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262132Z FEB 92

FROM

FM [redacted (b)(3):10 USC 424]

TO

TO RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC

CONTROLS

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

BODY

COUNTRY: (U) **VENEZUELA** (VE).

SUBJ: [redacted (b)(3):10 USC 424] DIPLOMATS INTERVIEW LEADERS OF
COUP ATTEMPT (U)

WARNING: (U) THIS IS AN INFO REPORT, NOT FINALLY
EVALUATED INTEL. REPORT CLASSIFIED ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
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- DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DOI: (U) 920222.

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SOURCE: A. (U) "EL UNIVERSAL", CONSERVATIVE DAILY
NEWSPAPER, CIRCULATION 140,000, (U), CARACAS, **VENEZUELA**,
920222, IN SPANISH. GENERALLY RELIABLE. B. (U) [redacted (b)(3):10 USC 424]
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SUMMARY: (U) IN ORDER TO GET THE "REAL" STORY ABOUT THE
4 FEB **COUP** ATTEMPT, THREE VE CONGRESSMEN INTERVIEWED THE
FIVE LTC'S THAT HEADED THE OPERATION. THEY DISCUSSED
THEIR IDEOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES AMONG OTHER SUBJECTS.
TEXT: 1. (U) THREE CONGRESSMEN FROM LEFTIST POLITICAL
PARTIES; PEDRO ((ESCARRA)) MARTINEZ, A CONGRESSMAN FROM
MOVIMIENTO DE INTEGRIDAD NACIONAL (MIN) IN CARABOBO STATE;
ORLANDO ((FERNANDEZ)), FROM MOVIMIENTO AL SOCIALISMO (MAS)
IN LARA STATE AND PABLO ((MEDINA)), FROM LA CAUSA RADICAL
(CAUSA R) IN CARACAS, WENT TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF
DIRECCION DE INTELIGENCIA MILITAR (DIM) TO INTERVIEW THE
FIVE LIEUTENANT COLONELS WHO HEADED THE ABORTIVE **COUP**
ATTEMPT ON 4 FEB 92. THE LTC'S, HUGO ((**CHAVEZ**)) FRIAS,

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JESUS MIGUEL ((ORTIZ)) CONTRERAS, JOEL CANDELARIO ((ACOSTA)) CHIRINOS, FRANCISCO JAVIER ((ARIAS)) CARDENAS AND JESUS ((URDANETA)) HERNANDEZ SPOKE CANDIDLY ABOUT THEIR IDEOLOGY AS A GROUP, THEIR REASONS FOR ATTEMPTING A **COUP**, THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH RETIRED MG CARLOS ((PENALOZA)) ZAMBRANO, WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE CONGRESS'S RESPONSE TO BE AND THEIR TREATMENT SO FAR.

2. (U) THE COLONELS EXPRESSED THEIR PRIDE FOR WHAT THEY WERE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH (ON 4 FEB) AND STATED THAT THE MAIN REASON THEY DID IT WAS BECAUSE THEY WERE TIRED OF BEING A PARTY TO CORRUPTION. THE COLONELS DO NOT FEEL THAT THEY HAVE VIOLATED THE CONSTITUTION. THEY ALSO STATED THAT THEY NEVER HAD ANY INTENTION OF KILLING THE PRESIDENT, IF THAT HAD BEEN THE CASE IT COULD HAVE EASILY BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. THIS IS BECAUSE THEY HAD SUPPORTERS WITHIN THE CASA MILITAR (b)(3):10 USC 424 -PRESIDENTIAL GUARDFORCE) WHO WERE WITHIN METERS OF THE PRESIDENT DURING THE **COUP** AND COULD HAVE KILLED HIM WITH NO PROBLEM. THEIR INTENTION WAS TO ARREST **CARLOS ANDRES ((PEREZ))** (CAP) AND PUT HIM ON PUBLIC TRIAL.

3. (U) MG PENALOZA WAS ACCUSED BY THE LTC'S OF BEING AN ELITIST, WHO TRIED TO RUIN THE CAREERS OF THE CONSPIRATORS. PENALOZA, WHEN HE COMMANDED THE ARMY, WAS POMPOUS AND ALWAYS REJECTED THE IDEA OF A POPULAR ARMY, SAYING IT WAS ONE OF CASTES.

4. (U) THEY STATED THAT OFFICERS WITH SUCH IMPECCABLE SERVICE RECORDS AS THEY HAVE COULD NOT HAVE CHANGED OVERNIGHT. ACCORDING TO THE LTC'S IT IS IMPOSSIBLE THAT THEY SHOULD BE TREATED AS CRIMINALS. IN ORDER TO BACK UP HIS ASSERTION THAT HE WAS A GOOD AND LOYAL OFFICER, **CHAVEZ** STATED THAT HE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WHEN THE TANKS OF THE AYALA BATTALION ROLLED ON TO THE STREETS OF CARACAS IN 1988, HE WAS AT A SOFTBALL GAME. HE SAID, I WAS ONE OF THE SURPRISED.

5. (U) LTC ARIAS ASKED THE CONGRESSMEN TO INVESTIGATE WHY THE MISSILES FOR THE BATTALION IN ZULIA STATE ARE NOT USABLE. HE SAID THAT THE JOKE THERE (IN ZULIA) WAS THAT THE **COUP** FAILED BECAUSE THEY USED MARGOLD ARMAMENTS (b)(3):10 USC 424 (b)(3):10 USC 424 -MARGOLD IS A VE CIVILIAN ARMS COMPANY THAT IS BEING INVESTIGATED FOR DEFRAUDING THE VE MILITARY).

6. (U) THE LTC'S SPOKE OF THE REASONS THEY DECIDED TO ATTEMPT A **COUP**. FOR THEM PRIMARILY IT WAS THE CORRUPTION

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THAT THEY SAW ALL AROUND AND THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE. HOWEVER, THE IMPETUS WAS CAP'S DECLARATIONS ABOUT THE GULF OF **VENEZUELA**. THEY STATED THAT THEIR GOAL WAS NOT A MILITARY DICTATORSHIP, THAT THEY ARE SONS OF DEMOCRACY. ARIAS SAID THAT HE WAS PROUD OF WHAT THEY DID AND IT DOES NOT MATTER THAT IT WILL COST HIM 30 YEARS OF HIS LIFE.

7. (U) **CHAVEZ** AND THE OTHERS DO NOT WANT CAP INVOLVED IN THEIR TRIALS; AS HIS OPINION OF THEM IS ALREADY WELL KNOWN, HE CALLED THEM BANDITS. WHEREAS, MINISTER OF DEFENSE MG FERNANDO ((OCHOA)) ANTICH IS MORE OPEN-MINDED, SINCE, AS **CHAVEZ** STATED, ONCE HE (**CHAVEZ**) HAD SURRENDERED AND IT WAS OBVIOUS THE **COUP** HAD FAILED, MG OCHOA SAT DOWN AND HAD DINNER WITH HIM, ON THE NIGHT OF 4 FEB.

8. (U) THE COMANDANTES, AS THEY ARE CALLED, WERE ALL IN UNIFORM WHEN THE CONGRESSMEN SAW THEM AND HAD NO REAL COMPLAINTS ABOUT THEIR TREATMENT EXCEPT THAT THEY HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO SEE A LAWYER. THE COLONELS WERE ALSO DISTURBED OVER THEITICAL PARTIES ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO REMOVE THEMSELVES FROM THIS ISSUE. WHEREAS, THE LEFT WANTS TO BE PERCEIVED AS THE GROUPS WHO WANT TO CHANGE THE STATUS QUO.

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