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22 July 2011

(U) Key Points

- (C) [Redacted] (b)(1),Sec. 1.4(b),Sec. 1.4(d)
- (C) [Redacted] (b)(1),Sec. 1.4(b),Sec. 1.4(d)
- (C) [Redacted] (b)(1),Sec. 1.4(b),Sec. 1.4(d)

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(U) Source Summary Statement: Information in this intelligence assessment was gathered from open sources and unclassified and classified government sources.

(U) Overview

(U//FOUO) In the first half of 2011, the Lobo administration overcame international sanctions related to the ousting of former President Zelaya and advanced diplomatic relations in hopes of securing the resources to address domestic challenges such as the economy and crime. According to a JUN CID-Gallup poll, Lobo's approval rating dipped in the first half of the year. This is

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likely due to Lobo's focus on external rather than domestic social issues in the first year of his term.¹ The economy is slowly recovering, but remains dependent on the restoration of multilateral and bilateral funding mechanisms. Honduras remains politically polarized, but Lobo continues to focus efforts to mitigate social unrest, combat internal security threats, and repair the fractured economy.

(U) Political Situation

(U) International Success, Domestic Distractions

(U) Tegucigalpa made positive strides towards accomplishing the goals of its political agenda in the first half of 2011. On 22 May, President Lobo and former President Zelaya signed an agreement that paved the way for Honduras' reinstatement into the international community; Colombia and Venezuela facilitated the agreement and on 1 JUN the Organization of American States (OAS) welcomed Honduras' return after a two year hiatus. The accord between Lobo and Zelaya allowed Zelaya to return to Honduras and established the National Front of Popular Resistance (FNRP) as a legitimate political party. Honduras' reintegration and Zelaya's return removed two significant distracters from Tegucigalpa's domestic concerns: specifically security, and the economy. This will allow Honduras to fully engage in joint security and monetary initiatives and focus greater attention on domestic socio-economic issues.

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(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(b),Sec. 1.4(c),Sec. 1.4(d)

(U) Governance

(U) New Constitutional Reforms

(S//NF) Despite concessions allowing for Zelaya's return, the political landscape of Honduras remains divided. In mid-JAN, President Lobo followed through with one of his campaign promises to unite the populace by passing significant legislation reforming the way the constitution can be changed. The new reforms, overwhelmingly approved by Congress, allow any portion of the constitution to be subject to public vote for reform. Previously, certain portions of the constitution, such as presidential term limits, were not allowed to be changed.³ Former President Zelaya was ousted from office for attempting to change presidential term limits without reforming the constitution.

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~~(C)~~ Opposition parties supportive of Zelaya are requesting President Lobo hold a constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution. On 9 JUL, Lobo formed a committee to begin a dialogue and assess which is the better route: reforming or rewriting the constitution.

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(U) Economic Situation

(U) Fiscal Trends

(U) The Honduran economy, one of the poorest in the region, remains weakened by growing inflation and a lack of foreign investment; the potential for economic growth through the remainder of 2011 is small.⁵ The relatively small (~\$15.4B) open economy is extremely vulnerable to external cyclical trends, particularly US economic conditions.⁶ Although the political situation in the country is improving somewhat, economic stability will require time and significant macroeconomic reform. Economic growth in Honduras remains contingent upon US economic performance, as the US is Honduras' key trading partner and the destination for almost 90% of the country's migrants.⁷

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Real GDP growth (%)	↑	3.7 (2011) 2.8 (2010)
Unemployment rate (%)	↓	4.8 (2011) 5.1 (2010)
Gross fixed investment (% real change)	↑	10.4 (2011) 7.3 (2010)
Inflation (%)	↑	7.0 (2011) 4.7 (2010)
Current-account balance (% GDP)	↓	-7.1 (2011) -6.2 (2010)
Remittance inflows (\$US billions)	↑	2.75 (2011) 2.53 (2010)

(U) Economic Intelligence Unit, May 11

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(U) Honduras: Economic Indicators, June 2011

- (U) The Economist Intelligence Unit forecasts GDP growth of 3.7% for 2011, primarily attributable to resumed International Monetary Fund (IMF) financing and US economic recovery.
- (U) Unemployment is set to decline nominally. Nevertheless, the high underemployment level poses a significant problem (~36% underemployed).⁸
- (U) Foreign investment is expected to post nominal growth in 2011, but will not normalize to 2008 levels. Sectors that will attract the most investment are telecommunications, agriculture, and textiles and clothing.⁹
- (U) The current-account deficit is forecast to widen due to high import requirements and dependence on oil imports.
- (U) High inflation rates are raising the basic cost of living and diminishing the purchasing power of remittances.
- (U) Remittances are expected to grow as the US economy rebounds.

