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DIA FOR IR BRANCH

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PTER, PGOV, PHUM, PREL, PE
SUBJECT: GOP ORDERS INVESTIGATIONS OF PRISON DEATHS

REFS: (A) LIMA 7185, (B) LIMA 7217

1. (C) SUMMARY: GOP HANDLING OF LAST WEEK'S PRISON RIOTS IS UNDER INCREASING SCRUTINY BY SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, FOREIGN MEDIA, AND DOMESTIC OPPOSITION. GOP HAS ISSUED COMMUNIQUE STATING ITS PRESUMPTION THAT EXCESSES OCCURRED AND PLEDGING IMPARTIAL AND INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS BY GOP, MILITARY, AND CONGRESS. SI CONFERENCE ISSUED STRONG DECLARATION JUNE 22 THAT RE-AFFIRMED SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND CALLED UPON GARCIA TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON

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INVESTIGATIONS. VICE PRESIDENT SANCHEZ REACTED ANGRILY TO CRITICAL NEW YORK TIME'S EDITORIAL.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SAM A. MOSKOWITZ
DATE/CASE ID: 9 AUG 1999 199902275

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Current Handling: n/a
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CRITICISM WITHIN PERU HAS COME NOT ONLY FROM THE UNITED LEFT, BUT ALSO FROM NOTED CONSERVATIVE AUTHOR MARIO VARGAS LLOSA. ALTHOUGH PROMISE OF INVESTIGATION WILL HELP GARCIA DEFEND HIS IMAGE ABROAD, IT WILL ALSO SERVE TO KEEP ISSUE ALIVE AND MAINTAIN POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT BETWEEN GARCIA AND MILITARY. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) GOP HAS ALREADY COME UNDER PRESSURE FROM DELEGATES AT THE ONGOING SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL (SI) CONFERENCE, FOREIGN PRESS, AND SOME DOMESTIC POLITICAL FIGURES, TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGED GOP ABUSES DURING LAST WEEK'S OPERATIONS TO RETAKE PRISONS IN WHICH AT LEAST 240 TERRORISTS/PRISONERS DIED (REF A). ON JUNE 21 THE GOP ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE IN WHICH IT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE HIGH DEATH TOLL IN LURIGANCHO PRISON (WHERE APPARENTLY NO TERRORISTS/PRISONERS SURVIVED) "LEAD IT TO PRESUME" THAT EXCESSES WERE COMMITTED BY SECURITY FORCES. IN RESPONSE, THE GOP HAS ORDERED THE ARMED FORCES TO CARRY OUT AN INVESTIGATION THROUGH THE MILITARY JUDICIAL SYSTEM. THE GOP ALSO REQUESTED THAT THE PERUVIAN CONGRESS NAME AN INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION AND ALSO ASKED THE FISCAL (ATTORNEY GENERAL) TO INVESTIGATE. THE GOP PROMISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PUNISH ANY EXCESSES THAT MAY HAVE OCCURRED. THE COMMUNIQUE CONCLUDED BY PRAISING THE "DECISIVE ACTION" OF THE ARMED FORCES IN RE-ESTABLISHING ORDER.

3. (C) WE UNDERSTAND THAT ABOVE COMMUNIQUE RESPONDED TO STRONG PRESSURE FROM SI CONFERENCE DELEGATES WHO WERE SHOCKED BY LAST WEEK'S DEATH TOLL, AND BY ALLEGATIONS OF EXCESSIVE FORCE. INSIDERS TELL US THAT
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DUTCH, BELGIAN AND SCANDINAVIAN DELEGATES SOUGHT TO HAVE SI GO ON RECORD WITH A CONDEMNATORY STATEMENT. WILLY BRANDT, CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ AND OTHERS REPORTEDLY RESISTED. THE GOP COMMUNIQUE GAVE SUPPORTIVE ELEMENTS IN SI A TOOL TO USE IN KEEPING SI REACTION MODERATE. ON JUNE 22 THE SI CONFERENCE ISSUED A DECLARATION NOTING ITS SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND REJECTION OF TERRORISM. THE DECLARATION STATED THAT "SERIOUS QUESTIONS" HAD DEVELOPED ABOUT THE METHODS EMPLOYED BY GOP TO PUT DOWN PRISON RIOTS AND THE HIGH DEATH TOLL, NOTING THAT PRESIDENT GARCIA HIMSELF HAD CONSIDERED THE DEATH TOLL TO BE EXCESSIVE. THE DECLARATION UNDERScoreD

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GARCIA'S COMMITMENT TO CARRY OUT IMPARTIAL AND INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS OF EVENTS AT THE PRISONS AS WELL AS GARCIA'S WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW FOREIGN HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS TO COME TO PERU.

