

DTG

221839Z MAR 02

FROM

FM (b)(3):10 USC 424

TO

TO RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC (b)(3):10 USC 424

CONTROLS

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SECTION 01 OF 07 (b)(3):10 USC 424

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

SERIAL: (U) (b)(3):10 USC 424

/***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****/

BODY

COUNTRY: (U) VENEZUELA (VE); NETHERLANDS ANTILLES (NA).

IPSP: (U) (b)(3):10 USC 424

SUBJ: (b)(3):10 USC 424 /UNITAS AND SUBSEQUENT VISIT BY VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT AND SENIOR VENEZUELAN LEADERSHIP TO THE USS YORKTOWN (U)

WARNING: (U) THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE. REPORT CLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

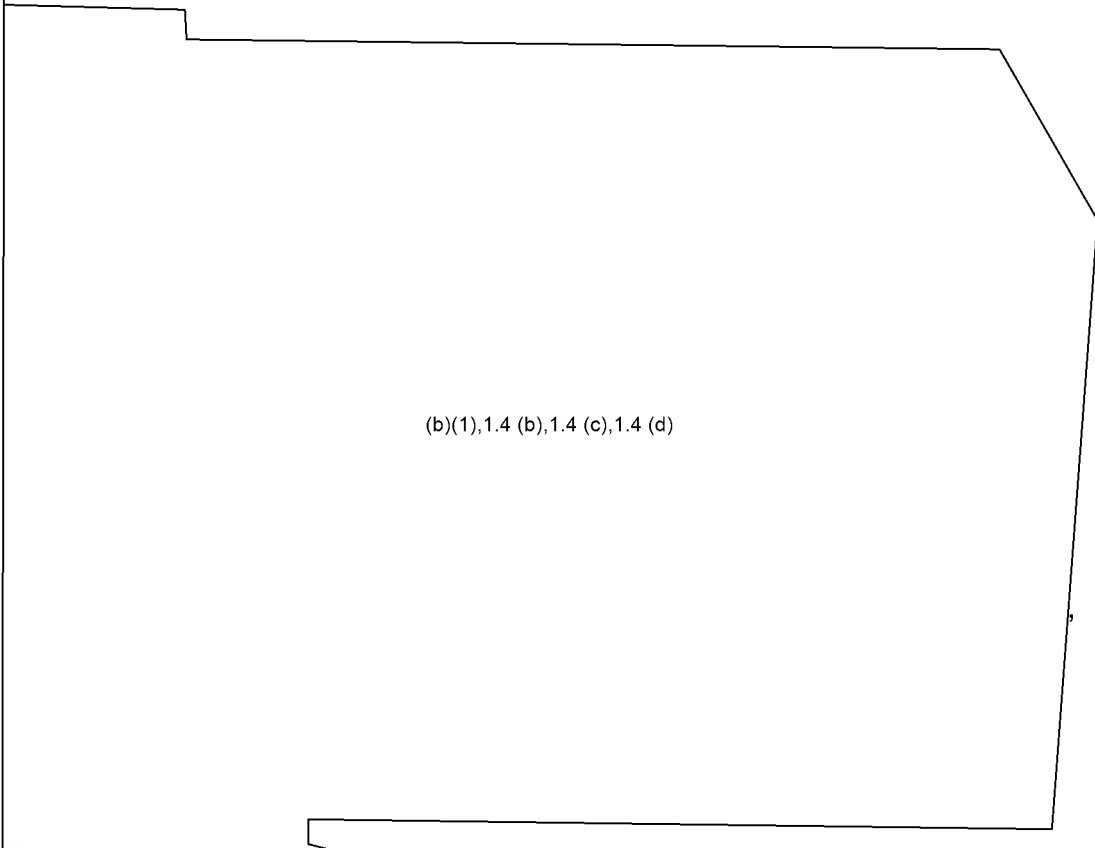
DOI: (U) 20020308.

REQS: (U) (b)(3):10 USC 424

SUMMARY: (U) THE UNITAS EXERCISE 43-02 STARTED WITH A MINIMAL NOTICE VISIT BY VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT ((CHAVEZ)) TO THE USS YORKTOWN AND A SUBSEQUENT CHAVEZ MEETING WITH COMMANDER, U.S. NAVAL FORCES SOUTH.

