REleased in Part 1.4(D)

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ACTION DRL-09

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-10 ACDE-00 INLB-01 AID-00 ARA-01 ACQ-01
INL-01 OASY-00 SRPP-00 DS-00 EB-00 OIGO-01 TEDE-00
INR-00 IO-00 L-01 ADS-00 OIC-02 DSCC-00 /027W

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P 102238Z JAN 97
PM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3961
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
INFO CIA WASHDC
DIRONDCP WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
NSC WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 1139
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USMISSION GENEVA
DEA WASHDC
NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD
FBI WASHDC
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 00274

STATE FOR DRL, ARA/AND, INL, L/LEI
NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS

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Current Class: CONFIDENTIAL
UNCLASSIFIED
Page: 1
CURRENT CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 10 JAN 2017
DATE/CASE ID: 09 APR 2008 200604350
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ONDCCP FOR BILL BOZIN
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEA FOR OP, OPL, OC, AX
JUSTICE FOR CRIM. WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET
FBI FOR CID/IRS/IRU2
USIA FOR AR, I/GAR
TREASURY FOR FINCEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/27/01
TAGS: PHUM, PREL, PGOV, SNAR, PINR, KJUS, KCRM, CO
SUBJECT: RETIRED ARMY COLONEL LAMBASTE MILITARY FOR INACTION
AGAINST PARAMILITARIES

REF:

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECONOFF SUSAN ABYTA. REASON 1.5(D).

SUMMARY

2. (U) RETIRED ARMY COLONEL CARLOS ALFONSO VELASQUEZ, PUBLICLY
DENOUNCED THE ARMY JANUARY 9 FOR FAILING TO COMBAT PARAMILITARY
GROUPS IN URABA. KNOWN AND ADACRED AS FORMER COMMANDER OF THE
ARMY COMPONENT OF THE SPECIAL ANTI-NARCOTICS TASK FORCE IN CALI
(BLOQUE DE BUSQUEDA), VELASQUEZ IS CREDITED WITH UNCOVERING
INFORMATION THAT FORMED THE BASIS FOR CASO 8,000. VELASQUEZ
CLAIMS THAT HE WAS FORCED INTO RETIREMENT BECAUSE OF A HIGHLY
CRITICAL REPORT HE DRAFTED CHARGING THE ARMY WITH INACTION AND
NEGLIGENCE IN THE FACE OF GROWING PARAMILITARISM IN URABA, WHERE
HE WAS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE 17TH BRIGADE. END SUMMARY.

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HIGHLY RESPECTED COLONEL PUBLICLY CALLS ARMY TO ACCOUNT

3. (U) RETIRED ARMY COLONEL CARLOS ALFONSO VELASQUEZ WENT ON

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NATIONAL TV JANUARY 9 TO BLAST THE ARMY FOR ITS WILLFUL FAILURE TO COMBAT PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN COLOMBIA. LOCAL DAILIES GAVE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO VELASQUEZ STATEMENTS JANUARY 10, BUT VELASQUEZ HAD EVIDENTLY BEEN PREPARING TO GO PUBLIC FOR SOME TIME. AN EXTENSIVE INTERVIEW WITH VELASQUEZ APPEARED IN THE JANUARY 15-FEBRUARY 15 ISSUE OF "ALTERNATIVA" AS WELL. VELASQUEZ WAS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE 17TH BRIGADE IN URABA FROM JUNE 1995 UNTIL THE FALL OF 1996. ON MAY 31, 1996, VELASQUEZ SUBMITTED AN INTERNAL REPORT TO THE GENERAL STAFF, CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF THE 17TH BRIGADE FOR FAILURE OF THE BRIGADE TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN URABA. THE REPORT WAS CRITICAL OF THE 17TH BRIGADE COMMANDER GENERAL RITO ALEJO DEL RIO WHO, VELASQUEZ CHARGED, WAS NOT ENGAGED IN FIGHTING PARAMILITARIES AND WHO TOOK SPECIAL MEASURES TO KEEP VELASQUEZ OUT OF THE LOOP WITH REGARD TO KEY BRIGADE ACTIONS. VELASQUEZ SAID HE ALSO WROTE TO GENERAL BEDOYA, THE ARMY COMMANDER AND LATER MET WITH HIM. BEDOYA WAS NOT SYMPATHETIC, SAID VELASQUEZ. A RESULT, AN INVESTIGATION AGAINST VELASQUEZ HIMSELF WAS LAUNCHED, AS HE TOLD THE PRESS, FOR "INSUBORDINATION AND DISLOYALTY." ON AUGUST 23, THE ARMY GENERAL ASSIGNED TO INVESTIGATE THE CASE ISSUED A RESOLUTION OF "REPRISION SEVERA" OR SEVERE REPRIMAND AGAINST VELASQUEZ FOR "INSUBORDINATION, BREACH OF SERVICE AND COMRADESHIP." VELASQUEZ' EFFORTS TO APPEAL FAILED, AND ON NOVEMBER 20, HE WAS ORDERED INTO RETIREMENT, WHICH TOOK EFFECT JANUARY 1. HE TOLD "ALTERNATIVE" THAT DURING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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APPEAL HEARING, HE WAS CRITICIZED FOR HAVING RECOMMENDED THAT AN INTERNATIONAL NGO GIVE SPECIAL RECOGNITION TO MONSIGNOR DUARTE CANCINO AND MAYOR GLORIA CUARTAS OF APARTADO FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN FAVOR OF PEACE.

