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Department of State

AmEmbassy RIO DE JANEIRO

January 21, 1965

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Castello Branco Rejects Re-election or Extension of His Mandate

EmbTels 1493 and 1499

There is transmitted herewith the full text of President Castello Branco's Military Club speech of January 18 before the annual reunion of the 1921 class of military academy graduates. This speech, one of the more significant of President Castello Branco's recent public addresses, is probably as much an indication of the pressure the President is already under to continue in office beyond the expiration of his mandate as it is a reflection of his personal opposition to any such continuation and his determination to reject any re-election or extension of his mandate. Moreover, it may well represent an effort to forestall development of any overwhelming groundswell of opinion that the needs of the revolution dictate his continuation in office.

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The sources of this pressure on the President appear to be located primarily, although not exclusively, among the ranks of the military. Military opinion on the matter is clearly not unanimous--many Lacerda-backing military officers, for example, favor 1966 elections--and that body of military opinion which holds that Castello Branco should remain in office seems to be divided over the reasons why. On the one hand, there are the advocates of some sort of a military dictatorship, officers who feel either 1) that elections are so much nonsense in the present situation or 2) that only the military have the capacity to govern. Illustrative of the first half of this point of view was a recent statement by General Luiz Guedes, Commander of the II Military Region. Guedes, who may not be basically dictatorial-minded, advocated that the São Paulo mayoralty

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elections be called-off because of a dearth of candidates identified with the revolution, and because "the people do not always make the proper choice". It is not clear where Guedes stands with respect to the presidential election issue, but his words and sentiments on the mayoralty election are in fact echoed by some of his military colleagues in speaking of the presidential issue. It was probably this group that President Castello Branco had in mind when he referred in his Military Club speech to "old and new advocates of dictatorship". On other issues this group would form part of the so-called military "hard line" though it would by no means encompass all "hard line" officers since some are clearly unhappy with Castello Branco as President and would oppose his continuation in office.

On the presidential issue, a fine line probably separates the dictatorial-minded group from a second group of military officers which may be larger than any other. Clearly responsive to the President's wishes on most matters and more apolitical than the "hard liners", they seem to feel that the nation simply cannot afford the luxury of an election campaign this soon after the revolution, and that an election might create problems so it is better just to forego the election for the time being. This point of view may have been best expressed by War Minister Costa e Silva during his December tour through the Northeast when he said on several occasions: "We will maintain Castello Branco in office until the end of his mandate or as long thereafter as is necessary". It is the Embassy's impression that the number of officers now arriving at the conclusion that it will be necessary to preserve the President in office beyond 1967 is growing. Individually, most of these officers have little influence over the President or over matters of government policy; collectively they represent a most important body of opinion in the country and one the President can hardly afford to ignore. It was probably this group the President had in mind when he appealed to "companions of the revolution" to comprehend the reasons for his decision not to allow either his re-election or the extension of his mandate.

The group within the military which will probably have the most influence on the President's final position regarding the 1966 presidential election problem is made up of the handful of close military advisors who participate in many policy discussions and who seem to have carte blanche to make policy recommendations to the President. This would include such trusted aides as Chief of the Military Household General Ernesto Geisel, Chief of the National Information Service General Colbery do Couto e Silva, Colonel Meira Matos, and a few other members of the so-called "Sorbonne" group. Essentially democratic, these officers have a strong sense of political reality. While out of recognition of the need to strengthen the institution, they would normally advocate Castello Branco's vacation of the Presidency at the

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(Weeks 3, Item 3) less than two years after being soundly defeated in a national referendum. A different sort of a compromise, but within the limits of Brazilian political reality, might be some general agreement for Castello Branco to be selected as the only candidate in a one-time indirect election of the President in 1966.

For the Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.:

Lowell C. Kilday

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Second Secretary

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As stated.

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