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RELEASED IN PART
1.4(D)

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 02694 01 OF 02 192149Z
ACTION ARA-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-10 ACDE-00 INLB-01 AID-00 ACQ-01 INL-01
DEAE-00 OASY-00 SRPP-00 DS-00 OIGO-01 FBIE-00 TEDE-00
INR-00 ADS-00 MMP-00 SCT-00 ASDS-01 DSCC-00 DRL-09
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R 192142Z MAR 97
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5385
INFO SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
NSC WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 1848
SECDEF WASHDC

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 002694
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: APPEALS REVIEW PANEL
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 18 MAR 2022
APPEAL ACTION: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELEASE
REASON(S): 1.4(D)
DATE/CASE ID: 24 MAY 2010 200604350

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TAGS: PHUM, ASEC, PGOV, PTER, PINS, SNAR, PINR, CO
SUBJECT: COLOMBIAN EXPERT DISCUSSES PARAMILITARIES, GUERRILLAS
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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 02694 01 OF 02 192149Z

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECONOFF PEG WILLINGHAM. REASON 1.5(D).

2. (c) SUMMARY: [REDACTED] AN
EXPERT ON COLOMBIA'S INTERNAL CONFLICT, MET MARCH 11 WITH
POL/ECONOFF TO DISCUSS RECENT PARAMILITARY AND GUERRILLA
ACTIVITIES. HE PREDICTED THAT CASANARE DEPARTMENT COULD BECOME
"ANOTHER URABA" AND SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH HE HAD NO PROOF, HE
BELIEVES LINKS EXIST BETWEEN SOME IN THE MILITARY AND MEMBERS OF
PARAMILITARY GROUPS. HE DEPLORED THE RECENT WAVE OF GUERRILLA-
PERPETRATED BOMBINGS AGAINST CIVILIANS. [REDACTED] URGED THE USG TO
IMPOSE STRICT CONTROLS ON ASSISTANCE TO THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY.
END SUMMARY.

1.4(D)

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3. (c) [REDACTED] POL/ECONOFF MET MARCH 11 WITH [REDACTED] AN EXPERT ON COLOMBIA'S LONG-RUNNING INTERNAL CONFLICT. [REDACTED] FOCUSED ON THE RECENT INCREASE IN PARAMILITARISM, WARNING THAT, IN ADDITION TO TRADITIONAL HOTBEDS OF PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY LIKE URABA AND THE MAGDALENA MEDIO, THE DEPARTMENT OF CASANARE "MAY BECOME THE URABA OF THE FUTURE." LIKE URABA, CASANARE IS ECONOMICALLY RICH (BECAUSE OF THE OIL INDUSTRY); BOTH ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION (ELN) AND REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA (FARC) GUERRILLAS OPERATE THERE; AND SUSPECTED PARAMILITARY PATRON VICTOR CARRANZA HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN ESTABLISHING GREATER INFLUENCE THERE, ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] THIS VOLATILE MIX, AND THE PRESENCE OF SOME ILLICIT DRUG CROPS, MAKE CASANARE RIPE FOR CONFLICT, [REDACTED] HE HAD SPOKEN AT A CONFERENCE [REDACTED] AND WAS STRUCK BY THE "CLIMATE OF FEAR" HE ENCOUNTERED, INCLUDING RUMORS THAT CARRANZA IS SPONSORING 300-400 ARMED MEN TO "CLEAN OUT" CASANARE. [REDACTED] CLAIMED THAT 65 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN MURDERED IN CASANARE IN

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1.4(D)

1.4(D)

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 02694 01 OF 02 192149Z

THE PAST 45 DAYS IN ACTIONS HE ATTRIBUTED TO PARAMILITARIES. HE SAID THAT CARRANZA HAS LEARNED A LESSON FROM THE SITUATION IN URABA: AVOID BIG MASSACRES THAT GENERATE BAD PUBLICITY. INSTEAD, KILL ONE OR TWO PEOPLE AT A TIME OVER A PERIOD OF WEEKS. THE DEATHS ARE ONLY REPORTED BY THE LOCAL, RATHER THAN NATIONAL, PRESS, AND NO ONE PAYS ATTENTION, [REDACTED] DECLARED.

