

UNCLASSIFIED

E12

CONFIDENTIAL

RELEASED IN FULL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 13897 01 OF 02 090013Z
ACTION ARA-00

INFO	LOG-00	COPY-01	ADS-00	INR-10	SS-00	CIAE-00	H-01
	NSCE-00	NSAE-00	SSO-00	SY-06	HA-08	L-03	PM-10
	PA-01	MCT-04	OMB-01	INM-07	INRE-00	ANAE-00	A-02
	SYE-00	SP-02	SNP-01	PRS-01	SLPD-01	SPD-01	/060 W
					-----313400 090031Z /62		

O 090010Z NOV 85
 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3575
 INFO CONTADORA COLLECTIVE
 DEPTJUSTICE WASHDC
 DEA HQS WASHDC
 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS
 DIA WASHDC
 USIA WASHDC 6582

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 13897

DEPT OF JUSTICE FOR OIA

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PTER, CO
 SUBJECT: THE PALACE OF JUSTICE ATTACK-LOSSES AND GAINS

REF: BOGOTA 13815

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. SUMMARY: THE M-19 TERRORIST ATTACK ON THE COLOMBIAN PALACE OF JUSTICE, NOVEMBER 6-7, TOOK A HEAVY HUMAN TOLL: AT LEAST 88 DEAD, INCLUDING 12 OF THE NATION'S 24 SUPREME COURT JUSTICES, 13 MILITARY AND POLICE PERSONNEL, ALL THE TERRORISTS (ABOUT 40), AND MANY CIVILIANS. THE DEAD TERRORISTS INCLUDED THREE "COMANDANTES". THE REMNANTS OF THE M-19'S FALSE "ROBIN HOOD" IMAGE ALSO DIED IN THE PALACE. COLOMBIANS SEEM UNITED IN SUPPORT OF THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 13897 01 OF 02 090013Z

GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS AND OF PRESIDENT BETANCUR'S DECISION NOT TO NEGOTIATE WHEN THE HIGHLY-RESPECTED INSTITUTION OF THE SUPREME COURT WAS UNDER ATTACK. THE M-19 MISCALCULATED AND LOST. PRESIDENT BETANCUR SHOWED THAT HE CAN BE

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

REMARKABLY TOUGH WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES DEMAND. THE GOC SECURITY FORCES DEMONSTRATED THEIR CAPABILITIES. COLOMBIA PUBLIC MAY ULTIMATELY TURN AGAINST OTHER GUERRILLA GROUPS-- NOTABLY THE FARC. END SUMMARY

3. THE ATTACK: AT 11:40 A.M. NOVEMBER 6, THE COLOMBIAN PALACE OF JUSTICE WAS ATTACKED BY MEMBERS OF M-19. AN ESTIMATED 35-45 HEAVILY ARMED GUERRILLAS ENTERED THE PALACE THROUGH THE BASEMENT IN ONE TRUCK, ALSO LOADED WITH FOOD TO SUPPORT A LENGTHY STAY. EARLY IN THE AFTERNOON, GOC SECURITY FORCES COUNTER-ATTACKED FROM HELICOPTERS ON THE ROOF, WHILE LIGHT TANKS SMASHED THEIR WAY INTO THE FIRST FLOOR, BUT ENCOUNTERED STRONG OPPOSITION. RETREATING TO THE THIRD AND FOURTH FLOORS, THE GUERRILLAS HELD AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF HOSTAGES INCLUDING MOST OF THE SUPREME COURT JUSTICES. ACCORDING TO GOC SOURCES, A FIRE WHICH VIRTUALLY ENGULFED THE BUILDING WAS SET BY THE GUERRILLAS.

