CONFIDENTIAL
n/a

PAGE 01
Bogota 01594 01 OF 02 242301Z

INFO LOG-00 MFA-01 NP-00 AID-00 AMAD-01 A-00 CA-02
CCO-00 CTME-00 INL-01 SRPP-00 DS-00 EB-00 ED-01
FBIE-00 FBO-01 HHS-01 H-01 SSA-01 TEDE-00 INR-00
IO-00 LAB-01 L-00 MMP-00 M-00 AC-01 NSA-00
OCS-03 OIC-02 OMB-01 OPIC-01 OPR-01 PA-00 PM-00
PRS-00 ACE-00 P-00 SCT-00 SP-00 IRM-00 SSO-00
SS-00 STR-00 TRSE-00 T-00 USIE-00 USSS-00 ASDS-01
DTC-01 PMB-00 DSCC-00 PRM-01 DRL-02 G-00 NFAT-00
SAS-00 /026W

P 242300Z FEB 00
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3499
INFO NSC WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
DIRONDCP WASHDC
USCINCSC MIAMI FL//SCJ2/SCJ5/POLAD//

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 001594

DEPT PASS TO USAID
E.O. 12958; DECL: 02/24/10
TAGS: PHUM, PTER, MASS, PREF, AORC, ASEC, SOCI, CO
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02
Bogota 01594 01 OF 02 242301Z

SUBJECT: THREE Paramilitary Massacres on Colombia's North Coast

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR CURTIS W. KAMMAN, REASON 1.5(D).

SUMMARY
-----

1. (C) THREE Paramilitary Massacres in Northern Colombia -- Including the Largest in Recent Memory -- Have Provoked the Flight of Thousands of Peasants from the Area. The Military Pursued the Paramilitary Attackers, with Some Notable Successes. The Attacks Occurred Within the Context of Long-Running Guerrilla-Paramilitary Competition...
FOR THE STRATEGIC MONTES DE MARIA COASTAL REGION. VICTIMS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SELECTIVELY TARGETED IN TWO OF THE MASSACRES. HOWEVER, THE LARGEST MASSACRE WAS AN INDISCRIMINATE ORGY OF DRUNKEN VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.

FIRST OF THREE MASSACRES AT LAS OVEJAS, SUCRE

2. (U) A GROUP OF APPROXIMATELY 150 AUC PARAMILITARIES STAGED ATTACKS IN FIVE NEIGHBORHOODS OF LAS OVEJAS MUNICIPALITY OF SUCRE DEPARTMENT FEBRUARY 16-17. THEY MURDERED AT LEAST 20 PERSONS WHOM THEY SUSPECTED OF BEING SYMPATHIZERS OR MEMBERS OF GUERRILLA MOVEMENTS, AND BURNED DOZENS OF HOMES. (THE HUMAN RIGHTS UNIT OF THE FISCALIA (FUDH) REPORTED THAT IT PROCESSED DEATH CERTIFICATES FOR 18 RESIDENTS OF LAS OVEJAS AS OF FEBRUARY 24, BUT THAT THE WORK WAS INCOMPLETE.) LAS OVEJAS IS IN THE MONTES DE MARIA REGION, A STRATEGIC AREA LONG CONTESTED BY PARAMILITARIES AND FARC AND ELN GUERRILLAS FOR ITS VALUE.

PAGE 03

BOGOTA 01594 01 OF 02 2423012

AS A DRUGS- AND GUNS-RUNNING CORRIDOR. ACCORDING TO PRESS, MORE THAN 20 COMBATANTS WERE KILLED IN CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN AREA PARAMILITARIES AND GUERRILLAS. THE AIR FORCE FORCED DOWN IN THE AREA ONE OF AN ESTIMATED NINE HELICOPTERS BELONGING TO CARLOS CASTANO’S AUC. THE PARAMILITARY PILOTS DESTROYED THE HELICOPTER AFTER IT WAS FORCED TO LAND. (NOTE: THE HELICOPTER REPORTEDLY HAD ONE .50 CALIBER MACHINE GUN MOUNTED IN THE DOORWAY. END NOTE.)

37 KILLED INDISCRIMINATELY AT EL SALADO

PULLED FROM THEIR HOMES, ALTHOUGH AT LEAST ONE VICTIM HAD HIS THROAT SLIT IN A CHURCH. AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF HOMES WERE BURNED.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04

BOGOTA 01594 01 OF 02 242301Z

MARINES GIVE CHASE

4. (U) MARINES OF THE THIRD MARINE INFANTRY BATTALION, ULTimately UNDER THE COMMAND OF COLONEL RODRIGO QUINONES, PURSUED THE ATTACKING PARAMILITARIES. ON FEBRUARY 22, QUINONES REPORTED THAT HIS MEN HAD KILLED TWO PARAS AND CAPTURED ANOTHER 11. THE FUDH REPORTED THAT QUINONES HAD TURNED THE 11 OVER FOR JUDICIAL PROCESSING. NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OMBUDSMAN CASTRO TOLD HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER FEBRUARY 23 THAT HE WAS SURPRISED AND DELIGHTED BY THE MARINES' QUICK RESPONSE.