TEXT: 1. (c) (b)(1),(b)(3):10 USC 424,1.4 (c)

2. (c) THE BACKGROUND FOR VENEZUELAN PARTICIPATION IN



3. ~~(C)~~ UNITAS 43-02 IS THE CARIBBEAN PHASE OF UNITAS 20020000 THAT BEGAN ON 20020225 AND WILL LAST THROUGH 20020310. SHIPS BEGAN OPERATIONS IN CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA, PROCEEDED TO CURACAO, NETHER-ANTILLES (NA), THEN TO PUERTO RICO (PR), HAVING ARRIVED THERE ON 20020308. THE BOL JOINED THE TASK FORCE AT SEA EARLY ON 20020301.

4. ~~(C)~~ PRESIDENT CHAVEZ'S VISIT - PREPARATION

- SHIPS FROM THE U.S., COLOMBIA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, MEXICO AND VENEZUELA PARTICIPATING IN UNITAS 43-02 ARRIVED IN PORT CURACAO NA ON 20020301. USS YORKTOWN BERTHED AT THE SAME PIER AS BOL.

- ON 20020301 AT 1400 LOCAL (L), THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE BOL, VENEZUELAN CAPTAIN ISSAC ((JORDAN)) ESCOBAR, ARRIVED UNANNOUNCED ON YORKTOWN'S QUARTERDECK WITH GENERAL ((MENDEZ)), THE VENEZUELAN CONSUL TO CURACAO. THE VENEZUELANAS ASKED TO SPEAK WITH THE U.S. TASK GROUP COMMANDER TO INFORM HIM THAT VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT CHAVEZ WOULD ARRIVE ON 20020302 AND HOST A UNITAS RECEPTION ONBOARD THE BOL. FURTHER, THEY WISHED TO INVITE THE ADMIRAL SERVING AS THE U.S. TASK FORCE COMMANDER FOR UNITAS

TO THE BOL'S RECEPTION.

- THE VENEZUELAN'S ALSO INDICATED THEY WOULD OFFER RECEPTION INVITATIONS TO ALL OF THE OTHER PARTICIPATING UNITAS' UNIT COMMANDERS. ALTHOUGH GEN MENDEZ, IN CIVILIAN ATTIRE, WAS THE SENIOR OF THE TWO VENEZUELAN'S, CAPT JORDAN WAS THE ONE WHO TENDERED THE INVITATION, "COMMANDING OFFICER TO COMMANDING OFFICER," AND PROVIDED THE DETAILS FOR THE VISIT.

- THE RECEPTION WAS PLANNED FOR NOON 20020302. CAPT JORDAN THEN INFORMED COMDESRON SIX THAT PRESIDENT CHAVEZ DESIRED, FOLLOWING THE RECEPTION, TO RECIPROCATE WITH A VISIT TO USS YORKTOWN (ACCORDING TO THE U.S. CONSUL IN CURACAO, THE VENEZUELAN CONSUL HAD PREVIOUSLY INQUIRED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF PRESIDENT CHAVEZ RECEIVING AN INVITATION TO VISIT THE U.S. FLAGSHIP DURING THE CURACAO PORT VISIT.)

- WHEN ASKED IF THERE WAS ANY PARTICULAR PART OF THE SHIP THAT PRESIDENT CHAVEZ WANTED TO SEE, GEN MENDEZ OFFERED THAT PRESIDENT CHAVEZ MAKES DECISIONS "ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT," AND THAT IT COULD NOT BE PREDICTED WHAT PRESIDENT ((CHAVEZ)) MIGHT REQUEST TO SEE OR DO ON THE SHIP.

-- WHEN HE VISITS ARMY UNITS IN VENEZUELA, GEN MENDEZ SAID, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ TYPICALLY PREFERS HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES. WHEN VISITING ARMOR UNITS, FOR EXAMPLE, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ TYPICALLY REQUESTS TO ENTER OR EVEN DRIVE TANKS. GEN MENDEZ ADDED, EVIDENTLY JOKING, THAT PRESIDENT CHAVEZ WOULD LIKELY ASK TO DRIVE THE SHIP WHEN HE VISITED USS YORKTOWN.

- SATISFIED THAT AN INVITATION FOR CHAVEZ HAD BEEN OFFERED, CAPT JORDAN REQUESTED THAT A TOTAL OF SIX VENEZUELAN SHIP RIDERS BE ACCOMMODATED ONBOARD THE U.S., COLOMBIAN, MEXICAN AND DOMINICAN SHIPS PARTICIPATING IN UNITAS.

