5-12-1992

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Brazil: Military Officers Continue To Demand Pay Hikes

by Barbara Khol

Category/Department: General
Published: Tuesday, May 12, 1992

On April 29, daily newspaper O Estado de Sao Paulo reported that the three military ministers convened with other members of the cabinet to push for a rapid equalization of salary levels among the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of government. O Estado said the federal government had already called for a study on the matter aimed at implementing "equiparacao" before year-end. (See Chronicle 04/30/92 for previous coverage on military salary demands.) In statements published May 1, Army Minister Carlos Tinoco assured troops that he would push for further salary hikes. The appeal, read Thursday in all military barracks, urged troops to use reason rather than force to show dissatisfaction with current pay levels. Aeronautics Minister Socrates Monteiro alluded to the possibility last week that troops would stage small uprisings to demand pay increases. Monteiro warned that the anger of low-ranking officers and enlisted men over poor salaries threatened to "break the mechanism of control over the troops." The armed forces had been pressing for pay increases since last year. In April, the salaries of most public employees, including military personnel were increased by 18%. The minimum wage was raised from US$45 to US$100 per month. An army general with 40 years of active service currently earns about US$2,000 a month, and an enlisted soldier, about US$200 per month. Spokespersons for the military noted that purchasing power has decline by about 850% since President Fernando Collor de Mello took office two years ago. According to official statistics, the consumer price index rose 575% over the past 12 months, and 90% since Jan. 1. Jair Bolsonaro, a retired army captain and federal deputy for the Democratic Christian Party, organized the spouses of low-ranking officers and enlisted personnel to protest low military salaries in a street demonstration in Brasilia last week. Gen. Gilberto Serra, chief of the army communications office, said the protest prompted Tinoco's statements. (Basic data from O Estado de Sao Paulo, 04/29/92; United Press International, 05/01/92; Spanish news service EFE, 04/29/92, 05/01/92, 05/02/92)

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