(U//FOUO) Ensuring sustained external aid and financing as well as attracting high-impact capital foreign investment projects will be the focal point of the Lobo administration's economic strategy.¹⁰

(U//FOUO) Financing Conditions Boost Confidence, Constrain Spending

(U//FOUO) In MAY, the IMF concluded the second review of the 18-month, ~US \$202m^a stand-by arrangement with Honduras. Ongoing support from the IMF bolsters the country's public finances and overall macroeconomic stability.¹¹ However, pressures to rein in public expenditures, coupled with rising inflation levels, will intensify socio-economic pressures at the national level.

(U//FOUO) As of MAY, Honduras is in compliance with IMF guidelines aimed at encouraging macroeconomic stability; the combined public-sector deficit and the stock of international reserves were well within the targets, and the debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratio remained below 30%. However, tax intake remains weak. As of MAR, tax revenue was US \$6.2M, below the set target.¹² Tegucigalpa trimmed spending to offset this income deficiency, further constraining the government's ability to address widespread poverty and crime. Revenue-raising tax reforms approved by Congress in MAR will go into effect in 2012. Congress is also discussing a proposed anti-evasion act aimed at strengthening tax administration and reducing exemptions.^b Congress also received a proposal to create a special rate of contribution to fund a budget increase for the Ministry of Public Security.^{13,14} However, significant reform of the tax system is unlikely as there is heavy opposition from the private sector and application of the tax code is expensive for the government to enforce.

(U//FOUO) Struggle to Attract Foreign Investment

(U//FOUO) Honduras will need to continue its efforts to boost foreign investment for future economic growth.^{15,16} Recent strategies to attract foreign investment include:

- (U) In JAN, Tegucigalpa approved an amendment to the constitution that allows the creation of 'charter cities' modeled on China's special economic zones. These charter cities are intended to attract foreign investors. The suggested sites, primarily in coastal areas, would operate under legal and regulatory systems independent of the Honduran central government.¹⁷
- (U) The government plans to fund modernization of Honduras's main port (Puerto Cortés, the largest port in Central America) and reduce its operating costs in order to boost competitiveness.¹⁸
- (U) In MAY, Honduras sponsored a "Honduras is Open for Business" event in San Pedro Sula. Various representatives of governments, foreign companies, and financial institutions gathered to discuss investment opportunities.¹⁹

(U) These efforts may attract investments, but physical and political insecurity, along with high crime and perceived corruption, will continue to dampen investor confidence.²⁰

^a (U) The Honduran government's IMF program is being supported by a blend of resources in the amount of about US\$202 million from two IMF credit lines, the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) and the Stand-By Credit Facility (SCF).

^b (U) An estimated 20-40% of taxable revenue is lost to tax evasion.

(U) Social Environment

(U) Mounting Social Tensions

(U) Economic conditions in Honduras will have a tremendous impact on the social environment over the mid to long term. Efforts to combat rampant poverty, inequality, and unemployment will continue to be hindered by budgetary pressures. Over the medium term, IMF-established targets aimed at boosting Honduran macroeconomic stability will continue to reign in public expenditures.²¹ Should key social programs remain under- or unfunded, preexisting socio-economic cleavages between the poor and elite business sectors may be further aggravated and lead to an escalation in protests.

(U) In the first half of 2011, protests and conflicts have been fairly small to medium in scale and socio-economic in nature. Without a perceived effective government response, these movements could be co-opted by political entities for advancement of their own political agendas.

