

PTQ4905

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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CIAE-00	OASY-00	DODE-00	ANHR-01
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	L-01	ADS-00	M-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01
	PA-00	PC-01	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00	SP-00
	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-10
	PRME-01	DRL-09	G-00	/029W			

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 FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3133
 INFO DIR FSINFATC
 AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 007339

NFATC FOR SPAS/POL

E.O. 12958: DECL:11/03/06
 TAGS: PGOV, MARR, PHUM, DR
 SUBJECT: PRESIDENT FERNANDEZ FIRES ARMED FORCES SECRETARY

1. CLASSIFIED BY DONNA J. HRINAK, AMBASSADOR.
 REASON: 1.5 (D)

 SUMMARY

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2. (C) PRESIDENT LEONEL FERNANDEZ FIRED ARMED FORCES SECRETARY GEN. JUAN ROJAS TABAR AND SHOOK UP THE SENIOR RANKS OF THE DOMINICAN MILITARY NOVEMBER 1. FERNANDEZ DISMISSED THE OUTSPOKEN ARMED FORCES SECRETARY SOME 36 HOURS AFTER GEN. ROJAS, IN THE COMPANY OF MORE THAN A DOZEN REPORTERS, MARCHED INTO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE TO DEMAND CLARIFICATION OF PUBLIC ALLEGATIONS LINKING HIM TO THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PROFESSOR NARCISO GONZALEZ (NARCISAZO). ROJAS DECLARED HIS INNOCENCE IN THE NARCISAZO CASE, CHARGED OTHER UNNAMED SENIOR MILITARY OFFICIALS WITH EFFORTS TO BESMIRCH HIS HONOR AND WITH COMPLICITY IN THE DISAPPEARANCE, AND CHALLENGED THE PRESIDENT TO DISMISS THEM OR HIM. ANNOUNCING ROJAS'S DISMISSAL ON TELEVISION, FERNANDEZ CALLED THE GENERAL'S ULTIMATUM "UNACCEPTABLE", ADDING THAT THE FIRING IS ALSO A WARNING TO OTHER PUBLIC SERVANTS. FERNANDEZ APPOINTED VICE ADMIRAL RUBEN PAULINO ALVAREZ TO REPLACE ROJAS. THE PRESIDENT'S FIRM ACTION HAS BEEN WIDELY PRAISED, AND THE POLITICAL SITUATION IS STABLE. END SUMMARY.

3. (U) IN A 7-MINUTE SPEECH BROADCAST NATIONALLY VIA RADIO AND TELEVISION THE EVENING OF NOVEMBER 1, PRESIDENT LEONEL FERNANDEZ TOLD DOMINICANS HE HAD DISMISSED ARMED FORCES SECRETARY GEN. JUAN BAUTISTA ROJAS TABAR. FERNANDEZ STATED THE GENERAL HAD COMMITTED AN "UNACCEPTABLE ERROR" IN ISSUING THE ULTIMATUM THAT EITHER THE PRESIDENT REPLACE HIM OR THE SENIOR OFFICIALS WHOM HE CHARGED WITH BACKING A CAMPAIGN TO LINK HIM (ROJAS) TO THE MAY 1994 DISAPPEARANCE OF SANTO DOMINGO AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR NARCISO GONZALEZ (NARCISAZO). ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT PRAISED ROJAS'S COURAGE FOR DEFENDING HIS HONOR, HE SAID "UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES" COULD HE ALLOW ROJAS "OR ANY OTHER MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES OR POLICE TO PLACE HIM BEFORE THE DOMINICAN PEOPLE"

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WITH SUCH AN ULTIMATUM. TO DO SO, HE STATED, WOULD MEAN "IT WOULD HAVE TO BE THE PRESIDENT" WHO LEFT OFFICE.

4. (U) EMPHATICALLY REFERRING TO HIMSELF, FERNANDEZ SAID, "THIS PRESIDENT WILL GO HOME WITH HIS CONSCIENCE HIGH AND HIS SPIRIT AT EASE AUGUST 16, 2000 AFTER MEETING THE OBLIGATION OF RESCUING THE VALUES OF ORDER AND DISCIPLINE, LOST IN DOMINICAN LIFE." ALLUDING TO THE COUNTRY'S AUTHORITARIAN PAST, THE PRESIDENT REJECTED A TRUJILLO SOLUTION SAYING HE WOULD CONTRIBUTE, WITH HIS FELLOW CITIZENS, TO PUTTING A HALT TO THE LACK OF DISCIPLINE

WHICH HAS PLAGUED DOMINICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PAST 30 YEARS AND TO THE STRENGTHENING OF DEMOCRACY. FERNANDEZ ALSO WARNED THAT ROJAS'S DISMISSAL SHOULD SERVE AS A WARNING TO OTHER PUBLIC OFFICIALS, "ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEY ARE PUBLIC SERVANTS."

