PAGE 01

INFO LOG-00 INLB-01 AID-00 ARA-01 CG-00 CTME-00 OASY-00
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P 262245Z SEP 96
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1851
INFO DOSAIRWING PATRICK AFB FL
USIA WASHDC 0331
NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
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SECTION 01 OF 04 BOGOTA 009464

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Current Class: }

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L. MILLS
DATE/CASE ID: 29 AUG 2001 200101108

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1. THIS CABLE IS SENSITIVE. PLEASE PROTECT.

2. CLASSIFIED BY MYLES R. R. FRECHETTE, AMBASSADOR, AMEMBASSY BOGOTA, REASON 1.5(D).

3. THIS IS AN ACTION CABLE. SEE PARA 18.

4. (U) SUMMARY: COLOMBIAN DEFENSE MINISTER ESGUERRA AND COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE AGREE TO THE USE OF AMERICAN PILOTS ALONGSIDE COLOMBIAN T-65 PILOTS IN OPERATIONAL MISSIONS. COLOMBIANS UNDERSTAND THAT U.S. PILOTS WOULD ERADICATE COCA AND OPIUM CROPS WITHIN A DETERMINED TIME PERIOD AND PROVIDE ON-THE-JOB TRAINING FOR THE COLOMBIANS. COLOMBIANS WOULD LIKE TO...

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 09464 01 OF 04 262311Z RECEIVE SOME OF THE RETROFITTED BRONCOS AND PROCEED WITH MINIMAL RISK NIGHT MISSIONS AS WELL AS DAY MISSIONS. THEY HAVE STRESSED STRONGEST INTEREST IN PROCEEDING ALONG THESE LINES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. EMBASSY REQUESTS INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO MOVE FORWARD WITH NAS/GOC AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM WITH MINIMAL DELAY. 
5. (U) THE AMBASSADOR MET WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE ESGUERRA FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF ON SEPTEMBER 25 TO DISCUSS VARIOUS ISSUES (SEPTELS). ABOUT 60 MINUTES OF THE MEETING WAS DEVOTED TO A DISCUSSION OF THE NAS/GOC AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM.


7. (U) COMMENT: JUST TO ENSURE THE AMBASSADOR GOT THE MESSAGE, THE MINISTER HAD HAND DELIVERED THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 26 A LETTER (DATED SEPTEMBER 26) EXPRESSING THE GOC'S WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE ERADICATING CROPS AND TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. ON NEW PROCEDURES. THE LETTER STATES THAT DESPITE GOC EXPRESSIONS OF "UNBREAKABLE WILL" AND DESIRE TO RESTART ERADICATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THE MINISTRY SEEKS TIME PASSING
AND GREAT OPPORTUNITIES WASTING. MINISTER NOTES THAT THIS IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOC. (LETTER TO BE SUMMARIZED SEPTEL).

8. (U) THE AMBASSADOR THEN MADE ALL THE POINTS IN REFTEL (PARAS 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, AND 9) IN ORDER TO GIVE THE MINISTER AND THE TWO POLICE OFFICERS A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF WHY THE UNITED STATES HAS REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT THE AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM, AS IT
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DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
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CONFIDENTIAL
SECTION 02 OF 04 BOGOTA 09464

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02	BOGOTA 09464 02 OF 04 262311Z
DEPARTMENT INL A/S GELBARD FROM AMBASSADOR
STATE FOR ARA; ARA/AND; L/LEI
NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
ONDSCP FOR BILL BOZIN
DEA FOR OF, OFL, AO, AX
JUSTICE FOR CRIM/WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET
TREASURY FOR FINCEN
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
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USIA FOR AR, I/GAR
PASS AIRWING PASA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 9/26/00
TAGS: PGOV SNAR PREL KJUS CO
SUBJECT: NAS/GOC AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM

HAS BEEN RUN, IS NOT SATISFACTORY.

9. (C) THE REACTION OF THE COLOMBIANS VARIED BETWEEN ANGER,
INDIGNATION, AND OUTRAGE IN THE CASE OF COLONEL GALLEGRO. THE
MINISTER PALED CONSIDERABLY AND COMMENTED THROUGHOUT THE
DISCUSSION THAT ALL OF THIS WAS "ANCIENT HISTORY" BUT THAT
COLOMBIA AND THE U.S. NOW HAD TO GO FORWARD WITH A REINVIGORATED
ERADICATION PLAN. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT SOME OF THESE POINTS
MAY INDEED HAVE BEEN "HISTORY" BUT THEY WERE A GOOD INDICATION
THAT THE WILL TO SUPPORT THE ERADICATION PROGRAM OUTSIDE OF THE
NATIONAL POLICE HAS BEEN AND IS LACKING. THE LATEST DECISION OF
THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT INAZAPYR AS THE ONLY GRANULAR
HERBICIDE FOR TESTING WAS ONE MORE INDICATION THAT THE COLOMBIANS
DID THE MINIMUM, OFTEN DROPPED THEIR FEET AND APPEARED, AT LEAST
TO THE U.S.G., NOT TO BE COOPERATIVE. THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED

10. (C) GENERAL MONTENEGRO SAT THROUGHOUT WITH HIS ARMS
CROSSED, LIPS TIGHTLY SEALED, STARING FIRMLY AT THE CEILING.
COLONEL GALLEGRO, AT TIMES WITH TEARS RUNNING DOWN HIS CHEEKS,
ATTEMPTED TO RESPOND POINT BY POINT TO THE AMBASSADOR'S
CRITICISMS. HE ARGUED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SHORTCOMINGS, BUT ON
BOTH SIDES, NOT JUST BY COLOMBIA. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR POINTED
OUT THAT THE USE OF THIRD COUNTRY PILOTS HAD BEEN APPROVED
BETWEEN NAS AND THE GOC AT ONE TIME, GALLEGRO ARGUED HEATEDLY THAT
AT THE TIME INL HAD BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE ANY THIRD COUNTRY
PILOTS. THEREFORE THE PROGRAM HAD CONTINUED FORWARD ONLY WITH
COLOMBIAN PILOTS SINCE THE GOC WOULD NOT APPROVE THE USE OF
AMERICAN PILOTS. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHY AT ONE TIME THE
COLOMBIANS HAD ALLOWED AMERICAN PILOTS TO FLY AND YET WOULD NOT
DO SO UNDER THE SAMPER ADMINISTRATION, MINISTER ESGUERRA POINTED
OUT THAT POLICIES CHANGE FROM ADMINISTRATION TO ADMINISTRATION IN
THE U.S. AS WELL.

11. (U) AFTER LISTENING TO COLONEL GALLEGRO'S IMPASSIONED
DEFENSE OF THE CFP THE AMBASSADOR CUT THE DISCUSSION SHORT BY
SAYING THAT WHAT IS AT ISSUE IS THAT THE U.S.G. HAS CONCLUDED
THAT THE GOC HAS SIMPLY NOT SHOWN ENOUGH POLITICAL WILL TO GO

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FORWARD. THE U.S.G. HAS CONSISTENTLY STUCK TO ITS OBJECTIVES AND
FAITHFULLY KEPT ASSISTANCE TO THE POLICE FLOWING. BECAUSE OF
THAT, SAID THE AMBASSADOR, THE U.S.G. HAD THREE OPTIONS TO OFFER.
HE THEN GAVE AN EXTRACT OF THE THREE OPTIONS TO THE MINISTER AND
WENT THROUGH EACH ONE CAREFULLY SO THAT THE COLOMBIANS UNDERSTOOD

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BOGOTA 09464 02 OF 04 262311Z
WHAT WAS AT ISSUE.

12. (C) THERE WAS A STUNNED SILENCE AFTER THE AMBASSADOR
FINISHED HIS EXPOSITION. THE MINISTER SAID BEFORE RESPONDING TO
THE OPTIONS, THAT HE HAD TO MAKE CLEAR IT IS HIS UNDERSTANDING
THAT THE GOC AND THE U.S.G. SHARE THE SAME OBJECTIVE, THAT IS,
THE DESTRUCTION OF AS MUCH OF THE ILLEGAL CROPS IN COLOMBIA AS
POSSIBLE. IN LOOKING AT THE OPTIONS HE DID NOT WANT TO ADOPT THE
THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS OPTION BECAUSE THAT WOULD ENGAGE COLOMBIA
IN "ENDLESS COMPLICATIONS" WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. HE ALSO SAID
THAT THIS WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO DEFEND IN THE COLOMBIAN
CONGRESS. HE THEN SAID THAT HE REJECTED THE THIRD OPTION OF
ALLOWING THE COLOMBIANS TO DO IT ALONE BECAUSE CONTINUED U.S.G.
INVOLVEMENT, RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL ADVICE ARE NECESSARY FOR THE
COLOMBIANS TO LEARN HOW TO DO THIS RIGHT.

13. (C) THEREFORE, SAID THE MINISTER, RELUCTANTLY, HE IS
PREPARED TO RECOMMEND TO PRESIDENT SAMPER, AND HE HAD NO DOUBT
PRESIDENT SAMPER WOULD APPROVE, THE USE OF AMERICAN PILOTS FLYING
PAGE 02

BOGOTA 09464 03 OF 04 262312Z
DEPARTMENT INL A/S GELBARD FROM AMBASSADOR
STATE FOR ARA; ARA/AND; L/LEI
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DEA FOR OF, OFL, AO, AX
JUSTICE FOR CRIM/WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 9/26/00
TAGS: PGOV SNAR PREL KJUS CO
SUBJECT: NAS/GOC AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM

ALONGSIDE THE COLOMBIAN T-65 PILOTS IN OPERATIONAL MISSIONS. HE
SAID THAT IN EXPLAINING THIS TO HIS CONGRESS HE WOULD HAVE TO
DESCRIBE THE AMERICANS AS INSTRUCTORS AND THE COLOMBIANS AS THE
PILOTS. IRONICALLY, HE OBSERVED, IT WOULD BE EASIER TO DEFEND IN
CONGRESS AND BEFORE PUBLIC OPINION THE USE OF U.S. INSTRUCTOR
PILOTS RATHER THAN THE OTHER TWO OPTIONS. HERE, AND FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN THE AMBASSADOR'S EXPERIENCE, COLONEL GALLECO
INTERRUPTED THE MINISTER URGING HIM TO RECONSIDER THE THIRD
COUNTRY NATIONALS OPTIONS. COLONEL GALLECO AND GENERAL
MONTENEGRO BOTH SAID THEY THOUGHT THAT IN TERMS OF PUBLIC OPINION
THE USE OF THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS WOULD BE EASIER TO ACCEPT THAN
AMERICANS.

