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B1, 1.4(D)

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R 211833Z APR 89  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4907  
INFO DEPTJUSTICE WASHDC  
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AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BOGOTA 05874

SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD  
DEA FOR OF, OC, OIOC

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: SNAR, PHUM, PINS, PTER, CO  
SUBJECT: HOW THE NARCOS OPERATE IN META DEPARTMENT

REF: BOGOTA 5400

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT

SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION  
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2. NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS ARE INTENT ON CONSOLIDATING  
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CONTROL OVER THE DEPARTMENT OF META, ACCORDING TO

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] HAS SERVED IN FIVE DIFFERENT

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON  
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)  
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 20 APR 2014  
DATE/CASE ID: 23 JAN 2008 200603866

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DEPARTMENTS. HE HAS BEEN IN META FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS. HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE REGION AND ABILITY TO COMPARE IT TO OTHER RURAL AREAS OF COLOMBIA MAKE HIS REMARKS OF SUFFICIENT INTEREST TO REPORT, WITH THE PROVISIO THAT MUCH OF WHAT HE SAID IS SECOND HAND.

[REDACTED] TRAVELS WIDELY AND OFTEN WITHIN THE REGION, AND HAS MANY CONTACTS AMONG CAMPESINOS. HE EXPRESSED HIS VIEW OF THE GROWING NARCO THREAT TO META IN A TWO-HOUR TALK AT HIS [REDACTED] WITH POLOFF ON APRIL 8. THE DAY BEFORE, 100 DAS ("DEPARTAMENTO DE SEGURIDAD") AGENTS RAIDED A RANCH NEAR PUERTO LOPEZ, META AND FOUND A TRAINING CAMP FOR 40 ASSASSINS AND A MASS GRAVE WITH MORE THAN EIGHTY BODIES (REFTEL); THE STORY OF THE RAID WAS BREAKING AS [REDACTED] SPOKE.

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3. NARCOS ARE BUYING UP META'S LANDS FOR MORE THAN IDLE INVESTMENT [REDACTED] THEIR STRATEGY INCLUDES EXERTING CONTROL OVER THE REGION'S POLITICS AND SUBJUGATING CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS TO NARCO SECURITY NEEDS. THE DEPARTMENT'S SHOCKING LEVELS OF VIOLENCE ARE LARGELY A RESULT OF THE NARCOS. THEY HAVE CORRUPTED THE LOCAL MILITARY AND HAVE WORKED OUT A WAY TO COEXIST WITH GUERRILLAS. THE REGION IS STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT FOR ITS PROXIMITY TO BOGOTA, ITS GOOD LANDS, AND THE CONTROL IT OFFERS OVER ACCESS TO THE EASTERN PLAINS AND TO THE CLANDESTINE TRANSPORTATION ROUTES COMING UP FROM PERU, BOLIVIA AND BRAZIL. [REDACTED] CONTENDED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO COMBAT THE NARCOS WOULD BE TO PURGE THE MILITARY OF ITS CORRUPT ELEMENTS AND ATTACK THE NARCO LEADERS HEAD ON.

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MORE THAN JUST BUYING LAND

4. META IS A DEPARTMENT IN THE EASTERN PLAINS WHOSE 85,600 SQUARE KILOMETERS ARE SPARSELY POPULATED WITH ONLY HALF A MILLION PEOPLE. THE RIVERS CASCADING DOWN FROM THE EASTERN CORDILLERA IRRIGATE THE LOWER LANDS TO THE EAST, MAKING META A FERTILE REGION FOR RICE CULTIVATION AND, SINCE THE COMING OF THE NARCOS, OF CATTLE RANCHING. NARCOS CURRENTLY OWN ABOUT 200,000 HECTARES OF LAND THERE, [REDACTED] AND ARE STILL BUYING AT AN ALARMING RATE. GONZALO RODRIGUEZ GACHA, AKA "EL MEXICANO," AND VICTOR CARRANZA ARE THE MAIN PURCHASERS. CURRENTLY THEIR MINIONS ARE BUYING UP PLOTS IN EL CASTILLO AND ARE EXTENDING THEIR REACH TOWARDS LA

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URIBE, THE TOWN CLOSEST TO THE FARC'S HEADQUARTERS AT "CASA VERDE." NARCOS BOUGHT VOTES TO ELECT LACKEYS AS MAYORS OF SAN MARTIN AND PUERTO LOPEZ, ACCORDING TO



