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UNCLASSIFIED SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 006692

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR PM/ATEC, ARA/AND, AND INL
DOD FOR DSAA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PARM, SNAR, PGOV, PREL, MASS, BEXP, CO
SUBJECT: THE PROPOSED SALE OF UH-60L HELICOPTERS TO COLOMBIA

SUMMARY

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1. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE PROPOSED CASH SALE OF UH-60LS TO THE
GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST OF THE UNITED
STATES. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE RECENTLY BEEN STRAINS IN OUR
BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, INCLUDING THE DECERTIFICATION OF COLOMBIA
FOR INADEQUATE COUNTER-NARCOTICS PERFORMANCE AND THE REVOCATION
OF PRESIDENT SAMPER'S VISA, WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO COUNTER-
NARCOTICS COOPERATION WITH THE GOC, WHICH THIS SALE WILL ENHANCE.
IT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF U.S. REGIONAL GOALS AND
NATIONAL SECURITY OBJECTIVES IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS: IN PROVIDING
OPTIMIZED AND READILY AVAILABLE MID-LIFT OF GROUND FORCES
EMPLOYED AGAINST COUNTER-NARCOTICS TARGETS; IN ALLOWING THE
COLOMBIAN ARMY (COLAR) TO SUPPORT MORE EFFECTIVELY NATIONAL
POLICE COUNTER-NARCOTICS OPERATIONS, INCLUDING THOSE FOR
ERADICATION OF ILLICIT CROPS; IN INCREASING COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT
PRESENCE IN REMOTE AND ISOLATED AREAS NOW UNDER THE CONTROL OF
NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS; IN ACHIEVING THE CAPTURE OF NARCOTICS
TRAFFICKERS AND THE DESTRUCTION OF NARCOTICS PROCESSING LABS AND
OTHER TARGETS; AND IN PROMOTING REGIONAL PEACE BY ELIMINATING
SIGNIFICANT COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT WEEKNESSES IN BORDER CONTROL
PRESENTLY STRAINING COLOMBIAN RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEIGHBORS. THE
SALE WILL ALSO HAVE A DIRECT AND BENEFICIAL IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY
OF THE UNITED STATES BY SUPPORTING JOBS AT U.S. COMPANIES AND
INCREASING EXPORTS. END SUMMARY.

REASON THE COLAR DESIRES THE SALE OF UH-60LS

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2. THE COLAR'S MOST CRITICAL WEAKNESS IS INSUFFICIENT
TRANSPORTATION. FOR EXAMPLE, THE COLAR SECOND MOBILE BRIGADE,
WHICH CURRENTLY IS ACHIEVING COUNTER-NARCOTICS SUCCESS OPERATING
JOINTLY WITH COLOMBIAN MARINE AND NATIONAL POLICE FORCES IN
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GUAVIARE DEPARTMENT, HAS A TOTAL OF EIGHT HELICOPTERS AVAILABLE.
OF THESE, TWO ARE BORROWED FROM ANOTHER UNIT AND THREE ARE LEASED
RUSSIAN MI-17S WHICH CANNOT BE COMMITTED TO DIRECT COMBAT
OPERATIONS. THUS, AN ENTIRE COLAR MOBILE BRIGADE ENGAGED IN
DAILY OPERATIONS AGAINST NARCOTRAFFICKERS HAS ASSIGNED LESS
HELICOPTER SUPPORT THAN A STANDARD U.S. ARMY INFANTRY PLATOON.
TO COUNTER THIS DEFICIENCY, ONE OF COLAR'S MAJOR EFFORTS IS THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AIR MOBILITY CAPABILITY. THE AQUISITION OF
UH-60L HELICOPTERS AFFORDS THE COLAR A MODERN AIR ASSET THAT WILL
PROVIDE THEM WITH LONG-TERM MEDIUM AIRLIFT CAPABILITY. THE UH-
60L WILL PROVIDE THE COLAR THE NEEDED FLEXIBILITY TO REACH REMOTE
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS IN COLOMBIA WHERE NARCOTRAFFICKERS OFTEN
ESTABLISH COCAINE PROCESSING LABS, AND THE DEPENDABILITY OF AN
AIR ASSET WITH AN ESTABLISHED U.S. ARMY LOGISTICAL SUPPORT
INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE MOVEMENT OF TROOPS AND LOGISTICAL SUPPLIES
TO CONDUCT AND SUSTAIN COUNTER-NARCOTICS AND INTERNAL DEFENSE
OPERATIONS.

UH-60LS AND THE COLAR'S FORCE STRUCTURE AND MISSION CAPABILITY

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3. THE UH-60L WILL ENABLE THE COLAR TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE,
RELIABLE AIR LIFT TO MEET THE FOLLOWING MISSION REQUIREMENTS:

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A. MOVEMENT OF PERSONNEL ENGAGED IN COUNTER-NARCOTICS OPERATIONS
IN REMOTE AREAS TO INCLUDE PROVIDING SECURITY FOR COLOMBIAN
NATIONAL POLICE COUNTER-NARCOTICS OPERATIONS AND INTERDICTION
OPERATIONS AGAINST COCAINE LABORATORIES, SHIPMENTS OF PRECURSOR
CHEMICALS, AND CLANDESTINE AIRSTRIPS USED IN SHIPMENTS OF ILLEGAL
NARCOTICS.

B. RAPID DEPLOYMENTS OF SECURITY FORCES TO MEET OTHER INTERNAL
DEFENSE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT CONTINGENCIES, INCLUDING DEALING WITH
INCREASINGLY ASSERTIVE GUERRILLA ACTIVITY.