(U) In MAR, the teachers' union launched a three week strike which concluded with the establishment of a forum that would address reforms to the teachers' public pension fund.²² However, Economist Intelligence Unit reporting indicates that there have been little to no results as of JUN, "owing to the political elements of the relationship between teachers' unions and the government, especially those affiliated with the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (FNRP)."²³

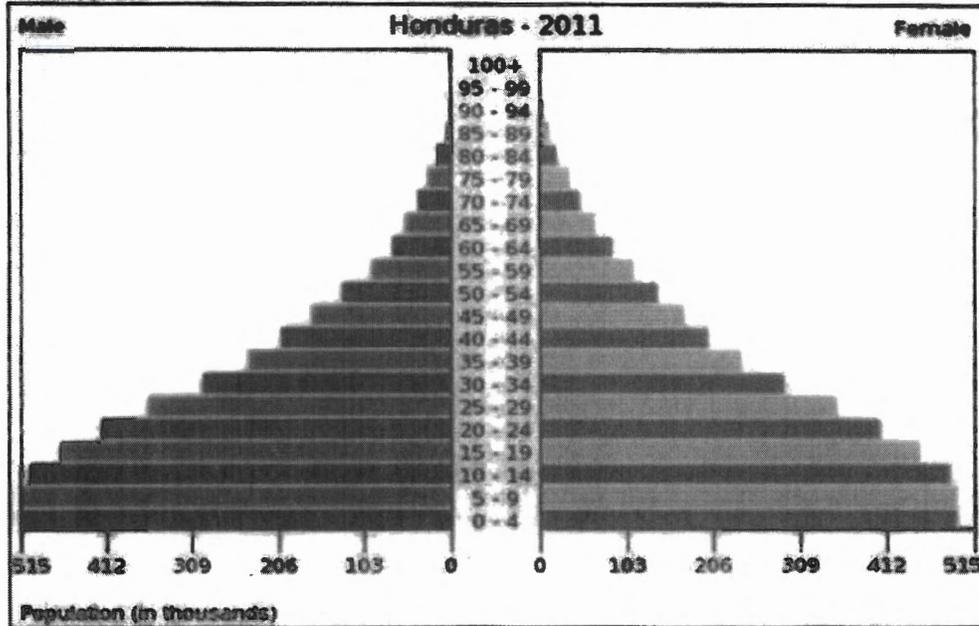
(U) Conflicts between peasants and wealthy landowners are on the rise. One prominent case, in the Bajo Aguan area, began when a group of 3,000 locals overran 50 African Palm plantations owned by Honduran business magnate Miguel Facussé. After months of tensions, in JUN a deal was made where the government agreed to buy 4,045.7 hectares (ha) at a price of US\$7,000/ha from Facussé, with the objective of selling it back to the peasants over time. This conflict not only claimed 42 lives, but also generated negative attention that led to European investors pulling funding for a biodiesel project with Facussé. Similar land conflicts may occur as the peasant organization, Movimiento Campesino del Aguán (MUCA), claims that other landowners in the region own tracts of land beyond what the Agrarian Reform Law allows.^{24,25,26}

(U) Demographic Pressures

(U) Demographic pressures will exacerbate the already weak socio-economic environment. Population dynamics include population growth due to a high birth rate, rapid urbanization, and significant emigration flows. Honduras has a substantial youth population; as of JUN, nearly 58% of the population is below age 24, with the majority under the age of 15.^{27,c} The most pressing demand on the government will be to provide adequate basic services to its growing population.

^c (U) Total population in Honduras is 8.1M (US Census Bureau International Database, 14 Jun 11).

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(U) Over half (58%) of the Honduran Population is Under 24 Years of Age

(U) Honduras suffers from rampant poverty and inequality, with an estimated 60% of the population living below the national poverty line.²⁸ Inflationary pressures have increased basic living costs and pushed many people deeper into poverty. Rising food prices, coupled with increased reliance on food imports, makes Honduras extremely vulnerable to food insecurity. A JUN United Nations report shows food prices in Honduras reached all-time highs in MAY.²⁹ The wholesale price of maize in MAY was valued 80% higher than the price a year ago; prices of red beans in MAY were double their price for the same month last year.³⁰ Natural disasters could exacerbate the food situation.³¹ A USAID report indicates that in the 2011 Atlantic hurricane season, there is a 75% probability that Honduras will experience the impact of a named storm and a 27% probability of the country experiencing one or more hurricanes.³²

