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SERIAL:

(b)(3):10 USC 424

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

**BODY**

COUNTRY: (U) NICARAGUA (NU); VENEZUELA (VE).

IPSP:

SUBJ:

NICARAGUAN PRESS REACTION TO US  
HANDLING OF VENEZUELAN COUP/COUNTER-COUP PORTRAYS US  
INVOLVEMENT AS DIPLOMATIC FAILURE (U)

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

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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SOURCE: A. (U) DAILY NEWSPAPER, "EL NUEVO DIARIO", MANAGUA, NICARAGUA, 20010417 (U), SPANISH. THE PAPER IS KNOWN FOR ITS LEFTIST VIEWS AND IS CONSIDERED SENSATIONALISTIC IN BOTH EDITORIALS AND IN REPORTING. WIDELY READ AND CONSIDERED INFLUENTIAL.

SUMMARY: (U) MEDIA PORTRAY US INVOLVEMENT IN EVENTS SURROUNDING VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT CHAVEZ COUP AND COUNTER-COUP - US POSITION AND HANDLING OF EVENTS SEEN AS DIPLOMATIC FAILURE.

TEXT: 1. (U) SOURCE A REPORTS THAT ACCORDING TO VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR IN NICARAGUA, MIGUEL ((GOMEZ)) NUNEZ, THAT CARACAS IS TEACHING WASHINGTON THE ABC'S OF DEMOCRACY. ACCORDING TO GOMEZ THE UNITED STATES CANNOT BEHAVE AS IF DEMOCRACY IS A GOOD THING WHEN IT IS TO THEIR (USG) ADVANTAGE AND THAT DEMOCRACY IS A BAD THING WHEN IT IS TO THEIR DISADVANTAGE. GOMEZ REMARKED THAT DEMOCRACY MUST BE A SINGULAR AND INDIVISIBLE CONSTRUCT. VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR GOMEZ WHO CLAIMS TO BE OVERSHADOWED BY EVERY PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENT MADE BY THE U.S. AMBASSADOR NOW HAS THE MEDIA LIMELIGHT THRUST ON HIM. ACCORDING TO AMBASSADOR GOMEZ, THE RETURN TO POWER OF HUGO CHAVEZ DEMONSTRATES THE GREAT POLITICAL FAILURE OF THE MIGHTY UNITED STATES THAT SEEKS TO BE THE CENSOR OF WORLD POLITICS; GOMEZ ASSERTS THE UNITED STATES MADE A SERIOUS ERROR IN THE WAY IT OFFICIALLY SPOKE OUT ABOUT THE COUP, EXPRESSING DELIGHT OVER PRESIDENT CHAVEZ'S OUSTER AND LATER BY NOT ACKNOWLEDGING THIS DIPLOMATIC BLUNDER.

2. (U) SOURCE A INDICATED THAT RECENTLY THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF ACTIVITY IN THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY. DURING THE LAST FEW DAYS SOME WELL KNOWN POLITICAL PERSONALITIES HAVE BEEN SHOWING UP, AMONG THEM WAS AGUSTIN ((JARQUIN)) AND OTHERS MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS. (FIELD COMMENT. JARQUIN IS SANDINISTA PARTY LEADER DANIEL ((ORTEGA'S)) STAND-IN IN THE NICARAGUAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HOWEVER, JARQUIN IS A MEMBER OF THE CONVERGENCIA, A GROUP ALLIED WITH THE FSLN, BUT NOT A MEMBER OF THE FSLN. HE IS BELIEVED TO HAVE LITTLE INFLUENCE WITHIN THE FSLN.) ACCORDING TO AMBASSADOR GOMEZ, THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE COUP HAVE DEMONSTRATED WHO VENEZUELA'S REAL FRIENDS ARE AND WHO ARE THE ONES THAT ARE UNTRUSTWORTHY AND CAN'T BE COUNTED. AMBASSADOR GOMEZ

POINTED OUT, THAT THE STANCE ADOPTED BY THE UNITED STATES DURING THE THWARTED COUP WILL GET THEM ISOLATED FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY; THIS WAS A DEFEAT FOR U.S. POLICY AND FOR U.S. DIPLOMACY, INDICATING THAT THE ATTITUDE ADOPTED BY THE UNITED STATES REQUIRES REFLECTION. THE VENEZUELAN CHIEF OF MISSION COMMENTED THAT THE ENTIRE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY GAVE ITS SUPPORT TO VENEZUELA, AND THAT THE CRITICISMS EXPRESSED BY THE UNITED STATES HAVE ISOLATED IT FROM THE REST OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. AMBASSADOR GOMEZ ASSURED THAT VENEZUELA MAINTAINS A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES AND THAT VENEZUELA WANTS IT TO GET BETTER EACH DAY; CITING THAT VENEZUELA HAS AN EXCELLENT TRADE EXCHANGE WITH THE U.S., HE NOTED THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS VENEZUELA'S PRINCIPAL CRUDE BUYER AND TRADE PARTNER, HOWEVER, HE REBUKED THE UNITED STATES STATING THAT THE U.S. WILL HAVE TO RECONSIDER ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS VENEZUELA AND IN THE PROCESS REFLECT ON THE FACT THAT VENEZUELA EXPORTS 1.5 MILLION BARRELS OF PETROLEUM A DAY TO THE AMERICAN UNION.

