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P 231647Z DEC 91
 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1224
 INFO DEPTJUSTICE WASHDC
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CINCSO AND CINCLANT ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PINS, SNAR, PHUM, PGOV, ASEC, CO
SUBJECT: CRISIS RIPS MAGDALENA MEDIO PARAMILITARY GROUP

REF: BOGOTA 18523

1. (C) SUMMARY: COLOMBIA'S MAGDALENA MEDIO PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION IS IN CRISIS. AN INTERNAL BLOOD FEUD HAS BROKEN OUT OVER THE GROUP'S SURRENDER TO COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES (REFTEL). FEARING ANOTHER ATTEMPT ON HIS

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SAM A. MOSKOWITZ
DATE/CASE ID: 25 JUN 2001 200100593

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LIFE, THE ORGANIZATION'S LEADER, ARIEL OTERO, HAS FLED TO CALI TO BE PROTECTED BY THAT CITY'S DRUG MAFIA. THE LEADER OF THE DISSIDENTS, WHO VOW TO REMAIN ARMED, MAY BE LOCAL POLITICAL LEADER IVAN DUQUE, REMEMBERED AS THE HEAD OF THE SHORT-LIVED RIGHT WING, NARCO-FINANCED POLITICAL PARTY, MORENA. MEANWHILE, NOT EVEN THE SURRENDER OF OTERO'S FORCES HAS BEEN TOTAL; ONLY HALF OF THE PROMISED 500 FIGHTERS HAVE TURNED THEMSELVES IN SO FAR. THE GOC IS PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY THE QUALITY OF THE WEAPONS SURRENDERED. ASIDE FROM DUQUE AND OBVIOUSLY THE GUERRILLAS, THE GOC IS CONCERNED THAT BIG-TIME NARCOS, INCLUDING VICTOR CARRANZA AND LEONIDAS VARGAS, MAY MOVE INTO THE VOID LEFT BY OTERO'S ORGANIZATION. END SUMMARY.

SURRENDER PROVOKES BLOODY FEUD

2. (U) MAGDALENA MEDIO (MIDDLE MAGDALENA RIVER VALLEY) PARAMILITARY LEADER ARIEL OTERO'S RECENT MOVE TO

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 SURRENDER HIS FORCES TO COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES (REFTEL) HAS BROUGHT TO A BOIL THE SIMMERING CRISIS AFFECTING HIS ORGANIZATION SINCE THE JULY ASSASSINATION OF HIS PREDECESSOR, HENRY PEREZ. SINCE THE SURRENDERS BEGAN, A TIT-FOR-TAT WAR HAS BROKEN OUT INSIDE THE ORGANIZATION BETWEEN FORCES LOYAL TO OTERO AND THOSE OPPOSING THE SURRENDER. IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, THREE AREA CITY COUNCILMEN LINKED TO THE GROUPS HAVE BEEN ASSASSINATED, AND A FOURTH GRAVELY WOUNDED, IN THE VENGEFUL, BLOODY FEUD.

OTERO RUNS TO CALI MAFIA FOR PROTECTION

3. (C) THINGS GOT TOO HOT FOR OTERO. STILL RECOVERING FROM A PREVIOUS ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT, HE AND PEREZ' WIDOW AND THEIR RESPECTIVE CHILDREN HAVE FLED PUERTO BOYACA FOR CALI AND THE PROTECTION OF THAT CITY'S TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION. A GOC SOURCE TOLD POLOFF THEY FLEW IN TWO (APPARENTLY NARCO PROVIDED) SMALL CESSNAS;

DISSIDENTS VOW TO CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE

4. (U) IN A COMMUNIQUE TO THE MEDIA, THE DISSIDENT MAGDALENA MEDIO PARAMILITARY LEADERS ACCUSED OTERO OF

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B1, 1.5(D)

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BEING "A TRAITOR" WHO HAD KILLED HENRY PEREZ, AND IS ARMING A DISSIDENT M-19 GROUP. SAYING OTERO WAS AN OUTSIDER WHO HAD SUBVERTED THEIR MOVEMENT, THEY CALLED HIS SURRENDER "A FARCE," ADDING THAT ONLY HIS "PERSONAL GUARD" HAD SURRENDERED AND TURNED IN ONLY THEIR "OBSOLETE ARMS." CALLING THEMSELVES THE AREA'S

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AUTHENTIC CAMPESINO SELF-DEFENSE GROUPS, THEY VOWED NOT TO DISARM UNTIL THE GUERRILLAS HAD. THE COMMUNIQUE, HOWEVER, FAILED TO IDENTIFY THE DISSIDENT LEADERS.