4. (c) [REDACTED] SAID THAT SMALLER PARAMILITARY GROUPS ARE ACTIVE IN PUTUMAYO AND CAUCA DEPARTMENTS. THERE IS VERY LITTLE PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY IN CAQUETA OR GUAVIARE DEPARTMENTS, PRIMARILY BECAUSE NARCOTRAFFICKERS DO NOT HAVE LARGE LANDHOLDINGS THERE AND FIND IT IN THEIR INTEREST TO COLLABORATE WITH THE GUERRILLAS INVOLVED IN COCA CULTIVATION IN THE AREA. IN GENERAL TERMS, HE SAID, THE PARAMILITARIES CONTROL OUTLYING DEPARTMENTS AND HAVE LEFT THE CENTER OF COLOMBIA TO THE ARMY. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAS NO PROOF OF LINKS BETWEEN THE ARMY AND PARAMILITARIES, BUT IS CONVINCED THAT SUCH LINKS EXIST. AS AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE, HE CITED TWO RECENT MASSACRES IN ANTIOQUIA, ONE ATTRIBUTED TO THE FARC, THE OTHER TO PARAMILITARIES. [REDACTED] POINTED OUT THAT NEWSPAPER REPORTS NOTED THAT THE ARMY HAD PURSUED THE FARC, BUT NO MENTION WAS MADE IN THE PRESS OF THE ARMY OR ANY OTHER GOC AUTHORITIES PURSUING THE PARAMILITARIES. THIS KIND OF DISPARITY IS TYPICAL, [REDACTED]

5. (c) [REDACTED] NOTED THAT THE MOST RECENT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE THIRD "SUMMIT OF SELF-DEFENSE GROUPS" PUBLICLY ADMITTED

"PROBLEMATIC" LINKS TO THE MILITARY, IN PARTICULAR THE CASE OF RETIRED GENERAL FAROUK YANINE. [REDACTED] THEN TOLD AN ANECDOTE ABOUT AN EXPERIENCE HE HAD IN META DEPARTMENT THREE YEARS AGO THAT CONVINCED HIM OF A "CORRELATION" BETWEEN SOME ELEMENTS OF THE MILITARY AND "SELF-DEFENSE" GROUPS. HE WAS DRIVING ON A HIGHWAY

1,4(D)

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BOGOTA 02694 01 OF 02 192149Z
AND WAS STOPPED BY A ROADBLOCK SET UP BY A GROUP OF ARMED MEN WHO WERE NEITHER MILITARY NOR GUERRILLAS AND WHO APPEARED TO BE A "PRIVATE JUSTICE GROUP." A FEW MINUTES LATER, HE WAS STOPPED AT A MILITARY CHECKPOINT. BECAUSE THE HIGHWAY RAN THROUGH THE FLAT COUNTRY OF THE EASTERN PLAINS, [REDACTED] THE ARMY COULD SEE THE OTHER CHECKPOINT BUT DID NOT SEEM CONCERNED ABOUT IT. A FEW HOURS LATER, [REDACTED] HE WAS IN A RESTAURANT IN CASTILLO, META DEPARTMENT, AND SAW THE MEN FROM THE "PRIVATE JUSTICE" CHECKPOINT DRINKING BEER WITH THE SOLDIERS FROM THE MILITARY CHECKPOINT. WHILE CONCEDED THAT THIS DID NOT CONSTITUTE LEGAL PROOF OF WRONGDOING, [REDACTED] INCIDENTS LIKE THIS ONE HAVE PERSUADED HIM THAT A "CORRELATION" EXISTS BETWEEN SOME ELEMENTS OF THE MILITARY AND PARAMILITARIES.

