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DECLASSIFIED CIA DOCUMENTS SHOW UNITED STATES HAD DETAILED INFORMATION REGARDING THE APRIL 2002 COUP IN VENEZUELA

“This is substantive evidence that the CIA knew in advance about the coup, and it is clear that this intelligence was distributed to dozens of members of the Bush administration, giving them knowledge of coup plotting.”¹

“The United States had the option through diplomatic channels of telling Chávez that the coup plot appeared to be imminent but they didn't,” said Peter Kornbluh, an analyst at the National Security Archive, an independent group that collects declassified U.S. documents. “To have done that would have damaged their relationship with those people who were coming to them and saying, ‘We're working on this.’”²

“The CIA was simply doing what it is we do, in terms of analyzing events and providing policy-makers with our best estimate of the events as they unfold,” said [a CIA] spokeswoman, who declined to be named. She added that alerting Chávez to the impending coup “would suggest we would meddle in the affairs of another nation.”³

According to recently declassified CIA documents, the United States government had detailed information regarding the April 11th, 2002 coup in Venezuela, just one week prior to the events that led to the brief overthrow of democratically-elected President Hugo Chávez.

Despite this information provided by the CIA, detailing how a coup would likely unfold, the Bush Administration claimed that details of events occurring were unclear, and even went so far as to blame President Chávez, a legitimately elected head of state, for his own overthrow. On April 12, 2002, during a White House press briefing, Spokesperson Ari Fleischer conveyed the following:

“Let me share with you the administration's thoughts about what's taking place in Venezuela. It remains a somewhat fluid situation. But yesterday's events in Venezuela resulted in a change in the government and the assumption of a transitional authority until new elections can be held. The details still are unclear. We know that the action encouraged by the Chávez government provoked this crisis. The results of these events are now that President Chávez has resigned the presidency. According to the best information available, the Chávez government suppressed peaceful demonstrations ... The results of these events are now that President Chávez has

1 U.S. kept quiet on Chávez plot , Bart Jones and Letta Tayler , Newsday, November 24, 2004

2 U.S. denies not giving Chávez coup warning, Pablo Bachelet, 12/25/04

3 U.S. kept quiet on Chávez plot , Bart Jones and Letta Tayler , Newsday, November 24, 2004

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resigned the presidency. Before resigning, he dismissed the vice president and the cabinet, and a transitional civilian government has been installed. .. That is what took place... ”

During a White House Press Briefing on April 16th, Fleischer again contended that the U.S. remained in the dark about the events in Venezuela, saying that “...*events were combustible, events were fluid... Those events were not anticipated....*”

Yet, a CIA Senior Intelligence Brief dated April 6, 2002 (MORI DocID:1136214), reads, in pertinent part: “**Dissident military factions, including some disgruntled senior officers and a group of radical junior officers, are stepping up efforts to organize a coup against President Chávez, possibly as early as this month...To provoke military action, plotters may try to exploit unrest stemming from opposition demonstrations slated for later this month or ongoing strikes at the state-owned oil company PDVSA.**”⁴

The United States publicly applauded the coup, reversing its position only after becoming internationally isolated in its support of the coup leaders. Reports have recently surfaced that the United States openly led efforts to win regional support for the coup government of Pedro Carmona. Jorge Castañeda, former Foreign Minister of Mexico under President Vicente Fox, told the press in November that “**Effectively, there was a proposition made by the United States and Spain, to issue a declaration with Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and France recognizing the government of Pedro Carmona.**”⁵ Earlier last week, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos told a Spanish television station, "Under the previous government, in an unprecedented move for Spanish diplomacy, the Spanish ambassador (in Caracas) received instructions to support the coup."⁶

As pointed out by State Department Deputy Spokesman Adam Ereli on November 24, 2004, citing a 2002 report of the Office of Inspector General on US policy toward Venezuela in the run-up to the coup, the U.S. Government contends that it had alerted the Government of Venezuela of possible coup attempts, and a credible assassination threat.⁷ Mr. Ereli, however, did not clarify in his statements whether he was referring to having shared the detailed evidence contained in the CIA documents dated April 6, 2004. According to press reports, information about a coup plot was shared with Venezuela by State Department officials on Feb. 27, 2002, two months before the detailed information in question was provided by the CIA.⁸

The statements made by the U.S. Administration purporting a lack of knowledge or understanding surrounding events leading to and during the coup d’etat in Venezuela that briefly deposed democratically-elected President Hugo Chávez are starkly contradicted by these CIA documents.

4 www.venezuelafoia.info

5 DENUNCIA. El ex canciller mexicano habló ayer: “Colombia, España, El Salvador y EE UU apoyaron el golpe”, AFP/Nancy Faría, 11/28/04

6 Spain says former government backed Venezuela coup, Daniel Flynn, Reuters, 11/23/04

7 <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2004/38758.htm>

8 U.S. denies not giving Chávez coup warning, Pablo Bachelet, 12/25/04