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ACTION WHA-00

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R 301526Z MAR 06
 FM AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7900
 INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO
 AMEMBASSY LIMA
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RELEASED IN PART
 B1, 1.4(D)

UNCLAS GUAYAQUIL 000280

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
 TAGS: PGOV, KDEM, EC

SUBJECT: Presidential Campaign Politics from Guayaquil.

1. (SBU) Summary: Recent meetings with political leaders in Guayaquil revealed that negotiations between early presidential front-runner Leon Roldos and the Democratic Left (ID) party have bogged down over the vice presidential pick, and that some associated with the Social Christian (PSC) party fear a loss of congressional seats in the October elections. Some speculate that PSC leader Leon Febres Cordero might consider supporting ex-president Lucio Gutierrez' right to run to weaken opponents. The presidential field is now crowded with coastal pre-candidates, offering a powerful incentive for the ID to keep its options open. End Summary.

2. (U) CG, PolChief and PolEconOff met separately with presidential early front-runner Leon Roldos, his ally Humberto Mata, and Guayaquil Chamber of Commerce president Eduardo Maruri on March 24. PolChief met on March 25 with Patriotic Society national party president Gilmar Gutierrez, recently released from prison after five months of incarceration with his brother, ex-president Lucio Gutierrez. This was the first Embassy contact with the

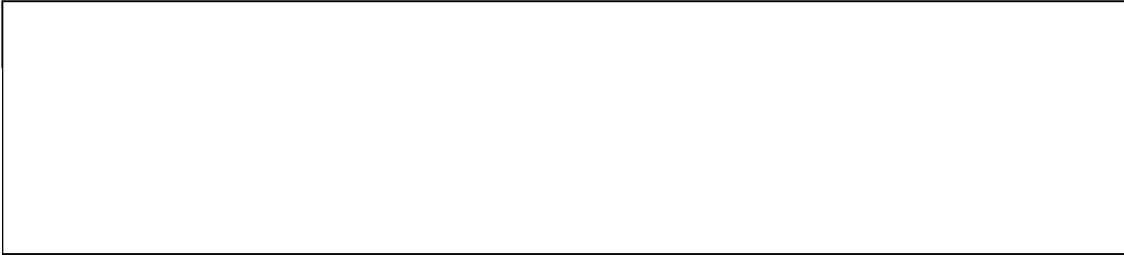
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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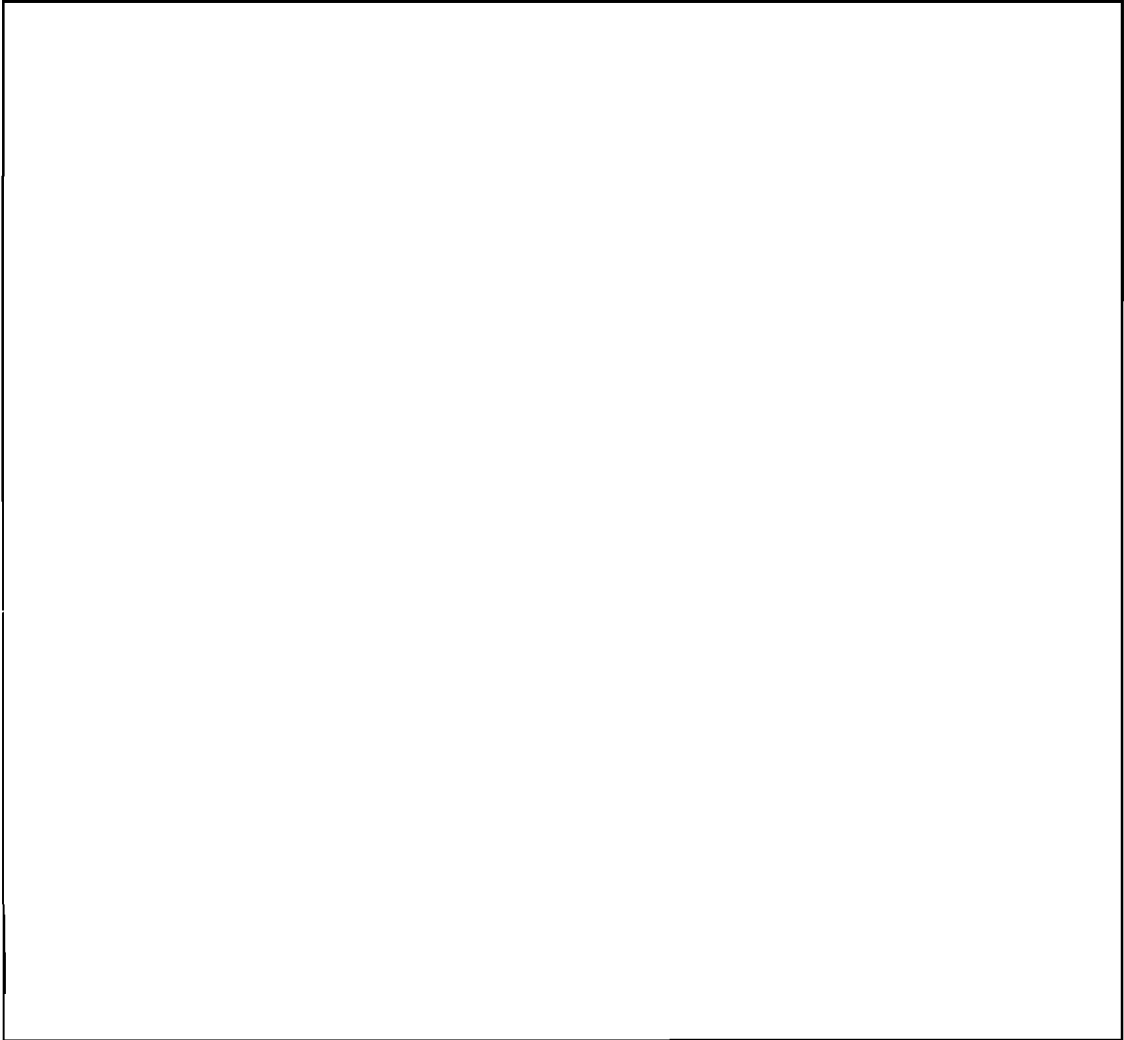
Gutierrez' camp since his return to Ecuador in October 2005.

