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~~Thursday June 24, 1976~~

~~CI NIDC 76-148C~~

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Thursday June 24, 1976.
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PORTUGAL

Whether the Portuguese will hold a presidential election on Sunday as scheduled was thrown into doubt yesterday when Prime Minister Azevedo, one of the four candidates, suffered a severe heart attack.

The latest medical reports describe his condition as serious.

If he dies before the voting begins, the constitution specifies that the president set a new date and that the entire election process begin again. This would mean a delay of at least six to eight weeks.

The Prime Minister had come under growing pressure because of the failure of his poorly organized and under-financed campaign to halt the momentum of the front-runner, army chief Eanes.

During the past week, Azevedo had stepped up his personal attacks against Eanes, accusing him of attempting to "torpedo" the reforms made by the officers who ousted the dictatorship and launched the revolution more than two years ago. He also criticized the army chief's efforts to restore "professionalism" to the military since the abortive leftist power play last November.

Azevedo's desperate attempts to discredit Eanes have created hostility against him in the armed forces and appear to have helped his own campaign very little.

Much of Azevedo's support now seems likely to go to Eanes, although Azevedo's campaign headquarters insists he will remain a candidate. Should the Prime Minister recover sufficiently and decide to withdraw from the race before the deadline tomorrow, however, he might encourage his followers to back the far left candidate, former security chief Otelo de Carvalho, whom he has praised in recent campaign statements.

██████████ If Azevedo lives, his illness will improve Eanes' chances of winning a majority in the first round of voting, avoiding a runoff.

██████████ If Azevedo dies before Sunday, the postponement of the election could have far-reaching consequences. Not only could it lead to shifting alliances and new candidates entering the race, but it would also postpone the formation of a new government based on the legislature elected last April. Any delay would also put off badly needed economic measures. ██████████