OTERO COULDN'T FILL PEREZ' SHOES

5. (C) IT'S TRUE OTERO (REAL NAME LUIS MENESES) IS A JOHNNY-COME-LATELY; HE'S NEITHER FROM THE MAGDALENA MEDIO NOR A FARMER. [REDACTED] A [REDACTED] STUDENT WITH LINKS TO THE PARAMILITARY GROUP, TOLD POLOFF OTERO'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ORGANIZATION BEGAN WHEN HE SERVED THE AREA AS AN ARMY OFFICER. AFTER RETIRING FROM THE MILITARY, OTERO REPORTEDLY RETURNED TO

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AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

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THE AREA AFTER A BRIEF ABSENCE.

6. (C) ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES, OTERO BROUGHT TO THE PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION HIS INTELLIGENCE, NATIONAL FOCUS (IN CONTRAST TO THE MYOPIC VIEW OF PEREZ AND OTHER CAMPESINO LEADERS), AND SKILLS AS A TRAINED MILITARY LEADER. HOWEVER, HE LACKED PEREZ' STRENGTH OF PERSONALITY, NATURAL LEADERSHIP ABILITY, AND LINKS TO THE COMMUNITY. ONE THING OTERO HAD GOING FOR HIM WAS THE SUPPORT OF PEREZ' WIDOW, WHOM DEPUTY NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR JAVIER TORRES VELASCO COMPARED TO QUEEN ELIZABETH, SAYING SHE HAS NO REAL POWER, BUT RATHER GREAT SYMBOLIC VALUE IN PUERTO BOYACA. THAT, HOWEVER, PROVED INSUFFICIENT.

7. (U) AFTER PEREZ' DEATH, OTERO FAILED TO INHERIT THE CONFIDENCE AREA FARMERS HAD IN PEREZ. MANY STOPPED CONTRIBUTING, LEAVING THE ORGANIZATION IN DECLINE AND UNABLE TO CONTINUE PAYING ITS ARMY OF HIRED GUNMEN. AMONG THOSE SAID TO HAVE CUT THE GROUP OFF WAS DEAD MEDELLIN NARCO GONZALO RODRIGUEZ GACHA'S FAMILY. OTERO QUICKLY LOST PEREZ' CONTROL OF ALL THE AREA'S PARAMILITARY FORCES.

DUQUE MAY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY
 [REDACTED]

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8. (C) SOME OF THE DISSATISFIED AREA FARMERS WENT
LOOKING FOR A REPLACEMENT THEY COULD TRUST.

B1, 1.5(D), B6

[REDACTED] THE NEW
UNIDENTIFIED LEADER OF THE NON-SURRENDERING AREA
PARAMILITARY GROUPS MAY BE IVAN ROBERTO DUQUE GAVIRIA,
PRESIDENT OF THE PUERTO BOYACA CITY COUNCIL AND FORMER
HEAD OF THE PARAMILITARY GROUPS' PARENT ORGANIZATION,
THE RANCHERS AND FARMERS ASSOCIATION OF THE MAGDALENA
MEDIO (ACDEGAM). (DUQUE ALSO DIRECTED THEIR NOW DEFUNCT
SHORT-LIVED POLITICAL PARTY, THE MOVEMENT FOR NATIONAL
RESTORATION, MORENA.) [REDACTED] THERE IS REASON TO
BELIEVE A LOCAL ARMED FORCES COMMANDER IS LINKED TO
DUQUE, AND HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE RECENT SLAYINGS.

