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SERIAL: DODID 247-2E

BODY

SUBJ: VENEZUELA: GOVERNMENT CONCERNS. (U)

DOI: 3 SEP 92 (AS OF 1542 EDT)

TEXT: 1. ~~(S/NF)~~ ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS ARE WORRIED ABOUT POSSIBLE SOCIAL UNREST, CORRUPTION SCANDALS, AND CONTINUED MILITARY RESTIVENESS.

2. ~~(S/NF/OC)~~ THE ARMED FORCES CHIEFS RECENTLY DISCUSSED REPORTS THAT LEFTISTS ARE PLANNING A CAMPAIGN OF CIVIL UNREST BEGINNING ON 8 SEPTEMBER. LEFTISTS HOPE TO STIR UP STUDENTS RETURNING FROM VACATION AND PROVOKE AN OVERREACTION BY SECURITY FORCES. THE LEFTISTS ARE BELIEVED LINKED TO THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTIONARY 200 MOVEMENT (MBR-200), A REBEL GROUP CONSISTING MAINLY OF JUNIOR OFFICER SUPPORTERS OF JAILED FEBRUARY **COUP** ATTEMPT LEADER **HUGO CHAVEZ**. THE MBR-200 ALSO REPORTEDLY PLANS TO CONDUCT HARASSING ATTACKS ON MILITARY BASES. IN A POSSIBLY RELATED DEVELOPMENT, THE NATIONAL GUARD STOOD DOWN FROM ITS HIGHEST ALERT STATUS ON 28 AUGUST, FOLLOWING WEEKLONG RUMORS THAT A UNIT NEAR CARACAS WOULD REVOLT.

3. ~~(C)~~ IN THE CORRUPTION PROBE, CONTROVERSY CONTINUES REGARDING JURISDICTION OVER THE HIGHLY PUBLICIZED "TURPIAL" NAVY CONTRACT IRREGULARITIES SCANDAL. ARREST WARRANTS REPORTEDLY REMAIN

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OUTSTANDING FOR SIX SENIOR ACTIVE-DUTY OFFICERS. PRESIDENT PEREZ AND HIS MISTRESS ARE ALSO LINKED TO CORRUPTION.

4. ~~(S/NF)~~ PEREZ IS DETERMINED TO REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL (b)(3):10 USC 424
HIS TERM ENDS IN 1994. HE PROBABLY HOPES THE RECENT ARREST OF A NOTORIOUSLY CORRUPT LABOR LEADER WILL GIVE HIS UNPOPULAR ADMINISTRATION SOME CREDIBILITY. HIS SUPPORTERS INSIST THAT THIS DECEMBER'S LOCAL ELECTIONS WILL EASE PRESSURE AND DIVERT ATTENTION. SENIOR OFFICERS STILL AFFIRM THEIR SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY, COMPLAINING THE NEWS MEDIA ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SPORADIC RUMORS OF MILITARY DISCONTENT.

5. ~~(S/NF)~~ THE CRISIS ATMOSPHERE CAUSED BY THE FEBRUARY COUP ATTEMPT LINGERS DESPITE EFFORTS BY PEREZ AND HIS BACKERS TO DISPEL IT. LAST SPRING, THE LEFTISTS MUSTERED LITTLE SUPPORT FOR THEIR WEEKDAY DEMONSTRATIONS. NONETHELESS, IF SIGNIFICANT ANTIADMINISTRATION ACTIVITY COMBINES WITH PROTESTS OVER WATER SHORTAGES AND PRICE INCREASES, IT WILL REINFORCE THE IMPRESSION AT HOME AND ABROAD THAT VENEZUELA IS INCREASINGLY UNSTABLE. ALTHOUGH THE STRENGTH OF MBR-200 IS UNCLEAR, SECURITY OFFICIALS PRIVATELY FEAR ITS POTENTIAL FOR SUBVERSION. ANOTHER MAJOR COUP ATTEMPT IS CONSIDERED UNLIKELY, BUT REVOLTS AND RUMORS OF REVOLTS WILL CONTINUE.

6. ~~(S/NF)~~ EVENTS IN BRAZIL HAVE INCREASED PUBLIC SENSITIVITY TO MALFEASANCE. VENEZUELA'S MILITARY LEADERSHIP IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT ITS IMAGE BECAUSE CORRUPTION WAS A CHIEF FACTOR IN THE FEBRUARY COUP ATTEMPT. THUS, THE HIGH COMMAND WILL RESIST ANY INVESTIGATIONS PERCEIVED AS THREATENING THE INSTITUTION. IN THE NEAR TERM, PEREZ'S POLITICAL SKILL WILL BE SEVERELY TESTED AS HE COPEs WITH SOCIAL UNREST AND BALANCES HIS NEED FOR MILITARY SUPPORT AGAINST PRESSURE TO PUNISH CORRUPT SENIOR OFFICIALS.

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