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SERIAL: (U) IIR [REDACTED]

TEXT

COUNTRY: (U) COLOMBIA (CO); BRAZIL (BR); ARGENTINA (AR); PERU (PE); ECUADOR (EC); VENEZUELA (VE); PANAMA (PM).

//IPSP: (U) [REDACTED]

COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJ: IIR [REDACTED] SENIOR COLOMBIAN ARMY OFFICER BIDDING HIS TIME DURING REMAINDER OF SAMPER REGIME (U)

WARNING: (U) THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE. REPORT CLASSIFIED

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
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DOI: (U) 970710.

REQS: (U) [REDACTED]

SOURCE: (U) [REDACTED]

SUMMARY: ~~TS~~ [REDACTED] SHARES [REDACTED] VIEWS ON A HOST OF TOPICS. [REDACTED] IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT CHANCES FOR ANY IMPROVEMENT IN THE CAPABILITY OF THE ARMED FORCES AS LONG AS SAMPER IS IN POWER, AND EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT THE GOC'S ABILITY TO CONTROL CONVIVIR'S. ENCLOSURES.

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TEXT: 1. ~~TS~~ [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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2. ~~TS~~ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] DURING THE MEETING, [REDACTED] PASSED SEVERAL COPIES OF THE LATEST EDITION. THE TWO MOST RECENT EDITIONS ARE FOUND AT ENCLOSURES 1 AND 2. THE IBERO-AMERICAN EDITORS CONFERENCE WILL BE HOSTED THIS FALL BY BRAZIL AND ATTENDANCE OF THIRD COUNTRY OFFICIALS IS PARTIALLY SUPPORTED THROUGH THE U.S. SECRETARY OF THE ARMY LATIN AMERICAN COOPERATION FUND (LATAM COOP FUND).

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[REDACTED]

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3. ~~TS~~ A BROAD RANGE OF OTHER ISSUES ALSO CAME UP IN THE DISCUSSION [REDACTED] REFLECTING ON BORDER PROBLEMS, [REDACTED] THE VENEZUELAN FRONTIER HAD ALWAYS BEEN EXTREMELY POROUS AND TENSE. GUERRILLA IMPUNITY IN AREAS SUCH AS ARAUCA, WHERE THE TRAGIC 6 JUL DOWNING OF A HELICOPTER LOADED WITH COLAR TROOPS HAD OCCURRED, GREATLY COMPLICATED MATTERS FOR BOTH GOVERNMENTS, WHICH SEEMED INCAPABLE OF STEMMING THE IMMENSE TRAFFIC IN CONTRABAND GOING BACK AND FORTH IN SEVERAL SECTORS OF THEIR MUTUAL BORDER. NOW THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT HAD TO DEAL WITH THE INCREASINGLY PROBLEMATIC PANAMANIAN BORDER TOO, [REDACTED] LAMENTED, STATING THAT [REDACTED] NEXT TASK FOR THE AFTERNOON WAS DEALING WITH A DELEGATION OF PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS VISITING WITH THE MOD ON THAT ISSUE. [REDACTED] HALF-JOKINGLY ADDED THAT [REDACTED] ASSUMED SOMETHING WOULD NEXT FLARE UP WITH PERU, ECUADOR, OR BRAZIL, THOUGH THE SCANT POPULATION AND GOVERNMENT PRESENCE IN THE AMAZON JUNGLE OF THE LATTER MIGHT HELP ENSURE THAT BORDER REMAINS RELATIVELY CALM.

[REDACTED]

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4. ~~TS~~ [REDACTED] SEEMED VERY PESSIMISTIC THAT THE TACTICAL SITUATION IN COLOMBIA WOULD IMPROVE ANYTIME SOON. [REDACTED] STATED DIRECTLY AND FRANKLY THAT NOTHING

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SIGNIFICANT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE REMAINING YEAR OR SO OF THE DEBILITATED, CORRUPT ADMINISTRATION OF PRESIDENT ERNESTO ((SAMPER)) PIZANO, WHICH THE ARMED FORCES WERE JUST TRYING TO SURVIVE AND THE DRUG TRAFFICKERS, GUERRILLAS, AND PARAMILITARIES WERE GLEEFULLY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF. TO [REDACTED] QUERY, [REDACTED] RESPONDED THAT THE TWO GREATEST SHORTCOMINGS HAMPERING THE MILITARY RIGHT NOW ARE INADEQUATE AIRLIFT AND POOR INTELLIGENCE, AND THE MILITARY BUDGET UNDER SAMPER IS INSUFFICIENT TO PRODUCE MUCH IMPROVEMENT IN EITHER AREA.

