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FM AMBASSADOG BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASH DC IMMEDIATE 3989
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASH DC
INFO AMBASSADOG CARACAS
US MISSION GENEVA
DEA WASH DC
NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
SECDEF WASH DC//OCDEPS//
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD
FBI WASH DC
DIA WASH DC
CIA WASH DC
DIRO NCDC WASH DC
US CONSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
NSC WASH DC
USIA WASH DC 1162
DEPT OF TREASURY WASH DC
SECDEF WASH DC

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STATE FOR ARA/AND, INL, L/LEI
NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
ONDCE FOR BILL BOZIN
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEA FOR OF, OFL, OC, AX
JUSTICE FOR CRIM. WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET
FBI FOR CID/IRS/IRU2
USIA FOR AR, I/GAR
TREASURY FOR FINCEN

Current Class:  

UNCLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958:  DECL: 01-12-01
TAGS: PRBL, PGOV, SNAR, PINR, PHUM, PINS, MASS CO
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S JANUARY 12 MEETING WITH NEW MOD DESIGNATE

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECONOFF MIREMBE NANTONGO. REASON 1.5(D).

2. (U) SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR MET FOR TWO HOURS ON JANUARY 12 WITH THE PROSPECTIVE NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE, GUILLERMO ALBERTO GONZALEZ MOSQUERA (REF A). DURING THE CORDIAL MEETING OVER LUNCH, GONZALEZ TALKED ABOUT HIMSELF AND HIS BROAD INTENTIONS VIS A VIS HIS NEW PORTFOLIO, AND AMBASSADOR BRIEFED HIM ON OUTSTANDING ISSUES OF USG INTEREST WITH THE DEFENSE MINISTRY. GONZALEZ WILL TAKE OVER HIS NEW POST ON FEBRUARY 3. OUTGOING MOD ESQUIERRA PLANS TO ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON ON JANUARY 18 TO TAKE UP HIS NEW DUTIES AS AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. END SUMMARY

3. (C) AMBASSADOR MET FOR TWO HOURS ON JANUARY 12 WITH INCOMING MINISTER OF DEFENSE GUILLERMO ALBERTO GONZALEZ MOSQUERA.

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GONZALEZ CAME ACROSS AS A PLEASANT, FRIENDLY, APPARENTLY STRAIGHTFORWARD PERSON WITH A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR. HE OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY TELLING THE AMBASSADOR HOW HE SPENT TWO AND A HALF YEARS OBTAINING A GRADUATE DEGREE IN PLANNING FROM PURDUE UNIVERSITY. RECALLING THAT HE WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE U.S. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE IN GENEVA DURING HIS TIME AS COLOMBIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N. THERE. FROM LATE 1993 TO EARLY 1996, HE NOTED HE HAS A "SOFT SPOT" FOR THE U.S. HE SAID THAT IN EARLY 1996 HE WAS INVITED TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE IN CLEVELAND ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE MATTERS. HE HAD A PRIVATE LUNCH WITH FORMER COMMERCE SECRETARY RON BROWN, DURING WHICH THEY TALKED ABOUT COLOMBIA, HE SAID. AFTER SAYING HOW MUCH HE LIKED AMERICANS, GONZALEZ SAID HIS EXPERIENCE IN GENEVA HAD TAUGHT HIM THAT THERE ARE THREE KEY ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS: NARCOTICS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT. "YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME HOW IMPORTANT COUNTERNARCOTICS AND HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCES ARE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. I KNOW," HE SAID.

WHY DID SAMPER CHOOSE GONZALEZ?