4. FINAL HOURS: THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION THROUGHOUT WAS NOT TO NEGOTIATE, DESPITE A RADIO APPEAL NOVEMBER 6 FROM THE HOSTAGE PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT. SECURITY FORCES RENEWED THEIR COUNTER-ATTACK IN THE EARLY MORNING DARKNESS NOVEMBER 7. DURING THIS PERIOD, IT IS BELIEVED THE M-19 KILLED THEIR HIGH RANKING HOSTAGES. RESISTANCE CONTINUED UNTIL 2:30 PM ON NOVEMBER 7, WHEN GOC FORCES WERE ABLE TO REMOVE THE SURVIVING HOSTAGES FROM THE BURNED-OUT HULK OF THE PALACE. NONE OF THE GUERRILLAS SURVIVED.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 13897 01 OF 02 090013Z

5. THE COSTS: AT LEAST 88 PERSONS ARE DEAD BY OFFICIAL COUNT. THE BREAKDOWN OF CASUALTIES IS NOT YET OFFICIAL, AS FINAL CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS CONTINUE. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE PRESS ACCOUNTS, THE DEAD INCLUDE ELEVEN SUPREME COURT JUDGES, THIRTEEN GOC SECURITY PERSONNEL, AROUND FORTY GUERRILLAS, AND THE REST CIVILIANS AND NONCOMBATANT. A TWELFTH JUDGE WAS AN INDIRECT CASUALTY, DYING IN A LOCAL HOSPITAL OF HEART FAILURE WHEN TOLD OF THE ATTACK. INCLUDED AMONG THE M-19 LOSSES WERE THREE SENIOR LEADERS, MEMBERS OF ITS "NATIONAL DIRECTORATE."

6. THE SUPREME COURT -- DOWN BUT NOT OUT:

THE COURT IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR SECTIONS WITH A TOTAL OF

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

24 MAGISTRATES. THE DEATHS OF ELEVEN MAGISTRATES, INCLUDING COURT PRESIDENT ALFONSO REYES ECHANDIA, ARE NATURALLY A MAJOR BLOW. THE ATTACK AND FIRE IN THE PALACE OF JUSTICE DESTROYED MANY OF THE ARCHIVES, INCLUDING FILES OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. IT WILL BE DIFFICULT AND TIME-CONSUMING TO RECONSTRUCT THE RECORDS. THE COURT WILL RESUME WORK NEXT WEEK IN TEMPORARY QUARTERS AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY, BUT IS UNLIKELY TO ACCOMPLISH MUCH UNTIL NEW MAGISTRATES HAVE BEEN APPOINTED AND REMAINING RECORDS SALVAGED. SOME RECORDS ARE DUPLICATED ELSEWHERE, BUT MANY MAY BE IRRETRIEVABLE, PUTTING STRAIN ON THE JUDICIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS.

7. PUBLIC OPINION: THE "BLOOD AND FIRE" BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE M-19 HAVE UNITED A MAJORITY OF COLOMBIANS IN ANGER AGAINST TERRORISM AND IN SUPPORT OF THE COUNTRY'S DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. THE SUPREME COURT IS PERHAPS THE MOST UNIVERSALLY RESPECTED OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS. HENCE, ITS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 13897 02 OF 02 090014Z
ACTION ARA-00

INFO	LOG-00	COPY-01	ADS-00	INR-10	SS-00	CIAE-00	H-01
	NSCE-00	NSAE-00	SSO-00	SY-06	HA-08	L-03	PM-10
	PA-01	MCT-04	OMB-01	TNM-07	INRE-00	ANAE-00	A-02
	SYE-00	SP-02	SNP-01	PRS-01	SLPD-01	SPD-01	/060 W

-----313421 090031Z /62

O 090010Z NOV 85
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3576
INFO CONTADORA COLLECTIVE
DEPTJUSTICE WASHDC

UNCLASSIFIED

DEA HQS WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS
DIA WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 6583

