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ACTION ARA 16

INFO SSD 00, NSCE 00, USIE 00, CCO 00, CIAE 00, DODE 00, GPM 04, H 05, INR 07,  
L 03, NSAE 00, NSC 10, P 04, RSC 01, SP 02, SS 25, IO 13, PC 04, AID 28,  
RSR 01, EUR 15, OPR 02, /137 W

12/15/68  
RUO 14330

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O R 151800Z DEC 68  
FM AMEMBASSY RIO DE JANEIRO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5824  
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
AMCONGEN RECIFE  
CINCSO  
AMCONGEN SAO PAULO  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L RIO DE JANEIRO 14330

SUBJECT: SITREP OF CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS

JOINT STATE/DEFENSE MESSAGE

1. FOLLOWING ARE EMBASSY'S GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF SITUATION AS OF NOON DECEMBER 15.
2. ARMY IS IN COMMAND. COSTA E SILVA WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN REMOVED HAD HE NOT GONE ALONG. CABINET WAS GIVEN LITTLE OPTION. MAGALHAES PINTO WAS LONGEST HOLDOUT. NOT CLEAR WHAT COSTA E SILVA'S PRESENT POSITION IS. HE HAS NOT APPEARED IN PUBLIC, NOR HAS HE ISSUED ANY STATEMENTS. SOME SOURCES TELL US HE STILL HAS REINS OF GOVERNMENT IN HIS HANDS; OTHERS RAISE SOME QUESTION. LYRA TAVARES AND FIRST ARMY COMMANDER SYSENO SARMENTO ARE TWO OF THE KEY FIGURES IN CURRENT ACTIVITIES. LATTER IS PARTICULARLY ACTIVE AND ONE OF HIS AIDES TOLD ARMA LYRA HAS TURNED OVER OPERATIONS TO SYSENO.
3. ARRESTS HAVE BEEN UNCOORDINATED BUT ARMY SAYS IT IS NOW PROCEEDING ON ORGANIZED BASIS. MILITARY TELL US THEY "DETERMINED TO DO THE JOB RIGHT THIS TIME." WHAT THEY LACK IN VISION IS COMPENSATED FOR BY THEIR FIRM BELIEF THEY DOING THE RIGHT THING.

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MILITARY PERHAPS MORE UNITED NOW THAN IT HAS BEEN SINCE 1964.

4. NO ORGANIZED RESISTANCE DEVELOPING, NOR IS ANY LIKELY TO. MODERATE CIVILIANS DISTRESSED BUT THERE LITTLE THEY CAN DO. PRESS HEAVILY CENSURED AND FEAR OF DETENTION INFECTS POLITICALLY CONSCIOUS CLASS IN RIO ALTHOUGH OUTLYING AREAS RELATIVELY CALM. OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP IS RELATIVELY INEFFECTIVE AT THIS POINT AND MANY SCHEDULED FOR ARREST. COMMUNIST PARTY AND SPLINTER GROUPS UNLIKELY ACT SINCE MANY OF THEM HAVE BEEN HOPING FOR DICTATORIAL MOVES IN ORDER TO SWELL THEIR CLANDESTINE RANKS. THE ONLY POSSIBILITY FOR SERIOUS OPPOSITION LIES WITH THE CHURCH, BUT CNDEMNATORY STATEMENTS FROM THE PULPIT, THOUGH THEY WILL HAVE LONG TERM EFFECT, ARE UNLIKELY TO INCITE ANYBODY TO OPEN RESISTANCE AT THIS POINT. BELTON

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