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HAVANA 01360 01 OF 03 292242Z

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AID-00	CA-02	CIAE-00	COME-00	OASY-00	DODE-00
DOTS-00	SRPP-00	EAP-01	EB-01	EUR-01	FAAE-00
H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	INSE-00	IO-00	L-01
NSAE-00	OCS-03	OIC-02	PRS-00	P-00	SP-00
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R 292231Z FEB 96
 FM USINT HAVANA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7950
 INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
 USCINCOM NORFOLK VA
 AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
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 WHITE HOUSE FOR RNUCCIO
 INS/MEXICO CITY FOR DIDIR
 USIA FOR BCCR (SLIPPE) AND AR (ADLER, EVANS)
 ROME FOR THE VATICAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/28/2005
 TAGS: PHUM, PGOV, PREL, CU
 SUBJECT: "CONCILIO CUBANO" TRIES TO REGROUP;
 SOME CRITICIZE "BROTHERS TO THE RESCUE"

CLASSIFIED BY: JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN, PRINCIPAL OFFICER,
 USINT HAVANA. REASON: 1.5 (D)

SUMMARY

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1. (C) WITH OVER 150 OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS DETAINED OR HARASSED OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS, "CONCILIO CUBANO" LEADERS ARE BEGINNING TO TRY TO REGROUP. AN EXPANDED SECRETARIAT IS EXPECTED TO BE ELECTED BY MARCH 2, AND A NEW REQUEST TO THE GOVERNMENT TO MEET WILL BE SUBMITTED BY MID-MARCH. "CONCILIO" LEADERS REPORT STRONG SUPPORT FROM THIRD COUNTRY DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS. SEVERAL DISSIDENTS EXPRESSED FRUSTRATION THAT THE DOWNING OF THE "BROTHERS TO THE RESCUE" PLANES DIVERTED INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC ATTENTION FROM THE "CONCILIO" AND CREATED AN EVEN MORE DIFFICULT SITUATION FOR THE INTERNAL OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY.

THE BODY COUNT

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2. (U) ACCORDING TO AN UPDATED LIST PREPARED BY THE "COMISION CUBANA DE DERECHOS HUMANOS Y RECONCILIACION NACIONAL," THE HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING GROUP HEADED BY ELIZARDO SANCHEZ SANTACRUZ, OVER 150 HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS WERE DETAINED OR HARASSED SINCE FEBRUARY 15. ABOUT 10-15 REMAINED IN DETENTION AS OF FEBRUARY 27, 5-8 OF WHOM HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN TOLD THAT THEY WILL BE TRIED ON SUCH CHARGES AS DANGEROUSNESS, ILLEGAL ENRICHMENT, AND ENEMY PROPAGANDA.

3. (C) OF THE "CONCILIOS" FIVE-MEMBER SECRETARIAT, TWO HAVE BEEN TRIED AND CONVICTED (LEONEL MOREJON ALMAGRO, THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND "CONCILIO," AND LAZARO GONZALEZ VALDES), AND ONE IS HOSPITALIZED (MERCEDES PARADA ANTUNEZ). THE TWO REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE SECRETARIAT, HECTOR PALACIOS RUIZ AND REINALDO COSANO ALEN, HAVE CLASHED OVER PALACIOS DECISION TO SUSPEND THE PLANNED FEBRUARY 24 EVENT. (ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] PALACIOS DECIDED TO SUSPEND THE EVENT AS EARLY AS FEBRUARY 15, AFTER NEWS OF THE FIRST DETENTIONS, ALTHOUGH THE FORMAL STATEMENT WAS ONLY ISSUED ON FEBRUARY 20.) [REDACTED] [REDACTED] HAVE REQUESTED REFUGEE APPLICATIONS.

