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TITLE: SUBJECT: POLL SHOWS PUBLIC ANGER OVER GUERRILLA ATTACKS;
CONTINUING POPULARITY FOR GAVIRIA

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TAGS: PGOV, PINR, CO, SNAR

SUBJECT: POLL SHOWS PUBLIC ANGER OVER GUERRILLA ATTACKS;
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RELEASED IN PART B3 CIA
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1. (U) AN OVERWHELMING NUMBER OF COLOMBIANS (92%) WOULD CONDITION GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION AT THE CARACAS PEACE TALKS ON A CESSATION OF GUERRILLA TERRORIST ATTACKS, ACCORDING TO A POLL CONDUCTED BY THE NATION'S LEADING POLLSTER, THE NATIONAL CONSULTING CENTER (CNC), AND PUBLISHED JULY 28 IN THE COUNTRY'S LEADING DAILY, EL TIEMPO.

2. (U) THE POLL ALSO SHOWS PRESIDENT GAVIRIA, AFTER ONE YEAR IN OFFICE, ENJOYING GREAT POPULARITY. SEVENTY-TWO PERCENT SAID THEY WOULD VOTE FOR GAVIRIA IF NEW ELECTIONS WERE HELD. HE WAS GIVEN AN OVERALL APPROVAL RATING OF 7.4 OUT OF 10.

3. (U) ANCHORING GAVIRIA'S POPULARITY ARE HIS NARCO POLICIES. SEVENTY-TWO PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED SAID THAT THE SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY HAD IMPROVED IN THE PAST YEAR IN RELATION TO NARCOTRAFFICKING. ONLY 24% SAID IMPROVEMENTS HAD OCCURRED REGARDING THE GUERRILLAS.

4. (U) THE POLL POINTS UP PROBLEMS FOR THE GAVIRIA ADMINISTRATION IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE. FIFTY-THREE PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED THINK THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY HAS WORSENERED UNDER GAVIRIA; 34% THINK THE ECONOMY REMAINS THE SAME AND ONLY 12% THINK IT IS BETTER. UNEMPLOYMENT, TOO, IS A MAJOR CONCERN: 43% THINK THIS AREA IS WORSE TODAY THAN A YEAR AGO WHILE 42%

REVIEW AUTHORITY: James Cooper, Senior Reviewer

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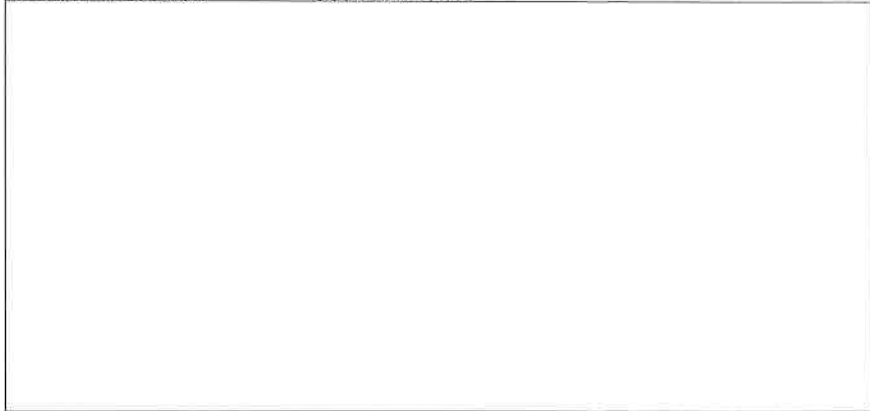
THINK IT IS THE SAME AND ONLY 14& BETTER.

5. (C) COMMENT: AFTER A YEAR IN OFFICE, GAVIRIA IS A POPULAR PRESIDENT WITH A STRONG BASE OF PUBLIC SUPPORT. THE POLICIES THAT LED TO THE SURRENDER OF PABLO ESCOBAR AND A HALT TO NARCO-RELATED TERRORISM ENJOY WIDE BACKING.

6. (C) PUBLIC ANGER OVER THE CURRENT WAVE OF GUERRILLA ATTACKS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THE CARACAS TALKS WILL COLLAPSE. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN A CAMPAIGN TO ORCHESTRATE PUBLIC SENTIMENT AGAINST THE GUERRILLAS (REFTEL) AND THE POLL, CONDUCTED BY THE LIBERAL PARTY'S MAIN POLLSTER AND APPEARING IN A PRO-GAVIRIA PAPER, MAY BE A VEILED ATTEMPT TO STRENGTHEN THE ADMINISTRATION'S HAND.

7. (C) IF GAVIRIA HAS AN ACHILES' HEEL, IT IS THE ECONOMY. IT WILL BE HARD TO SUSTAIN HIS CURRENT POPULARITY IF HIS ECONOMIC POLICIES CONTINUE TO RECEIVE SUCH POOR REVEIWS. MCNAMARA

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