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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WARNING: INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE

REPORT CLASS ~~SECRET~~-NOFORN

DIST: 6 JUNE 2000

COUNTRY: GUYANA
SUBJ: VIEWS OF ELECTIONS COMMISSION CHAIRMAN SINGH ON THE JANUARY 2001
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

DOI:

SOURCE:

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SUMMARY: NONE

TEXT: 1. GUYANA'S NEWLY APPOINTED ELECTIONS COMMISSION CHAIRMAN, FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE GUYANA DEFENSE FORCES (GDF) RETIRED MAJOR GENERAL JOSEPH ((SINGH)), WAS, SOMEWHAT CONCERNED REGARDING THE REACTION OF HIS FORMER TROOPS TO THE JANUARY 2001 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. SINGH LAMENTED THAT THE GDF WAS A SERIOUSLY UNDERFUNDED ORGANIZATION WITH RELATIVELY LOW MORALE, AND NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH HE ALWAYS FELT CONFIDANT HE COULD CONTROL HIS TROOPS WHILE HE LED THEM, HE WAS UNSURE HOW THEY MIGHT ACT UNDER THEIR NEW LEADER IF VIOLENCE BROKE OUT AFTER THE ELECTION.

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2. SINGH NOTED THAT HE HAD A FAIRLY LOW OPINION OF HIS SUCCESSOR, BRIGADIER MICHAEL ((ATHERLY)), WHOM HE VIEWED AS CORRUPT AND EXTREMELY SELF-INTERESTED. SINGH DISPARAGINGLY NOTED THAT ATHERLY WAS A CLOSE FRIEND OF POLICE COMMISSIONER LAURIE ((LEWIS)), WHOM SINGH CONSIDERED TO BE THOROUGHLY CORRUPT AND HEAVILY INVOLVED IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY. SINGH WORRIED THAT ATHERLY MIGHT COMPROMISE THE GDF'S NEUTRALITY IN THE ELECTION BY LENDING HIS SUPPORT TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER IN EXCHANGE FOR POLITICAL FAVORS THAT WOULD BENEFIT HIM PERSONALLY. SINGH CONCLUDED THAT HIS FORMER INFLUENCE IN THE GDF WOULD MEAN LITTLE BY THE TIME THE ELECTION OCCURRED BECAUSE HE WOULD NOT BE IN A POSITION TO OFFER THE GDF RANK-AND-FILE ANYTHING IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR ALLEGIANCE, WHILE ATHERLY LIKELY WOULD SECURE SOME ADVANTAGE FOR HIS TROOPS IN ANY DEAL HE STRUCK.

3. SINGH COMMENTED THAT HE BELIEVED GUYANA'S MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES, THE RULING PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP) AND THE OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC), WOULD WORK TO ENSURE THAT WORKABLE ELECTION REFORM, AND THE CONDITIONS STIPULATED IN THE DONOR COUNTRIES' MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING, WOULD BE MET IN TIME TO ENSURE A RELATIVELY SMOOTH ELECTION. SINGH STATED THAT, PARADOXICALLY, BOTH PARTIES WERE CONVINCED

THAT THE SOONER THE ELECTION WAS HELD, THE BETTER THEIR CHANCES OF VICTORY WOULD BE. THE PPP FEARED A DETERIORATING ECONOMY, WHICH WOULD TRANSLATE INTO LOSSES AT THE POLLS, WHILE THE PNC WORRIED THAT THE LONGER THE PPP REMAINED IN OFFICE, THE GREATER ITS ABILITY TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS IN GUYANA WHILE USING GOVERNMENT LARGESSE TO SECURE ADDITIONAL VOTES. BECAUSE OF THOSE VIEWS, SINGH BELIEVED BOTH SIDES WOULD COMPROMISE SUFFICIENTLY IN THE COMING MONTHS TO ESTABLISH A WORKABLE FRAMEWORK FOR THE ELECTION.

4. SINGH CONTINUED THAT, ALTHOUGH HE WAS WELL AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS CURRENT POSITION, HE WAS CONCERNED WITH THE POSITION'S LACK OF ANY REAL POWER. SINGH BELIEVED THAT THE SINGLE TOOL AVAILABLE TO HIM TO FORCE COMPROMISE AND PROGRESS IN THE ELECTION WAS PUBLICLY EXPOSING GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS WHO MIGHT ATTEMPT TO HAMPER THE REFORM PROCESS. ADDITIONALLY, SINGH NOTED THAT HE COULD TURN TO THE INTERNATIONAL AND DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY TO EXERT PRESSURE IN GUYANA; HOWEVER, HE ADMITTED THAT HE HAD NO REAL SENSE OF THE ABILITY OF LOCAL DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES TO ACT QUICKLY WITHOUT HAVING TO CONSULT THEIR SUPERIORS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE CAPITALS. SINGH STATED THAT HE PRIMARILY WOULD CONSIDER TURNING TO THE EMBASSIES OF THE U.K., CANADA, AND UNITED STATES FOR SUPPORT. HE SAID HE DID NOT TRUST THE CHINESE AND CUBAN DIPLOMATS EVEN THOUGH HE HAD EXCELLENT CONTACTS IN BOTH GROUPS.

POC: [REDACTED] COMMENTS, EVALUATIONS, AND REQUIREMENTS WELCOME.

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ACQ: [REDACTED]

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WARNING: REPORT CLASS S E C R E T--NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS.

[REDACTED]
ALL PORTIONS CARRY CLASSIFICATION AND CONTROLS OF OVERALL DOCUMENT.
END OF MESSAGE

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