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B1, 1.4(D)

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ACTION DS-01

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 INR-07 SS-00 CIAE-00 NSCE-00 ARA-00
NSAE-00 SSO-00 AMAD-01 PA-01 CCO-00 INRE-00 CA-02
SCT-02 /014 W

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O 081705Z JUL 89
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6876
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 10197

SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: ASEC, PTER, PINS, PGOV, CO
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON SHOOTOUT NEAR AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

REF: BOGOTA 9988

1. (C) SUMMARY: MORE INFORMATION HAS SURFACED ON THE JULY 5 SHOOTOUT NEAR THE RESIDENCES OF THE AMBASSADOR AND DCM. THERE IS NO/NO INDICATION THUS FAR THAT THE GROUP WAS PLANNING AN ATTACK ON THE RESIDENCES. ACCORDING TO SECURITY SOURCES, THE GROUP WAS SETTING UP A SAFEHOUSE FROM WHICH TO COMBAT MEDELLIN CARTEL CAPO GONZALO RODRIGUEZ GACHA THE FOUR MEN KILLED IN THE SHOOTOUT WERE ASSOCIATES OF THE LATE GILBERTO MOLINA, A POWERFUL EMERALD TRAFFICKER KILLED LAST FEBRUARY ALONG WITH 17 OTHERS AT HIS FARM NEAR BOGOTA. THE GROUP BELIEVED MOLINA WAS ORDERED KILLED BY RODRIGUEZ GACHA, WHO WANTS TO TAKE OVER THE EMERALD BUSINESS. A SURVIVOR

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SAID THAT THE GROUP STAGED ITS SUICIDAL ATTEMPT AT RESISTANCE BECAUSE IT BELIEVED THAT THE ARRESTING ARMY UNIT WAS REALLY A HIT SQUAD SENT BY THE MEDELLIN CARTEL. QUESTIONS REMAIN UNANSWERED, HOWEVER, AND WE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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STILL DOUBT WE KNOW THE FULL STORY. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) AT APPROXIMATELY 7:30 A.M. JULY 5 THE COLOMBIAN SPECIAL MILITARY COMMANDO GROUP RECEIVED AN ANONYMOUS TELEPHONE CALL REPORTING THE PRESENCE OF ARMED MEN IN APARTMENT 801 OF THE ALTOS DE ROSALES BUILDING. AT 10:45 A.M., A SPECIAL RESPONSE UNIT ENTERED THE BUILDING, CLEARED THE EIGHTH FLOOR HALLWAY, AND APPROACHED APARTMENT 801. SEVERAL HAND GRENADES WERE ALLEGEDLY HURLED FROM THE APARTMENT, INJURING THREE MILITARY, ONE OF WHOM REMAINS IN CRITICAL CONDITION.

3. (U) ACCORDING TO AN EYEWITNESS, IN A FINAL ASSAULT LASTING 15 MINUTES THE ARMY UNIT "TOOK THE PLACE APART," KILLING FOUR MALE SUSPECTS AND ARRESTING A MAN AND A WOMAN. AMONG THE DEAD WERE THE FORMER LAWYER OF THE LATE GILBERTO MOLINA, A POWERFUL EMERALD TRAFFICKER WHO WAS KILLED ALONG WITH 17 OTHERS LAST FEBRUARY. THE MALE ARRESTED IS ANGEL GAITAN MAHECHA, WHO HAD SURVIVED THE MASSACRE IN WHICH MOLINA WAS KILLED. AS HE WAS LED OUT, GAITAN SHOUTED TO THE PRESS THAT "GACHA HAS DONE THIS; HE HAS PAID 200 MILLION PESOS TO HAVE THIS DONE." GAITAN WAS REFERRING TO GONZALO RODRIGUEZ GACHA, A TOP LEADER OF THE MEDELLIN CARTEL AND A MAIN SUSPECT IN MOLINA'S DEATH. ARMY SOURCES TOLD THE PRESS THAT APARTMENT 801 IS LEASED BY ASSOCIATES OF VICTOR CARRANZA, A TOP EMERALD DEALER LINKED TO MOLINA AND TO THE CALI CARTEL.

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4. (U) THE ALTO DE ROSALES BUILDING IS LOCATED ONE BLOCK FROM THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE. CONTRARY TO REFTTEL REPORT, THE FLOOR WHERE THE ACTION TOOK PLACE DOES NOT/HAVE A CLEAR LINE OF SIGHT OVER THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE. BUT APARTMENT 801 DOES HAVE A CLEAR VIEW OF THE DCM'S APARTMENT DIRECTLY ACROSS THE STREET. THE ARMY TEAM FOUND THREE LAW ROCKETS, 26 GRENADES, EIGHT RIFLES, EIGHT UZIS, 300 STICKS OF DYNAMITE AND SOPHISTICATED COMMUNICATIONS GEAR. THEY ALSO REPORTEDLY FOUND SOME 200,000 U.S. DOLS WORTH OF EMERALDS AND PROPAGANDA PAMPHLETS OF THE "RICARDO FRANCO FRONT" (RFF), AN ULTRA-VIOLENT TERRORIST GROUP THAT BROKE AWAY FROM THE PRO-SOVIET FARC GUERRILLAS SOME 2-3 YEARS AGO. THE ARMY AUTHORITIES REFUSED TO SPECULATE ON THE RICARDO FRANCO FRONT PROPAGANDA, SINCE THEIR EXPERTS

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BELIEVE THAT THE FRANCO FRONT IS EXTINGUISHED.