NEW MILITARY LEADERSHIP

5. (C) WITH ROJAS'S DISMISSAL CAME A NUMBER OF OTHER CHANGES IN THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP. NAVY HEAD ADMIRAL GERARDO SANTANA SOLANO WAS REPLACED, AS WAS THE COMMANDER OF THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD BATTALION, GEN. MAXIMO MOREL MARICHAL. THEIR REPLACEMENTS ARE ADM. FRANCISCO FRIAS OLIVENCIA AND COL. CARLOS SOLER PEREYRA, RESPECTIVELY. THE PRESIDENT RETIRED GEN. FERNANDO SANCHEZ AYBAR, COMMANDER OF THE ARMY'S SECOND BRIGADE HEADQUARTERED IN SANTIAGO, AND REPLACED HIM WITH COL. JOSE VALDEZ BAUTISTA. THE PRESIDENT ALSO RETIRED FORMER NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS DIRECTORATE (DNI) CHIEF AND POLICE GEN. RAMON RODRIGUEZ ARIAS. TO REPLACE THE RETIRED ROJAS, FERNANDEZ NAMED VICE ADMIRAL RUBEN PAULINO

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ALVAREZ, WHO IS FAVORABLY KNOWN FOR HIS ROLE AS CHIEF OF THE ELECTORAL POLICE FOR THE 1996 ELECTIONS.

ROJAS AND NARCISAZO

6. (U) VISIBLY INDIGNANT, GEN. ROJAS HAD MARCHED INTO ATTORNEY GENERAL ABEL RODRIGUEZ DEL ORBE'S OFFICE ON OCTOBER 31 IN THE COMPANY OF MORE THAN A DOZEN REPORTERS WITH CAMERAS ROLLING. TAKEN BY SURPRISE, RODRIGUEZ GREETED THE GENERAL AND ASKED THE JOURNALISTS, AFTER SOME PICTURES WERE TAKEN, TO ALLOW THEM TO SPEAK PRIVATELY. WITHOUT HESITATION, HOWEVER, THE GENERAL BEGAN HIS EXPOSITION TO THE A/G. ROJAS DECLARED HE HAD NEVER KNOWN PROF. GONZALEZ AND THAT HE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH HIS DISAPPEARANCE. HE DEMANDED THAT THE A/G QUESTION THOSE PERSONS, SUCH AS MRS. GONZALEZ AND JOURNALISTS, WHO "WITHOUT BASIS" ARE MAKING ACCUSATIONS WHICH DAMAGE HIS AND HIS FAMILY'S HONOR AND REPUTATION. (NOTE: ROJAS WAS SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE AT THE

TIME OF GONZALEZ'S DISAPPEARANCE IN MAY 1994. THE PROFESSOR IS ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN HELD AT THE SAN ISIDRO AIR BASE AROUND THE TIME OF HIS DEMISE. IN LATE OCTOBER, ROJAS'S NAME APPEARED IN THE PRESS, ATTRIBUTED TO MEMBERS OF THE "TRUTH COMMISSION," AS AN OFFICIAL WHO SHOULD BE QUESTIONED IN THE GONZALEZ CASE.)

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 007339

NFATC FOR SPAS/POL

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT FERNANDEZ FIRES ARMED FORCES SECRETARY

7. (U) THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, UNABLE TO DISGUISE HIS
CONSTERNATION BEFORE THE CAMERAS, LISTENED TO THE GENERAL. AT
ONE POINT, RODRIGUEZ WAS ABLE TO REITERATE HIS PREVIOUSLY STATED
POSITION THAT THE FERNANDEZ ADMINISTRATION WOULD ADDRESS CHARGES
OF CORRUPTION AND OTHER CRIMINAL WRONGDOING ON THE BASIS OF
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INVESTIGATIONS AND EVIDENCE AND NOT ON THE BASIS OF ORAL
ACCUSATIONS. UNASSUAGED, THE GENERAL CONTINUED, DEMANDING THE
A/G QUESTION OTHER SPECIFIC PERSONS "KNOWN FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES"
AT THE OPPOSITE END OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM AND EVEN FORMER
DOMINICAN CONSUL IN MIAMI GUAROA LIRANZO, ALTHOUGH HIS NAME DID
NOT APPEAR IN PRESS REPORTS. ROJAS THEN ISSUED THE ULTIMATUM TO
THE PRESIDENT WHICH RESULTED IN HIS EVENTUAL DOWNFALL.

COMMENT

8. (C) ROJAS'S INDISCREET BEHAVIOR -- DESCRIBED BY ONE POLITICAL
ANALYST AS "VERBAL INCONTINENCE" -- WAS THE ACTION OF A PROUD
MILITARY OFFICER PERHAPS JUSTLY INDIGNANT ABOUT CHEAP TALK
LINKING HIM TO A SERIOUS VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND
BESMIRCHING HIS HONOR AND REPUTATION. AS THE GOVERNMENT, UNDER
PRESSURE FROM THE OAS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, BEGINS TO WORK
MORE DILIGENTLY ON THE GONZALEZ CASE, REAL INFORMATION MAY HELP
CLARIFY WHAT, IF ANY, BASIS "FLYING ACCUSATIONS," AS THE ATTORNEY
GENERAL REFERS TO THEM, AGAINST ROJAS AND OTHER OFFICIALS MAY
HAVE.

9. (C) IN TERMS OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MILITARY, THE
PRESIDENT APPEARS TO HAVE COME OUT AHEAD AFTER THIS CRISIS.
INDEED, THIS ASSERTION OF AUTHORITY HAS PROVIDED AN INROAD INTO
THE RETIREMENT OF ACTIVE DUTY GENERALS, AWAITED, BUT MORE
SENSITIVE THAN THE RETIREMENT OF THE TWO DOZEN FLAG-RANK OFFICERS
SOME DAYS EARLIER.
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