4. (C) THE MINISTER-DESIGNATE, WHO IS A TOUCH LOQUACIOUS BUT LESS SO THAN HIS PREDECESSOR ESQUIERRA, SAID HE WAS NOT CONTACTED BY

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PRESIDENT SAMPER UNTIL THE NIGHT BEFORE SAMPER ANNOUNCED HIS
APPOINTMENT IN CARTAGENA ON JANUARY 9. HE WAS ON HOLIDAY IN
CARTAGENA WITH HIS FAMILY WHEN THE NEWS STORY FIRST SURFACED, AND
WERE CONTACTED BY A COUSIN WHO TOLD HIM ABOUT IT, HE SAID.
(COMMENT: GONZALEZ MADE CLEAR FROM HIS COMMENTS TO THE MEDIA,
HOWEVER, THAT HE WOULD ACCEPT THE POSITION IF IT WERE OFFERED.
END COMMENT)

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5. (C) ACCORDING TO GONZALEZ, SAMPER CHOSE HIM FOR THREE
REASONS: HE IS A GOOD MANAGER (HERE HE CITED HIS EXPERIENCE IN
MANAGING THE STATE-OWNED AGRICULTURAL BANK, CAJA AGRARIA, AMONG
OTHERS); HE IS STRONG ON HUMAN RIGHTS (HE NOTED THAT THIS WAS A
KEY PART OF HIS PORTFOLIO DURING HIS TENURE AS AMBASSADOR TO THE
U.N.); AND IS A GOOD NEGOTIATOR. "WITH GOOD WILL, I CAN WORK OUT
EVEN VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS," HE SAID.

WILL TAKE CHARGE ON FEBRUARY 3

6. (U) GONZALES SAID HE WOULD RETURN TO CARACAS ON JANUARY 12 TO
MAKE HIS FAREWELL CALLS. HE WILL RETURN TO COLOMBIA TO ATTEND A
FEBRUARY 1-2 MEETING IN CARTAGENA BETWEEN THE RENMINSH OF COLOMBIA
AND VENEZUELA WITH THEIR BORDER COMMISSION, BEFORE RETURNING TO
BOGOTA TO BE SWORN IN BY PRESIDENT SAMPER ON FEBRUARY 3.

BEDOYA TO BE ACTING MINISTER

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ACTION ARA-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-10 ACDE-00 INLB-01 AID-00 ACQ-01 INL-01
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DEA WASHDC
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SECDDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
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DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
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7. (U) DURING THE APPROXIMATELY TWO WEEK INTERVAL BETWEEN
ESCUERRA’S DEPARTURE AND GONZALES’ SWERING-IN, ARMED FORCES
COMMANDER HAROLD BEDOYA WILL HOLD THE DEFENSE PORTFOLIO AS ACTING
MINISTER. BOTH ESCUERRA AND GONZALES ASSURED AMBASSADOR THAT
THIS (RATHER THAN HAVING THE VICE-MINISTER ASSUME CHARGE) HAS
BEEN THE CUSTOM OBTAINING SINCE GOC MINISTERS OF DEFENSE HAVE
BEEN CIVILIANS.
WHAT HE HOPES TO ACCOMPLISH

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8. (U) NOTING THAT, AS HE TOLD THE MEDIA, HE INTENDS TO WORK HARD FOR THE MILITARY (PURSUE EFFICIENCY IN SPENDING, SECURE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT, SEEK TO OBTAIN LEGAL INSTRUMENTS TO FACILITATE THE MILITARY TASK, ADVANCE THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE ARMY, ETC), GONZALES SAID THAT HE NEVERTHELESS WILL NOT SPARE ANY EFFORT TO REACH A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN COLOMBIA'S GUERRILLA INSURGENCY. HE STATED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT HE WAS AGAINST THE PHENOMENON OF PARAMILITARIES, THAT HE WOULD GO AFTER THEM, AND THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE IN THEM. IN ADDITION, HE SAID, "YOU HAVE A GOOD FRIEND IN ME ON COUNTERNARCOTICS ISSUES."

HUMAN RIGHTS

9. (C) AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT THE USG IS VERY MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. HE SAID THAT MINISTER FERNANDO BOTERO, THE FIRST MOD HE WORKED WITH, WAS VERY GOOD ON HUMAN RIGHTS, BUT HIS SUCCESSOR JUAN CARLOS ESGUERRA LESS SO. "HE DID NOT PUSH THE MILITARY. WE HOPE YOU WILL PUSH THE MILITARY," AMBASSADOR SAID. HE REMINDED GONZALES THAT SOUTHCOM IS SPONSORING A HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE IN MIAMI IN EARLY FEBRUARY WHICH GONZALES PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO ATTEND, BUT ENCOURAGED HIM TO ENSURE THAT MOD REPRESENTATIVES ATTENDED.