Coffee with the Front-runner

3. (SBU) As former vice president Leon Roldos arrived to our meeting he shouted orders into his cell phone to "get ID leader Andres Vallejo into a room (with him and his advisors Antonio Ricuarte and Cornelio Marchan) to work out the details of the alliance or be done with it." Roldos acknowledged to us that no deal had yet been struck, and said he would select from among possible ID running-mates.



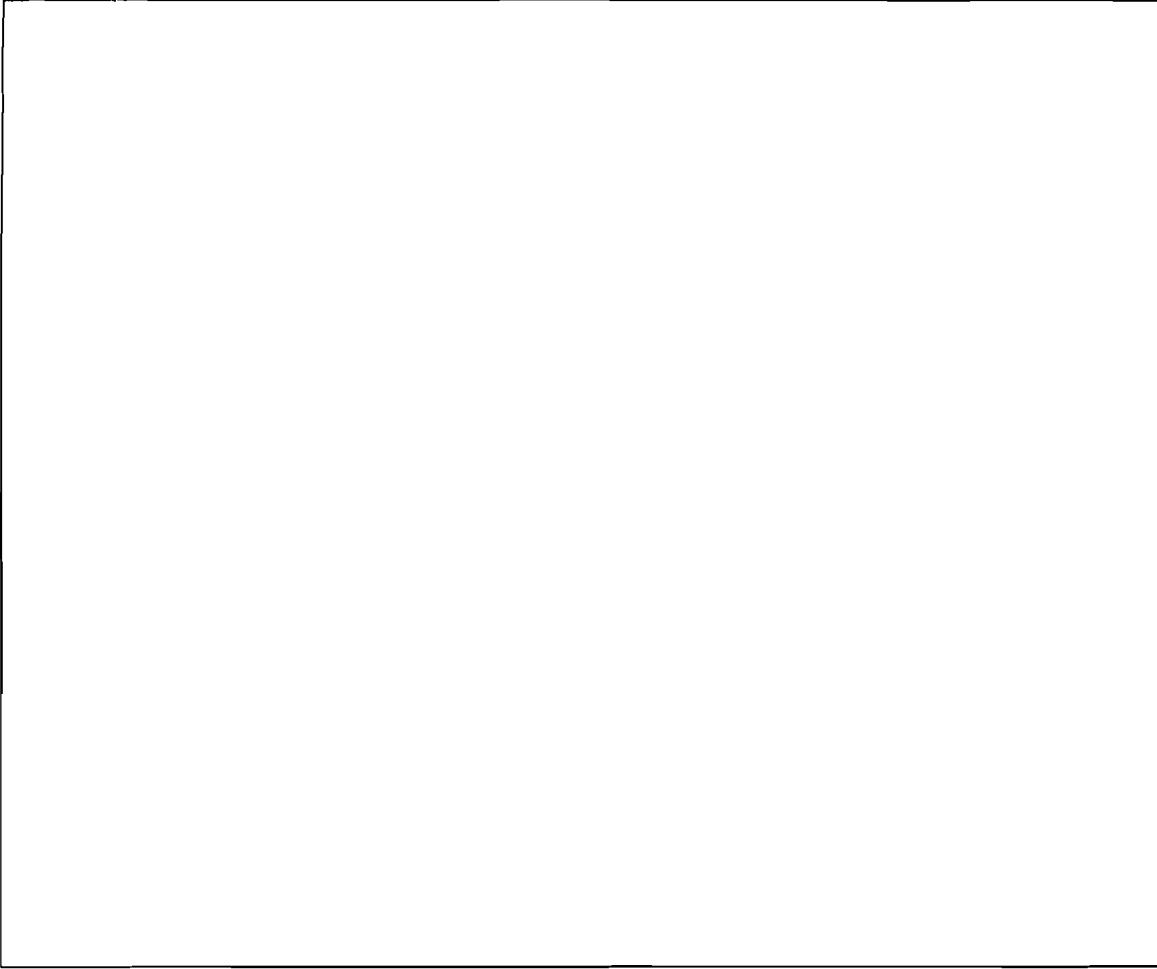
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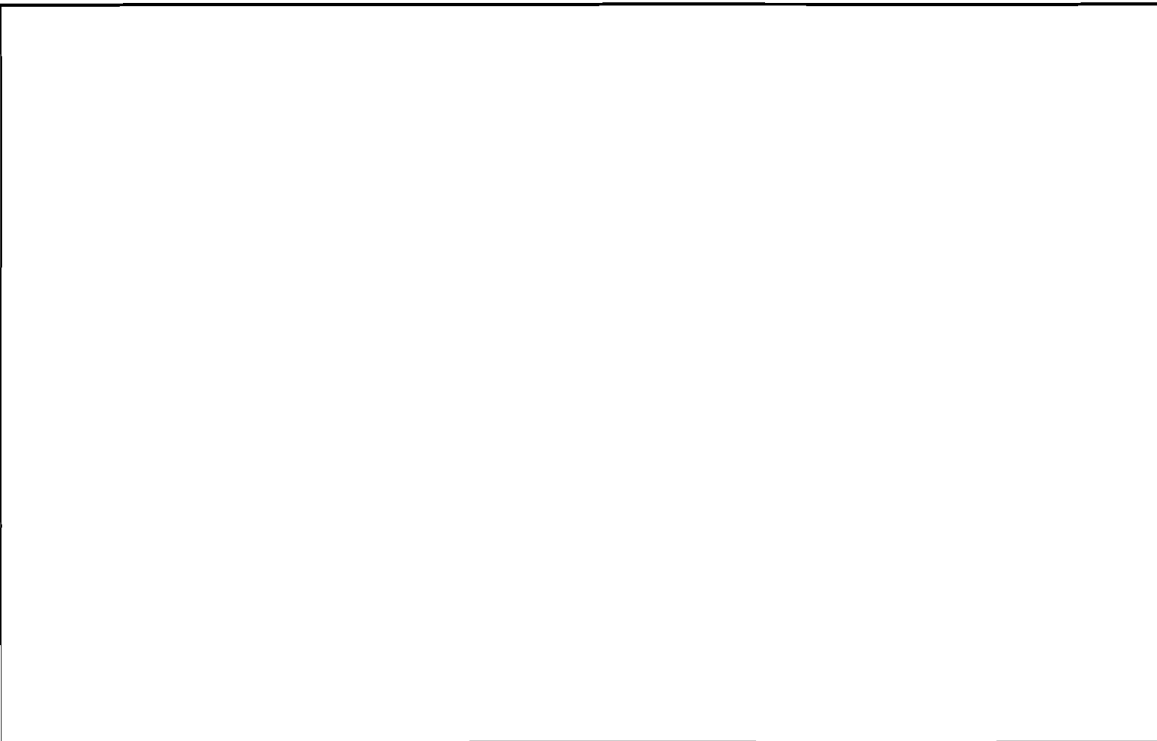
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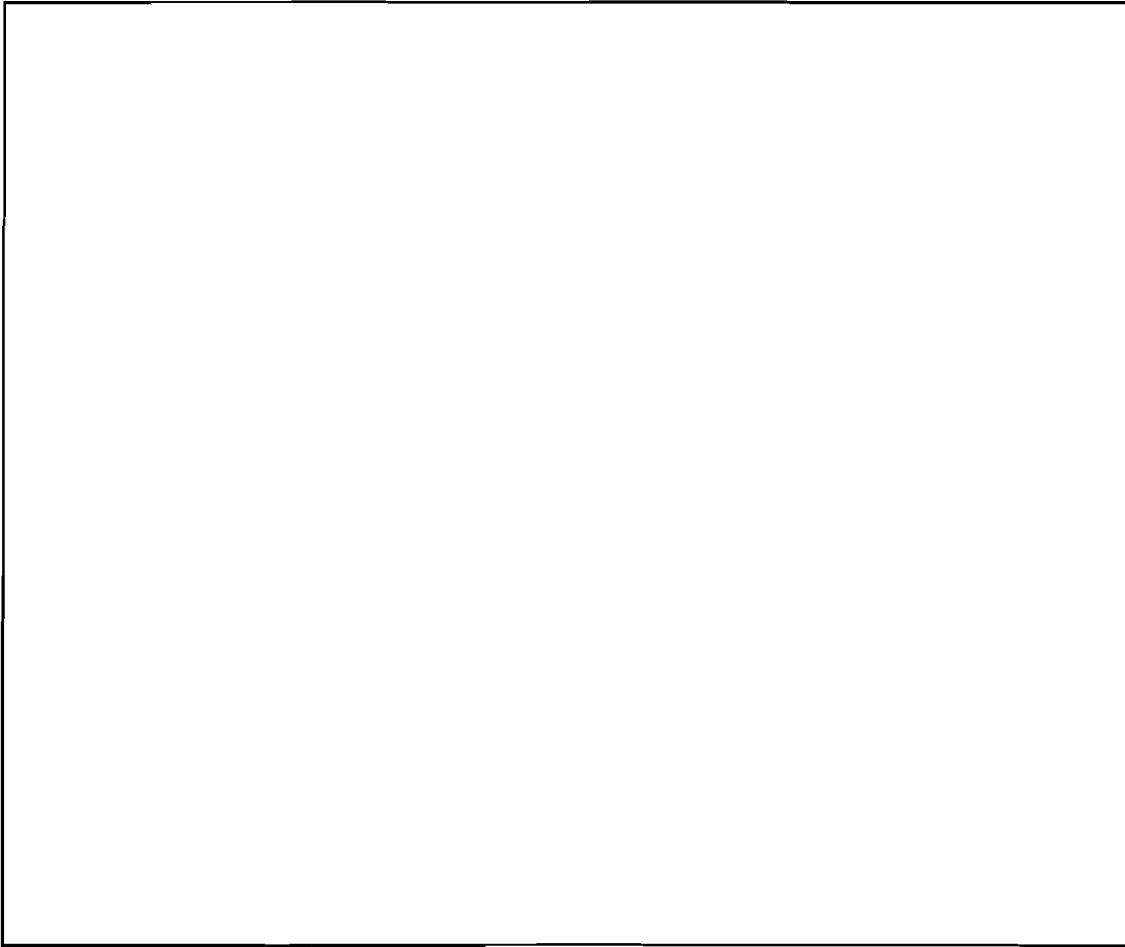
