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PTQ4082

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PTO0873

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(B); 1.4(C), 1.4(D)

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ACTION ARA-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-08 ACDE-00 INLB-01 ACQ-01 INL-01 DS-00
EB-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 ADS-00 MMP-00 SCT-00 ASDS-01
DSCC-00 DRL-04 SAS-00 /017W

-----19A655 092239Z /38

R 092224Z FEB 98
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1294
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 3844
NSC WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
DIRONDCP WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
FBI WASHDC

DEPT OF STATE APPEALS REVIEW PANEL (ARP)

FOIPA/PA	Mandatory Review
() Release	() Declassify
(<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) Excise PP	() Declassify in Part
() Deny	() Class. Ret/Renew

Exemptions RI
ARP Action Cert DRP Date 9-24-04

DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD
SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
DEA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 001249

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STATE FOR ARA/AND, DRL
NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
ONDCP FOR JANET CRIST
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

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/09/03

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(B), 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 9 FEB 2008
DATE/CASE ID: 17 MAR 2004 200103487

UNCLASSIFIED

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TAGS: PTER, PGOV, PINS, PINR, CO, PM
SUBJECT: COLOMBIAN ARMY REPORTEDLY CAPTURES 23 PARAMILITARIES
(U) CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECONOFF PEG WILLINGHAM. REASON 1.5(D).

1. (C) ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, OVER 100 MEMBERS OF THE ARMY'S 17TH BRIGADE (HEADQUARTERED IN CAREPA, ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT, IN THE URABA AREA) CAPTURED 23 SUSPECTED PARAMILITARIES (INCLUDING TWO PANAMANIAN CITIZENS) FEBRUARY 7 IN CHOCO DEPARTMENT NEAR THE PANAMANIAN BORDER. HOWEVER, AS [REDACTED] IT APPEARS THAT THE MEN VOLUNTARILY TURNED THEMSELVES IN TO THE MILITARY, PERHAPS BECAUSE THEY WERE SHORT ON AMMUNITION AND FAR FROM THEIR HOME BASE. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THE ARMY ALSO SEIZED 20 AK-47 RIFLES, ONE GALIL RIFLE, ONE R-15 RIFLE, A GRENADE LAUNCHER AND AMMUNITION. THE ENCOUNTER TOOK PLACE WHILE THE ARMY WAS CLASHING WITH A REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA (FARC) FRONT, WHICH THE PARAMILITARY GROUP WAS ALSO BATTLING. THE COMMANDER OF THE 17TH BRIGADE, BRIGADIER GENERAL ORLANDO CARRENO,
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TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE COULD NOT CONFIRM IF THE MEN WERE UNDER THE COMMAND OF PARAMILITARY LEADER CARLOS CASTANO, BUT THEY WERE DEFINITELY "AUTODEFENSAS." CARRENO ALSO SAID THAT WHILE IT WAS STILL UNCLEAR IF THERE IS A JOINT PANAMANIAN-COLOMBIAN PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION, THE CAPTURED GROUP HAD BEEN OPERATING ALONG THE BORDER. THE 23 MEN (WHOSE NAMES WERE PUBLISHED IN BOGOTA DAILY "EL ESPECTADOR" FEBRUARY 9) WERE TURNED OVER TO PROSECUTORS FEBRUARY 8.

2. (C) COMMENT: WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY THIS DEVELOPMENT BUT WE ARE NOT YET SURE HOW TO INTERPRET IT. UNTIL RECENTLY, THE MILITARY HAS HAD LITTLE SUCCESS IN CAPTURING PARAMILITARIES. THIS INCIDENT MAY REFLECT NEW PRIORITIES IN THE WAKE OF THE GOC'S DECEMBER ANNOUNCEMENT OF A MAJOR CRACKDOWN ON PARAMILITARIES, AS WELL AS MILITARY FORCES COMMANDER GENERAL BONETT'S MESSAGE TO HIS TROOPS THAT "THE ENEMY OF YOUR ENEMY IS NOT YOUR FRIEND." THE 17TH BRIGADE HAS A NEW COMMANDER, WHICH MAY ALSO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO AN INCREASED SURGE IN ANTI-PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY. THE PREVIOUS COMMANDER, BRIGADIER GENERAL RITO ALEJO DEL RIO, NOW THE HEAD OF THE 13TH BRIGADE IN BOGOTA, WAS RUMORED TO HAVE BEEN QUITE TOLERANT OF PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY IN URABA. THE WELL-PUBLICIZED CAPTURE OF THESE PARAMILITARIES COMES ON THE EVE OF THE VISIT TO WASHINGTON BY GENERAL BONETT, AND GIVES HIM SOMETHING POSITIVE TO REPORT TO USG INTERLOCUTORS CONCERNED ABOUT PARAMILITARISM.

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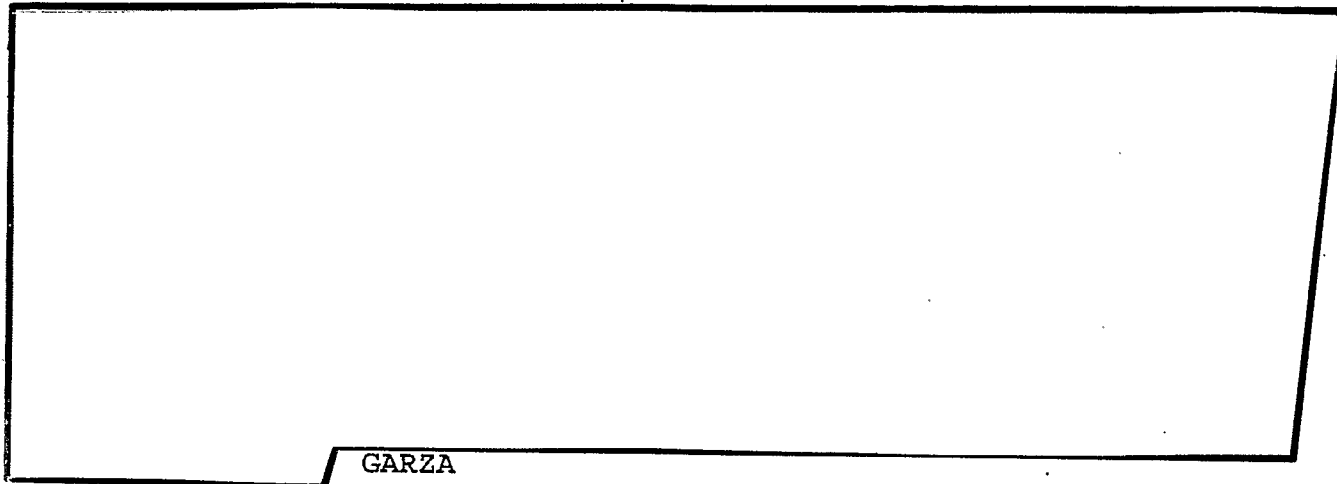
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