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TO : Department of State

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FROM : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO

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GENERAL

The Christmas holidays, and all they meant in terms of festive preparation, last minute shopping and religious observance kept Dominicans busy this week. Considerable press and other attention was given to the Apollo VIII moon shot; there were few political or other issues capturing major attention during the week.

In general, including the problems accompanying the Ayuntamiento's payment of back wages to ex-workers (Item 1), newsworthy items were largely economic or only peripherally political in nature (even the PRD was relatively quiet this week -- Item 2) as: (1) the Cibao continued to dry itself off and the road to Puerto Plata was reopened to some traffic after having been closed for about two weeks; (2) Congress approved the 1969 budget, reported by the press as amounting to RD\$186,655,200 (RD\$230,324,219 -- if external financing were included); (3) an automobile ferry began thrice-weekly service between San Pedro De Macoris and San Juan, Puerto Rico; (4) the UASD employees' strike continued, apparently unsettled (WPR #40); (5) the National Education Council prepared to meet December 30, for the first time since 1964 (probably on the agenda: consideration of the highly controversial "diversified

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education" program); (6) an arms cache was discovered near Higüey (10 rifles, one shotgun); and (7) a delegation, headed by Foreign Secretary Fernando AMIAMA Tio, was named to attend the inauguration of Puerto Rico's Governor-elect, Luis Ferré. Although the Embassy does not have confirmation, other reports state that President Balaguer himself will attend the Ferré inaugural ceremonies. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

1. Controversy Accompanies Payment of Ayuntamiento Ex-Workers

The long-awaited payment of some 5,000 former workers of the Santo Domingo Ayuntamiento began as scheduled on December 20 but new problems immediately arose as the workers charged that the deductions made, in the great majority of cases, were far more than those agreed upon between the Mayor, the workers' negotiating committee and Bishop POLANCO Brito. Municipal government officials answered the charge by stating that deductions had been made "as required" for the Tavera dam (2%), the workers' clinic (3%) and income tax as well as for "non-work days", i.e., Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. The President of the City Council, Rafael VIDAL, and other municipal officials, also maintained that it had been almost impossible to make sense out of the lists established during the previous (PRD) administration and that payrolls had been of necessity based in large part on information supplied by foremen and straw bosses. Payments had not been completed by the end of the week. (UNCLASSIFIED).

COMMENT: Many of the cases have been appealed to a complaints office established by the Mayor and some workers have refused to cash their checks until their cases have been settled. Meanwhile, the PRD, MPD, UER, CASC and the "Red Line" of the LJ4 have all issued statements supporting the workers. In addition to statements, the Communist PCD held several small micro-meetings in Santiago. The Mayor's promise to issue new checks in those cases where errors have been made has helped to prevent protest movements from gathering more steam. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE).

2. PRD Notes

In keeping with the dominant holiday mood, the PRD joined other Dominicans this week in putting politics on a backburner. Even the return on December 22 of Secretary General PEÑA Gómez received only brief notice and at week's end had not yet been followed by an "orienting" address or report on his trip (the party announced that Tribuna Democrática had been suspended for the Holidays). In his only public statement thus far (an airport arrival interview), Peña Gómez said that: (1) Bosch would not be a presidential candidate in 1970; (2) the question of PRD electoral participation will be decided by the PRD's Sixth National Convention; (3) Bosch "definitely" does not believe in Latin American-style democracy; (4) Bosch will return to the DR when he finishes a series of works in progress and published his "Popular Dictatorship" thesis, but before returning he will visit other "socialist and capitalist" countries; (5) at no time did he (Peña) intend to remain in Spain (as had been charged by some PRD leaders -- see WPR #38), but he would be

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going to Spain again next year; (6) The Swedish Social Democratic Party's Secretary for International Relations would arrive in the DR on December 28 as part of a tour of most Latin American countries, preparatory to a congress on Latin American problems to be celebrated next January in Chile; and (7) ten PRD youth leaders will receive scholarships to study in Rumania and Yugoslavia.

In other PRD news, police agents from Santo Domingo reportedly raided the home of a PRD labor leader and former city councilman in Villa Altagracia -- but found nothing; and two PRDers (one of them Legal Secretary Mario GARCIA) denied -- and were reportedly cleared -- of charges by a police informant that they had taken part in a meeting at which the assassination of three military officers (including Maj. Gen. PEREZ y Pérez) had allegedly been planned. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

COMMENT: Apparently Organization Secretary "Rafa" GAMUNDI will not be one of the PRD leaders gifted with a Rumanian or Yugoslav scholarship. PRD confidant Sacha VOLMAN told an Embassy officer that Gamundi did not qualify for one, but that an attempt would be made to send him to Algeria, presumably on another type of scholarship. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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by J.G.D.*

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