3. (U) AMBASSADOR GOMEZ REMARKED THAT THE UNITED STATES CANNOT ADVOCATE THAT DEMOCRACIES ARE GOOD WHEN THEY LIKE THEM, AND THAT THEY ARE EVIL WHEN IT IS NOT CONVENIENT FOR THEM. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE KIND OF DEMOCRACY AND THAT A SINGLE GOVERNMENT THAT AIMS TO ESTABLISH A UNI-POLAR SYSTEM IN THE WORLD SHOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO GOVERN OTHER DEMOCRACIES. AMBASSADOR GOMEZ SAID THEY (USG) HAVE TO BE MORE OBJECTIVE, STRAIGHTFORWARD AND EVEN-MINDED. GOMEZ CRITICIZED WITHOUT NAMING ANYONE SPECIFICALLY, BUT ALLUDED THAT ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR LATIN AMERICAN AFFAIRS, OTTO REICH AND HIS ADVISORS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR GIVING BAD ADVISE TO PRESIDENT BUSH. AMBASSADOR GOMEZ STRESSED THAT PRESIDENT BUSH NEEDS TO REXAMINE HIS POSITION CONCERNING VENEZUELA AND THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND HIS ADVISORS WHO IN THIS CASE FAILED TO GIVE PRESIDENT BUSH THE RIGHT ADVISE ALSO NEED TO DO SOME REFLECTION.

4. (U) ACCORDING TO SOURCE A, AMBASSADOR GOMEZ RETORTED THAT THE UNITED STATES CLAIMS THAT VOTES ALONE ARE NOT ENOUGH FOR DEMOCRACY; GOMEZ COMMENTED THAT VENEZUELA RECOGNIZED THAT THE PROBLEM OF DEMOCRACY WAS NOT JUST A MATTER OF VOTES ONLY SINCE IT WAS OBVIOUS IN THE CASE OF THE UNITED STATES WHERE PRESIDENTS ARE ELECTED WITH A VERY LOW PERCENTAGE OF VOTES.

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VENEZUELA ON THE OTHER HAND HAS HAD AMPLE EXPERIENCE WITH VOTING AND ELECTIONS, WHERE THE PRESIDENT, STATE GOVERNORS, CITY MAYORS, ASSEMBLYMEN, THE NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND EVEN THE VENEZUELAN CONSTITUTION HAVE ALL GONE THROUGH SEVEN ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, CONFIRMING AND RECONFIRMING THE LEGITIMACY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN VENEZUELA; A PROCESS UNPRECEDENTED IN WORLD HISTORY. ACCORDING TO GOMEZ NO OTHER HEAD OF STATE NOR ANY CONSTITUTION HAS EVER BEEN SCRUTINIZED, DEBATED, QUESTIONED OR PUT TO THE TEST, AS HAS VENEZUELA'S. ADDITIONALLY GOMEZ NOTED THAT PRESIDENT CHAVEZ WON ALL THESE PROCESSES AND THAT THE EXERCISE OF POWER BY PRESIDENT CHAVEZ IN APPLYING THE VENEZUELAN CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLE OF A PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY, GIVES THE GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA GREAT LEGITIMACY. THE GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA MAKES IT A PRACTICE TO CONFER DIRECTLY WITH ITS CITIZENS WHEN MAKING DECISIONS, AND IT IS ONE OF THE FEW GOVERNMENTS WHERE CONSULTATIVE REFERENDUMS ARE PERFORMED WITH RELATIVE FREQUENCY. AMBASSADOR GOMEZ CLARIFIED THAT VENEZUELA'S MAYORS AND REPRESENTATIVES CAN BE REMOVED FROM OFFICE AT ANY TIME THROUGH CONSULTATIVE REFERENDUMS BY THE ELECTORATE IF THESE ELECTED OFFICIALS ARE NOT DOING THEIR JOBS CORRECTLY. HE CLAIMED THAT THERE WAS A GREATER LEVEL OF DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA THAN EVER BEFORE, AND THAT IN VENEZUELA NOT ONE SINGLE DAILY NEWSPAPER HAD BEEN CLOSED DOWN, NOR HAD ANY NEWSMAN BEEN PERSECUTED, DETAINED OR JAILED DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS, SOMETHING THAT COMMONLY HAPPENED FROM 1958 THROUGH 1998 BEFORE PRESIDENT CHAVEZ WAS ELECTED.

5. (U) AMBASSADOR GOMEZ CONDEMNED RIGHTIST FORCES OPPOSED TO PRESIDENT CHAVEZ FOR PRECIPITATING THE CRISIS AND PRAISED THE BEHAVIOR OF FORCES LOYAL TO CHAVEZ ASSERTING THAT PRESIDENT CHAVEZ HAS COME OUT OF THIS CRISIS MUCH STRONGER. AMBASSADOR GOMEZ NOTED THAT IN HIS SPEECH PRESIDENT CHAVEZ WAS REFLEXIVE, AND ADMITTED TO HIS OWN MISTAKES WHICH HE HAS BEGUN TO RECTIFY, ACKNOWLEDGING HIS LESS THAN ADEQUATE BEHAVIOR WITH THE NEWS MEDIA, AND PRAISED CHAVEZ'S CALLS FOR NATIONAL REFLECTION, CONTEMPLATION AND RECONCILIATION NOT ONLY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE GOVERNMENT BUT ALSO FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE ENTREPRENEURS, THE OPPOSITION AND THE MEDIA. AMBASSADOR GOMEZ CONCLUDED THAT VENEZUELA COUNTS ON A GREAT DEAL OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT, AND HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THE GREAT SUPPORT OF THE

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