B1, 1.5(D)

...SO MAY CARRANZA AND NARCO VARGAS

9. (C) WITH PEREZ DEAD AND OTERO IN CALI, THE GOC FEARS
THAT OTHERS MAY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VOID. ASIDE FROM
DUQUE, AMONG THE POTENTIAL COMPETITORS TO CONTROL THE
AREA ARE EMERALD KINGPIN VICTOR CARRANZA AND CAQUETA
NARCO LEONIDAS VARGAS [REDACTED] THERE IS REASON TO
BELIEVE DUQUE AND CARRANZA ARE ALLIED. A PRESS REPORT
QUOTED AN UNIDENTIFIED DISSIDENT AS SAYING THEY HAD
RENEWED THEIR FRIENDSHIP WITH CARRANZA, AND THAT HE HAS
OFFERED TO SUPPLY THEM WITH ARMS.

B1, 1.5(D)

GOVERNMENT HAPPY WITH PARTIAL SURRENDER

10. (C) MEANWHILE, NOT EVEN THE SURRENDER OF OTERO'S
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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FORCES HAS BEEN TOTAL. ESCOBAR HAD TOLD POLOFF DECEMBER
4 HE DIDN'T THINK OTERO WOULD TURN IN EVERYTHING; AREA
RANCHERS DOUBT THE GOVERNMENT CAN PROVIDE THE NECESSARY
SECURITY. VICE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT HECTOR RIVEROS
SERRATO AND PATINO AGREED THAT THOSE WHO HAD SURRENDERED
PROBABLY WERE THE FULL-TIME, PAID GUNMEN WHO PATROLED
THE GENERAL AREA, NOT CAMPESINOS WORKING ON INDIVIDUAL
FARMS. RIVEROS TOLD POLOFF DECEMBER 16, HOWEVER, THAT
THE GOC WASN'T WORRIED THE SURRENDER MAY BE PARTIAL.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT, HE SAID, IS THAT THE ASSASSINATION OF

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PEREZ AND THE SURRENDER AND FLIGHT FROM THE AREA OF
OTERO MEAN THE GROUPS' MILITARY COMMAND NO LONGER EXISTS.

IMPRESSIVE ARMS, AMMUNITION SURRENDERED

11. (C) [REDACTED] OTERO
HAD GIVEN THE GOVERNMENT IMPRESSIVE COMPUTERIZED LISTS
OF THE 500 MEMBERS THAT WOULD SURRENDER AND THE 700 ARMS
THEY WOULD TURN IN. [REDACTED] THE SURRENDERS
CONTINUE AT A PACE OF SEVERAL A DAY, ONLY HALF,

B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D)
B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D)

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APPROXIMATELY 225, HAVE COME IN SO FAR. ALL THE MEN AND ARMS SURRENDERED ARE LISTED. WHILE THERE WAS NO MUNITIONS LIST, A LOT OF AMMO ALSO HAD BEEN SURRENDERED. INTERESTING, [REDACTED] MOST OF THE AMMUNITION DOESN'T MATCH THE ARMS; IT'S FOR LARGER CALIBER WEAPONS. [REDACTED] GOC INTEL HAD PICKED UP THAT A LARGE STOCK OF WEAPONS RECENTLY HAD ARRIVED IN CALI. ONE THEORY IS THAT THE GUNS HAVE GONE TO DISSIDENT M-19 GROUPS IN THE CALI AREA. [REDACTED] MANY GOOD-QUALITY, SOPHISTICATED ARMS HAD BEEN SURRENDERED. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT HAD PLANNED TO BURN THE WEAPONS, AS THEY DID WITH THE M-19'S ARMS, THEY NOW ARE LEANING TOWARD DISTRIBUTING THEM TO POORLY ARMED MILITARY UNITS, SUCH AS THE NAVAL MARINES.

B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D)

B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D)

B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D)

GOVERNMENT WILL TRY TO FILL THE VOID

12. (C) [REDACTED] THE GOC NEEDS TO FILL THE SECURITY VOID. [REDACTED] SAYING THE PROBLEM WITH THE PARAMILITARY GROUPS' PRIVATE JUSTICE/SECURITY IS THAT IT RESPONDS ONLY TO SPECIAL INTERESTS. CALLING NARCOS THE NO. 1 THREAT, [REDACTED] THE GUERRILLAS ALSO COULD RETURN TO WREAK HAVOC.