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BOGOTA 13897

DEPT OF JUSTICE FOR OIA

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PTER, CO

SUBJECT: THE PALACE OF JUSTICE ATTACK-LOSSES AND GAINS

CHOICE AS A TARGET WAS PARTICULARLY CLUMSY. PRESIDENT BETANCUR IS ENJOYING A RESURGENCE OF SUPPORT. (SOME JUDICIAL EMPLOYEES HAVE TAKEN EXCEPTION TO GOC'S HANDLING OF THE CRISIS.) IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT IN WHAT DIRECTION PUBLIC OPINION WILL ULTIMATELY MOVE, AND HENCE WHETHER BETANCUR WILL RETAIN HIS MASTERY OF THE ISSUE. FOR THE M-19, ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE SEEMS NO QUESTION THAT THE ATTACK WAS A DISASTER IN EVERY POSSIBLE SENSE. WHEN THEY GET OVER THEIR SHOCK, THE M-19 MAY BE EVEN MORE BIZARRELY DANGEROUS AS THEY TRY DESPERATELY TO RECOUP.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 13897 02 OF 02 090014Z

8. COMMENT: WE WERE REMINDED OF SOME THINGS THIS WEEK THAT BODE WELL FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY. BELISARIO BETANCUR CAN BE REMARKABLY TOUGH WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT. WE EXPECT THAT IN FUTURE INCIDENTS HE WOULD BE JUST AS DETERMINED. WE BELIEVE THAT ONE OF THE FACTORS PRESSING ON BETANCUR WAS PRESIDENT DUARTE'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE TERRORIST KIDNAPPING OF HIS DAUGHTER. AS FOREIGN MINISTER RAMIREZ MADE CLEAR TO US LAST MONTH, BETANCUR -- WHO MAINTAINED REGULAR TELEPHONIC CONTACT WITH DUARTE THROUGHOUT THE LATTER'S ORDEAL -- BELIEVED THAT THE INTENSE PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT OF A "DESPERATE" SALVADORAN PRESIDENT IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WAS A "TRAGIC MISTAKE." THE RESULTS, ACCORDING TO BETANCUR, INCLUDED PREMATURE CONCESSIONS AND INCREASED VULNERABILITY OF SALVADORAN DEMOCRACY. IN THIS REGARD, IT IS IRONIC THAT ONE OF THE JUDGES RESCUED EARLY FROM THE JUSTICE PALACE HERE WAS THE PRESIDENT'S OWN BROTHER, JAIME BETANCUR, WHO WAS HIMSELF A

... } ... } ... } ... } ... }

UNCLASSIFIED

TERRORIST KIDNAP VICTIM TWO YEARS BEFORE. THE FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD US LAST MONTH THAT THE PRESIDENT FREQUENTLY COMPARED HIS HANDLING OF HIS BROTHER'S KIDNAPPING (FAVORABLY) WITH DUARTE'S DEALINGS ON BEHALF OF HIS DAUGHTER. IT APPEARS TO US THAT THE M-19 CALL ON THE 7TH ON BETANCUR TO SEND JAIME BACK TO THE PALACE AS A MEDIATOR ONLY SERVED TO RECONFIRM THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL AND POLITICAL DECISION TO ACT WITH FORCE RATHER THAN EVEN APPEAR TO NEGOTIATE WITH TERRORISTS.

--THE COLOMBIAN PEOPLE ARE INCREASINGLY ANGRY AND DISILLUSIONED WITH THE VIOLENT GUERRILLAS. THE REMNANTS OF M-19'S "ROBIN HOOD" IMAGE DIED IN THE PALACE. THE PUBLIC WILL SUPPORT STAYING ACTIVE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 13897 02 OF 02 090014Z

AGAINST THE M-19. AS FOR THE OTHER GROUPS, ESPECIALLY THE FARC, UNLESS THEY ARE VERY CAREFUL THEY MAY BE SWEEPED INTO THIS REACTION -- NOT NECESSARILY A BAD THING, IN THE VIEW OF MANY.

9. IN SEPTELS WE WILL ANALYZE THE IMPACT OF THE PALACE ATTACK ON COLOMBIA'S PEACE PROCESS AND ASSESS THE PERFORMANCE OF THE GOC'S FORCES DURING THIS CRISIS.
GILLESPIE

UNCLASSIFIED