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SERIAL: DODID 273-1E

BODY

SUBJ: VENEZUELA: INTERNAL SECURITY. (U)

DOI: 29 SEP 92 (AS OF 1528 EDT)

- TEXT: 1. ~~(S/NF)~~ PRESIDENT PEREZ'S EFFORTS TO PORTRAY POLITICAL TERRORISTS AS RADICALS WILL PROBABLY PROVE EFFECTIVE, BUT HE STILL FACES PROBLEMS.
2. ~~(S/NF/NF/OC)~~ THE NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE COUNCIL (NSDC) HAS GIVEN THE POLICE AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES FREE REIGN AGAINST POLITICAL TERRORISTS FOLLOWING THE 23 SEPTEMBER ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST CONGRESSIONAL DEPUTY AND FORMER LABOR LEADER, ANTONIO RIOS. THE NSDC PARTICULARLY WANTS IMMEDIATE AND AGGRESSIVE ACTION IDENTIFYING BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (MBR) MEMBERS, THE PRIMARILY MILITARY SUPPORTERS OF FEBRUARY **COUP** ATTEMPT LEADER, **HUGO CHAVEZ**. THE NSDC BELIEVES THE MBR, WHICH HAS ALLIED WITH LEFTISTS AND WHICH CONTINUES **COUP** PLOTTING, WAS MOST LIKELY BEHIND THE ATTACK. IT ALSO THINKS THE PERPETRATORS USED ANOTHER NAME TO AVOID DAMAGING MBR'S IMAGE. ON THE 27TH, UNIDENTIFIED INDIVIDUALS THREW AN EXPLOSIVE DEVICE AT THE CARACAS RESIDENCE OF FORMER PRESIDENT LUSINCHI; NO INJURIES WERE REPORTED.
3. ~~(S/NF)~~ PEREZ WILL MOST LIKELY URGE THE PUBLIC AND THE ELITE TO DEFEND DEMOCRACY AGAINST LEFTWING SUBVERSION, AND SUCH AN APPEAL,

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EVEN IN A SOCIETY AS FRAGMENTED AS THAT IN VENEZUELA, WILL PROVE SUCCESSFUL IN THE NEAR TERM. HOWEVER, SOME LEFTIST PARTIES, SUCH AS CAUSA-R, HAVE POPULAR LEADERS AND ARE ESSENTIALLY DEMOCRATIC AND NONVIOLENT. THUS, INDISCRIMINATE LEFTIST-BAITING COULD INCREASE THESE PARTIES' PUBLIC SUPPORT, ACCORDING TO US OFFICIALS.

4. ~~(C)~~ IN RELATED DEVELOPMENTS, DEFENSE MINISTER JIMENEZ RECENTLY MET WITH NATIONAL GUARD FLAG OFFICERS TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS WITHIN THAT SERVICE. THE NATIONAL GUARD WAS THE MOST LOYAL SUPPORTER OF PEREZ DURING THE FEBRUARY COUP ATTEMPT. HOWEVER, MORALE HAS DETERIORATED OWING TO POOR LIVING CONDITIONS, AND INCREASING NUMBERS OF GUARDSMEN ARE SAID TO BE SYMPATHETIC TO THE MBR. MANY GUARDSMEN ARE ALSO UPSET OVER THE DRUG-TRAFFICKING CHARGES AGAINST POPULAR FORMER ANTIDRUG UNIT COMMANDER, BRIG GEN GUILLEN.

5. ~~(S/NF)~~ (b)(3):10-USC 424 WHETHER THE 23 AND 27 SEPTEMBER TERRORIST INCIDENTS WERE THE INITIAL ACTS OF A LEFTWING NATIONAL CAMPAIGN, OR WHETHER THEY WERE THE ACTS OF INDIVIDUALS, REMAINS UNCLEAR. THE GOVERNMENT HAS A HISTORY OF NOT TOLERATING POLITICAL VIOLENCE, AND THE PUBLIC REMAINS LEERY OF RADICAL LEFTISTS. THUS FAR, RADICAL STUDENTS HAVE FAILED TO EXPLOIT FRUSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF CIVIL DISORDER. VIOLENCE--EVEN WHEN TARGETED AGAINST CORRUPT OFFICIALS-- WILL CAUSE FEAR AND COULD MAKE MOST CITIZENS EVEN MORE UNWILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN ANTIGOVERNMENT PROTESTS.

6. ~~(S/NF)~~ STILL, THE VIOLENCE, LIKE STUDENT ACTIVISM, IS CONTRIBUTING TO AN ATMOSPHERE OF INSTABILITY. PEREZ REMAINS UNPOPULAR, AND POLLS SHOW CONTINUED DISTRUST OF THE SYSTEM. LOW MORALE IS WIDESPREAD IN THE ARMED FORCES, DESPITE HIGH COMMAND EFFORTS TO SHOW CONCERN FOR THE TROOPS. MANY OFFICIALS ARE CONCERNED THAT A HIGH VISIBILITY TERRORIST ACT COULD PROMPT ANOTHER COUP ATTEMPT.

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