ACTION: SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO: AMBASSAD BRAZILIA
AMCONSUL RECIFE
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
USCINCSO

RIO DE JANEIRO 6699

CINCSO FOR POLAD
MARAHIO TORTURE REPORT

SUBJECT: [Redacted]

REF: BRASILIA A-30, RECIFE REPORT 28, RIO 6500

1. CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF BRAZILIAN BISHOPS BEGAN MEETING IN RIO YESTERDAY, OFFICIAL PURPOSE OF WHICH TO DISCUSS SUBJECTS LEFT UNFINISHED AT BRASILIA MEETING LAST MAY. APPARENT FROM PRESS, HOWEVER, THAT MAJOR EMPHASIS AT MEETING BEING GIVEN TO MORE CURRENT TOPICS — SPECIFICALLY, ALLEGED TORTURE OF MARAHIO PRIEST AND CRIMES OF DEATH SQUADS. PRESS REPORTS COUNCIL ESTABLISHED TWO WORKING GROUPS TO STUDY THESE SUBJECTS.

2. BISHOP OF SAN LUIS, JOAO BATISTA MOTA, REPORTEDLY SAID AT MEETING THAT HE AND BISHOP AVELAR BRANDAO VILELA OF TERESINA MARAHIO HAD VISITED PRIEST MONTEIRO IN PRISON AND CONFIRMED HIS BAD
TREATMENT BY POLICE; AFTER WHICH THEY IMMEDIATELY INFORMED
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO IN RIO. MOTA REPORTED ON SERIES OF MEETINGS
HE HAD HELD AFTERWARDS WITH PRESIDENT, MINISTER OF JUSTICE,
AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES ABOUT IMPRISONMENT OF PRIEST. HE
URGED COUNCIL TAKE URGENT DECISION ON MATTER. ACCORDING TO
COUNCIL PRESS SPOKESMAN, COPY OF NORTHEAST BISHOPS’ DOCUMENT
DENONCING THE TORTURE OF PRIESTS HAS BEEN RECEIVED BY POPE.

3. BISHOPS’ DECISION TO INQUIRE INTO PRIEST’S ALLEGED TORTURE
COMES ON HEELS OF SEPTEMBER 8 PRESS STATEMENT BY GENERAL
VALTER PIRES DE CARVALHO E ALBUQUERQUE THAT ON INSTRUCTIONS
OF PRESIDENT TO DETERMINE ABSOLUTE TRUTH IN THE MATTER, HE
HAD CONDUCTED INVESTIGATION WHICH REVEALED NEITHER OF TWO
MARANHÃO PRIESTS ARRESTED HAD BEEN TORTURED. HE SAID ABRASIONS
ON MONTEIRO WERE MADE BY HANDCUFFS DURING EIGHT-HOUR RIDE IN
JEEP OVER ROUGH ROAD UPON BEING TAKEN TO PRISON FACILITIES
IN SAO LUIS. PIRES EXHIBITED PHOTO SHOWING ABRASIONS AND
MADE POINT THAT LEGS SHOWED NO MARKS, WHICH WOULD NOT BE CASE
IF MONTEIRO HAD BEEN SUSPENDED FROM A BEAM WITH HIS LEGS AND
HANDS TIED TOGETHER AS WAS CHARGED. PIRES REFERRED TO MONTEIRO AND HIS SUPERIORS AS LIARS. HE SAID MONTEIRO AND PRIEST XAVIER HAD ADMITTED IN STATEMENTS TO POLICE THAT THEY BELONGED TO AÇÃO POPULAR TERRORIST GROUP AND HAD MAINTAINED CONTACTS WITH SUBVERSIVES.

4. O GLOBO SEPT. 4 PUBLISHED STRONG EDITORIAL CALLING FOR INVESTIGATION MARANHÃO TORTURE REPORT (RIO 6500). ON DAY FOLLOWING EDITORIAL O GLOBO SAID IN FRONT PAGE STATEMENT THAT RELIABLE SOURCE HAD INFORMED IT INVESTIGATION HAD TAKEN PLACE WHICH PROVED NONEXISTENCE OF ANY ILL TREATMENT OF PRIEST.

5. COMMENT: AFTER STATEMENT OF GENERAL PIRES DENYING TORTURES,

MARANHÃO EMPREITES ARGUES ACTION BY COUNCIL QUESTIONING THIS DENIAL COULD LEAD TO INCREASED CHURCH-GOB FRICTION AND THREATEN REPORTED INFORMAL UNDERSTANDING (RIO 5239).

NCCB ACTION (LIKE RECENT O GLOBO EDITORIAL) INDICATES BELIEF THAT SIMPLE DENIAL OF OCCURRENCE OF TORTURES NO LONGER SUFFICIENT RESPONSE BY AUTHORITIES.