B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D)

B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D)

13. (U) TO STOP THE HEMORRHAGING IN THE AREA'S SECURITY

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SITUATION, THE GOVERNMENT CONVENED AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF HIGH-RANKING SECURITY OFFICIALS DECEMBER 17 TO DRAW UP A PLAN FOR THE REGION. IN ATTENDANCE WERE DEFENSE MINISTER RAFAEL PARDO RUEDA, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR RICARDO SANTAMARIA, INSTRUCCION CRIMINAL DIRECTOR CARLOS EDUARDO MEJIA (WHOSE AGENCY IS HANDLING THE JUDICIAL ASPECTS OF THE SURRENDERS), NATIONAL REHABILITATION PLAN (PNR) DIRECTOR CESAR MANUEL NINO, COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTOR GEN. MIGUEL ANTONIO GOMEZ, JUDICIAL AND INVESTIGATIVE POLICE (DIJIN) DIRECTOR COL. LUIS

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MONTENEGRO, THE COMMANDERS OF THE TWO ARMY BRIGADES BASED IN THE REGION (4TH AND 14TH), THE POLICE COMMANDERS FOR CUNDINAMARCA, ANTIOQUIA AND BOYACA, AND THE GOVERNORS ELECT OF ANTIOQUIA AND BOYACA. PNR WILL FUND PROGRAMS TO ASSIST THE REINSERTION OF THE SURRENDERED PARAMILITARY FIGHTERS INTO CIVILIAN LIFE.

COMMENT

14. (C) IT REMAINS UNCLEAR THAT MAJOR NARCOS HAVE INTEREST IN THE AREA, OR WHAT THAT INTEREST WOULD BE. THE MAGDALENA MEDIO HAS LOST MUCH OF ITS IMPORTANCE FOR THE COCAINE TRADE TO CAQUETA AND PUTUMAYO. CLEARLY THE GUERRILLAS, HOWEVER, ARE INTERESTED IN RETURNING TO THE REGION THEY ONCE TERRORIZED, BUT FROM WHICH THEY WERE EXPELLED BY THE PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN 1985.

15. (C) THE MAGDALENA MEDIO, THE ONLY REGION OF THE COUNTRY WHERE THE INSURGENTS HAVE BEEN DEFEATED MILITARILY, THUS BECOMES A MAJOR TEST CASE FOR THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT. IT NEEDS TO MOVE INTO THE
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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AGRICULTURALLY RICH AREA AND PROVIDE THE NECESSARY GOVERNMENT PRESENCE (NOT JUST SECURITY), THE ABSENCE OF WHICH WAS THE PROBLEM IN THE FIRST PLACE. KEEPING OUT THE GUERRILLAS AND NARCOS, THUS MAKING A RESURGENCE OF PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY UNNECESSARY, WILL BE NO SMALL ORDER. END COMMENT.

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EXCISE

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E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PINS, SNAR, PHUM, PGOV, ASEC, CO
SUBJECT: CRISIS RIPS MAGDALENA MEDIO PARAMILITARY GROUP

THE AREA AFTER A BRIEF ABSENCE.

6. (C) ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES, OTERO BROUGHT TO THE PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION HIS INTELLIGENCE, NATIONAL FOCUS (IN CONTRAST TO THE MYOPIC VIEW OF PEREZ AND OTHER CAMPESINO LEADERS), AND SKILLS AS A TRAINED MILITARY LEADER. HOWEVER, HE LACKED PEREZ' STRENGTH OF PERSONALITY, NATURAL LEADERSHIP ABILITY, AND LINKS TO THE COMMUNITY. ONE THING OTERO HAD GOING FOR HIM WAS THE SUPPORT OF PEREZ' WIDOW, WHOM DEPUTY NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR JAVIER TORRES VELASCO COMPARED TO QUEEN ELIZABETH, SAYING SHE HAS NO REAL POWER, BUT RATHER GREAT SYMBOLIC VALUE IN PUERTO BOYACA. THAT, HOWEVER, PROVED INSUFFICIENT.