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

VENEZUELAN LCDR (CC) EDGAR ANTONIO ((SANCHEZ)) ANGEL ARRIVED AT YORKTOWN'S QUARTERDECK AND WAS ESCORTED TO MEET WITH THE SHIP'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND DISCUSS PROTOCOL FOR PRESIDENT CHAVEZ'S VISIT. LCDR SANCHEZ, MILITARY AIDE TO PRESIDENT CHAVEZ, ASSURED THE YORKTOWN'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER THAT NO ARMED SECURITY PERSONNEL WOULD ACCOMPANY THE PRESIDENT ON THE SHIP. LCDR SANCHEZ SAID THERE WOULD BE NO RESTRICTIONS AS TO WHO HAD

ACCESS TO PRESIDENT CHAVEZ ON THE SHIP, AND NOTED THAT PRESIDENT CHAVEZ WOULD LIKELY ATTEMPT TO TALK TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE CREW HE ENCOUNTERED.

-- (b)(1),1.4 (c)

- LCDR SANCHEZ SAID THE PRESIDENT WOULD ARRIVE WITH HIS WIFE AND TWO-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER.

-- (b)(1),1.4 (c)

PRESIDENT CHAVEZ IS ON A DIET, SANCHEZ EMPHASIZED, AND PREFERS NUTRASWEET AND DECAFFEINATED COFFEE. FOR SNACKS PRESIDENT CHAVEZ PREFERS HEALTHY FOOD SUCH AS FRESH FRUIT. PRESIDENT CHAVEZ WOULD SPEAK IN SPANISH THROUGH HIS OWN INTERPRETER, NOTING THAT PRESIDENT CHAVEZ SPEAKS VERY LITTLE ENGLISH. LCDR SANCHEZ INDICATED HE EXPECTED 30 MEMBERS OF THE VENEZUELAN MEDIA TO ACCOMPANY THE PRESIDENT AND COVER THE SHIP VISIT FROM THE PIER. HE DID NOT ASK THE USS YORKTOWN TO ALLOW THE VENEZUELAN MEDIA TO EMBARK, BUT HE NOTED OFFICIAL VENEZUELAN PUBLIC AFFAIRS PERSONNEL, INCLUDING PHOTOGRAPHERS, WOULD ACCOMPANY PRESIDENT CHAVEZ. SANCHEZ ASKED THAT THE U.S. TF COMMANDER BE MADE AVAILABLE TO SPEAK WITH VENEZUELAN PUBLIC AFFAIRS PERSONNEL.

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

5. ~~(C)~~ THE PRESIDENT ARRIVES AT THE BOL.

- ON 20020302, THE PRESIDENTIAL RECEPTION ONBOARD BOL WAS DELAYED UNTIL 1230(L). COMUSNAVSO (CTF 138), COMDESRON SIX, AND THE COMMANDING OFFICERS OF PARTICIPATING SHIPS FROM U.S., COLOMBIA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, AND MEXICO ARRIVED AT 1230 AND WAITED ON THE FLIGHT DECK OVER AN HOUR BEFORE PRESIDENT CHAVEZ ARRIVED IN A MOTORCADE. NEARLY ANOTHER HOUR PASSED AS PRESIDENT CHAVEZ, DRESSED CASUALLY IN A WIND BREAKER, REMAINED INSIDE THE SHIP AS GUESTS WAITED OUTSIDE ON THE FLIGHT DECK. ABOUT 40 INDIVIDUALS FROM THE VENEZUELAN MEDIA, INCLUDING PRINT AND BROADCAST

JOURNALISTS, HAD EMBARKED BOL AND WERE WAITING ON THE SHIP'S FLIGHT DECK. WHILE THEY WAITED SIX VENEZUELAN F-16S (FLYING AT LOW ALTITUDE IN CLOSE THREE-PLANE FORMATIONS) OVERFLEW BOL WITHOUT WARNING. NO WEAPONS WERE NOTED UNDER THE WINGS.

--

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

- PRESIDENT CHAVEZ FINALLY APPEARED ON THE FLIGHT DECK ABOUT 1415 (L).

--

(b)(1),(b)(3):10 USC 424,1.4 (c)

- UPON ARRIVAL, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZED AND PERSONALLY GREETED COMNAVSOUTH. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO PERSONALLY GREET THE ASSEMBLED COMMANDING OFFICERS, BEGINNING WITH THE U.S. OFFICERS.

