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DIA FOR IR BRANCH

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

REFS: (A) LIMA 7185, (B) LIMA 7217
(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 ANGERLY TO CRITICAL NEW YORK TIME'S EDITORIAL.

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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 EXCESSSES 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 EXCESSSES 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 CONFIDENTIAL
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 ST MEETING CONTEXT, HE ANNOUNCED INVESTIGATIONS
INTO THE HANDLING OF THE PRISON RIOTS. BUT IN 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. FURTHER-
MORE, MILITARY IS UNLIKELY TO ACCEPT ANY MEASURE OF
SCAPEGOATING IN THIS AFFAIR.

7. (C) VICE PRESIDENT SANCHEZ'S COMMENTS WERE UN-
CHARACTERISTICALLY HARSH. PRESIDENT ADVISOR HUGO OTERO,
WHO WAS WITH SANchez AT PRESS CONFERENCE, TOLD
POLCOUNS JUNE 22 THAT VICE PRESIDENT WAS BLINDSIZED
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
NATIONALISTIC TERMS TO CRITICISM REGARDING ITS HANDLING OF IT.
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