1. (C) COLOMBIAN PRESS REPORTED AUGUST 12 AN ANGRY DENIAL BY (APPEARENTLY-EX) ARMY INSPECTOR GENERAL IVAN RAMIREZ OF CHARGES CONTAINED IN AN AUGUST 11 "WASHINGTON POST" ARTICLE, IN WHICH HE ACCUSED THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF BETRAYAL AND OF MALIGNING HIS "HONOR." IN ADDITION TO REPORTING HIS FOMENTING OF ILLEGAL PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS, THE POST ARTICLE CHARGED RAMIREZ WAS A CIA INFORMANT, AND LINKED HIM TO HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND...
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NARCOTRAFFICKING. ALSO IN THE NEWS ARE GENERAL OFFICERS FERNANDO MILLAN PEREZ AND RITO ALEJO DEL RIO ROJAS, BOTH OF WHOM ARE SUBJECTS OF FEDERAL PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE INVESTIGATIONS INTO ALLEGED LINKS TO ILLEGAL PARAMILITARY GROUPS. THESE INVESTIGATIONS WILL SERVE AS A MARKER TO OFFICERS WHO CONTINUE TO ILLEGALLY ASSIST PARAMILITARY GROUPS. END SUMMARY.

GEN. RAMIREZ ANGRILY DENIES "WASHINGTON POST'S" ALLEGATIONS


3. (U) THE INFURIATED RAMIREZ BLASTED THE POST'S ARTICLE AS "INFAMOUS PERSECUTION, YELLOW JOURNALISM, AND SENSATIONALISM." HE PUBLICLY ATTEMPTED TO THE "FARC AND CERTAIN (I.E., LEFTIST) NGO'S" ACCUSATIONS AGAINST HIM OF INVOLVEMENT IN NARCOTRAFFICKING AND SUPPORT OF PARAMILITARY GROUPS. HE ACCUSED THE USG OF ABANDONING THOSE WITH WHOM IT COOPERATED DURING THE COLD WAR. REFERRING TO THE DEPARTMENT'S HAVING REVOKED HIS VISAM IN MAY ON TERRORISM GROUNDS, RAMIREZ SAID HE HAS "COME TO EXPECT ANYTHING FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT." HE ALSO SAID HE IS IN POSSESSION OF "PROOF OF HIS INNOCENCE," BUT DECLINED TO DIVULGE THAT PROOF.

4. (S) COMMENT AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

RAMIREZ WAS HEAD OF ARMY INTELLIGENCE FROM 1991-1994, AND RETAINED A GREAT DEAL OF INFLUENCE AMONG ARMY INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS AFTER HE LEFT THAT POST TO COMMAND THE 1ST BRIGADE. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE "POST" ARTICLE CITED ONLY PERSONS FROM THE UNITED STATES AND COLOMBIAN INTELLIGENCE
COMMUNITIES, RAMIREZ AGAIN PUBLICLY TRACED HIS DIFFICULTIES DIRECTLY TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT. AFTER HIS Visa WAS REVOKED IN SECRET

May, he said on Bogota Radio that his problems emanated directly from "Two Members of the Embassy Political Section."

TWO GENERALS UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR TIES TO PARAMILITARIES


6. (U) THE FEDERAL PROSECUTOR ALSO CONFIRMED THAT A PRELIMINARY

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INVESTIGATION OF GENERAL RITO ALEJO DEL RIO ROJAS, COMMANDER OF THE ARMY'S 13TH BRIGADE (BOGOTA), IS ALSO UNDERWAY. ACCORDING TO PRESS, THE GENERAL'S ALLEGED LINKS TO ACCU PARAMILITARIES IN THE URABA REGION WHILE HE COMMANDED THE 17TH BRIGADE FROM DECEMBER 1995 TO DECEMBER 1997 ARE THE SUBJECT OF THE INVESTIGATION.

7. (S) BIOGRAPHIC NOTE: ALTHOUGH BRIGADE COMMANDS ARE GENERALLY ROTATED EVERY YEAR, GENERAL DEL RIO WAS ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN COMMAND OF THE 17TH BRIGADE IN HIGHLY-CONFLICTIVE URABA REGION FOR TWO YEARS, APPARENTLY BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN BLOODYING THE PARC'S NOSE DURING THE PERIOD OF HIS COMMAND. HIS SYSTEMATIC ARMING AND EQUIPPING OF AGGRESSIVE REGIONAL PARAMILITARIES WAS PIVOTAL TO HIS MILITARY SUCCESS AT THE TIME. GENERAL DEL RIO HAS LONG BEEN ACCUSED OF LINKS TO PARAMILITARIES: HE WAS INVESTIGATED FOR ALLEGEDLY DELIVERING 100 MP5 SUBMACHINE GUNS IN 1985 TO PARAMILITARIES IN THE MAGDALENA MEDIO REGION. HE IS REPUTED TO BE A PROTEGE OF MAJOR GENERAL IVAN RAMIREZ. THANKS TO ACCUSATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES LEVELLED BY NGO'S CINEP (RESEARCH AND POPULAR EDUCATION CENTER) AND JUSTICIA Y PAZ (PEACE AND JUSTICE), DEL RIO'S RELATIONS WITH THOSE AND OTHER NGO'S ARE PARTICULARLY STRAINED. END NOTE.

COMMENT

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8. (C) AS DEMONSTRATED BY HIS INVENTIVE, MAJOR GENERAL RAMIREZ TENDS TO SINGLE OUT THE STATE DEPARTMENT AS THE SOURCE OF HIS TROUBLES. THE "WASHINGTON POST" ARTICLE PROVIDED HIM OCCASION TO MAKE A FINAL JAB AT THE DEPARTMENT BEFORE RETIREMENT. WE ARE UNSURPRISED THAT HE DECLINED TO DIVULGE THE "EVIDENCE OF HIS
INNOCENCE" -- THE DEPARTMENT FOUND THAT EVIDENCE OF HIS
COMPICITY IN REPEATED, GRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WAS
SUFFICIENT TO REVOKE HIS VISA. HIS APPARENTLY IMMENENT DEPARTURE
FROM THE RANKS OF THE COLOMBIAN ARMY WILL CONTRIBUTE TO ITS
ONGOING PROFESSIONALIZATION. SEPARATELY, WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY
THE FEDERAL PROSECUTOR'S APPARENT DILIGENCE IN INVESTIGATING
LINKS BETWEEN SENIOR ARMY OFFICERS AND PARAMILITARIES. THESE
INVESTIGATIONS WILL SERVE AS A MARKER TO THOSE ARMY OFFICERS WHO
CONTINUE TO ILLEGALLY ASSIST OR OTHERWISE WORK WITH PARAMILITARY
GROUPS.

KAMMAN

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