-CHAVEZ THEN GAVE AN APPROXIMATELY THIRTY MINUTE SPEECH. HE BEGAN BY EMPHASIZING THAT VENEZUELA IS A CARIBBEAN NATION, AND ANNOUNCED THAT BY PARTICIPATING IN UNITAS THIS YEAR VENEZUELA WAS "RETURNING TO THE CARIBBEAN." HE SUGGESTED THAT VENEZUELA WOULD PARTICIPATE AGAIN IN UNITAS IN 200300, AND SPECIFICALLY CITED THE CARIBBEAN, ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC PHASES OF THE EXERCISE.

--

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

CHAVEZ EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR UNITAS AS A WAY FOR COUNTRIES IN THE REGION TO CONFRONT COMMON CHALLENGES AND PROMOTE STABILITY. THE KEY TO STABILITY, HE CONTINUED, IS FIGHTING POVERTY. THIS PROVIDED A TRANSITION FOR HIM TO DEVOTE THE REMAINDER OF HIS SPEECH TO ARTICULATING HIS ECONOMIC IDEOLOGY AND "BOLIVARIAN" IDEALS, AND TO ARGUE THAT MILITARY FORCES SHOULD PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN FIGHTING POVERTY. HE SAID THE REASON THE VENEZUELAN NAVY HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN UNITAS FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS WAS BECAUSE IT WAS FOCUSED ON INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. IN CLOSING, CHAVEZ REEMPHASIZED SUPPORT FOR VENEZUELA'S PARTICIPATION IN UNITAS AND ITS "RETURN" TO THE CARIBBEAN. THEN, CITING DRUG TRAFFICKING, CRIME AND TERRORISM SPECIFICALLY, HE CLAIMED THAT VENEZUELA INTENDED TO BE A "PARTNER" WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AGAINST COMMON THREATS IN

THE REGION. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PRESIDENT CHAVEZ'S REMARKS, THE U.S. DELEGATION DEPARTED BOL.

6. ~~(E)~~ PRESIDENT CHAVEZ ARRIVES AT THE USS YORKTOWN.

- PRESIDENT CHAVEZ AND HIS ENTOURAGE ARRIVED AT YORKTOWN'S BROW (PLANK) LESS THAN 15 MINUTES AFTER THE RECEPTION ON THE BOL. IN A LATE CHANGE, VENEZUELAN DEFENSE MINISTER JOSE VINCENTE ((RANGEL)) DID NOT ATTEND BUT GEN MENDEZ DID. ACCORDING TO A ROSTER PROVIDED BY THE VENEZUELAN, THE REST OF THE ENTOURAGE INCLUDED (SPANISH TITLES PROVIDED IN PARENTHESES) -

- LUIS ALFONSO ((DAVILA)) (MINISTRO DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES - FOREIGN MINISTER)

- GENERAL LUCAS ((RINCON)) ROMERO (INSPECTOR GENERAL DE LA FUERZAS ARMADAS DE VENEZUELA - IG FOR THE VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES)

- VA (VADM) JORGE ((SIERRALTA)) ZAVARSE (COMANDANTE GENERAL DE LA ARMADA - VENEZUELAN CNO)

- CC (LCDR) EDGAR ((SANCHEZ)) ANGEL (EDECAN) (NOTE: EDECAN IS FROM THE FRENCH AIDE-DE-CAMP) COORDINADOR - AIDE TO THE PRESIDENT)

- MARIA JOSEFINA ((QUIJADA)) (TRADUCTORAL OFICIAL - OFFICIAL TRANSLATOR)

- GB(EJ) (ARMY BG) JOSE AQUILES ((VITERI)) VIETRY (JEFE DE LA CASA MILITAR - SENIOR MILITARY AIDE)

- JESUS ((SUAREZ)) CHOURIO (ASISTENTE DEL SENOR PRESIDENTE - AIDE TO THE PRESIDENT)

- FRANCISCO ((AMELIACH)) (DIPUTADO ASAMBLEA NACIONAL - MEMBER OF THE VENEZUELAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES)

- TAREK WILLIAM ((SAAB)) (DISPUTADO ASAMBLEA NACIONAL - MEMBER OF THE VENEZUELAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES)

- CA (RADM) ORLANDO ((MANIGLIA)) (COMANDANTE DE LA ESCUADRA - FLEET COMMANDER)

