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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 00756

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TEXT

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PHUM, SNAR, PA
SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN BRUCE MORRISON MEETS WITH THE
- PRESIDENT

REF: ASUNCION 0725

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT

2. SUMMARY: CONGRESSMAN BRUCE MORRISON (D-CONN), ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR AND ACTING POL COUNSELOR, MET WITH PRESIDENT GENERAL ANDRES RODRIGUEZ ON FEBRUARY 14, IN WHAT WAS A SECOND OPPORTUNITY IN TWO DAYS TO EXPLAIN AND ADVANCE THE BIPARTISAN USG POLICY TOWARDS PARAGUAY ON THE THREE DS. DURING THE 40 MINUTE CONVIVIAL AND SPIRITED EXCHANGE, RODRIGUEZ COVERED SIMILAR GROUND AS IN YESTERDAY'S SESSION, GIVING FIRM COMMITMENTS TO THE PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, ACCEPTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS, REFORM OF THE ELECTORAL LAW (INCLUDING PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION FOR LEGISLATIVE SEATS), THE REOPENING OF CLOSED MEDIA OUTLETS (ABC COLOR AND RADIO NANDUTI), AS WELL AS THE LIMITING OF A PRESIDENT'S TENURE TO ONE TERM. RODRIGUEZ DID MAKE CLEAR THAT HE WAS NOT INCLINED TO ACCEPT POSTPONEMENT OF THE MAY 1 ELECTION DATE. CONGRESSMAN MORRISON RAISED OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS LABOR RIGHT, THE PROTECTION OF THE

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BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS OF FORMER STROESSNER OFFICIALS CURRENTLY UNDER DETENTION, AND GOP COOPERATION IN A POSSIBLE FUTURE INVESTIGATION OF **NAZIS** SUSPECTED TO BE LIVING IN **PARAGUAY**. RODRIGUEZ REASSURED US THAT HE WOULD BE REVIEWING GOP LABOR POLICY WITH HIS NEW MINISTER. HE ALSO PROMISED THAT FORMER GOP OFFICIALS CHARGED WITH COMMITTING CRIMES WOULD BE FAIRLY TRIED IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW. WHILE RODRIGUEZ DID NOT COMMIT HIMSELF TO COOPERATE IN **NAZI** HUNTING, HE DID SAY THAT **PARAGUAY** WOULD NO LONGER BE A SAFE HAVEN FOR "THIEVES AND CRIMINALS". IN THIS MEETING RODRIGUEZ GAVE US ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS USG SUPPORT FOR THE CURRENT GOP INITIATIVES, AND TO EMPHASIZE THAT WE ARE WATCHING CLOSELY FOR CONCRETE ACTIONS THAT INDICATE THE PROCESS REMAINS ON TRACK. END SUMMARY.

3. CONGRESSMAN BRUCE MORRISON, ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR AND ACTING POL COUNSELOR, MET WITH GOP PRESIDENT ANDRES RODRIGUEZ ON FEBRUARY 14 AND REVIEWED GOP INITIATIVES IN THE AREA OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS. RODRIGUEZ HAD AGREED TO MEET MORRISON IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST MADE BY THE AMBASSADOR IN THEIR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 13 (SEE REFTEL). THIS SECOND FRIENDLY CONVERSATION, LASTING FORTY MINUTES, WAS ANOTHER PRODUCTIVE US-GOP EXCHANGE, WITH CONGRESSMAN MORRISON HIGHLIGHTING THE BIPARTISAN NATURE OF USG POLICY TOWARDS PARAGUAY AND OUR HOPES THAT THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS WOULD LEAD TO AN IRREVERSIBLE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

