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Department of State

TELEGRAM

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02 INR-06 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 AID-20 PC-04

RSR-01 INRE-00 /098 W

073084

PIR 291935Z NOV 71
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2777
INFO AMCONSUL RECIFE
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 1785

SUBJECT: TISTOWNISTER DISMISSED

REF: USDAO RIO 261630Z NOV 71

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1. SUMMARY: ON NOVEMBER 27 PRESS ANNOUNCED PRESIDENT MEDICI'S DECISION TO ACCEPT RESIGNATION AIR MINISTER MARCIO SOUSA E MELO. IN FACT, THE MINISTER HAD BEEN FIRED SEVERAL DAYS PREVIOUSLY. THIS IS ONLY SECOND CABINET DISMISSAL IN OVER TWO YEARS OF THE MEDICI ADMINISTRATION. IT ALSO CULMINATES A GROWING FACTIONALISM WITHIN AIR FORCE BETWEEN SOUSA E MELO SUPPORTERS AND THOSE OF FORMER AIR FORCE LEADER BRIG. EDUARDO GOMES. DESIGNATED TO REPLACE SOUSA E MELO IS RETIRED BRIGADIER JOELMIR CAMPOS DE ARARIPE MACEDO WHO ASSUMES OFFICE TODAY, NOVEMBER 29. END SUMMARY.

2. ALTHOUGH PEG FOR DISMISSAL WAS REPORTEDLY POLICY DIFFERENCES OVER TACTICAL USE OF CERTAIN AIRCRAFT SQUADRONS, SOUSA E MELO WAS FIRED FROM HIS POSITION FOR VARIETY OF REASONS. NOT THE LEAST THESE REASONS WERE GENERAL INEFFECTIVENESS AS AIR MINISTER AND REPEATED FAILURE TO CARRY OUT ORDERS. MOREOVER, DURING HIS INCUMBENCY, GROWING DISSIDENCE AROSE WITHIN AIR FORCE

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RANKS BETWEEN HIS OWN SUPPORTERS AND OTHER FACTIONS, THE PRINCIPAL OF WHICH WAS SPEAR-HEADED BY RETIRED BRIG. EDUARDO GOMES, 1920'S "TENENTE", FORMER AIR FORCE CHIEFTAIN DURING WWII, AND DEFEATED PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WHOSE NAME SANCROSANT IN BRAZILIAN MILITARY AVIATION. THERE WAS ALSO CONSIDERATION THAT SOUSA E MELO GAVE FREE REIN TO THOSE HARDENED ELEMENTS WITHIN AIR FORCE WHO ENGAGED IN REPRESSIVE ANTI-SUBVERSION ACTIVITY, LEADING TO CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM. ANOTHER FACTOR IN AIR MINISTER'S DOWNFALL WAS PERSISTENT REPORTS OF CORRUPTION WITHIN THE MINISTRY DURING HIS INCUMBENCY. IN SPITE OF ABOVE, HOWEVER, PRESIDENT MEDICI STILL ADDRESSED WARM PUBLIC LETTER TO SOUSA E MELO COMMENDING LATTER'S DEDICATION AND PATRIOTISM.

3. BRIG. JOELMIR ARARIPE MACEDO IS HIGHLY RESPECTED OFFICER WITH ENGINEERING BACKGROUND. HE HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN PROJECTION OF NEW SUPERSONIC INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT BEING BUILT IN RIO DE JANEIRO. HIS APPOINTMENT BELIEVED DUE TO HIS EXCELLENT RECORD AS A TECHNICIAN AND A "DOER" AND TO HIS NEUTRAL POSITION IN AIR FORCE INTERNECINE STRUGGLE. BIO DATA FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM.

4. COMMENT: AS DAO HAS BEEN REPORTING, SOUSA E MELO'S DISMISSAL WAS LONG EXPECTED, BUT TIMING WAS UNCERTAIN. PRESIDENT MEDICI'S MEASURED ACTION IN FIRING SOUSA E MELO PROBABLY REFLECTS THE CONFLICT BETWEEN HIS DESIRE TO GET RID OF AN INEFFECTIVE AND TROUBLESOME MINISTER AND AT THE SAME TIME PRESERVE THE APPEARANCE OF UNITY IN HIS GOVERNMENT AND SOLIDARITY WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES. GP-3.
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