5. (C)

[REDACTED]

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IT IS

UNCHARACTERISTIC OF EMERALD OR NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS TO SHOOT IT OUT OPENLY WITH THE AUTHORITIES WHEN THEY ARE VASTLY OUTNUMBERED, EVEN UNDER THREAT OF ARREST (GIVEN THE STATE OF THE COLOMBIAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM THEY CAN USUALLY OBTAIN THEIR FREEDOM RATHER QUICKLY)

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[REDACTED] THAT GAITAN MAHECHA CONFESSED THAT HIS GROUP FIRED ON THE ARMY TEAM BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THE ARMY UNIFORMS WERE BOGUS. THEY FEARED THAT THEY WERE REALLY KILLERS SENT BY RODRIGUEZ GACHA TO STAGE A MASSACRE SIMILAR TO THE ONE IN WHICH MOLINA WAS KILLED

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LAST FEBRUARY. AT THAT TIME, KILLERS GARBED AS ARMY SOLDIERS SECURED ACCESS TO GILBERTO MOLINA'S FARM IN SASAIMA, CUNDINAMARCA, AND SHOT MOLINA AND OTHERS. GAITAN MAHECHA SAID THAT RODRIGUEZ GACHA ORDERED MOLINA KILLED. HE IS NOW TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE EMERALD TRAFFICKING BUSINESS FROM MOLINA'S "HEIR," VICTOR CARRANZA.

6. (C) AFTER THE ARMY'S ASSAULT ON THE APPARENT ESMERALDERO SAFE HOUSE THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH THE GROUP HAVE CONTINUED TO COME UNDER ATTACK, BUT FROM NON-OFFICIAL SOURCES. ON JULY 6 THE MAYOR OF CHIA (CUNDINAMARCA (NEAR BOGOTA), ORLANDO GAITAN MAHECHA WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED AND HIS DRIVER KILLED AS HE WAS DRIVING
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TOWARD THE CAPITAL. HE IS THE BROTHER OF APT. 801 SURVIVOR ANGEL GAITAN MAHECHA. THE MAYOR HAD EARLIER TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE BELIEVES RODRIGUEZ GACHA WANTS TO KILL BROTHER ANGEL. RODRIGUEZ GACHA, THE MAYOR SAID, IS TRYING TO TAKE OVER MOLINA'S EMERALD MINES IN MUZO. ON JULY 7 A EMERALD DISTRIBUTORSHIP ALLEGED TO BE OWNED BY CARRANZA WAS BOMBED. THERE WERE NO FATALITIES.

7. (C) COMMENT: AMONG THE QUESTIONS WHICH REMAIN TO BE ANSWERED ABOUT THIS CURIOUS AFFAIR IS WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE RFF PROPAGANDA PAMPHLETS IN APT. 801. THE SECURITY SOURCES BELIEVE THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN CONCEIVED AS A PLOY BY THE GROUP TO SIDETRACK SUSPICIONS FOR ACTIONS THAT WERE TO BE PERPETRATED AGAINST THE RODRIGUEZ GACHA OUTFIT. MOREOVER, FROM WHAT IS KNOWN SO FAR WE ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE EXPLANATIONS OF WHY PRACTICALLY ALL THE ARMS FOUND IN THE APARTMENT WERE OFFENSIVE WEAPONS NOR WHY THE GROUP WOULD CHOSE A NEIGHBORHOOD SO HEAVILY PATROLLED AS THE AREA AROUND THE

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AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE FOR THEIR HIDEOUT. FINALLY, WE STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE TELEPHONE CALL WENT TO THE ARMY AND WHY AN ARMY UNIT RESPONDED TO IT RATHER THAN THE POLICE.

8. (C) THESE INCIDENTS ILLUSTRATE WELL HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO ASCRIBE MOTIVES TO VIOLENT GROUPS HERE. MUCH DATA CONFIRM THERE IS A CONFLICT UNDERWAY BETWEEN THE MEDELLIN AND CALI MAFIAS. MORE RECENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT RODRIQUEZ GACHA, ONE OF THE BLOODIEST OF THE MEDILLIN-LINKED OPERATIVES, IS SEEKING TO DOMINATE THE EMERALD MINES. CARRANZA IS IDENTIFIED WITH THE EMERALD BUSINESS BUT ALSO WITH NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING AND RIGHT WING DEATH SQUADS. A MASS GRAVE WAS RECENTLY FOUND ON CONFIDENTIAL

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ONE OF HIS RANCHES ON THE EASTERN PLAINS. HE MAY BE AN ALLY OF THE CALI CAPOS. WE HEAR FROM TIME TO TIME DISTURBING BUT AS YET UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT ONE OR THE OTHER MANAGE TO TIE IN WITH VARIOUS LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT AND SECURITY FORCES.

9. (C) THE ABOVE ACCOUNT COMES FROM MEDIA SOURCES AND FROM INITIAL INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM COLOMBIAN OFFICIALS IN THE COURSE OF OUR SECURITY INVESTIGATION. BOTH COULD BE MISLEADING; THEY ARE CERTAINLY INCOMPLETE.

[REDACTED] WE WILL BE SEEKING A BETTER EXPLANATION OF THE STORY. MCLEAN

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