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ACTION ARA-16

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9598
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARAMARIBO 0362

USIA FOR AR; GENEVA FOR UNHRC

E.O. 12356: DECL: 02/05/89
TAGS: PGOV, NS
SUBJ: POLICE RECONSTRUCT DEATH OF MAJOR HORB

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REF: PARAMARIBO 0331 AND PREVIOUS (NOTAL)

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. SUMMARY: POLICE OFFICIALS ON AFTERNOON OF 4 FEBRUARY RECONSTRUCTED PURPORTED SUICIDE OF MAJOR ROY HORB BEFORE TELEVISION CAMERAS. EVENT TOOK PLACE IN HORB'S FORMER CELL WHERE POLICE INSPECTOR VAN DER LAAR SAID THAT AVAILABLE EVIDENCE LED TO CONCLUSION THAT HORB TOOK HIS OWN LIFE. SURINAMERS RESPONDED TO

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Adolph Eisner, Senior Reviewer

POLICE PERFORMANCE WITH OUTRIGHT SKEPTICISM AND VOICED SUSPICION OF VAN DER LAAR'S EXPLANATION. END SUMMARY.

3. AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 4 POLICE OFFICIALS CLOSED HORB CASE WITH TELEVISED RECONSTRUCTION OF HIS PURPORTED SUICIDE. EXPECTED CONCLUSION OF TECHNICAL RECONSTRUCTION--THAT HORB "TOOK HIS OWN LIFE" WAS BROADCAST OVER AFTERNOON RADIO AND EVENING TELEVISION FOLLOWING REGULAR NEWS. FEBRUARY 5 EDITION OF DAILY "DE WARE TIJD" ALSO CARRIED REPORT ON POLICE RECONSTRUCTION OF INCIDENT. POLICE EFFORT WAS DIRECTED AND EXPLAINED BY CHIEF INSPECTOR VAN DER LAAR, HEAD OF TRACING AND RECOGNITION SERVICE. INSPECTOR IS A NETHERLANDER WHO HAS WORKED FOR SURINAME POLICE FOR 25 YEARS.

4. RECONSTRUCTION AND EXPLANATION WERE AS FOLLOWS:
-- DESCRIPTION OF HORB'S CELL: IN RIGHT REAR CORNER OF CELL WAS BUILT IN STEP-UP, APPROXIMATELY 18-20 INCHES HIGH. IMBEDDED IN WALL APPROXIMATELY 5 FEET ABOVE STEP-UP WAS HOOK. THIS HOOK, AND THREE OTHERS IMBEDDED IN OTHER WALLS OF CELL WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN IN PLACE FROM EARLY DAYS OF FORT ZEELANDIA'S EXISTENCE.
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-- SUICIDE ACT: MAJOR HORB CLIMBED UP STEP UP, PUT DOUBLE LENGTH OF ELASTICIZED CORD THROUGH HOOK, TIED CORD AROUND HIS NECK, THEN JUMPED OFF STEP-UP. THIS SEQUENCE WAS DEMONSTRATED BY ONE OF VAN DER LAAR'S SUBORDINATES. CHIEF INSPECTOR ALSO SAID THAT HOOK IN QUESTION HAD BEEN UNDER HORB'S WEIGHT. HE POINTED TO OTHER THREE HOOKS WHICH WERE STRAIGHT. HE ALSO ASSERTED THAT HAD HORB NOT DOUBLED LENGTH OF CORD HE USED, IT PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE HELD HIS WEIGHT.

-- "FAREWELL LETTER:" VAN DER LAAR SHOWED VIEWERS WORDS SCRATCHED INTO WALL (IN DUTCH) THAT READ AS FOLLOWS: "HORB IS UNJUSTLY LOCKED UP." VAN DER LAAR SAID HE TOOK THE PHRASE TO BE HORB'S "FAREWELL LETTER."

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARAMARIBO 0362

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-- NO SIGN OF VIOLENCE: VAN DER LAAR NOTED THAT PALE FACIAL COLOR AND DISCHARGE OF BODY FLUIDS AND WASTES, ALL TYPICAL OF PERSON WHO DIED BY SUICIDE WERE PRESENT WITH HORB'S BODY. THERE WAS "UTTERLY" NO SIGN OF
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VIOLENCE. ALSO, HORB'S SLIPPERS HAD BEEN SET ON FLOOR IN FRONT OF STEP-UP AND THERE WAS PAINT FROM STEP-UP ON BOTTOM OF HORB'S FEET. VAN DER LAAR THEREFORE CONCLUDED FOR VIEWERS THAT "WITH GREAT PROBABILITY BORDERING ON CERTAINTY" HORB'S DEATH WAS A SUICIDE.

-- PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITION OF PRISONER: VAN DER LAAR EXPLAINED THAT IN GENERAL, PRISONERS UNDER STRESS OFTEN BLACK OUT AND BECOME UNSTABLE. THEY THEN OFTEN CHOOSE WAY OUT OF LEAST RESISTANCE-SUICIDE.

5. UNDER NON-ACCUSATORY LEADING QUESTION FROM TELEVISION REPORTER, VAN DER LAAR STOOD ON HIS INTEGRITY AND SAID HE WOULD NOT HAVE HESITATED TO POINT OUT ANYTHING AMISS.

6. REACTION OF SURINAMERS: VIEWERS WHO WATCHED PROGRAM WITH EMBOFFS, AND OTHERS CONTACTED AFTERWARD, ALMOST TO A PERSON DERIDED VAN DER LAAR'S EXPLANATION. SOME SAID HORB'S GYM SHORTS DID NOT HAVE WAIST CORD, ONLY ELASTIC BAND. OTHERS POINTED OUT THAT HORB'S WAIST SIZE WAS APPROXIMATELY 26-28 INCHES AND LENGTH OF CORD DEMONSTRATED BY VAN DER LAAR WAS AT LEAST TWICE THAT LENGTH. SURINAMERS REFERRED TO HORB'S DEATH, BEFORE AND AFTER RECONSTRUCTION PERFORMANCE, AS A "KILLING", NOT SUICIDE.

7. COMMENT: MILITARY CLEARLY ARE AT PAINS TO PROVE THAT HORB'S DEATH WAS SUICIDE AND NOT OF THEIR DOING. HENCE PARADE OF NON-POLITICAL EXPERTS SINCE INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF HORB'S DEATH. SKEPTICISM AND SUSPICION OF POPULATION TOWARD MILITARY'S EXPLANATION HAS NOT LED TO ANY ORGANIZED ACTION PROTESTING HORB'S DEATH, HOWEVER. DUEMLING

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