PEASANTS FLEE VIOLENCE

5. (U) IN RESPONSE TO THE MASSACRES AT LAS OVEJAS-EL SALADO, AREA PEASANTS PACKED THEIR BELONGINGS ON TO CARTS AND FLED. NGO'S AND PRESS ESTIMATED THEIR NUMBERS AT APproximately 3,000.

MASSACRE AT PEACE COMMUNITY

6. (C) ON THE NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 19, ACCU PARAMILITARIES SELECTIVELY ASSASSINATED FIVE BANANA WORKERS IN THE SELF-DECLARED "PEACE COMMUNITY" OF SAN JOSE DE APARTADO, IN URABA, ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT, AND WOUNDED A FURTHER THREE. THE ACCU REPORTEDLY SUSPECTED THE MEN OF BEING

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01

BOGOTA 01594 02 OF 02 242301Z

ACTION WHA-01

INFO LOG-00 MFA-01 NP-00 AID-00 AMAD-01 A-00 CA-02
CCO-00 CTME-00 INL-01 SRPP-00 DS-00 EB-00 ED-01
FBI-00 FBO-01 HHS-01 H-01 SSA-01 TEDE-00 INR-00
IO-00 LAB-01 L-00 MMP-00 M-00 AC-01 NSAE-00
OCS-03 OIC-02 OMB-01 OPIC-01 OPR-01 PA-00 PM-00
PRS-00 ACE-00 P-00 SCT-00 SP-00 IRM-00 SSO-00
SS-00 STR-00 TRSE-00 T-00 USIE-00 USSS-00 ASDS-01

n/a
CONFIDENTIAL
n/a

P 242300Z FEB 00
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3500
INFO NSC WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
DIEW WASHDC
USCINCOS MIAMI FL//SCJ2/SCJ5/POLAD//

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 02 OF 02 BOGOTA 001594

DEPT PASS TO USAID

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/10
TAGS: PHUM, PTER, MASS, PREF, AORC, ASEC, SOCI, CO
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02
BOGOTA 01594 02 OF 02 2423012

SUBJECT: THREE PARAMILITARY MASSACRES ON COLOMBIA'S NORTH COAST

SYMPATHIZERS OR MEMBERS OF GUERRILLA MOVEMENTS. ARMY BRIGADIER GENERAL CARLOS VARGAS FORERO, COMMANDER OF THE 17TH BRIGADE, TOLD PRESS HE WAS WORKING WITH POLICE TO ATTEMPT TO APPREHEND THE PERPETRATORS. HARD-LEFT HUMAN RIGHTS NGO JUSTICE AND PEACE ("JUSTICIA Y PAZ"), WHICH MAINTAINS AN OFFICE IN APARTADO, PUBLICLY CHARGED THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE 17TH BRIGADE HAD PARTICIPATED DIRECTLY IN THE MASSACRE.


IN SPITE OF APARTADO'S STATED COMMITMENT TO NON-VIOLENCE, SOME SECTORS OF THE ARMED
8. (C) WHAT'S NEW ABOUT ALL THIS? IN ONE SENSE, NOT MUCH: PARAMILITARIES AND GUERRILLAS HAVE FOUGHT OVER THE STRATEGIC MONTES DE MARIA REGION FOR YEARS. HOWEVER, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME POST CAN RECALL THAT THE MILITARY, IN THIS CASE MARINES, PURSUED PARAMILITARIES IN THE WAKE OF ATROCITIES IN THE REGION WITH SOME VIGOR. THE MILITARY'S MOTIVES FOR GOING AFTER THE PARAS WITH NEWFOUND ALACRITY ARE OPEN TO DEBATE.

9. (C) THESE CASES ALSO DESERVE ATTENTION FOR THE SHEER NUMBERS OF PERSONS MASSACRED: WITH 37 REPORTED DEAD AT EL SALADO, THIS LOOKS TO HAVE BEEN THE WORST SINGLE MASSACRE SINCE THE 1988 SEGOVIA MASSACRE. (THE 1997 MAPIRIPAN MASSACRE MAY HAVE CLAIMED MORE VICTIMS, BUT THERE WAS NEVER A DEFINITIVE BODY COUNT.) THE GOVERNOR OF BOLIVAR DEPARTMENT SAID HE WAS GOING TO LOOK INTO THE BACKGROUNDS OF THOSE MURDERED, WITH THE GOAL OF DETERMINING WHETHER OR NOT THEY WERE IN LEAGUE WITH GUERRILLAS, AS THE PARAMILITARIES CLAIM.

RECENTLY TOLD PRM A/S TAFT THAT PARAMILITARIES' TARGETING OF GUERRILLAS IS BECOMING MORE ACCURATE. INDEED, THEIR TARGETING WAS QUITE SELECTIVE AT LAS OVEJAS AND SAN JOSE DE APARTADO. HOWEVER, JUDGING BY THE PARAMILITARIES' DRUNKEN, WILD BEHAVIOR, THE MASSACRE AT EL SALADO LOOKS TO HAVE BEEN VERY INDISCRIMINATE.

KAMMAN