END-USE MONITORING

10. (C) AMBASSADOR URGED GONZALES TO KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH ESGUERRA ON END-USE MONITORING AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES WITH RESPECT TO THE 506(A) DRAWDOWN. AMBASSADOR NOTED THE STRONG NGO INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS AND EMPHASIZED THAT 506(A) REQUIRES ASSURANCES REGARDING THE END USES OF EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED. BEFORE ESGUERRA LEAVES, HE WILL MEET WITH AMBASSADOR TO WORK OUT THE MAIN LINES OF THE END-USE MONITORING AGREEMENT. "THIS IS THE MOST BURNING ISSUE," SAID AMBASSADOR, ADDING THAT NO 506(A) EQUIPMENT TRANSFERS WILL BE AUTHORIZED UNTIL THE AGREEMENT IS SIGNED.
11. (S) AMBASSADOR TOLD GONZALEZ THAT THE EMBASSY HAS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE 20TH INTELLIGENCE BRIGADE MAY HAVE INVOLVEMENT WITH DEATH SQUADS, AND THAT CONTACT AND ASSISTANCE WAS COMPLETELY SEVERED AS SOON AS WE HEARD OF THE POSSIBILITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.

MILITARY COUPS

12. (C) AMBASSADOR STATED THAT USG POLICY UNEQUIVOCALLY OPPOSES MILITARY COUPS. COLOMBIA IS A DEMOCRACY, HE SAID, RECALLING HIS OWN REJECTION OF CIVILIAN OVERTURES RESPECTING A POSSIBLE COUP IN MID-1995. IN ADDITION, THE EMBASSY HAS MADE A POLICY OF WARNING THE TOP BRASS OF ANY REPORTS IT GATHERS CONCERNING COUP RUMORS, SAID AMBASSADOR.

NO ASSISTANCE WITH GUERRILLA INSURGENCY
13. (C) THERE WILL BE NO USG ASSISTANCE FOR FIGHTING THE GUERRILLAS, AMBASSADOR TOLD GONZALES. HE SAID THE ISSUE RAISES TOO MANY HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS AND HAS BEEN A SEARING EXPERIENCE FOR US IN CENTRAL AMERICA. IN ADDITION, AMBASSADOR SAID, THE GOC HAS NEVER PROVIDED ANY EVIDENCE OF HAVING A COHERENT ANTI-GUERRILLA STRATEGY. THE GUERRILLAS CANNOT BE OVERCOME BY FORCE ALONE. WHAT IS NEEDED IS A COMPREHENSIVE ANTI-INSURGENCY STRATEGY WHICH SHOULD INCLUDE MEASURES TO WIN "THE HEARTS AND MINDS" OF COLOMBIAN PEASANTS, SAID AMBASSADOR. IF A PEACE COMPONENT IS DESIRED, THEN IT TOO SHOULD HAVE A COHERENT STRATEGY. ALL WE HAVE SEEN SO FAR IN THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY EFFORT IS IMPROVISATION, SAID AMBASSADOR.

COUNTERNARCOTICS
14. (C) AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT SOME EQUIPMENT WILL BE GIVEN TO THE ARMED FORCES FOR COUNTERNARCOTICS PURPOSES BECAUSE THEY BEGAN, IN 1996, TO STRONGLY SUPPORT THE POLICE COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORTS. AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THE USG POSITION REGARDING GUERRILLAS AND NARCOTRAFFICKING: NOT ALL FRONTS ARE INVOLVED IN NARCOTRAFFICKING AND THOSE THAT ARE CANNOT BE SAID TO CONSTITUTE A CARTEL. IN THE U.S. VIEW, THE NOTION OF THE "FARC CARTEL" WAS PUT TOGETHER BY THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY, WHO CONSIDERED IT A WAY TO OBTAIN U.S. ASSISTANCE IN THE COUNTERINSURGENCY. IT HAS NOT WORKED, BECAUSE WE DON'T BELIEVE IT, NOR DO MANY COLOMBIANS, INCLUDING THE POLICE, AMBASSADOR SAID.