4. IN RESPONSE TO CONGRESSMAN MORRISON'S QUESTIONS, RODRIGUEZ COVERED SIMILAR GROUND AS IN THE AMBASSADOR'S FEBRUARY 13 MEETING, WITH RODRIGUEZ AGAIN COMMITTING HIMSELF TO 1) PUSH FOR A NEW DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT BASED ON FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS WITH FULL OPPOSITION PARTICIPATION, 2) SUPPORT FOR PRESS FREEDOM AND THE REOPENING OF MEDIA OUTLETS SUCH AS RADIO NANDUTI AND ABC COLOR, 3) REFORM THE ELECTORAL LAW TO ALLOW FOR PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION, 4) CONVOKE A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WITH A SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON PASSAGE OF AN AMENDMENT LIMITING THE PRESIDENT'S TENURE TO ONE TERM, 5) RESPECT THE RIGHT OF OPPOSITION PARTIES TO PARTICIPATE FREELY IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS WITH THE UNRESTRICTED RIGHT TO HOLD POLITICAL RALLIES, AND, 6) ACCEPT "QUALIFIED" INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS, 7) REGARDING THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE ELECTION DATE BEYOND MAY 1, RODRIGUEZ SAID THAT HE WAS NOT INCLINED TO YIELD TO THIS OPPOSITION DEMAND.

5. CONGRESSMAN MORRISON TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO FOLLOW UP ON THE AMBASSADOR'S INITIAL MEETING WITH RODRIGUEZ, AND RAISED OTHER ISSUES OF INTEREST TO US, SUCH AS THE LABOR RIGHTS LINK IN **PARAGUAY'S** REGAINING THE PRIVILEGE OF THE GENERAL SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES (GSP). CONGRESSMAN MORRISON ALSO HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF FORMER STROESSNER OFFICIALS WHO ARE UNDER DETENTION. ALSO, IN A LOCAL CONSTITUENT ISSUE,

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CONGRESSMAN MORRISON ALSO REQUESTED FUTURE GOP COOPERATION IN FINDING FORMER **NAZI** WAR CRIMINALS THAT MIGHT BE RESIDING IN **PARAGUAY**.

6. IN RESPONSE TO MORRISON'S POINTS, RODRIGUEZ STATED THE FOLLOWING: A) LABOR RIGHTS -- HE ADMITTED THAT LABOR RIGHTS HAD BEEN TRAMPLED UPON BY THE FORMER REGIME, PARTICULARLY UNDER THE REIGN OF MINISTER OF LABOR
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EUGENIO JACQUET; HE PROMISED TO REVIEW THIS WITH THE NEW LABOR MINISTER. B) HUMAN RIGHTS FOR FORMER STROESSNER SUPPORTERS -- HE SAID THAT DETAINED OFFICIALS WOULD BE ACCORDED DUE PROCESS AND THOSE ACCUSED, FAIR TRIALS. RODRIGUEZ ADDED THAT MILITARY OFFICERS WOULD BE TRIED IN MILITARY COURTS AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS IN CIVILIAN COURTS, C) COOPERATION IN THE SEARCH FOR **NAZIS** -- RODRIGUEZ GAVE NO SPECIFIC PROMISES, BUT SAID THAT HE WOULD ENSURE THAT **PARAGUAY** WOULD NO LONGER BE A HAVEN FOR "THIEVES AND CRIMINALS."

7. COMMENT: THIS MEETING GAVE US A SECOND OPPORTUNITY TO EMPHASIZE TO PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ STRONG USG INTEREST IN SEEING **PARAGUAY** MOVE TOWARDS A MORE DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT. RODRIGUEZ CLEARLY HAS GOTTEN THE MESSAGE THAT WHILE WE STRONGLY ENDORSE HIS MANY PROMISES AND ACTIONS TO DATE, WE WILL BE WATCHING CLOSELY FOR ACTIONS THAT KEEP THE PROCESS IN FORWARD MOTION. FOR HIS PART, THE NEW PARAGUAYAN LEADER IMPRESSED US WITH HIS STATED RECOGNITION THAT IT WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO GO BACK ON THE MANY SPECIFIC PLEDGES HE HAS MADE TO THE PARAGUAYAN PEOPLE AND FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS.
TOWELL

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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