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**The President**

## ***REPORT***

**Subj:** Visit to Portuguese associations 10-14 September 2005.

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1. From 10-14 September I visited the Portuguese associations. The main reason for my visit was the tense situation in Portugal with respect to deteriorating social conditions in general and in particular for military personnel.
2. Background of the tension is the financial deficit that the Government is facing for some time and the warnings from “Brussels” that they have to stay within the limits of the Euro-zone. Therefore, the Government has decided to cut heavily in social provisions such as pensions, health, etc. As the governing socialist party has an absolute majority in Parliament, it must be expected that the Government will have little political difficulties in having its plans approved.
3. Portuguese society however, is not accepting the plans forthwith. In particular the military personnel see this as another deterioration of their working conditions that have been deteriorating already over the past 10-20 years. In their view the balance with civil society is completely in favor of civil society and the Government’s plans will only tilt the unbalance further down. Moreover, they are being ignored in consultations as they are entitled to in accordance with the Law of 2001 that gave them the right of association.
4. Since June this year, the associations have been organizing peaceful and playful manifestations with Parliament, the Prime Minister, etc. causing however the Ministry of Defense to react that these actions were illegal, damaging discipline, etc. thereby only pouring oil on the fire. For 13 September the associations had planned a manifestation that however was forbidden by the Lisbon authorities, duly advised by the Minister of Defense. An appeal to the Lisbon Tribunal was turned down, although many lawyers doubt the authority of the Lisbon Government in this and are also of the opinion that the associations have the right to organize manifestations (in civilian, no military insignia, etc.) as planned.
5. So, the associations turned to Plan B: a meeting in the Casa de Alentejo in Lisbon where some 3.000 military personnel met in the building, on the stairs and even outside on the streets. Speakers were me, the three associations and their huge supporter, the Magistrate Dr. Bernardo Colaço. The meeting clearly showed in a very disciplinary and dignified way their discontent, their loyalty to the State and the people of Portugal and was closed with an impressive and emotional singing of the national anthem.
6. Further manifestations are to be expected from various segments of Portuguese society (judges to go on strike!), incl. military personnel (but organized by their wives!) and their dependents. Strategies will be developed to have a huge national manifestation and it can only

be hoped that the Government will come to its senses and defuse the increasing explosive situation.

7. After the manifestation the Minister of Defense declared on television that to his opinion the Law on associations has to be reviewed and may be changed. Considering the circumstances, that can only mean further tightening of the soldier's civil rights. Our Portuguese friends will carefully monitor this and develop their own proposals to make the Law more clear with respect to their rights.

8. The proposal by Carlos Pires (AOFA) of an international conference on globalism was not discussed.

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*Uden, 23 October 2007,  
Bauke Snoep*