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5. [REDACTED] DID NOT BRING UP THE CURRENTLY HOT ISSUE OF END-USE MONITORING AS IT RELATES TO HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE AND THE RECEIPT OF U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE, BUT MOST COLAR OFFICERS KNOW THAT THE MOD AND EMBASSY OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO NEGOTIATE A DIFFICULT AGREEMENT. NOT SURPRISINGLY, DESPITE [REDACTED] FRANK COMMENTS ABOUT THE PRESIDENT, [REDACTED] REFRAINED FROM SAYING ANYTHING NEGATIVE ABOUT [REDACTED] IMMEDIATE BOSSES, [REDACTED]

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6. [REDACTED] INTERESTINGLY, [REDACTED] IS THE FIRST COLAR OFFICER TO OPENLY TELL [REDACTED] THAT THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH THE LEGAL "CONVIVIR" MOVEMENT (RURAL INTELLIGENCE WATCH COMMITTEES/SECURITY COOPERATIVES), WHICH HERETOFORE [REDACTED] CONTACTS HAVE ALL TOUTED AS NOT ONLY GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED AND LEGALIZED BUT ALSO VERY USEFUL AND TOTALLY UNDER CONTROL (THOUGH A NUMBER OF HUMAN RIGHTS NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN MUCH LESS SANGUINE). [REDACTED] DESCRIBED THE CONVIVIR'S AS "VERY DIFFICULT TO CONTROL," AND COMPARED THESE ELEMENTS TO THE "RONDAS CAMPESINAS" IN PERU. [REDACTED] THE LATTER HAD LIKEWISE BEEN ESTABLISHED LEGALLY BY THE GOVERNMENT IN LIMA TO HELP REGAIN CONTROL OF REMOTE RURAL AREAS AND TO GIVE THE PEASANTS A STAKE IN THEIR OWN SECURITY. THE PEASANTS OF BOTH THE RONDAS AND THE CONVIVIR'S HAD BEEN TRAINED AND LINKED UP TO GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES BY RADIO COMMUNICATIONS AND, IN THE CASE OF THE FORMER, ARMED WITH SHOTGUNS (SUPPOSEDLY THE CONVIVIR'S HAVE ONLY SMALL ARMS, THE MAJORITY OF WHICH ARE PRIVATELY OWNED). UNFORTUNATELY, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] CONCERNS BEGAN TO BE VOICED THAT THE RONDAS WERE GETTING OUT OF CONTROL, AND MANY OF THE "RONDEROS" WERE ACTUALLY BECOMING ALLIED WITH THE NARCOS. ONCE PEASANTS ARE ARMED AND GET A TASTE FOR POWER AND EASY MONEY, IT IS HARD TO DISARM THEM AND KEEP THEM UNDER TIGHT GOVERNMENT CONTROL. [REDACTED] SAID THAT WAS THE CONCERN OF HIS GOVERNMENT TOO, I.E., AWARENESS OF THE POTENTIAL FOR CONVIVIR'S TO DEVOLVE INTO FULL-FLEDGED PARAMILITARIES, THOUGH THE MOD WAS RELUCTANT TO ADMIT IT PUBLICLY, [REDACTED]

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7. ~~7~~ ASKED [REDACTED] WHAT [REDACTED] CAREER PLANS WERE, AND WHETHER [REDACTED] HAD A SHOT AT MAKING GENERAL OFFICER, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] SHOOK [REDACTED] HEAD AND SAID [REDACTED] WOULD HAVE TO RETIRE IN 1999. [REDACTED] YEAR GROUP HAD ITS OPPORTUNITY FOR PROMOTION TO FLAG RANK LAST YEAR, AND [REDACTED] WAS NOT SELECTED. [REDACTED] TICKED OFF THE NAMES OF SOME OF [REDACTED] CLASSMATES, WHICH WERE THE STUDENTS OF THE WAR COLLEGE'S HIGH MILITARY STUDIES COURSE (CAEM) [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] THAT GROUP, WHICH GRADUATED IN NOV 96 AND WAS PROMOTED TO BG IN DEC, INCLUDES SUCH OFFICERS AS BG RAFAEL HORACIO ((RUIZ)) NAVARRO, 2ND BRIGADE COMMANDER IN BARRANQUILLA (ATLANTICO); BG FERNANDO ((MILLAN)) PEREZ, 5TH BRIGADE COMMANDER IN BUCARAMANGA (SANTANDER); BG JAIME HUMBERTO ((USCATEGUI)) RAMIREZ, 7TH BRIGADE COMMANDER IN VILLAVICENCIO (META); BG GABRIEL EDUARDO ((CONTRERAS)) OCHOA, 12TH BRIGADE COMMANDER IN FLORENCIA (CAQUETA); BG ISMAEL ((PLATA)) VERA, 16TH BRIGADE COMMANDER IN YOPAL (CASANARE); AND BG EDUARDO ((SANTOS)) QUINONES, 1ST MOBILE BRIGADE COMMANDER IN FUSAGASUGA (CUNDINAMARCA).