14. (C) COLONEL GALLECO THEN MADE AN IMPASSIONED PLEA FOR GOING
AHEAD WITH THE ERADICATION. HE SAID THAT DURING THE THREE WEEKS
PAGE 03

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Current Class: CONFIDENTIAL
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1996BOGOTA09464

PAGE 03

BOGOTA 09464 03 OF 04 262312Z

THAT THE PROGRAM HAD BEEN STALLED THE NATIONAL POLICE (CNP) HAD BEEN TRYING TO GO FORWARD WITH ITS SINGLE T-65 BUT THE RESULTS WERE "MINIMAL." THE COLOMBIAN ARMY IS IN PLACE PROVIDING SECURITY FOR THE SPRAY AIRCRAFT AND HE HAD EXPLOSIVES STOCKPILED IN MIRAFLORES TO DESTROY NARCO AIRFIELDS. NOW IS THE TIME TO STRIKE, HE ARGUED. GENERAL MONTENEGRO, THE MINISTER AND COLONEL GALLEGO ALL ARGUED THAT IT IS CRUCIAL FOR THE GOC TO GO FORWARD WITH THE ERADICATION PROGRAM SO THAT THE GUERRILLAS AND NARCOS CANNOT SPREAD THE STORY THAT, IF THERE ARE PEASANT DEMONSTRATIONS THE GOC WILL SLOW DOWN OR STOP ERADICATION. ALL THREE COLOMBIANS SAID IT IS CRUCIAL TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM.


15. (C) MINISTER ESGUERRA RECALLED IN DETAIL HIS CONVERSATION WITH INL A/S GELBARD IN WASHINGTON IN WHICH ASSISTANT SECRETARY GELBARD SAID THAT INL WOULD MAKE AVAILABLE SOME RETROFITTED BRONCOS WHICH COULD BE USED FOR SPRAYING. HE SAID THAT WITH THE ACCEPTANCE BY THE GOC OF THE USE OF AMERICAN PILOTS HE HOPED THAT INL WOULD FURNISH THE RETROFITTED BRONCOS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. THE AMERICAN AND COLOMBIAN PILOTS COULD BEGIN FLYING NOT ONLY MINIMAL RISK NIGHT MISSIONS BUT ALSO DAY TIME MISSIONS.

16. (C) THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF ANIMATED DISCUSSION AND

CURRENT CLASS: CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: CONFIDENTIAL
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1996BOGOTA09464

PAGE 04

BOGOTA 09464 03 OF 04 262312Z

DISAGREEMENT AMONG THE THREE COLOMBIANS ABOUT WHETHER TO BRING COLOMBIAN AIR FORCE PILOTS ON DETAIL INTO THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE TO HELP WITH THE SPRAYING RIGHT AWAY AND WHETHER TO UTILIZE ALL EIGHT T-65 SPRAY PLANES PLUS THE RETROFITTED BRONCOS. THE IDEA OF AIR FORCE PILOTS HELPING THE POLICE OBVIOUSLY TICKLED GENERAL MONTENEGRO AND COLONEL GALLEGO BUT THE MINISTER FELT THIS
WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE FAC.

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DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEAD
CIA WASHDC

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 04 OF 04 BOGOTA 009464

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02  BOGOTA 09464 04 OF 04 262312Z
DEPARTMENT INL A/S SELBARD FROM AMBASSADOR
STATE FOR ARA; ARA/AND; L/LEI
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R.O. 12958: DECL: 9/26/00

Current Class: CONFIDENTIAL
TAGS: PGOV SNAR PREL KJUS CO
SUBJECT: NAS/GOC AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM

VALID AND THEY ARE VERY MUCH AWARE THAT THE RECENT DECISION ON IMAZAPYR HAS ANGERED THE U.S.G. END COMMENT.

18. (U) ACTION REQUESTED: THAT INL RESPOND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO HOW THE AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM COULD BE RESTARTED WITH THE LEAST POSSIBLY DELAY. EMBASSY PROPOSES WE BEGIN WITH THE TWO U.S. INSTRUCTOR PILOTS NOW IN COUNTRY AS THIS WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT SIGN TO THE COLOMBIANS THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO MOVE THE ERADICATION PROGRAM FORWARD TO MEET BOTH THE GOC'S AND USG'S OBJECTIVES. FRECHETTE