7. (U) AFTER PEREZ' DEATH, OTERO FAILED TO INHERIT THE CONFIDENCE AREA FARMERS HAD IN PEREZ. MANY STOPPED CONTRIBUTING, LEAVING THE ORGANIZATION IN DECLINE AND UNABLE TO CONTINUE PAYING ITS ARMY OF HIRED GUNMEN. AMONG THOSE SAID TO HAVE CUT THE GROUP OFF WAS DEAD MEDELLIN NARCO GONZALO RODRIGUEZ GACHA'S FAMILY. OTERO QUICKLY LOST PEREZ' CONTROL OF ALL THE AREA'S PARAMILITARY FORCES.

DUQUE MAY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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8. (C) SOME OF THE DISSATISFIED AREA FARMERS WENT LOOKING FOR A REPLACEMENT THEY COULD TRUST. BOTH TORRES AND

B1.5 (A)

TOLD POLOFF THE NEW UNIDENTIFIED LEADER OF THE NON-SURRENDERING AREA PARAMILITARY GROUPS MAY BE IVAN ROBERTO DUQUE GAVIRIA, PRESIDENT OF THE PUERTO BOYACA CITY COUNCIL AND FORMER HEAD OF THE PARAMILITARY GROUPS' PARENT ORGANIZATION, THE RANCHERS AND FARMERS ASSOCIATION OF THE MAGDALENA MEDIO (ACDEGAM). (DUQUE ALSO DIRECTED THEIR NOW DEFUNCT SHORT-LIVED POLITICAL PARTY, THE MOVEMENT FOR NATIONAL RESTORATION, MORENA.) TORRES SAID THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE A LOCAL ARMED FORCES COMMANDER IS LINKED TO DUQUE, AND HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE RECENT SLAYINGS.

...SO MAY CARRANZA AND NARCO VARGAS

9. (C) WITH PEREZ DEAD AND OTERO IN CALI, THE GOC FEARS

THAT OTHERS MAY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VOID. ASIDE FROM DUQUE, AMONG THE POTENTIAL COMPETITORS TO CONTROL THE AREA ARE EMERALD KINGPIN VICTOR CARRANZA AND CAQUETA NARCO LEONIDAS VARGAS. TORRES SAID THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE DUQUE AND CARRANZA ARE ALLIED. A PRESS REPORT QUOTED AN UNIDENTIFIED DISSIDENT AS SAYING THEY HAD RENEWED THEIR FRIENDSHIP WITH CARRANZA, AND THAT HE HAS OFFERED TO SUPPLY THEM WITH ARMS.

GOVERNMENT HAPPY WITH PARTIAL SURRENDER

10. (C) MEANWHILE, NOT EVEN THE SURRENDER OF OTERO'S



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FORCES HAS BEEN TOTAL. [REDACTED] HAD TOLD POLOFF DECEMBER 4 HE DIDN'T THINK OTERO WOULD TURN IN EVERYTHING; AREA RANCHERS DOUBT THE GOVERNMENT CAN PROVIDE THE NECESSARY SECURITY. VICE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT HECTOR RIVEROS SERRATO AND [REDACTED] AGREED THAT THOSE WHO HAD SURRENDERED PROBABLY WERE THE FULL-TIME, PAID GUNMEN WHO PATROLED THE GENERAL AREA, NOT CAMPESINOS WORKING ON INDIVIDUAL FARMS. RIVEROS TOLD POLOFF DECEMBER 16, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOC WASN'T WORRIED THE SURRENDER MAY BE PARTIAL. WHAT'S IMPORTANT, HE SAID, IS THAT THE ASSASSINATION OF PEREZ AND THE SURRENDER AND FLIGHT FROM THE AREA OF OTERO MEAN THE GROUPS' MILITARY COMMAND NO LONGER EXISTS.