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5. HE ALSO CONTENDED THAT NARCOS ARE SEEKING TO CONTROL LOCAL CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS. A CAMPESINO LEADER IN SAN MARTIN TOLD HIM THAT HE HAD BEEN FORCED UNDER THREAT OF DEATH TO TURN HIS ORGANIZATION INTO A SPY NETWORK THAT WOULD REPORT TO NARCOS THE PRESENCE OF STRANGERS IN THE REGION. ANOTHER CAMPESINO DESCRIBED A RECENT TOWN MEETING IN MESETAS IN WHICH NARCO EMPLOYEES EXPLAINED TO CAMPESINOS THEIR 'NEW RESPONSIBILITIES,' SUCH AS DENOUNCING THE PRESENCE OF GUERRILLAS AND STRANGERS.

6. NARCOS GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO COOPT CAMPESINOS, AS ILLUSTRATED BY A STORY A CAMPESINO TOLD  SOME

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 04 BOGOTA 05874

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TIME AGO, RODRIGUEZ GACHA SPONSORED A "CAMPESENO DAY" CELEBRATION FOR THOSE LIVING NEAR HIS HACIENDA AT EL RECREO. (EL RECREO IS LOCATED IN CAQUETA, NEAR THE BORDER WITH META.) TRUCKS BROUGHT THEM TO THE HACIENDA WHERE THEY WERE OFFERED A FEAST AND GIFTS. AFTER MAKING AN ANTI-COMMUNIST SPEECH, ORGANIZERS "REQUESTED" THAT THE CAMPESENOS' COOPERATE IN ASSISTING THE NARCOS  
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IDENTIFY OUTSIDERS. NOW, AS [REDACTED] HAS PERSONALLY OBSERVED, CAMPESENOS DO NOT ALLOW VEHICLES TO APPROACH THE HACIENDA; THE ROAD HAS BEEN DIVERTED WELL AROUND IT.

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7. NARCOS HAVE GOOD REASON TO QUESTION CAMPESENO LOYALTIES, [REDACTED] NARCOS HAVE PUSHED CAMPESENOS OFF THEIR LANDS WITH A COMBINATION OF MONEY AND TERROR. THEY HAVE CREATED UNEMPLOYMENT BY SWITCHING FROM LABOR INTENSIVE CULTIVATION SUCH AS RICE FARMING TO EXTENSIVE CATTLE RANCHING, WHICH REQUIRES FEW HIRED HANDS. NARCOS OFTEN DO NOT EVEN ALLOW CAMPESENOS TO FISH IN RIVERS ON THEIR LANDS, CUTTING OFF AN IMPORTANT CAMPESENO FOOD SUPPLY. SOME CAMPESENOS IN META ARE LITERALLY STARVING, ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] THEIR ONLY CHOICES ARE TO FIGHT BACK OR TO MOVE FARTHER OUT INTO THE PLAINS, WHERE SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS DO NOT EXIST. [REDACTED] PREDICTED THAT CAMPESENOS MIGHT TAKE UP ARMS ONCE THEY REALIZE THAT PROMISES OF RECEIVING LAND THROUGH PRESIDENT BARCO'S AGRARIAN REFORM WILL NOT BE

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FULFILLED. THEY HAVE REMAINED PEACEFUL UP TO NOW, HE SAID, BOTH BECAUSE OF EXPECTATIONS OF RECEIVING LAND UNDER THE AGRARIAN REFORM AND BECAUSE THE ALTERNATIVE OF TURNING TO THE GUERRILLAS FOR HELP IS NOT POPULAR.

8. [ ] SPECULATED THAT CONSOLIDATING CONTROL OVER META IS PART OF A STRATEGIC PLAN BY NARCOS THAT INCLUDES CONTROLLING THE MAGDALENA MEDIO AND URABA REGIONS. META IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT IS CLOSE TO BOGOTA, HAS GOOD LANDS, AND CONTROLS ACCESS TO THE EASTERN PLAINS AND CLANDESTINE TRANSPORTATION ROUTES COMING UP FROM PERU, BOLIVIA AND BRAZIL. COMPLETE CONTROL OVER THE AREA WOULD ALLOW NARCOS TO OPERATE AIR STRIPS AND LABS WITH EVEN GREATER IMPUNITY THAN THEY NOW DO.

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MILITARY CORRUPTION IN META  
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9. [ ] POSITED THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY IN META WORKS CLOSELY WITH VIGILANTE GROUPS HIRED BY NARCOS. HE ADMITTED THAT PROOF OF SUCH ALLEGATIONS WAS HARD TO FIND, BUT HE CITED MANY EXAMPLES OF STORIES HEARD SECOND HAND. SOME OF THEM WERE:

- A LIEUTENANT CASARES (EXACT NAME UNKNOWN) OF THE TWENTY-FIRST AIRMOBILE BATTALION STATIONED AT GRANADA WAS A LEADER IN THE MASSACRE OF 17 RELATIVES OF THE PATRIOTIC UNION MAYOR OF EL CASTILLO IN JULY 1988 (NOTE: ONE OF THE ALLEGED NARCO-HIT MEN CAPTURED IN BOGOTA BY DAS AGENTS ON APRIL 4 WAS ALSO REPORTEDLY INVOLVED IN THIS MASSACRE; SEE BOGOTA 5131). CASARES, [ ] HEARD, WORKED DIRECTLY FOR LIEUTENANT COLONEL JULIO HERNAN CHAPARRO, BATTALION COMMANDER, WHO WORKED FOR NARCOTRAFFICKER RODRIGUEZ GACHA. THE VEHICLES USED IN THE ATTACK WERE SEEN PARKED INSIDE THE BATTALION COMPOUND BEFORE AND AFTER THE MASSACRE. CHAPARRO HAS SINCE BEEN TRANSFERRED [ ] (NOT KNOW TO WHERE); [ ] THOUGHT CASARES HAD BEEN DISCHARGED.

- THE SAME LIEUTENANT CASARES GOT INTO AN ALTERCATION WITH GRANADA'S POLICE INSPECTOR. WHEN THE INSPECTOR COMPLAINED AT THE BATTALION, HE WAS TOLD THAT THE MILITARY WOULD NOT SANCTION THE LIEUTENANT. THE INSPECTOR THEN FILED A COMPLAINT WITH A LOCAL JUDGE, NAMING TWO WITNESSES. WITHIN DAYS BOTH WITNESSES HAD

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BEEN KILLED. THE INSPECTOR THEN HAPPENED UPON COLONEL CHAPARRO AND LIEUTENANT CASARES DRINKING A BEER TOGETHER. THE INSPECTOR DENOUNCED CASARES TO CHAPARRO. SOON THEREAFTER, THE INSPECTOR WAS ASSASSINATED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 04 BOGOTA 05874

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- A FRIEND OF [REDACTED] WAS STOPPED AND QUESTIONED BY A HEAVILY ARMED GROUP OF MEN IN A JEEP AS HE DROVE NEAR SAN JUAN DE ARAMA. ALLOWED TO CONTINUE, HE FOLLOWED THE MEN. THEY CAME TO A MILITARY CHECK-POINT. THE ARMED MEN WERE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE WHILE [REDACTED] FRIEND WAS CAREFULLY SEARCHED.

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- A CITIZEN OF GRANADA WAS SHOT BY ASSASSINS AFTER HE DENOUNCED NARCO ACTIVITIES TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES. HIS FRIENDS REQUESTED A MILITARY ESCORT FOR THE AMBULANCE THAT WAS TO TAKE HIM TO A HOSPITAL IN VILLAVICENCIO. THE MILITARY REFUSED. ON THE ROAD TO VILLAVICENCIO, A GROUP OF ARMED MEN STOPPED THE AMBULANCE AND SHOT THE CITIZEN 38 TIMES.

- FOUR EMPLOYEES OF NARCOTRAFFICKERS WERE ROBBED BY OFF-DUTY POLICE WHILE MAKING A DELIVERY OF A LARGE AMOUNT OF CASH. ONCE THE ONE SURVIVOR OF THE ATTACK RECUPERATED, HE WAS BROUGHT BACK TO GRANADA WHERE HE IDENTIFIED THE PERPETRATORS IN A LINE-UP OF ALL OF GRANADA'S POLICE OFFICERS. THE SWIFT RESPONSE, [REDACTED] WAS DUE TO NARCO'S CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE MILITARY.