15. (C) AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT THE U.S. IS NERVOUS ABOUT WORKING WITH THE MILITARY ON COUNTERNARCOTICS ISSUES, PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF PERVASIVE CORRUPTION IN THE MILITARY. THIS INCLUDES NOT ONLY CORRUPTION IN PROCUREMENT CONTRACTS, BUT MILITARY PERSONNEL THEMSELVES BEING CORRUPTED BY NARCOS. UNLIKE THE POLICE, WHO HAVE THE ADMINISTRATIVE MEANS AND A POLICY OF IDENTIFYING AND ELIMINATING CORRUPT ELEMENTS, THE ARMY STEADFASTLY DEFENDS SUCH ELEMENTS, SAID AMBASSADOR.


17. (U) AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED TO GONZALEZ THE PROGRAM CURRENTLY IN EFFECT THROUGH WHICH U.S. PILOTS ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE ERADICATION PROGRAM.

MEETING PLANNED FOR GONZALEZ’S RETURN
18. (U) GONZALEZ THANKED AMBASSADOR FOR HIS BRIEFINGS AND EXPRESSED HIS WILLINGNESS TO BEGIN WORKING TOGETHER. AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT THE TWO MEET AGAIN VERY SOON AFTER GONZALEZ'S RETURN TO COLOMBIA. AMBASSADOR TOLD GONZALEZ THAT, AS SOON AS

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POSSIBLE, HE WOULD TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY OF INTRODUCING HIM TO ALL
EMBASSY AGENCY HEADS WHO WORK WITH THE GOC ARMED FORCES.

PERAFAN SCANDAL

19. (U) AFTER A CEREMONY ON JANUARY 13 WELCOMING 6 HELICOPTERS
FOR THE POLICE, AMBASSADOR WAS BESIEGED BY MEMBERS OF THE
COLOMBIAN PRESS WHO WANTED TO KNOW WHAT HE THOUGHT OF GONZALEZ’S
ALLEGED TIES TO NARCOTRAFFICKER JUSTO PASTOR PERAFAN (REF C).
(COMMENT: THE COLOMBIAN PRESS HAS MADE MUCH OF THE ASSISTANCE
RENDERED BY GONZALEZ TO PERAFAN IN PLACING HIS CHILDREN IN A
SWISS SCHOOL WHEN THE FORMER WAS AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N. IN
GENEVA. GONZALEZ HAS NOT DENIED THE STORY, BUT CALLED IT
"ANECDOTAL" AND HIS ASSISTANCE TO PERAFAN SUCH AS HE RENDERED
VERY FREQUENTLY TO COLOMBIAN CITIZENS ABROAD. END COMMENT).
AMBASSADOR, WHEN ASKED, TOLD REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA THAT HE

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COULD NOT CONCEIVE THE GOC APPOINTING A MOD TAINTED BY
MEANINGFUL TIES WITH NARCOTRAFFICKERS. IF THIS WERE THE CASE,
HOWEVER, IT WOULD HAVE AN IMMEDIATE NEGATIVE EFFECT ON BILATERAL
RELATIONS AND COOPERATION AND WOULD PROBABLY AFFECT THE
CERTIFICATION DECISION, AMBASSADOR SAID.

GONZALEZ FAMILY

20. (C) GONZALEZ TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT HE HAS THREE CHILDREN, TWO
DAUGHTERS AND A 27-YEAR-OLD SON
DEPARTMENT AND DRIVES AROUND ALONE IN A PICK-UP TRUCK. GONZALEZ
SAID HE WANTED TO GET HIS SON OUT OF THE COUNTRY AND INTO THE
U.S. TO STUDY ENGLISH FOR A WHILE, AND ASKED FOR HELP OBTAINING THE VISA. AMBASSADOR TOLD HIM TO HAVE HIS SON CALL THE EMBASSY TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT OBTAINING A STUDENT VISA, REMINDING HIM THAT THERE IS NO "QUICK AND EASY WAY" TO DO SO. FRECHETTE