- JESUS ((MONTILLA)) (GOVERNADOR DEL ESTADO FALCON - GOVERNOR OF FALCON STATE)

- FRANKLIN ((DIAZ)) GONZALEZ (ASISTENTE DEL SENOR PRESIDENTE - AIDE TO THE PRESIDENT)

- STTE(EJ) (ARMY CWO) JOSE ((VIVANCO)) (AYUDANTE DEL SENOR PRESIDENTE - AIDE TO THE PRESIDENT)

- CNEL (EJ) (ARMY COL) ALCIDES ((RONDON)) (DIRECTOR DE RELACIONES PRESIDENCIALES - DIRECTOR OF PRESIDENTIAL RELATIONS)

- GUARDIA MARINA (MIDN) PEDRO ((TORRES)) (ESTUDIANTE DE LA

ESCUELA NAVAL DE VENEZUELA - VENEZUELAN NAVAL ACADEMY STUDENT)

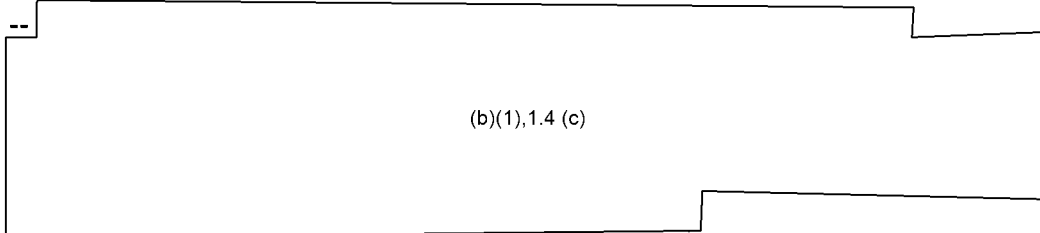
- GUARDIA MARINA (MIDN) JOSE ((SILVA)) (ESTUDIANTE DE LA ESCUELA NAVAL DE VENEZUELA - VENEZUELAN NAVAL ACADEMY STUDENT)

- CNEL (EJ) (ARMY COL) EDUARDO ((CENTENO)) MENA (SECRETARIO PRIVADO DEL SENOR PRESIDENTE - PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT)

- CN (CAPT) ROBERT ((VAN DAM)) (DUTCH NAVAL ATTACHE TO VENEZUELA).

- PRESIDENT CHAVEZ AND HIS ENTOURAGE WERE GREETED IN YORKTOWN'S FLAG/COMMODORE CABIN AND THEN PROVIDED A TEN-MINUTE TOUR OF THE SHIP, INCLUDING THE FLIGHT DECK WITH HELICOPTER, THE COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER, AND THE BRIDGE.

-THE GROUP THEN ASSEMBLED IN THE WARDROOM. WHILE HIS ENTOURAGE TALKED AMONG THEMSELVES AND MINGLED WITH SOME MEMBERS OF YORKTOWN'S WARDROOM, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ SPOKE DIRECTLY TO COMNAVSOUTH FOR NEARLY FORTY MINUTES, ALMOST WITHOUT PAUSE.

--


(b)(1), 1.4 (c)

7. (C) CHAVEZ'S HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

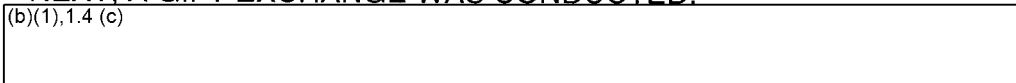
- PRESIDENT CHAVEZ RECOUNTED IN DETAIL HIS YEARS AS A JUNIOR OFFICER IN THE ARMY AND AS HE SPOKE HE SKETCHED A MAP OF VENEZUELA ON A NOTEPAD TO ILLUSTRATE PLACES WHERE HE WAS ASSIGNED. HE NOTED THAT AS AN ARMY CAPTAIN HE WAS ASSIGNED TO INSTRUCTOR DUTY, DURING WHICH TIME HE SAID HE DEVELOPED A VERY STRONG RAPPORT WITH THE JUNIOR OFFICERS WHO WERE HIS STUDENTS. WRITING AND CIRCLING THE YEAR "1989" ON HIS NOTEPAD, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ SAID THAT THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT THAT YEAR ORDERED THE ARMY TO CRACK DOWN ON A POPULAR UPRISING RESULTING FROM WIDESPREAD POVERTY. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT AT THE TIME REPRESENTED ONLY A SMALL, RICH SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION AND IMPLIED THAT IT WAS NOT A TRUE DEMOCRACY BECAUSE "IT DID NOT PAY ATTENTION TO THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE." THE PRESIDENT SAID VENEZUELA'S OIL RESERVES SHOULD HAVE MADE THE COUNTRY A "CUP OF GOLD," BUT THAT WEALTH WAS ENJOYED