C. MOVEMENT OF LOGISTICAL SUPPLIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

D. SEARCH AND RESCUE.

E. MEDICAL EVACUATION.

F. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.

ARMED FORCES-POLICE COOPERATION

4. SINCE SAMPER CAME INTO OFFICE THE ARMED FORCES HAVE NOT BEEN
NEARLY AS SUPPORTIVE OF COUNTER-NARCOTICS OPERATIONS BY THE
NATIONAL POLICE AS WE WOULD LIKE, AND WE HAVE CONTINUED TO URGE
CLOSER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO IN COUNTER-NARCOTICS.
NEVERTHELESS, THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ARMED FORCES IN THE GUAVIARE
DEPARTMENT OVER THE LAST THREE MONTHS ALONGSIDE THE POLICE IS AN
AUGURY OF A TREND COUNTRY TEAM BELIEVES WILL BE SUSTAINED. WE
WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS THE ARMED FORCES FOR INCREASED SUPPORT OF
THE POLICE IN COUNTER-NARCOTICS, WHICH THE ADDITIONAL AIRLIFT
CAPACITY OF THE UH-60L HELICOPTERS WILL FACILITATE.
5. REGIONAL INSTABILITY IN LATIN AMERICA CAN OFTEN BE CONNECTED TO BORDER PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE INABILITY OF ONE PARTY TO CONTROL ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN REMOTE BORDER AREAS. IN THE CASE OF COLOMBIA'S NEIGHBORS, THE ALMOST TOTAL INABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA TO CONTROL NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS PASSING THROUGH COLOMBIAN BORDERS HAS CREATED CONFUSION, THE POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL CONFLICT, AND IN THE CASE OF THE COLOMBIAN-VENEZUELAN BORDER, HAS GIVEN RISE TO ACTUAL VENEZUELAN BORDER INCursions INTO COLOMBIAN TERRITORY. THERE IS EVERY EXPECTATION VENEZUELA WILL BREATHE EASIER WHEN THE COLOMBIAN ARMY IS BETTER ABLE TO EFFECT BORDER CONTROL AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS ALONG ITS BORDER. WITH THE UH-60Ls THE COLAR WILL BE ABLE TO ASSIST NATIONAL POLICE UNITS AND ITS OWN GROUND FORCES IN BORDER PATROL AND COUNTER-NARCOTICS OPERATIONS IN AREAS WHERE TRAFFICKERS NOW ROAM FREE. THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF THE COLOMBIAN-BRAZILIAN BORDER, WHERE IN 1993 INSURGENT ELEMENTS WITHIN COLOMBIA WERE ABLE TO MOUNT AN OPERATION AGAINST BRAZILIAN SECURITY FORCES. THE SALE OF THE UH-60LS TO COLOMBIA WOULD ALSO HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT IN THE COLOMBIAN-ECUADOR AND COLOMBIAN-
PERUVIAN BORDER AREAS, ALLOWING COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCES TO
PATROL THE PUTAMAYO, CAQUETA AND AMAZON RIVERS, AIDING RIVERINE
FORCES IN COMBATTING NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. COLOMBIA DOES NOT
HAVE BORDER DEMARCATION DISPUTES WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. WE CAN
EXPECT ALL OF COLOMBIA’S NEIGHBORS TO SUPPORT AN INCREASED
ABILITY BY THE COLAR TO CONTROL THE COLOMBIAN SIDES OF THEIR
BORDERS.

GOC ABILITY TO OPERATE, MAINTAIN AND SUPPORT THE UH-60LS

6. THE COLOMBIAN AIR FORCE CURRENTLY POSSESS THE LOGISTICAL
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INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRED TO SUSTAIN THE UH-60L UNTIL THE COLAR
AVIATION BRANCH LOGISTICAL INFRASTRUCTURE BECOMES FULLY
OPERATIONAL. AN INTERNAL TRAINING PROGRAM IS BEING USED TO
ACCELERATE REQUIRED TRAINING FOR THE AIR CREWS. IN ADDITION TO
THIS TRAINING, COLAR WILL REQUIRE FORMAL OPERATIONAL,
MAINTENANCE, AND LOGISTICS TRAINING VIA U.S. SCHOOLS, MOBILE
TRAINING TEAMS AND POSSIBLY EXTENDED TRAINING SERVICE
SPECIALISTS.

ECONOMIC BENEFIT TO U.S. OF THE UH-60LS SALE

7. THIS ONE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS PLUS SALE WILL BENEFIT
THOUSANDS OF EMPLOYEES WORKING IN THE U.S. HELICOPTER
MANUFACTURING SECTOR. BY PROVIDING EXPORTS, IT WILL HELP OUR
TRADE BALANCE. FINANCING IS NOT A PROBLEM; IT IS BEING
NEGOTIATED DIRECTLY BETWEEN THE GOC AND SIKORSKY COMPANY.

RELEVANT HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

8. THE COUNTRY TEAM CAN ATTEST TO EFFORTS BY THE COLOMBIAN
DEFENSE MINISTRY TO REDUCE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. THE NUMBER
OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS ATTRIBUTED TO MILITARY UNITS DECREASED
IN 1995. IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, WE HAVE SEEN THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF A HUMAN RIGHTS SECRETARIAT WITHIN THE COLOMBIAN DEFENSE
MINISTRY, THE INCORPORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING INTO THE
SYLLABUS OF EVERY OFFICER AND NCO SCHOOL IN THE COLOMBIAN
MILITARY, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICES AT THE
BRIGADE AND, IN SOME CASES, BATTALION LEVELS, AND THE CONTINUED
OVERSIGHT OF PROSECUTING ATTORNEY GENERAL OFFICERS OVER MILITARY
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