4. (U) AT A JUNE 21 PRESS CONFERENCE, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT LUIS ALBERTO SANCHEZ REACTED TESTILY TO REPEATED FOREIGN MEDIA QUESTIONS BASED ON JUNE 21 NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL THAT CRITICIZED GOP HANDLING OF PRISON RIOTS. SANCHEZ CLAIMED THAT NYT EDITORIAL WAS PART OF A CAMPAIGN AGAINST PERU BECAUSE OF THE GOP'S POSITION ON FOREIGN DEBT REPAYMENT. SANCHEZ COUNTER-ATTACKED, CITING IMPERFECTIONS OF U.S. DEMOCRACY, SUCH AS ITS INSISTENCE ON REPAYMENT OF FOREIGN DEBT AND ITS AGGRESSIVE THREATS AGAINST A SMALL COUNTRY (READ NICARAGUA). SANCHEZ REAFFIRMED THAT GOP WOULD INVESTIGATE PRISON EVENTS. NOTHING WOULD BE HIDDEN, HE SAID, BUT HE ALSO CLAIMED THE GOP HAD NOTHING TO HIDE. SANCHEZ SAID PRISONERS' BODIES WOULD BE TURNED OVER TO THEIR RELATIVES FOR IDENTIFICATION AND BURIAL; HOWEVER, SECURITY FORCES REPORTEDLY CARRIED

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OUT BURIAL OF PRISONERS OVER THE WEEKEND.

5. (U) NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE UNITED LEFT (IU) HAS EMERGED TO DENOUNCE ALLEGED GOVERNMENT EXCESSES IN WHAT IT TERMS THE "MASSACRE" IN THE PRISONS. IN ADDITION, NOBEL PRIZE WINNER AND NOVELIST MARIO VARGAS LLOSA HAS WRITTEN AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT GARCIA REJECTING THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE PRISON SITUATION, LABELLING ITS RESPONSE "DISPROPORTIONATE" AND "MORALLY AND LEGALLY UNJUSTIFIABLE." JOINED BY SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS, BOTH THE IU AND VARGAS LLOSA TOOK

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THE GOP TO TASK FOR THE REPORTED SEIZURE OF THE JUNE 19 EDITION OF THE MARXIST DAILY "NUEVO DIARIO" WHICH HAS FAILED TO APPEAR SINCE.

6. (C) COMMENT. GARCIA IS IN AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT SITUATION. TO DEAL WITH A POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM DISASTER IN THE SI MEETING CONTEXT, HE ANNOUNCED INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE HANDLING OF THE PRISON RIOTS. BUT IN SO DOING HE MAY HAVE OPENED PANDORA'S BOX. GARCIA MAY WELL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL ALL THESE INVESTIGATIONS, PARTICULARLY THOSE CARRIED OUT BY INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS. AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, WE UNDERSTAND THAT HE PERSONALLY ISSUED THE ORDERS FOR MILITARY ACTION AGAINST MUTINEERS IN PRISONS. FURTHERMORE, MILITARY IS UNLIKELY TO ACCEPT ANY MEASURE OF SCAPEGOATING IN THIS AFFAIR.

7. (C) VICE PRESIDENT SANCHEZ'S COMMENTS WERE UNCHARACTERISTICALLY HARSH. PRESIDENT ADVISOR HUGO OTERO, WHO WAS WITH SANCHEZ AT PRESS CONFERENCE, TOLD POLCOUNS JUNE 22 THAT VICE PRESIDENT WAS BLINDSIDED BY THE QUESTION. THIS COULD EXPLAIN IN PART HIS UNFORTUNATE AND UNJUSTIFIED COMMENT. BUT IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT SANCHEZ PLACED US AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS ON NOTICE THAT THIS IS AN EXTREMELY DELICATE MATTER FOR GOP, WHICH WILL REACT SHARPLY AND IN

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NATIONALISTIC TERMS TO CRITICISM REGARDING ITS HANDLING
OF IT.
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