4. (U) VELASQUEZ TOLD BOGOTA DAILY "EL TIEMPO" THAT THE ARMY IS NOT CONVINCED THAT PARAMILITARY ELEMENTS CONSTITUTE A DANGEROUS FACTOR IN THE PUBLIC DISORDER AND VIOLENCE IN URABA. HE FURTHER CHARACTERIZED ELEMENTS IN THE ARMY AS BEING EXTREMELY RADICALIZED TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY CONCEIVE THE GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS AS PERSONAL ENEMIES RATHER THAN AS ENEMIES OF SOCIETY. FOR HIS PART, VELASQUEZ SAID THE ARMY SHOULD COMBAT EVERY FACTOR THAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE VIOLENCE AFFECTING COLOMBIAN SOCIETY.
VELASQUEZ WARNED THAT THE TENDENCY TO IGNORE THE PRESENCE OF PARAMILITARIES COULD LEAD IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO A SITUATION ANALOGOUS TO WHAT HE CALLED COLOMBIA'S FORMER "COHABITATION" WITH NARCOTRAFFICKERS. HE TOLD "ALTERNATIVA" THAT THERE WAS NO OBJECTIVE AND IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION OF HIS ALLEGATIONS, EXPLAINING, "THE ARMY IS SUCH A HIERARCHICAL INSTITUTION THAT
THERE STILL EXISTS THE PRINCIPLE THAT ONE'S SUPERIOR IS RIGHT ABOVE ALL ELSE, AND FOR THAT REASON THEY GIVE MORE CREDENCE TO THE BRIGADE COMMANDER'S STATEMENT." VELASQUEZ STATED FURTHER THAT ARMY COMMANDER BEOYA HAD REPROACHED HIM FOR SUBMITTING HIS REPORT WITHOUT "INCONTOVERTIBLE EVIDENCE," TO WHICH HE COUNTERED THE PURPOSE OF THE REPORT WAS TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THE INFORMATION HE PROVIDED WAS SUFFICIENT TO LAUNCH AN INVESTIGATION
THAT WOULD PRODUCE HARD EVIDENCE.

AN ADIMRED AND MUCH-DECORATED OFFICER

5. (U) VELASQUEZ WAS BEST KNOWN AS THE COMMANDER OF ARMY COMPONENT OF THE SPECIAL ANTI-NARCOTICS JOINT COMMAND OR TASK FORCE ("BLOQUE DE BUSQUEDA") IN CALI. HE COMMANDED THE UNIT WHEN IT CONDUCTED RAIDS ON THE OFFICE OF THE CALI CARTEL'S FORMER ACCOUNTANT, GUILLERMO PALOMARI, WHOSE RECORDS REVEALED THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PENETRATION OF NARCODONATIONS IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AND FORMED THE BASIS OF CASO 8,000. HE GARNERED ADDITIONAL RESPECT AMONG THE COLOMBIAN PUBLIC WHEN HE STOOD UP TO A BLACKMAIL ATTEMPT BY THE CARTEL BY GOING PUBLIC ABOUT AN EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIR.

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COMMENT

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6. (C) EMBOFFS WHO KNOW VELASQUEZ SPEAK HIGHLY OF HIS PERFORMANCE AS HEAD OF THE ANTI-NARCOTICS SPECIAL JOINT COMMAND'S ARMY COMPONENT IN CALI. WHEN THE CARTEL TRIED TO BLACKMAIL HIM, THEN MINISTER OF DEFENSE BOTERO SAVED HIM FROM DISMISSAL. BOTERO CHARACTERIZED HIM AS CLEAN, AMONG THE BEST, AND OF UNQUESTIONABLE INTEGRITY.

VELASQUEZ' STATEMENTS BRING EXTRA PRESSURE TO BEAR ON THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY AS THEY PREPARE FOR A NEW DEFENSE MINISTER. THEY WILL ADD CREDIBILITY TO OUR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT.