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D172

P

B1, B6

1-4(d)

extend class.
to 200004409.

ENVELOPE

CDSN = CFS031 MCN = 98057/36686 TOR = 980572121
OTTZYUW RUEKJCS7622 0572122-CCCC--RUEALGX.
ZNY CCCCC

HEADER

O 262122Z FEB 98
FM SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
INFO RUEKJSA/STOC
RUEKCOM/JCP EMAIL CUSTOMER//USDCOMP//
RUEKMDT/USDP:ESC
RUEALGX/SAFE
O 262058Z FEB 98
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1670
INFO RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 0169
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEHIA/USIA WASHDC 3944
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
RHEHOND/DIRONDCP WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RUCNFB/FBI WASHDC
RUETIAA/DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
RULSADT/NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
RUEABND/DEA WASHDC
BT

EXCISE

CONTROLS

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 002097
STATE FOR ARA/AND, DRL AND INL (BEERS)
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

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Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
() Classify as (X) Extend as (C) Downgrade to
Date 6/30/05 Declassify on 2/25/08 Reason 1.4(d)

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
() Release (X) Excise () Deny (X) Declassify in part
Date 6/30/05 Exemption B1(d), B6

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E.O. 12958: 2/25/03

/***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****/

BODY

TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, PTER, PINS, ASEC, PINR, CO
 SUBJECT: MILITARY AND POLICE BEGIN CLEARLY CRACKING DOWN ON
 PARAMILITARIES AROUND CARLOS CASTANO
 REF: A) BOGOTA 1816 B) BOGOTA 1249 (C) BOGOTA 2036 (D) BOGOTA
 2035

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE O.P. GARZA. REASONS: 1.5(B&D).

1. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION CABLE. SEE PARA 11.
2. (C) SUMMARY: A SERIES OF CLEAR-CUT INCIDENTS RECENTLY DEMONSTRATES THAT GOC AUTHORITIES ARE BEGINNING TO DO MORE THAN JUST TALK ABOUT CRACKING DOWN ON PARAMILITARISM -- PARTICULARLY IN THE HEARTLAND OF CARLOS CASTANO'S ACCU. SEVERAL ARMY AND POLICE OFFICERS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED FOR COLLABORATING WITH PARAMILITARY LEADER CARLOS C1ASTANO AND HAVE BEEN FORMALLY CHARGED WITH HOMICIDE AND OTHER CRIMES. ON FEBRUARY 13, POLICE ARRESTED ONE OF CASTANO'S CLOSEST SUBORDINATES. IN A FIREFIGHT WHERE THE GOC SUFFERED CASUALTIES, POLICE AND MARINES KILLED FOUR PARAMILITARIES AND FORCED TEN OTHERS TO SURRENDER ON FEBRUARY 18. IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT, ACCORDING TO **F** **THE 22** 86
 PARAMILITARIES WHO SURRENDERED TO THE ARMY ON FEBRUARY 7 -- AND WERE PUBLICLY HANDED OVER TO THE FISCALES FOR INVESTIGATION -- HAVE IMPLICATED OTHER MILITARY PERSONNEL IN PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY. WE NOTE THAT THESE LATEST ANTI-PARAMILITARY INCIDENTS HAVE ALL TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE DEPARTURE FROM NORTHERN **COLOMBIA** OF FORMER FIRST DIVISION COMMANDER MG IVAN RAMIREZ AND HIS 17TH BRIGADE COMMANDER BG RIO ALEJO DEL RIO, WHO WERE WIDELY BELIEVED TO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A COMMAND CLIMATE CONDUCIVE TO TURNING A BLIND EYE TO PARAMILITARIES, OR WORSE. NOTHING IS IRREVERSIBLE, BUT AT LONG LAST THOSE DAYS APPEAR TO BE OVER. END SUMMARY.

 ARMY/POLICE PROTECTORS OF ACCU ARRESTED

3. (U) ONE ARMY MAJOR AND FOUR POLICE OFFICERS ARE NOW UNDER ARREST FOR COLLABORATING WITH PARAMILITARY WARLORD CARLOS CASTANO. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, PROSECUTORS FROM THE FISCALIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS UNIT SPENT SEVERAL MONTHS INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS OF CLANDESTINE LINKS BETWEEN CASTANO AND MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY FORCES, AND ON FEBRUARY 9 ASKED POLICE DIRECTOR SERRANO TO HAVE THREE POLICE OFFICERS ARRESTED. THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE THREE MEN

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WERE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY FELLOW POLICE PERSONNEL IN SAN JACINTO, BOLIVAR DEPARTMENT. PROSECUTORS MADE A SIMILAR REQUEST ON FEBRUARY 16 TO ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL GALAN, WHO ON FEBRUARY 17 ORDERED THE ARREST OF AN ARMY MAJOR IN MONTERIA, CORDOBA DEPARTMENT (A NOTORIOUS CASTANO STRONGHOLD). THE MEN ARE BEING CHARGED FORMALLY WITH HOMICIDE, CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT CONTRACT MURDER (I.E., TO HIRE "SICARIOS"), AND DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN ILLEGAL PARAMILITARY GROUPS.