B1 1.5 (A)

B1 1.5 (A)

IMPRESSIVE ARMS, AMMUNITION SURRENDERED

11. (C) [REDACTED]



B7A
B1 1.5 (C)

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INFO	LOG-00	AID-01	AMAD-01	SJK-01	DS-00	EB-01	HA-09
	H-01	INM-01	INRE-00	INR-01	IO-19	LAB-04	L-03
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	PRS-01	P-01	RP-10	SIL-01	SNP-01	SP-01	SR-01
	SS-01	STR-20	TRSE-00	T-01	USIE-00	FMP-01	/088W

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 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
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 DIRFBI WASHDC
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 AMEMBASSY CARACAS
 AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
 AMEMBASSY LIMA
 AMEMBASSY QUITO
 AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
 AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
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DEA FOR AD, AO, AX, DO, OC, OF, OIOA

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 CINCSO AND CINCLANT ALSO FOR POLAD

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GOVERNMENT WILL TRY TO FILL THE VOID

12. (C) TORRES SAID THE GOC NEEDS TO FILL THE SECURITY
 VOID. [] AGREED, SAYING THE PROBLEM WITH THE

B 1.5 (a7)

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PARAMILITARY GROUPS' PRIVATE JUSTICE/SECURITY IS THAT IT RESPONDS ONLY TO SPECIAL INTERESTS. CALLING NARCOS THE NO. 1 THREAT, TORRES SAID THE GUERRILLAS ALSO COULD RETURN TO WREAK HAVOC.

13. (U) TO STOP THE HEMORRHAGING IN THE AREA'S SECURITY

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] UNCLASSIFIED

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SITUATION, THE GOVERNMENT CONVENED AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF HIGH-RANKING SECURITY OFFICIALS DECEMBER 17 TO DRAW UP A PLAN FOR THE REGION. IN ATTENDANCE WERE DEFENSE MINISTER RAFAEL PARDO RUEDA, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR RICARDO SANTAMARIA, INSTRUCCION CRIMINAL DIRECTOR CARLOS EDUARDO MEJIA (WHOSE AGENCY IS HANDLING THE JUDICIAL ASPECTS OF THE SURRENDERS), NATIONAL REHABILITATION PLAN (PNR) DIRECTOR CESAR MANUEL NINO, COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTOR GEN. MIGUEL ANTONIO GOMEZ, JUDICIAL AND INVESTIGATIVE POLICE (DIJIN) DIRECTOR COL. LUIS MONTENEGRO, THE COMMANDERS OF THE TWO ARMY BRIGADES BASED IN THE REGION (4TH AND 14TH), THE POLICE COMMANDERS FOR CUNDINAMARCA, ANTIOQUIA AND BOYACA, AND THE GOVERNORS ELECT OF ANTIOQUIA AND BOYACA. PNR WILL FUND PROGRAMS TO ASSIST THE REINSERTION OF THE SURRENDERED PARAMILITARY FIGHTERS INTO CIVILIAN LIFE.

COMMENT

14. (C) IT REMAINS UNCLEAR THAT MAJOR NARCOS HAVE INTEREST IN THE AREA, OR WHAT THAT INTEREST WOULD BE. THE MAGDALENA MEDIO HAS LOST MUCH OF ITS IMPORTANCE FOR THE COCAINE TRADE TO CAQUETA AND PUTUMAYO. CLEARLY THE GUERRILLAS, HOWEVER, ARE INTERESTED IN RETURNING TO THE REGION THEY ONCE TERRORIZED, BUT FROM WHICH THEY WERE EXPELLED BY THE PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN 1985.

15. (C) THE MAGDALENA MEDIO, THE ONLY REGION OF THE COUNTRY WHERE THE INSURGENTS HAVE BEEN DEFEATED MILITARILY, THUS BECOMES A MAJOR TEST CASE FOR THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT. IT NEEDS TO MOVE INTO THE

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] UNCLASSIFIED

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AGRICULTURALLY RICH AREA AND PROVIDE THE NECESSARY GOVERNMENT PRESENCE (NOT JUST SECURITY), THE ABSENCE OF WHICH WAS THE PROBLEM IN THE FIRST PLACE. KEEPING OUT THE GUERRILLAS AND NARCOS, THUS MAKING A RESURGENCE OF PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY UNNECESSARY, WILL BE NO SMALL ORDER. END COMMENT.

BUSBY