SUBJ: IIR ANTI-NARCOTIC POLICE OPERATIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HUILA (U)

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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DOI: (U) 931116.

REQS: (U)

SOURCE:

SUMMARY: ANTI-NARCOTIC POLICE OPERATIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HUILA FOCUS PRINCIPALLY ON SUPPORT TO THE SPECIAL POLICE POPPY SPRAYING COMMISSION.

TEXT: 1. ANTI-NARCOTIC POLICE OPERATIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HUILA FOCUS PRINCIPALLY ON SUPPORT TO THE SPECIAL POLICE POPPY SPRAYING COMMISSION.

THE PERSONNEL ARE DESIGNATED AS DEPLOYABLE PERSONNEL ABOARD THE POLICE HELICOPTERS WHILE FLYING COMBAT AIR SUPPORT FOR THE TURBO THRUSH CROP SPRAYING AIRCRAFT WHEN SPRAYING OPERATIONS ARE CONDUCTED. EACH HELICOPTER CARRIES ANTI-NARCOTIC POLICE PERSONNEL IN ADDITION TO THE AIR CREW. THE DEPLOYED POLICE PERSONNEL ARE USED AS DOOR GUNNERS AS WELL AS GROUND ATTACK TROOPS IF THE SITUATION SO DEMANDS. POOR FLYING CONDITIONS OVER THE POPPY FIELDS ARE COMMON AND CONSTANTLY PLAQUE SPRAYING OPERATIONS.

2. THE DEPARTMENT OF HUILA IS THE
MOST PRODUCTIVE POPPY CULTIVATION REGION OF COLOMBIA. 
THE DEPARTMENTS OF TOLIMA AND CAUCA ARE ALSO HIGH PRODUCERS OF POPPY PLANTS. THAT THE LIMITED NUMBER OF CROP SPRAYING AIRCRAFT DOES NOT ALLOW CONSTANT PRESSURES TO BE BROUGHT TO BEAR AGAINST ALL CULTIVATION REGIONS AT ONCE WHICH IS REQUIRED TO ERRADICATE POPPY CULTIVATION. 80 PER CENT OF COLOMBIAN LATEX IS PRODUCED IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF TOLIMA, HUILA, AND CAUCA.

3. THE ANTI-NARCOTICS POLICE PERSONNEL ARE ALSO TASKED WITH PROVIDING PHYSICAL SECURITY TO THE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT ASIDE FROM PROVIDING SECURITY TO THE AIRPORT AND THE INSPECTION OF ARRIVING/DEPARTING PASSENGERS AND CARGO, ONE OF THEIR MAIN TASK IS TO PROVIDE PROTECTION TO THE POLICE HELICOPTERS AND TURBO-THRUSH CROP SPRAYING AIRCRAFT WHICH ARE KEPT AT THE AIRPORT.

4. POLICE POPPY ERRADICATION GROUND OPERATIONS ARE NOT COMMON BUT ARE PERIODICALLY CONDUCTED TARGETING THOSE POPPY FIELDS WHICH ARE ACCESSIBLE USING VEHICULAR SUPPORT. THE ANTI-NARCOTIC POLICE DON'T LIKE TO CONDUCT GROUND OPERATIONS WITHOUT HELICOPTER SUPPORT DUE TO THE REAL OR PERCEIVED GUERRILLA THREAT. THE ANTI-NARCOTIC POLICE HAVE CONDUCTED JOINT OPERATIONS WITH THE COLOMBIAN ARMY STATIONED AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO IN THE FUTURE. THE ARMY COMMANDERS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THESE OPERATIONS BUT THE ENLISTED PERSONNEL, PARTICULARLY THE DRAFTEES, ARE LESS THAT SUPPORTIVE OF THESE OPERATIONS DUE TO THE GUERRILLA THREAT.
5. Prior to a spraying mission, an operational briefing is conducted where discussions and decisions are made for that day's mission. The Turbo Thrush and helicopter pilots, the commander of the spraying commission, and commanding officer of the anti-narcotic unit attend the operational planning meeting.

6. During actual spraying operations, the Turbo Thrush aircraft sweep a poppy field only twice. Experience has shown that the aircraft begin receiving small arms fire from the growers generally on the third pass.

Comments: 1. More air resources are required to do a more efficient job in eradicating poppy cultivations. Extensive poppy cultivation sites exist and are expanding.
COLL: (U) AA.
INSTR: (U) U.S.
PREP: (U)
ACQ: (U) COLOMBIA, NEIVA (931116).
DISSEM: (U) FIELD: EMBASSY AT BOGOTA.
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