4. (U) UNTIL THE TIME OF HIS ARREST, ARMY MAJOR EDUARDO SANTOS VERGUERRA WAS SERVING AS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE 11TH BRIGADE'S 33RD INFANTRY BATTALION "JUNIN," HEADQUARTERED IN MONTERIA. THE THREE ARRESTED POLICE OFFICERS (ALBERTO BELTRAN ESTREMOR, JUAN CARLOS SILVA GELVES, AND OSCAR SOLANO PEDRAZA) HAD BEEN SERVING AS THE COMMANDERS OF POLICE STATIONS IN THE NORTHERN BOLIVAR TOWNS OF EL GUAMO, SAN JUAN NEPOMUCENO, AND SAN JACINTO RESPECTIVELY, ANOTHER AREA LONG CONSIDERED TO BE A CASTANO STRONGHOLD. THE MEN WERE TRANSFERRED TO BOGOTA TO TESTIFY ABOUT THEIR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN THE NOVEMBER 6 MURDER OF THE MAYOR-ELECT OF SAN JACINTO. MEMBERS OF THE FISCALIA'S TECHNICAL INVESTIGATIVE CORPS (CTI) AND OF THE DAS (ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT OF SECURITY) ALSO ARRESTED TWO CIVILIANS IN CONNECTION WITH THIS CASE.

5. (C) ACCORDING TO

THE FISCALIA HAS SINCE REQUESTED THAT GENERAL SERRANO ORDER THE ARREST OF A FOURTH POLICE OFFICER FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THESE CRIMES (AND THE POLICE WERE EXPECTED TO EXECUTE THIS ARREST ON FEBRUARY 25). IRONICALLY, THE TARGET OF THIS NEW ARREST ORDER

/***** BEGINNING OF SECTION 002 *****/

HAD JUST BEEN APPOINTED TO COMMAND THE POLICE UNIT IN SAN JUAN NEPOMUCENO IN THE WAKE OF THE FEBRUARY 10 ARREST OF THE PREVIOUS COMMANDER (SEE PARA 4, ABOVE). ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] ALL FOUR POLICE OFFICERS AND THE ARMY OFFICER WERE "THOROUGHLY INTEGRATED" INTO CARLOS CASTANO'S "ACCU" PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION.

DEPUTY COMMANDER OF AUC CAPTURED

6. (U) ON FEBRUARY 13, POLICE IN ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT ARRESTED EDWIN ALVAREZ CALVINO, AKA "PELUSA," BELIEVED TO BE SECOND IN COMMAND OF THE "AUTODEFENSAS UNIDAS DE COLOMBIA" (AUC) AFTER CARLOS CASTANO. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE POLICE BELIEVE "PELUSA" MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN AS MANY AS 200 MURDERS IN ANTIOQUIA AND AT THE TIME OF HIS ARREST WAS CARRYING A LIST TARGETING FORMER MAYORS, FORMER COUNCIL MEMBERS, AND NGO LEADERS FOR MURDER.

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PARAS CAPTURED AFTER FIRE FIGHT: GOC TAKES CASUALTIES

7. (U) ON FEBRUARY 17, POLICE AND MARINES IN SAN ONOFRE, SUCRE DEPARTMENT, KILLED FOUR PARAMILITARIES IN COMBAT AND DETAINED TEN OTHERS. THEY ALSO SEIZED A GRENADE LAUNCHER, GUNS AND AMMUNITION, AS WELL AS DOCUMENTS INDICATING THE PARAMILITARIES BELONGED TO CASTANO'S ACCU. TWO POLICE WERE KILLED AND FOUR INJURED IN THE CLASH. IN SEPARATE INCIDENTS, FOUR CONVIVIR (RURAL SECURITY COOPERATIVE) MEMBERS WERE RECENTLY ARRESTED IN ANTIOQUIA FOR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN THE AUGUST 14 MASSACRE OF TEN LUMBERJACKS, WHILE THE HEAD OF A CONVIVIR IN ARAUCA DEPARTMENT IS ALSO UNDER ARREST IN CONNECTION WITH A SPATE OF VIOLENT DEATHS IN RECENT MONTHS.

