DTG
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FROM
(b)(3):10 USC 424
TO
TO RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
CONTROLS
CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02
(b)(3):10 USC 424

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

BODY
COUNTRY: (U) VENEZUELA (VE).
SUBJ: (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.

- DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DOF: (U) 920222.

SOURCE: A. (U) "EL UNIVERSAL", CONSERVATIVE DAILY NEWSPAPER, CIRCULATION 140,000, (U), CARACAS, VENEZUELA, 920222, IN SPANISH. GENERALLY RELIABLE. B. (b)(3):10 USC 424

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 INTEIGENCIA MILITAR (DIM) TO INTERVIEW THE FIVE LIEUTENANT COLONELS WHO HEADED THE ABORTIVE COUP ATTEMPT ON 4 FEB 92. THE LTC'S, HUGO (CHAVEZ) FRIAS,
JESUS MIGUEL (ORTIZ) CONTRERAS, JOEL CANDELARIO
(ACOSTA) CHIRINOS, FRANCISCO JAVIER (ARIA) 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-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 COMMAND 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
(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
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.

(b)(1)(4) (c)