ONLY BY A SELECT FEW. THIS ENVIRONMENT, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ SAID, ENERGIZED THE POPULAR UPRISING THAT THE GOVERNMENT ORDERED THE ARMY TO CRUSH. PRESIDENT CHAVEZ SAID HE WITNESSED THE KILLING OF CHILDREN IN THE STREET, AND THAT HE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES WERE DETERMINED NOT TO ALLOW THE ARMY TO TURN AGAINST THE POPULATION AGAIN. POINTING EMPHATICALLY AT THE "1989" ON HIS NOTEPAD, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ INDICATED IT WAS THAT YEAR THAT THE JUNIOR OFFICERS IN THE ARMY FIRST ADVOCATED "DOING SOMETHING" ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT. MAKING THE GESTURE OF A SLIT THROAT, HE SAID MANY OFFICERS ADVOCATED EXTREME MEASURES. HOWEVER, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ SUGGESTED, HE AS MENTOR OF THE YOUNG OFFICERS AND WAS ABLE TO INTERVENE TO PREVENT BLOODSHED. CHAVEZ NOTED THAT IN ANY CASE THE MOTIVATION OF THE PLOTTERS WAS "PRO-DEMOCRATIC."

- HE THEN WROTE "1992" ON HIS NOTEPAD AND EXPLAINED THAT BY THAT YEAR, THE SITUATION FORCED THE "EFFORTS" THAT ULTIMATELY FAILED, AND HE SAID HE WENT TO JAIL. "WE WERE IN JAIL FOR TWO YEARS," HE SAID, "AND THEN THEY LET US GO, PUT US OUT ON THE STREET, AND WE STARTED A POLITICAL PARTY." CHAVEZ REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE WAS NOT A POLITICIAN, THAT HE WAS A SOLDIER SERVING ONLY "TEMPORARILY" AS PRESIDENT. HE SAID HIS ONLY AMBITION AS A JUNIOR OFFICER HAD BEEN TO RISE THROUGH THE MILITARY RANKS AND END UP PERHAPS A GENERAL, "WITH GREY HAIR, LIKE YOU." HE THEN BEGAN TO ARGUE THAT BECAUSE HE WAS A SOLDIER BY NATURE, NOT A POLITICIAN OR DIPLOMAT, HE LACKED THE DIPLOMATIC SKILLS THAT SOMEONE WHO WAS RAISED AND EDUCATED TO BE A POLITICIAN MIGHT POSSESS. HE CLAIMED THAT AS A RESULT, SOME THINGS HE HAS SAID HAVE HAD UNINTENDED RESULTS. "I SAY WHATEVER COMES INTO MY HEAD," HE SAID. "IT IS ONE OF MY FAULTS." THEN, HE OFFERED REGRETS WITHOUT CLARIFYING WHAT HE MIGHT BE APOLOGIZING FOR. FINALLY, SPEAKING IN HALTING ENGLISH FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE CONVERSATION, HE SAID HE HOPED U.S.-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS WOULD IMPROVE. ALL THIS WAS SAID DIRECTLY TO COMUSNAVSO THROUGH A TRANSLATOR, WITH NO MORE THAN THREE OTHER U.S. OFFICERS WITHIN EARSHOT. NO VENEZUELAN DIGNITARIES WERE PRESENT.

- NEXT, A GIFT EXCHANGE WAS CONDUCTED.

