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ACTION INR-00

RELEASED IN FULL

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	DODE-00	WHA-00	DS-00	UTED-00
	VC-00	TEDE-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	PM-00
	ACE-00	TEST-00	EPAE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	NFAT-00
	SAS-00	/004W					

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R 082131Z AUG 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7110
INFO NSC WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

UNCLAS CARACAS 002338

NSC FOR SALCEDO, AMB. MAISTO
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD
INR FOR FERNANDEZ

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE
SUBJECT: POLITICAL UPDATE II: AUGUST 8, 2002

SUMMARY

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1. IN ITS LONG-AWAITED DECISION, THE SUPREME JUSTICE
TRIBUNAL (TSJ) DID NOT ACCEPT THE CHARGE AGAINST THE FOUR
MILITARY OFFICERS. PRESIDENT CHAVEZ GAVE A STRONG SPEECH IN
MARGARITA ISLAND ENCOURAGING HIS SUPPORTERS TO DEFEND THE
REVOLUTION. THE TSJ DECISION AND THE CLOSURE OF PLAZA
BOLIVAR LED GOV-SUPPORTERS TO PROTEST AND BURN TIRES.
ALCALDE MAYOR ALFREDO PENA ANNOUNCED THAT PLAZA BOLIVAR
WILL ONLY BE OPEN TO "THE PEOPLE WITH DECENCY, THE PEOPLE
WITH JOBS." END SUMMARY.

COURT DECIDES NOT TO DECIDE

2. THE SUPREME COURT TRIBUNAL (TSJ) ONCE AGAIN EXTENDED THE

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SUSPENSE CONCERNING THE FATE OF THE FOUR MILITARY OFFICERS ACCUSED OF REBELLION. THE REPORT MADE BY MAGISTRATE ALEJANDRO ANGULO FONTIVEROS, TO BRING THEM TO TRIAL, WAS REJECTED, WITH ELEVEN VOTES AGAINST AND NINE VOTES IN FAVOR. HOWEVER, MAGISTRATE FRANKLIN ARRIECHE WAS DESIGNATED TO WRITE ANOTHER REPORT TO BE VOTED ON NEXT WEEK. ARRIECHE SEEMS TO BELIEVES THAT THE OFFICIALS SHOULD NOT BE TRIED, SO IT IS LIKELY THAT HE WILL WRITE A REPORT ACQUITTING THE MILITARY OFFICERS, WHICH COULD LIKELY BE APPROVED. TSJ PRESIDENT SAID A DECISION WOULD NOT BE REACHED BEFORE WEDNESDAY.

CHAVEZ LIFTS THE SPIRITS OF HIS SUPPORTERS

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3. IN CLASSIC, PRE-APRIL 11 FASHION, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ GAVE A SPEECH IN NUEVA ESPARTA, MARGARITA ISLAND, ENCOURAGING HIS SUPPORTERS TO DEFEND THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION, "TO BE READY, AT ALL MOMENTS, TO DEFEND THE REVOLUTION AGAINST ANYONE." CLEARLY BUOYED BY HIS TRAVELS TO BOLIVIA, ECUADOR, AND COLOMBIA, CHAVEZ SAID THAT THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION WAS THE HOPE OF MILLIONS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, WOMEN, AND STUDENTS. HE SAID THAT EVERYWHERE HE WENT, PEOPLE BEGGED HIM NOT TO "FALL," RESIGN, OR LET UP (DEJAR). HE SAID THAT HE ALWAYS RESPONDED "THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE WILL NOT LET UP."

4. HE ASKED THEM TO BE CALM, FAITHFUL, STRONG, UNITED, AND FULL OF OPTIMISM AND JOY. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THEIR PATH HAD ALREADY BEEN DIFFICULT, HE WARNED THAT THE HARDEST PARTS WERE YET TO COME AND THE REVOLUTION WAS A LONG AND DIFFICULT PATH. HE SPOKE OF REVOLUTIONARY LAWS HE HAS PASSED, LIKE THE FISHING LAW AND THE LAND LAW, AND OF HIS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMS AS THE "RHYTHM OF THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION." CHAVEZ ALSO SPOKE ON TV ASKING THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE NOT TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE TSJ MAGISTRATES, AND ASKING THEM ALL TO RESPECT THE DECISION, WHATEVER IT MAY BE.

TEMPERS FLARE IN DOWNTOWN CARACAS

5. IN THE MORNING, ALCALDE MAYOR ALFREDO PENA CLOSED PLAZA BOLIVAR, PLACING METROPOLITAN POLICE (PM) OFFICERS AT EVERY ENTRANCE. CHAVISTAS PROTESTED THIS CLOSURE AND THE SUPREME

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JUSTICE TRIBUNAL'S (TSJ) FAILURE TO PASS THE REPORT TO PUT
THE MILITARY OFFICERS ON TRIAL. LED BY LIBERTADOR MAYOR
FREDDY BERNAL, PRO-GOV CROWDS SWEEPED THROUGH THE PLAZA,
PULLING DOWN THE METAL BARRIERS PLACED BY THE PM. BERNAL
APPEARED ON TELEVISION TO ACCUSE MAYOR PENA OF PROVOKING
THE PEOPLE. THE PROTESTERS CLOSED OFF THE STREET IN FRONT
OF THE TSJ AND BURNED TIRES. FOUR POLICEMEN WERE REPORTED
INJURED IN FRONT OF THE METROPOLITAN ALCALDIA. PENA
FURIOUSLY DENOUNCED THE ACTS AND BLAMED BERNAL FOR
ENCOURAGING THE PROTESTERS. HE STATED THAT HE WOULD NO
LONGER ALLOW THE CHAVISTAS TO UNITE IN PLAZA BOLIVAR, "THIS
IS THE END OF ESQUINA CALIENTE." WHEN ASKED IF PLAZA
BOLIVAR WOULD REMAIN CLOSED OFF, HE RESPONDED "PLAZA
BOLIVAR WILL BE OPEN TO THE PEOPLE WITH DECENCY, THE PEOPLE
WITH JOBS."

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