SURRENDERED PARAS SING TO FISCALES

8. (C) AFTER APPARENTLY RUNNING OUT OF AMMUNITION IN CONFRONTATIONS WITH THE GUERRILLAS, TWENTY-TWO PARAMILITARIES (VICE 23 AS ORIGINALLY REPORTED) SURRENDERED TO THE ARMY NEAR THE PANAMANIAN BORDER ON FEBRUARY 7 (REF B). THE 17TH BRIGADE, UNDER A NEW COMMANDER SINCE THE DEPARTURE OF GENERAL DEL RIO AT THE END OF THE YEAR, PUBLICLY HANDED THE PARAS OVER TO THE FISCALIA FOR INVESTIGATION. (COMMENT: THE FACT THAT THEY WERE HANDED OVER PUBLICLY BY THE ARMY TO PROSECUTORS IS A FIRST AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, AT LEAST ON THIS SCALE. END COMMENT.)

]SOURCE TOLD POLOFF ON FEBRUARY 25 THAT THE PARAS HAVE IMPLICATED MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THEIR ACTIVITIES. THEIR JUDICIAL STATUS WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE END OF THIS WEEK.

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CONCLUDING COMMENT

9. (C) COMMENT: THIS CRACKDOWN COMES IN THE WAKE OF THE GOC'S PUBLIC INSISTENCE IN RECENT MONTHS THAT IT WAS SERIOUS ABOUT CRACKING DOWN ON PARAMILITARISM. NEVERTHELESS, THESE INCIDENTS ARE THE FIRST SUSTAINED, CONCRETE ACTION THAT WE CAN POINT TO CLEARLY PUTTING THIS POLICY INTO PRACTICE. TAKEN TOGETHER WITH THE ARREST OF VICTOR CARRANZA (REF C) AND THE MILITARY'S APPARENT NON-INVOLVEMENT IN OVERBLOWN CLAIMS OF PARAMILITARY MASSACRES IN PTO. ASIS (REF D), IT SUGGESTS THAT WE MAY BE CROSSING A WATERSHED ON THE NETTLESOME ISSUE OF THE MILITARY-PARAMILITARY NEXUS, AT LEAST IN PART OF THE COUNTRY.

10. (C) WE NOTE THAT THIS NEW-FOUND EFFECTIVENESS IN CURBING THE

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PARAMILITARIES CORRELATES CLOSELY WITH THE RECENT CHANGE OF COMMAND
/***** BEGINNING OF SECTION 003 *****/

IN SEVERAL KEY MILITARY POSITIONS IN NORTHERN COLOMBIA, INCLUDING THE FIRST DIVISION IN SANTA MARTA (FORMERLY HEADED BY MAJOR GENERAL IVAN RAMIREZ), THE 17TH BRIGADE IN URABA, AND THE 11TH BRIGADE IN MONTERIA. (REF A REPORTED PERCEPTIONS THAT THE NEW 17TH BRIGADE COMMANDER, BG MARTIN ORLANDO CARRENO SANDOVAL, HAS ALREADY MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE IS COMMITTED TO PURSUING PARAMILITARIES -- SOMETHING TAKEN AT FACE VALUE BY [] A LONG-STANDING CRITIC OF PERCEIVED GOC TOLERANCE FOR PARAMILITARISM.) IT SEEMS MORE THAN COINCIDENTAL THAT THE RECENT ANTI-PARAMILITARY ACTIONS HAVE ALL TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE DEPARTURE FROM NORTHERN COLOMBIA OF MILITARY PERSONNEL BELIEVED TO FAVOR PARAMILITARIES. B1

REQUESTED ACTION

11. (C) UNFORTUNATELY, NONE OF THE UNAMBIGUOUS INCIDENTS CITED HERE TOOK PLACE IN TIME FOR US TO GIVE THE GOC CREDIT IN THE 1997 ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD DO SO AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY -- PERHAPS BEGINNING WITH A PURPOSEFUL REFERENCE TO UNMISTAKABLE PROGRESS DURING INL ACTING A/S BEERS' ARNET ON CERTIFICATION ON FEBRUARY 27. IT IS FAR TOO EARLY TO DECLARE COMPLETE VICTORY, BUT THE DEPARTMENT CAN SAFELY SAY THAT IN A NUMBER OF SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS RECENTLY THE GOC MILITARY HAS SHOWN UNPRECEDENTED, AND MUCH WELCOMED, DETERMINATION IN CONFRONTING PARAMILITARISM. WE HOPE IT WILL STAY THE COURSE AND FINISH A JOB SO WELL BEGUN. BUT THEY ALSO NEED TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE NOTICED. GARZA

ADMIN

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