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United States Department of State

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DOD Coordination

MEMORANDUM FOR ARA/PPCP - Roberta Jacobson

FROM: ARA/AND - David Passage

RELEASED IN FULL

SUBJ: Consultations with SOUTHCOM

There are two countries where we could use some help from SOUTHCOM, weighing in with host country counterparts: Ecuador and Colombia.

Ecuador: Luigi Einaudi and I both believe the Ecuadorean military is the key to allowing a peace negotiation to go forward, or blocking it by withdrawing support from whichever politician pushes it. The ECmil has got itself far out on a limb by insisting that retaining the jungle it fought for/shed blood over is *sine qua non* for accepting a treaty. We need to persuade them that true leadership, *verdadero liderazgo*, involves clarity of vision and a willingness to focus on the future rather than the past. And that ECmil's future relationship with the US is going to depend in large part on such a vision and leadership.

-- There are absolutely no/no resources in the eastern jungles worth additional lives. No resources are known to exist there, and there is no economical way to exploit them even if there were. You can't even get the trees out, for what it would cost to build roads to get them out.

-- Ecuador's future depends on the economic development of its Sierra and coastal plain -- not frivolously wasting scarce human and financial resources in the rain forest. 90% of Ecuador's population lives within 200 kms of the Pacific Ocean. There is no/no value at all in traversing nearly 6000 kms of the slow-moving sluggish Amazon to get to an Atlantic which is worthless to a Pacific coast country.

-- Buying MiG29s would be an equally foolish waste of money and scarce resources when the EC Air Force, Navy, and even Army can't/don't maintain what they have. It would be an unmistakable signal to all of Ecuador's friends and allies that Ecuador is not a serious country deserving of respect. And it certainly wouldn't deter the Peruvians.

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-- Ecuador's military needs to take a more serious and realistic approach to its interests, its mission, and its equipment and training requirements to accomplish that mission. It would be easier to take Ecuador's equipment needs more seriously if there were better evidence of care and use of the equipment Ecuador already has.

-- That also includes the possibility of F16 purchases down the road. Once a definitive border agreement has been signed, the US will be willing to look at many things; until an agreement is signed, however, it's gonna be very difficult to get the USG to focus in any positive way on either Ecuador or Peru.

Colombia: The COMilitary is going through a rough patch but shows signs of at last starting to come to grips with its very real problems -- all/all of which are of its own making, and all/all of which it basically can fix itself. The single most concise description is that it needs to "clean up its own act". It needs to do less protecting of incompetent officers and more promoting of good ones faster; less on creating new divisions, and more on faster and more effective reaction to guerrilla attacks on towns and villages and civilian targets. Less on simply lashing out at perceived "enemies of Colombia" and more on developing and using credible and defensible intelligence gathering and interrogation techniques instead of 12-volt batteries and rubber hoses. Until it seriously professionalizes itself, the US military is not/not going to be permitted to cooperate with it. The issue is not the importance of Colombia or the nature of the guerrilla insurgency. Virtually everyone at senior levels of the USG fully appreciates Colombia's importance to the US; virtually no one in the US seriously believes the guerrillas are well-intentioned liberals, democrats and social reformers. The issue, rather, is what kind of defending force the US can associate with, and at this writing, the Colombian Army doesn't pass the test with human rights groups, the US Congress, or the media. No national American politician can ignore that reality after Vietnam.

-- No one should mistake recent criticism of Colombia's military in the US press for anything other than evidence that the US truly cares for Colombia and wants to see it survive the traumas we know it is going through.

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-- But the simple fact is that Colombia's military has very real weaknesses which will continue to prevent it from playing a positive role in seeing Colombia through its present danger unless corrected.

-- We have to assume that the Colombian military is sufficiently professional to understand these weaknesses itself. Clearly, there are too many incompetent or weak or indecisive senior officers leading troops into combat. The Colombian Army conducted its own investigation of the debacle at El Billar; its conclusions are as clear as they are obvious. And it is within the power of the Colombian military to correct them itself. Stop protecting incompetent officers! Clean up internal corruption! Reward officers who show, through example, how to lead their men!

-- No one in the US mistakes the FARC or ELN for social reformers or liberal democrats. No reputable voices in the US wish to see the FARC or ELN win the struggle in Colombia. But the US is not/not going to help a government or military force which is perceived as incompetent or which brutalizes -- or allows brutality against -- its own citizens. Yes, we know the guerrillas violate human rights -- but we're not being asked to help them. Yes, we know the Colombian military doesn't control all the paramilitary organizations -- but we also know there are enough ties between many of them and Colombian military officers that it becomes impossible for us to turn a blind eye. NO, we're not going to identify them; you know who they are. Heal yourselves before you ask us for help! If you don't understand why we withdrew Gen Ivan Ramirez's visa, then we're too far apart to be able to cooperate with each other.

-- Of course you have to have "intelligence" -- but you'll never get good actionable intelligence by brutalizing people. You need to learn how to collect actionable intelligence, and evaluate it according to your ability to use it, and file it so you can retrieve it when you need it. You can't do it the way you're doing it now. We'd like to be able to help, but we're not going to be *allowed* to help an outfit that is believed to be brutalizing its own people.

-- The ability of the US military to help Colombia's military is going to be a function -- purely and simply -- of what the USG and the American Congress and people and our media see Colombia doing to make itself worthy of support.

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