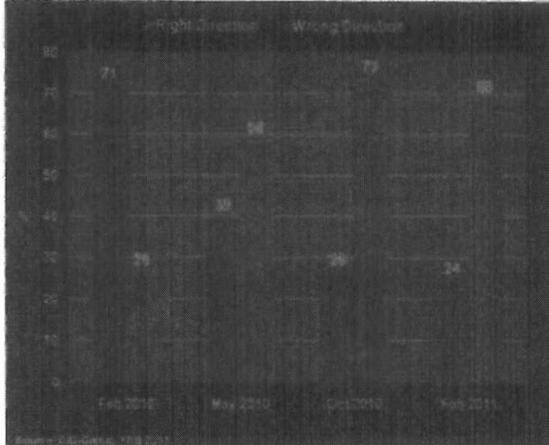
(U) Uncontrolled urbanization increases the populations' vulnerability to natural disasters and health risks. Land-clearing makes areas susceptible to flooding and mudslides in heavy rains or storms. Improper land use practices are harming water supplies and contributing to health concerns. Improper mining has led to the polluting of the Lago de Yojoa (the country's largest source of fresh water), as well as several rivers and streams, with heavy metals.³³

(U//FOUO) Public Opinion

(U//FOUO) According to a poll conducted by CID-Gallup in FEB, 24% of Hondurans surveyed say their country is going in the right direction. This is a sharp decrease from the 71% who answered similarly upon Lobo's inauguration in FEB 10.³⁴ Shortly after Lobo's inauguration, Hondurans' expectations were high; they expected Lobo to reduce crime like he promised in his campaign platform. Apart from crime, Lobo also promised to promote economic growth and foreign investment, which would lead to more jobs. A

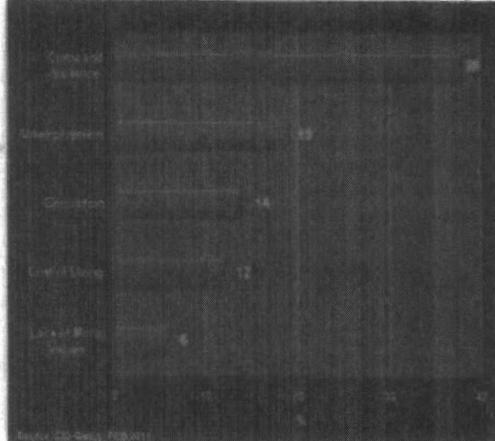
year after his election, the population felt these promises had not yet been fulfilled. Very few of those surveyed approved of President Lobo's efforts in handling the economy (31%) and unemployment (27%).³⁵

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(U) Direction Honduras is Heading (Feb 10-Feb 11)

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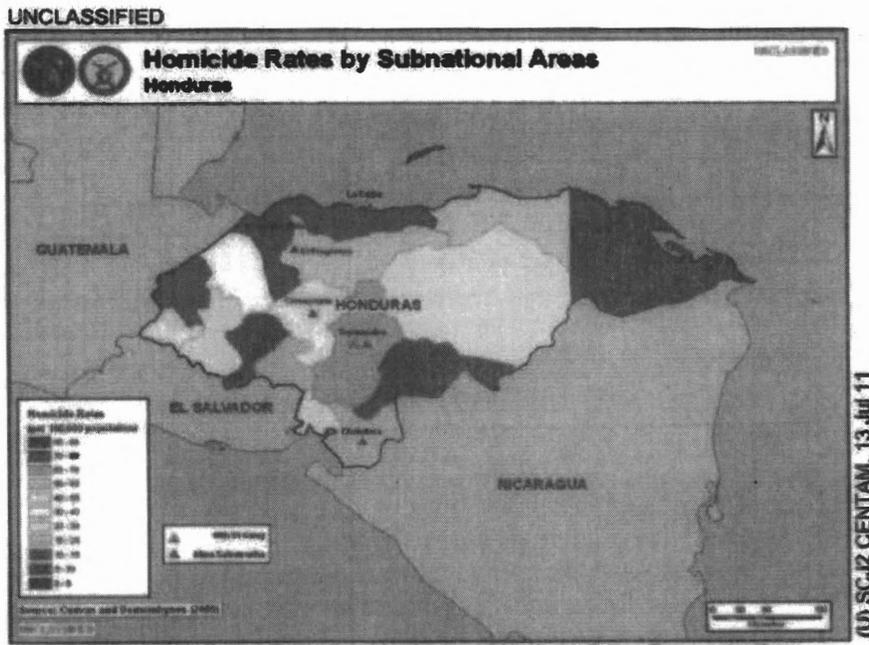
(U) Greatest Perceived Problems in Honduras