8. ~~8~~ [REDACTED] EXPRESSED NO BITTERNESS OVER [REDACTED] NON-SELECTION, BUT CONCEDED THAT PROMOTIONS AT THAT LEVEL ARE "VERY POLITICAL" AND CONDUCTED BY A SECRET PANEL OF GENERAL OFFICERS. WHEN [REDACTED] TOLD [REDACTED] THAT PROMOTION BOARDS IN THE U.S. ARMY ARE ALSO CONDUCTED SECRETLY AND IN A CENTRALIZED FASHION, BUT THAT WHEN THE RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED A LIST OF THE BOARD MEMBERS IS ALSO PUBLISHED, THE COLAR OFFICER ADMITTED [REDACTED] WISHED THAT WAS THE WAY THINGS WERE DONE IN COLOMBIA. TO [REDACTED] MENTIONING THAT IT IS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO BE SELECTED FOR BG IN THE U.S. ARMY WITHOUT FIRST SUCCESSFULLY COMMANDING A BRIGADE, [REDACTED] SAID THAT [REDACTED] HAD COMMANDED THE 8TH BRIGADE IN ARMENIA (QUINDIO), WHICH IS PART OF THE THIRD DIVISION HEADQUARTERED IN CALI (VALLE DEL CAUCA). [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] COLAR BRIGADES REPRESENT A MIXTURE OF COL-LEVEL AND BG-LEVEL COMMAND POSITIONS, THE LATTER OF COURSE BEING THE LARGER UNITS IN THE MORE CONTENTIOUS ZONES (WHICH [REDACTED] ADMITTED WERE MORE AND MORE INCLUDING THE ENTIRE COUNTRY). THE CUSTOM IS TO ASSIGN ALMOST ALL THE NEWLY PROMOTED CAEM GRADUATES TO BG-LEVEL BRIGADE COMMAND SLOTS EACH JANUARY. MOST OF THEM HAVE ALREADY COMMANDED A SMALLER BRIGADE AS A COLONEL.

9. ~~9~~ [REDACTED] AN ARTILLERY OFFICER, PROUDLY MENTIONED THAT [REDACTED] HAD A SON STUDYING ENGINEERING AT JAVERIANA UNIVERSITY (GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS COLOMBIA'S TOP SCHOOL). [REDACTED] ALSO HAS A DAUGHTER MARRIED TO A COLAR

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CAPTAIN STATIONED AT HONDA (TOLIMA) WITH THE 16TH INFANTRY BATTALION (UNDER THE 6TH BRIGADE AT IBAGUE).

COMMENTS: 1. ~~TC~~

[REDACTED]

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2. (U)

[REDACTED]

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3. (U)

[REDACTED]

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4. ~~TC~~ [REDACTED] PESSIMISTIC REMARKS ARE PROBABLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RANK AND FILE OF THE COLAR SENIOR OFFICER CORPS. THERE EXISTS A DEEP CYNICISM OVER WHAT THE SAMPER REGIME HAS DONE FOR THE MILITARY, AND PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS BY BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND THE MOD [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] REGARDING BIGGER BUDGETS, MORE RESOURCES, NEW UNITS, AND GREATER PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE ARMED FORCES ARE TAKEN WITH A HEFTY GRAIN OF SALT BY THE SOLDIERS ACTUALLY MAKING THE SACRIFICES IN THE FIELD.

ADMIN

COLL: (U)

INSTR: (U)

PREP: (U)

ENCL: (U) TO FOLLOW. TWO ENCLOSURES.

1. COLOMBIAN DEFENSE MINISTRY JOURNAL ENTITLED "DEFENSA NACIONAL," MAR-APR 97, 1 ORIGINAL CPY, IN COLOR, IN SPANISH, (U), 48 PGS.

2. "DEFENSA NACIONAL," MAY-JUN 97, 1 ORIGINAL CPY, IN COLOR, IN SPANISH, (U), 48 PGS.

ACQ: (U)

DISSEM: (U)

WARNING: (U) REPORT CLASSIFIED ~~SECRET~~

DRV FROM: [REDACTED]

DECL ON: ~~X1~~

END OF MESSAGE

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