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4. (C) [REDACTED] IS ALSO THE SUBJECT OF A DEFAMATION CAMPAIGN BY CUBAN STATE SECURITY, WHICH HAD A "PRENSA LATINA" (THE CUBAN GOVERNMENTS PRESS SERVICE) REPORTER

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INTERVIEW [] AT THE HOSPITAL LAST WEEK AND THEN PLAY AN
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ALLEGED TAPE OF THE INTERVIEW FOR ELIZARDO SANCHEZ AND A
GROUP OF ACTIVISTS ASSEMBLED AT HIS HOME. THE TAPE
REPORTEDLY HAS [] SAYING THAT [] HAD NOT, AND WAS
NOT, BEING DETAINED. ACTIVISTS ARE REPEATING THIS
STATEMENT TO JOURNALISTS AND THIRD COUNTRY DIPLOMATS.

5. (C) WHEN VISITED BY A DUTCH DIPLOMAT AND POL/ECON
OFFICER ON FEBRUARY 20, [] HAD SAID THAT [] WAS
DETAINED ON FEBRUARY 15 AT THE SIXTH PRECINCT STATION IN
MARIANAO, RELEASED ON THE 16, BUT THEN TAKEN LATER THE
SAME AFTERNOON BY STATE SECURITY AGENTS TO THE "BROTHERS
ALMEJEIRAS HOSPITAL." ACCORDING TO [] WAS
GIVEN THE OPTION OF RETURNING TO PRISON OR RECEIVING
TREATMENT AT THE HOSPITAL. ALTHOUGH [] CHOSE THE
LATTER, [] STILL CONSIDERED [] "DETAINED." THERE
WAS NO OBVIOUS POLICE OR STATE SECURITY PRESENCE OUTSIDE
HER ROOM ON FEBRUARY 20, THE DAY OF THE VISIT, BUT
[] SAID THAT THE ELEVENTH FLOOR OF THE HOSPITAL WAS
A "SPECIAL WARD" USED BY THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT FOR
POLITICALLY SENSITIVE CASES. AS EVIDENCE OF ITS
"SPECIALNESS," [] POINTED TO [] BEDSHEETS AND A
REFRIGERATOR, NOT NORMAL ACCOUTREMENTS IN CUBAN HOSPITAL
WARDS. AN AMERICAN REPORTER WHO VISITED [] ON

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FEBRUARY 28 SAID THAT HE HAD NO TROUBLE ENTERING [REDACTED]
ROOM, BUT THAT SOMEONE CHECKED IN ON THEM EVERY FEW
MINUTES.

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PICKING THEMSELVES UP, BRUSHING THEMSELVES OFF, AND
STARTING ALL OVER AGAIN

5. (C) [REDACTED] TOLD POL/ECON OFFICER ON FEBRUARY 28
THAT HE AND FOUR OR FIVE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE
"CONCILIOS" 28-MEMBER COORDINATING COUNCIL HAD MET ON
FEBRUARY 27 AND HAD DECIDED TO EXPAND THE SECRETARIAT TO
TEN MEMBERS AND TO ELECT THE FIVE NEW MEMBERS BY MARCH
2. ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] THE "CONCILIO" LEADERSHIP
EXPECTED TO SUBMIT ANOTHER LETTER TO THE CUBAN
GOVERNMENT BY MID-MARCH REQUESTING AUTHORIZATION TO HOLD
A MAY MEETING. [REDACTED] WILL TRY TO SCHEDULE THE
MEETING FOR THE WEEK BEFORE THE IBERO AMERICAN SUMMIT.

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6. (C) ON BEHALF OF THE "CONCILIO," [REDACTED] MADE THE
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ROUNDS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS ON FEBRUARY 27, MEETING THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR AND THE FIRST SECRETARIES OF THE EMBASSIES OF VENEZUELA AND ARGENTINA. ACCORDING TO

[REDACTED] ALL WERE WELL INFORMED ABOUT THE CRACKDOWN AND HIGHLY SUPPORTIVE OF "CONCILIOS" EFFORTS. THE ARGENTINE DIPLOMAT REPORTEDLY TOLD [REDACTED] THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIDER REFUSING TO APPROVE OBSERVER STATUS FOR CUBA AT THE "PARLATINO," THE LATIN AMERICAN PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZATION.