(U//FOUO) The FEB poll also revealed crime and violence combined as the most serious problem affecting the country (38%), followed by unemployment (19%).³⁶ The security situation remains a serious concern and about a third of the population continues to be underemployed.³⁷ Despite these setbacks, the general populace approves of President Lobo's efforts in international relations (41%), especially his efforts in leading the country towards international recognition and reintegration into the OAS. Despite challenges and lethargic domestic progress, according to the same poll, favorable opinion of President Lobo averaged 60%. Over half of the population surveyed (51%) approves of Lobo's job performance, while 36% disapprove. In addition, the majority of Hondurans surveyed (52%) believe President Lobo will do what is right for the people, while 38% believe the opposite.³⁸

(U) Security

(U) Honduras has the highest homicide rate in the Western Hemisphere. The atmosphere of criminal impunity is so pervasive that there is little disincentive to engage in criminal activity. For the first six months of 2011, the security and crime situation continued to deteriorate. This deterioration can primarily be attributed to gangs, drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) operating in the country.³⁹ According to Embassy reporting and statistics published in JAN, the 2010 homicide rate increased to 77 per 100,000, up from 66.8 recorded in 2009. Over the past four years, homicides have more than doubled; 3,118 reported in 2006 to 6,236 reported in 2010, averaging 16 homicides per day.^{40,41} According to JAN open source reporting, two major Honduran cities, San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, remain in the top 10 most violent cities in the world, with homicide rates of over 100 per 100,000.⁴² Given the large concentration of gang activity in Honduras' most violent areas, gang violence likely serves as the primary factor behind Honduras' alarming

murder rate. Rising crime and violence have caused the Honduran National Police to partner with the military in select urban areas to increase security presence and curtail crime.



(U) Homicide Rates Compared to Areas of Highest Gang Concentration

(G) (b)(1) Sec. 1.4(b)

(C) Honduras worked to improve joint military and Honduran National Police (HNP) efforts in the first half of 2011.

(b)(1), Sec. 1.4(b)

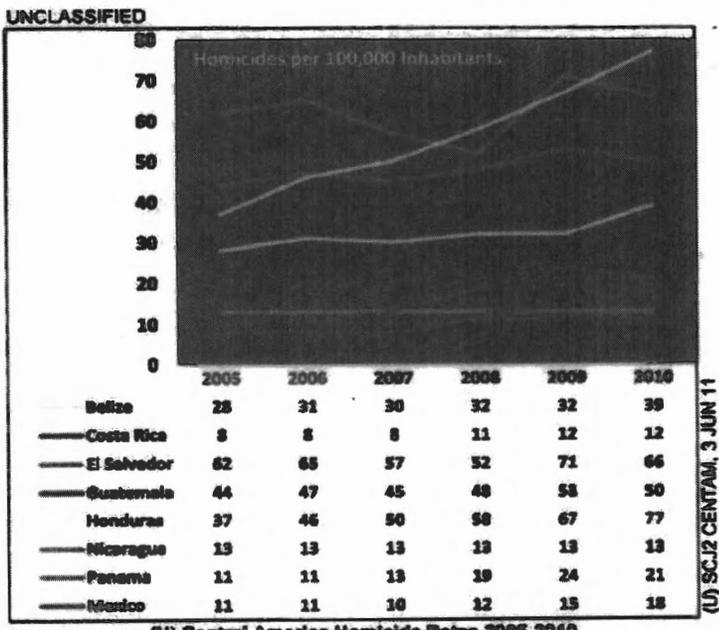
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(U) Central America Homicide Rates 2005-2010

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(G) (b)(1),Sec. 1.4(d)	STATE
(b)(1), Sec. 1.4(a), Sec. 1.4(b), Sec. 1.4(c), Sec. 1.4(d)	SOUTHCOM
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(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(c)	DIA
(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(a),Sec. 1.4(b)	DIA, SOUTHCOM
(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(c)	DIA
(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(a),Sec. 1.4(c)	SOUTHCOM