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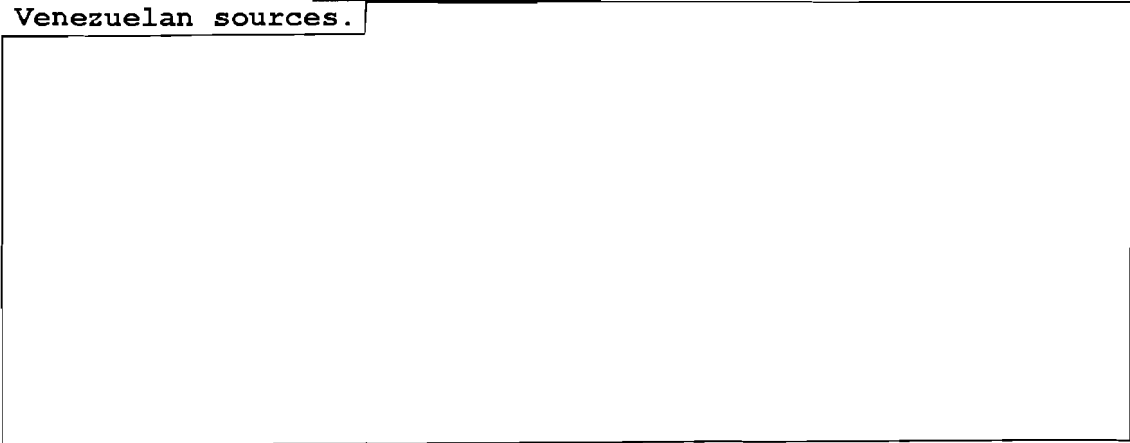
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10. (SBU) [redacted] believed Venezuelan president Chavez had a hand [redacted] [redacted] He urged the USG to take a more aggressive line against Chavez, whose regional influence is growing. In Ecuador, presidential candidate Rafael Correa has access to plenty of money, [redacted] implied comes from Venezuelan sources. [redacted]



12. (SBU) With many aspiring candidates crowding the populist-left field, a Gutierrez candidacy, with regional appeal in the Amazon, populous coastal Manabi province, and elsewhere, could act as a spoiler for several other aspirants, possibly even the perennial second-place finisher, banana magnate Alvaro Noboa. Polls taken immediately after Gutierrez' exit from prison put him immediately in second or third position after Roldos and Noboa, with nearly 20% support. Regardless of whether he runs, the PSP is poised to experience a boost from its current four congressional seats, especially in the Amazon region. We will continue to dialogue with all serious contenders for the presidency.

HERBERT

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