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

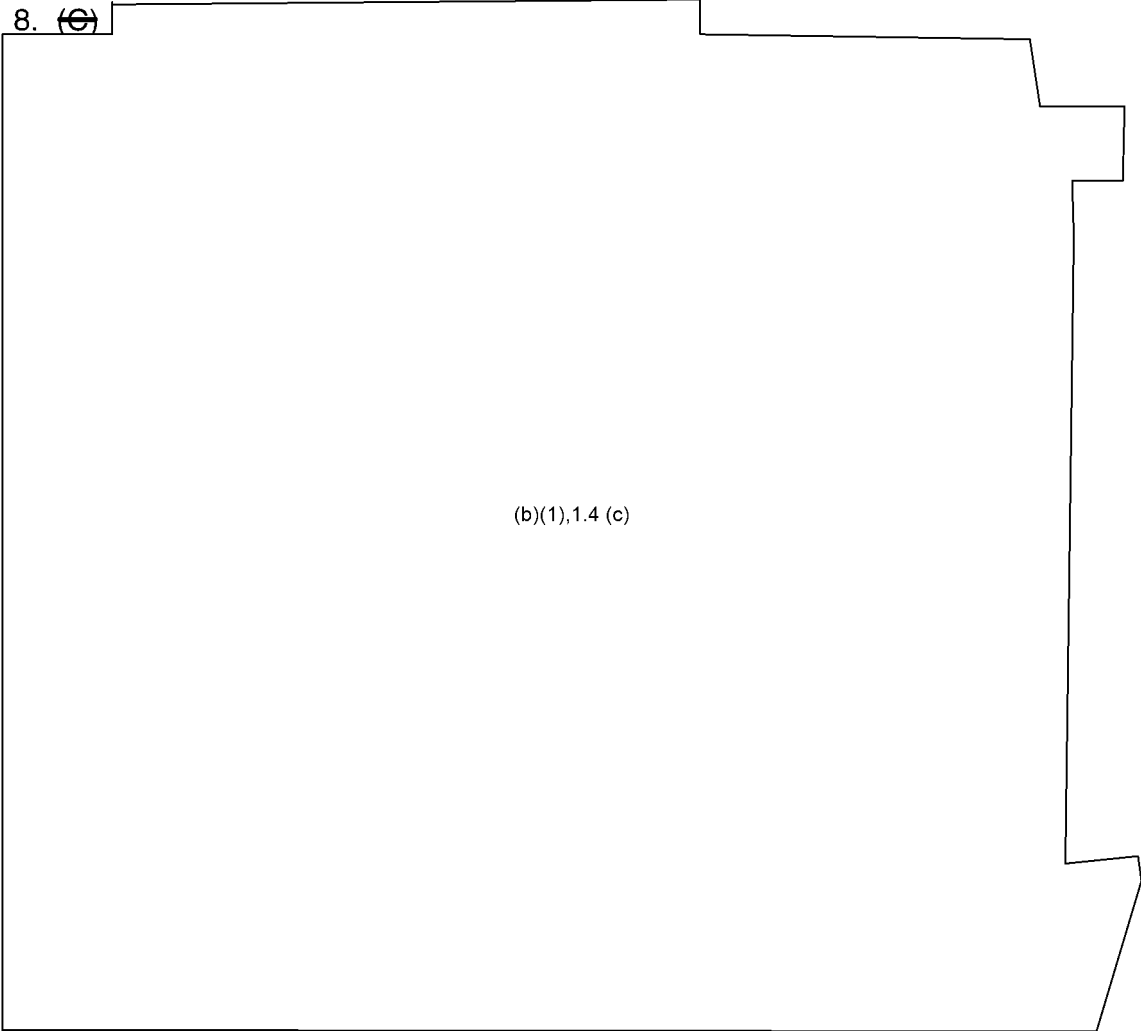


(b)(1),1.4 (c)

PRESIDENT CHAVEZ DID NOT FOLLOW THE PROTOCOL AND INTERRUPTED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE U.S. GIFT PRESENTATION TO PRESENT GIFTS OF HIS OWN, CHIEFLY BIOGRAPHIES AND STATUES OF SIMON BOLIVAR. HE ALSO AUTOGRAPHED AND PRESENTED HIS ANNOTATED SKETCH OF VENEZUELA, FROM HIS CONVERSATION WITH COMUSNAVSO, AS A GIFT FOR THE CO OF YORKTOWN.

- PRESIDENT CHAVEZ SIGNED THE SCRAP OF PAPER, "AS A REMINDER OF THIS UNFORGETTABLE DAY." PRESENTED WITH VARIOUS COMMAND COINS, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ PULLED OUT HIS WALLET AND SHOWED OFF A U.S. ONE DOLLAR BILL HE SAID HE KEEPS "FOR GOOD LUCK." AS HE LEFT THE WARDROOM TO DISEMBARK, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ'S FINAL WORDS WERE "I WOULD STAY LONGER BUT I HAVE TO MEET WITH RUSSIANS NOW, TO DISCUSS SOME OIL DEALS."

8. (S)



(b)(1),1.4 (c)