(U) Outlook

(U//FOUO) Honduras has made significant strides in achieving international recognition. Nevertheless, Lobo, who pledged to ensure security throughout the country during his 2009 presidential campaign, is challenged to produce tangible results on the economic, organized crime, and narco-trafficking fronts. Honduras' future economic growth will remain contingent upon sustained external funding made possible by recent progress in the international arena. However, the government will likely continue to struggle to develop an effective response to social inequalities, political divisions, rising crime, gangs, and growing DTO and TCO influence. Over the short term, Tegucigalpa will focus on addressing domestic security concerns; however, IMF-imposed fiscal restrictions will likely force the government to reduce spending on its currently underfunded police, military, and judicial budgets. These cuts increase the likelihood of these already weak institutions remaining susceptible to corruption and bribery.

(G) With substantial international assistance, (b)(1),Sec. 1.4(a) SOUTHCOM

(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(c) This whole-of-government strategy focuses on increasing police and military cooperation, enhancing rule of law, and garnering greater collaboration across the interagency. If resourced, the strategy will likely produce positive results. Over the long term, Honduras will continue to face economic difficulties. Honduras' progress towards compliance with IMF guidelines and recent full reintegration into the international community increase the likelihood of the country receiving expanded international aid. However, as Honduras continues to reign in its domestic fiscal policy to remain in compliance with IMF mandates, the nation will continually struggle to effectively respond to growing security and socio-economic concerns.

(U) Intelligence Gaps

• (S)	(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(c)	NON-RESPONSIVE
• (S)	(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(c)	RESPONSIVE
• (C)	(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(c)	NON-RESPONSIVE
• (C)	(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(c)	NON-RESPONSIVE

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(U) Intelligence Current As Of: 2011072119

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¹ (U) OSC; LAP20110628026002; 391853Z JUN 11; DOI 20 Jun 11; (U) *President Lobo Seen as Failing to Reduce Crime*; Extracted information is U; Overall document classification is U.

² (S//OC/NF)

(b)(1),Sec. 1.4(c)

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³ (U) OSC; LAP20110114026002; 172057Z JAN 11; DOI 11 Jan 2011; (U) *Honduran Lawmakers Discuss Reforms that Could Allow for Presidential Reelection*; Extracted information is U; Overall document classification is U.

⁴ (C) AMEMBASSY Tegucigalpa; DTG: 122336Z JUL 11; 13526; (C) *President Lobo Launches New Dialogue on Reform*; Extracted information is (C); Overall classification is (C).

⁵ (U) Online Publication; CIA; (U) *CIA World Factbook Honduras*; 17 Mar 11; ; Accessed 20 Jun 2011; (U) Source is a USG website.

⁶ (U) Online Publication; Economist Intelligence Unit; (U) *Views Wire Honduras*; 25 May 11; <https://www.eiu.com>; Accessed 15 June 2011; (U) Source is an economic report from the Economist Intelligence Unit.

⁷ (U) Online Publication; Economist Intelligence Unit; (U) *Views Wire Honduras*; 25 May 11; <https://www.eiu.com>; Accessed 15 June 2011; (U) Source is an economic report from the Economist Intelligence Unit.

⁸ (U) Online Publication; CIA; (U) *CIA World Factbook Honduras*; 17 Mar 11; ; Accessed 20 Jun 2011; (U) Source is a government website.

⁹ (U) United Nations Report; ECLAC; (U) *Foreign Direct Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean 2010*; May 2011; Accessed 20 Jun 2011; (U) Source is a regional division of the United Nations.

¹⁰ (U) Online Publication; CIA; (U) *CIA World Factbook Honduras*; 17 Mar 11; <http://www.cia.gov/cwfb/cfactbook/geos/ho.html>; Accessed 20 Jun 2011; (U) Source is a USG website.

¹¹ (U) IMF Report; International Monetary Fund; (U) *Honduras: First Review Under the Stand-By Arrangement and Under the Standby Credit Facility-Staff Report*; May 11; <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2011/cr11101.pdf>; Accessed 20 Jun 2011; (U) Source is a review report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed 13 Apr 11.

¹² (U) Online Publication; Economist Intelligence Unit; (U) *Honduras Economy: On Track with the IMF*; 20 Jun 2011; <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=2379005891&Fmt=3&clientId=77922&RQT=309&VName=PQD>; Accessed 21 Jun 11; (U) Source is an economic report from the Economist Intelligence Unit.

