SUBJECT: MOD ALLEGED TO HAVE AUTHORIZED ILLEGAL ARMS SALES TO CONVIVIRS AND NARCOTRAFFICKERS

REF: BOGOTA 1319

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY S.K. ABETYA. REASON: 1.5(D).

SUMMARY

2. (S) ALLEGATIONS THAT MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OFFICIALS AUTHORIZED ILLEGAL ARMS SALES TO CONVIVIRS WITH LINKS TO PARAMILITARIES AND NARCOTRAFFICKERS WERE RECENTLY PUBLISHED IN THE BOGOTA-BASED "ALTERNATIVA" MAGAZINE. POST'S CONTACTS HAVE LENT A SIGNIFICANT DEGREE OF CREDIBILITY TO THE ALLEGATIONS. EMBASSY INTENDS TO EXAMINE FURTHER DOCUMENTATION OF THESE ALLEGATIONS. IN THE MEANTIME, THE AMBASSADOR WILL EXPRESS TO THE GOC THE USG CONCERNS WHICH THE PUBLISHED INFORMATION RAISES. END SUMMARY.

3. (S) POL AND DAO OFFICERS HAVE ON TWO OCCASIONS MET WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO CLAIM THAT THE CONVIVIR (RURAL SECURITY AND VIGILANCE COOPERATIVES), ARE IN MANY CASES HEAVILY ARMED AND SUBJECT TO VIRTUALLY NO GOVERNMENT CONTROL, CONTRARY TO GOC PROPAGANDA ON THE GROUPS. THE INDIVIDUALS STRUCK EMBOFFS AS BEING CREDIBLE.

THE "SUPERINTENDENCY OF VIGILANCE AND PRIVATE SECURITY," HEADED UNTIL APRIL 4 BY HERMAN ARIAS GAVIRIA, CHARACTERIZED BY "ALTERNATIVA" AS THE "CONVIVIR CZAR."

4. (S) THE ARTICLE CONTAINS A LIST OF 60 CONVIVIRS AUTHORIZED BY ARIAS IN 1996 TO BUY A WIDE RANGE OF OFFENSIVE WEAPONS LEGALLY RESTRICTED FOR EXCLUSIVE USE BY THE ARMED FORCES AND POLICE. THE LIST INCLUDES SUBMACHINEGUNS, .9MM PISTOLS, MINI-UZIS, RIFLES, MUNITIONS AND OTHER RESTRICTED USE ITEMS
CONVIVIRS HAVE BEEN FORMED SINCE THEIR INCEPTION IN 1994, ACCORDING TO "ALTERNATIVA." THAT IS TWICE THE NUMBER OF CONVIVIRS BELIEVED TO HAVE FORMED BY JUNE/JULY OF 1996.
SECRET
n/a

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5753
INFO NSC WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 2000
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
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DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD
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SECRET SECTION 02 OF 02 BOGOTA 003330

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NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
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BOGOTA 03330 02 OF 02 092007Z
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEA FOR OF, OFL, OC, AX
JUSTICE FOR CRIM. WARREN, RICHARD AND NANDS/VAN VLIET
FBI FOR CID/IRS/IRU2
USIA FOR AR, I/GAR
TREASURY FOR FINCEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/07/07
TAGS: PREL, PHUM, PGOV, SNAR, PINR, KJUS, KCRM, CO
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IN ADDITION,

BOGOTA DAILY "EL ESPECTADOR" RECENTLY PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE ON THE

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THREE TYPES OF CONVIVIR, ARMED IN VARYING DEGREES, THAT HAVE EVOLVED BEYOND THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT OF UNARMED CITIZENS PROVIDING INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO GOVERNMENT FORCES.

7. (S) THE "ALTERNATIVA" ARTICLE ARGUE THAT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE IS PROVIDING A LEGAL COVER FOR PARAMILITARY GROUPS.

THE AMBASSADOR INTENDS TO QUERY THE NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER HE IS SWORN IN AS TO GOC PLANS TO INVESTIGATE THE PRESENT ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT BY THE SUPERINTENDENCY. POST WILL BASE INQUIRIES ON INFORMATION THAT HAS APPEARED IN THE PRESS.

PRECHETTE

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