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BROTHERS TO THE RESCUE . . . BUT NOT OF THE OPPOSITION

7. (C) IN SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH POL/ECON OFFICER, [REDACTED]

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EXPRESSED THEIR FRUSTRATION AT THE ACTIVITIES OF "BROTHERS TO THE RESCUE." [REDACTED] INSISTED EMPHATICALLY THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT COULD AND SHOULD HAVE FOUND SOME WAY OF PREVENTING THE "BROTHERS" PLANE FROM DEPARTING U.S. TERRITORY. WHILE HE CLAIMED THAT THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT WANTED TO MAINTAIN COLD WAR TENSIONS, HE ARGUED THAT RENEWED BILATERAL CONFLICT WAS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO ANY PEACEFUL TRANSITION AND URGED THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO DE-ESCALATE TENSIONS. [REDACTED] REGRETTED THAT THE "BROTHERS" SHOOTDOWN HAD DIVERTED INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION FROM THE CRACKDOWN ON "CONCILIO." HE SAID THAT THE "BROTHERS" PROVOCATION OF THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT ONLY HURT THE INTERNAL OPPOSITION.

8. (C) OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS WERE DIVIDED IN
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THEIR REACTION TO THE "BROTHERS" STRATEGY. ONE EXPRESSED SORROW AT THE INEVITABLE LOSS OF CUBAN (EXILE) LIFE IF "BROTHERS" CONTINUED TO TRY TO OVERFLY CUBA, BUT BRIGHTENED AT THE MEMORY OF THE POPULAR REACTION TO THE JANUARY 13 LEAFLETING OF PARTS OF THE CITY. ANOTHER COMPLAINED THAT THE "BROTHERS" ACTIVITIES DO NOTHING TO HELP RESOLVE CUBAS PROBLEMS AND NOTED THAT ANY FLOTILLA WOULD GO UNNOTICED BY THE CUBAN PEOPLE, SINCE IT WOULD NOT BE SEEN EITHER DIRECTLY OR ON TELEVISION.

9. (C) ALL OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS INTERVIEWED AGREED, HOWEVER, ON CASTROS MOTIVES FOR DOWNING THE PLANE: TO SHOW THAT HE REMAINS STRONG, COMPLETELY IN CHARGE, AND RESOLUTELY UNWILLING TO ADMIT ANY OPENING IN

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CUBAN POLITICAL LIFE SUCH AS THAT RECENTLY
"CONCILIO." ALL NOTED THAT HIS DECISION TO SHOOT DOWN
THE PLANE WAS CONSISTENT WITH HIS TRADITIONAL TACTIC OF
DIVERTING ATTENTION FROM DOMESTIC PROBLEMS BY CREATING
AN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS.

COMMENT

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10. (C) WITHOUT THE ENERGETIC, NON-IDEOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP OF LEONEL MOREJON ALMAGRO, THE "CONCILIOS" ABILITY TO REGROUP AND MOVE AHEAD IS UNCERTAIN. NEW DIFFERENCES OVER THE WISDOM AND LEGITIMACY OF THE DECISION TO SUSPEND THE "CONCILIO" EVENT ON FEBRUARY 24 AND TO EXPAND THE SECRETARIAT ARE NOW ADDED TO EARLIER INTERNAL FRICTIONS. THE REMOVAL OF MOREJON FROM THE SCENE WILL LIKELY ENABLE PALACIOS TO ACHIEVE HIS GOAL OF LEADING THE "CONCILIO."

11. (U) THE "CONCILIO" CRACKDOWN WAS MASSIVE BY CONTEMPORARY CUBAN REPRESSIVE STANDARDS AND SUGGESTS THE NERVOUSNESS OF THE GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OR PRECEDENT WHICH "CONCILIO" REPRESENTED. AFTER THE AUGUST 5, 1994 DISTURBANCES, FOR EXAMPLE, ONLY ABOUT 35 HUMAN RIGHTS LEADERS WERE DETAINED AND NONE WERE BROUGHT TO TRIAL.

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