¹³ (U) Online Publication; Economist Intelligence Unit; (U) *Honduras Risk: Alert - Risk Scenario Watch List*; 21 Jun 11; Accessed 13 Jul 2011; (U) Source is an economic risk watch list from the Economist Intelligence Unit.

¹⁴ (U) Online Publication; Economist Intelligence Unit; (U) *Honduras Economy: On Track with the IMF*; 20 Jun 2011; <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=2379005891&Fmt=3&clientId=77922&RQT=309&VName=PQD>; Accessed 21 Jun 11; (U) Source is an economic report from the Economist Intelligence Unit.

¹⁵ (U) Honduran FDI contracted significantly in 2009 (by 48%) but is slowly beginning to recover.

¹⁶ (U) Online Publication; United Nations Report; ECLAC; (U) *Foreign Direct Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean 2010*; May 11; Accessed 20 Jun 2011; (U) Source is a regional division of the United Nations.

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¹⁷ (U) Online Publication; Business Monitor International; (U) *Q2 Central America Business Forecast Report*; 17 Mar 2011; www.businessmonitor.com; Accessed 14 Jun 2011; (U) Source is a commercial business monitor report.

¹⁸ (U) Online Publication; Economist Intelligence Unit; (U) *Honduras Economy: Government Seeks to Boost Foreign Investment*; 8 Jun 11;

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¹⁹ (U) Online Publication; Economist Intelligence Unit; (U) *Honduras Economy: Government Seeks to Boost Foreign Investment*; 8 Jun 11;

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²² (U) OSC; LAP20110406026001; 061834Z APR 11; DOI 6 Apr 2011; (U) *Highlights: Central America Media 6 April 11*; Extracted information is U; Overall document classification is U.

²³ (U) Online Publication; Economist Intelligence Unit; *Honduras Economy: On track with the IMF*; 20 Jun 11; <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=2379005891&Fmt=3&clientId=77922&RQT=309&VName=PQD>; Accessed 21 Jun 2011; (U) Source is an economic report from the Economist Intelligence Unit.

²⁴ (U) OSC; LAP20110505026001; 051848Z MAY 11; DOI 5 May 2011; (U) *Highlights: Central America Political and Economic Issues 5 May 11*; Extracted information is U; Overall document classification is U.

²⁵ (U) OSC; LAP20110607026001; 071811Z JUN 11; DOI 7 Jun 2011; (U) *Highlights: Central America Political and Economic Issues 7 June 11*; Extracted information is U; Overall document classification is U.

²⁶ (U) Online newspaper; Latin News; (U) *Tracking Trends-Weekly Report 23 June 2011*; 23 Jun 11; www.latinnews.com; Accessed 24 Jun 2011.

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²⁸ (U) Online Database; World Bank Data; (U) *Honduras Country Page*; 2010; <http://data.worldbank.org/country/honduras>; Accessed 20 Jun 2011; (U) Source is online database from the World Bank.

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- ³⁵(U) Online publication; CID-Gallup; 21 Feb 11; (U) *Estudio de Opinion Publica-Honduras # 76*; Accessed on 13 Jun 2011; Source polling data provided by the Department of State Office of Opinion Research.
- ³⁶(U) (U) Online publication; CID-Gallup; 21 Feb 11; (U) *Estudio de Opinion Publica-Honduras # 76*; Accessed on 13 Jun 2011; Source polling data provided by the Department of State Office of Opinion Research.
- ³⁶(U) Online publication; CID-Gallup; 21 Feb 11; (U) *Estudio de Opinion Publica-Honduras # 76*; Accessed on 13 Jun 2011; Source polling data provided by the Department of State Office of Opinion Research.
- ³⁷(U) Online publication; CIA; (U) *CIA World Factbook Honduras*; 17 Mar 11;; Accessed 13 Jun 2011; (U) Source is a government website.
- ³⁸(U) Online publication; CID-Gallup; 21 Feb 11; (U) *Estudio de Opinion Publica-Honduras # 76*; Accessed on 13 JUN 11; Source polling data provided by the Department of State Office of Opinion Research.
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(b)(1),(b)(3):10 USC 424,Sec. 1.4(c)

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⁴⁷ (S//NF)

(b)(3):10 USC 424

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