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[REDACTED] CONTENDED THAT NARCO CORRUPTION EXTENDS TO GENERAL BEDOYA, COMMANDER OF THE SEVENTH BRIGADE BASED IN VILLAVICENCIO. IF THIS WERE NOT SO, HE STATED, THE MILITARY WOULD MOUNT AN OPERATION AGAINST RODRIGUEZ GACHA WHO TRAVELS FREELY TO SAN MARTIN AND EL RECREO BY HELICOPTER. [REDACTED] THAT AT EITHER LOCATION THE MILITARY COULD FIND HUGE AMOUNTS OF ILLEGAL WEAPONS AS WELL AS ILLEGAL HELICOPTERS. (COMMENT: GENERAL BEDOYA HAS BEEN COOPERATIVE WITH EMBASSY NAU. COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE RAIDED EL RECREO IN MARCH 1989; POLICE FOUND SOME WEAPONS AND A TRAINING CAMP FOR ASSASSINS NEARBY.)

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NARCOTRAFFICKER - GUERRILLA INTERACTION

10. [REDACTED] CONTENDED THAT WHILE THE FARC IS INVOLVED  
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IN NARCOTICS ACTIVITIES, THERE IS NO GENERALIZED NARCO-FARC COOPERATION IN META. (THE FARC IS META'S MAIN GUERRILLA GROUP.) THE TWO GROUPS KEEP THEMSELVES TERRITORIAALLY SEPARATE. NEITHER DOES THE FARC TRY TO COLLECT "BOLETEO" -- TAX -- FROM NARCO LANDOWNERS, PEDRAZA CLAIMED, BECAUSE IT WOULD BE TOO DANGEROUS. THE GUERRILLAS DO COLLECT FROM LEGITIMATE LANDOWNERS.

[REDACTED] ADDED THAT PRIVATE ARMED GROUPS WORKING FOR NARCOS ALSO COLLECT BOLETEO IN THEIR OFF-HOURS, AS DO COMMON CRIMINALS WHO CLAIM TO BE GUERRILLAS.

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11. IN THE AREAS IT CONTROLS, THE FARC PROTECTS COCA CROPS GROWN BY CAMPESINOS, [REDACTED] SOME FARC FRONTS OPERATE THEIR OWN LABS. THE FARC GOVERNS STRICTLY IN ITS AREAS, SETTING PRICES, IMPOSING TAXES, AND REGULATING THE SALE OF THE COCA CROP TO NARCOS. SOME FARC FRONTS COOPERATE DIRECTLY WITH NARCOS EVEN THOUGH IT IS CONTRARY TO FARC POLICY, [REDACTED] CLAIMED.

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12. THE FARC EXPERIMENTED WITH DIRECT COOPERATION WITH NARCOS IN META ABOUT EIGHT YEARS AGO, [REDACTED] GUERRILLA LEADERS AND SUPPORTERS REJECTED THAT APPROACH, HOWEVER, BECAUSE WORKING DIRECTLY WITH NARCOS WHO WERE TERRORIZING CAMPESINOS DAMAGED THE FARC'S GRASSROOTS SUPPORT.

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COMMENT

13. THE NARCO-FARC CONNECTION [REDACTED] DESCRIBES SHEDS LIGHT ON HOW THE TWO GROUPS "COOPERATE." THE FARC FILLS ITS COFFERS OFTEN DESPITE THE NARCOS, BY TAXING THEM AND THE CULTIVATORS AND IN SOME CASES GETTING INTO THE PROCESSING END OF THE BUSINESS. IN THIS SENSE THE TERM NARCO-GUERRILLA MEANS GUERRILLAS WHO MAKE MONEY OFF THE

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NARCO INDUSTRY IN ANY WAY THEY CAN, AND NOT NECESSARILY THROUGH ALLIANCES WITH THEM OR UNDERSTANDINGS ON COMMON GOALS. WHILE SOME OF THE DETAILS OF [REDACTED] ACCOUNT MAY BE INACCURATE, HE PAINTS A CONVINCING OVERALL PICTURE OF NARCOTRAFFICKER EFFECT ON LEGITIMATE FARMERS IN THE AREA. HIS CONCLUSION THAT NARCOS ARE TRYING TO CONSOLIDATE CONTROL OVER THE REGION FOR STRATEGIC

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PURPOSES SEEMS LOGICAL. HIS SKEPTICISM OVER THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY AND THE POLICE ("THEY MUST BE CORRUPT IF THEY DO NOT ARREST RODRIQUEZ GACHA") IS AN OFT HEARD DEDUCTION IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY AS WELL. RECENT SECURITY FORCE SUCCESSES AGAINST NARCO SPONSORED ASSASSINATION GROUPS WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE IF SUCH SKEPTICISM IS TO CHANGE.  
MCNAMARA

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