6. (c) [REDACTED] NOTED THAT THE PARAMILITARY "SUMMIT" COMMUNIQUE ANNOUNCED THAT "SELF-DEFENSE" GROUPS PLANNED TO EXPAND THEIR OPERATIONS TO CORDOBA, SOUTHERN BOLIVAR, SOUTHERN CESAR, AND PARTS OF SANTANDER AND NORTE DE SANTANDER DEPARTMENTS. HE GRIMLY NOTED THAT THE PARAMILITARIES ARE "MEN OF THEIR WORD" AND DO WHAT THEY SAID THEY WOULD DO IN PREVIOUS COMMUNIQUES; BETWEEN NOVEMBER 1996 AND FEBRUARY 1997, THEY HAVE CONDUCTED MASSACRES IN THOSE AREAS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 02694 02 OF 02 192150Z
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R 192142Z MAR 97
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Page: 4

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DIA WASHDC
 CIA WASHDC
 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
 NSC WASHDC
 USIA WASHDC 1849
 SECDEF WASHDC

~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~ SECTION 02 OF 02 BOGOTA 002694

STATE FOR ARA/AND, DRL, INL
 NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
 SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
 USIA FOR AR, I/GAR

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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 02694 02 OF 02 192150Z

[REDACTED] FEAR IS THAT INSTEAD OF KILLING MAYORS AND CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS, THE PARAMILITARIES' (AND POSSIBLY GUERRILLAS') NEW STRATEGY WILL BE TO TARGET CANDIDATES BEFORE THEY EVEN GET ELECTED.

1.4(D)

7. (e) [REDACTED] GLOOMILY PREDICTED THAT IF GUERRILLAS CONTINUE THEIR RECENT PATTERN OF MAKING HIT-AND-RUN URBAN ATTACKS, PARAMILITARIES WILL FIGHT BACK, MAKING COLOMBIAN CITIES MORE VIOLENT THAN EVER. [REDACTED] LAMENTED THE RECENT WAVE OF CAR BOMB ATTACKS AFFECTING CIVILIANS AND APPARENTLY PERPETRATED BY GUERRILLAS. HE NOTED THAT THIS TYPE OF ATTACK REPRESENTS A NEW DEPARTURE FOR THE GUERRILLAS, WARNING THAT IF THE TREND CONTINUES, THE COUNTRY'S ALREADY DIRE SECURITY SITUATION WILL DETERIORATE EVEN FURTHER, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE INDISCRIMINATE CAR BOMBINGS ARE DIFFICULT TO DETECT IN ADVANCE. (NOTE: SEPTEL REPORTS ON ANOTHER SUCH BOMBING, WHICH OCCURRED THE NIGHT OF MARCH 16-17 IN CUCUTA.)

8. (c) [REDACTED] URGED THE USG TO IMPOSE "STRICT CONTROLS" ON ASSISTANCE TO THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY. IN HIS VIEW, THE ARMY WANTS U.S. AID IN ORDER TO COMBAT THE INSURGENCY RATHER THAN TO DEFEAT NARCOTRAFFICKERS. [REDACTED] SAID THAT WHILE SOME MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY ARE "SINCERELY COMMITTED" TO COUNTER-NARCOTICS EFFORTS, OTHERS HAVE BEEN CORRUPTED BY THE NARCOS. THE ARMY HAS NO VISCERAL REASON TO HATE NARCOTRAFFICKERS, BUT HAS EVERY REASON TO HATE THE GUERRILLAS, WHO KIDNAP AND KILL SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS, [REDACTED] CONTINUED. IN A SENSE, HE ADDED, THE NARCOTRAFFICKERS IMPROVE THE LIVES OF AT LEAST SOME MEMBERS OF THE ARMY, WHILE GUERRILLAS

Current Class: ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Page: 4

OBVIOUSLY MAKE LIFE WORSE.

9. (c) COMMENT:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

LIKE OTHER

14(D)

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PAGE 03 BOGOTA 02694 02 OF 02 192150Z
COLOMBIAN "VIOLENTOLOGISTS," HE IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT HIS COUNTRY'S
FUTURE AND BELIEVES THE GOVERNMENT IS UNABLE TO PREVENT VIOLENCE
PERPETRATED BY GUERRILLAS AND PARAMILITARIES. UNFORTUNATELY, HIS
PESSIMISM SEEMS WELL-FOUNDED. IN REGARD TO HIS COMMENT ABOUT USG
ASSISTANCE TO THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY, OUR ASSISTANCE IS STRICTLY
TIED TO COUNTER-NARCOTICS EFFORTS OF THE MILITARY. MOREOVER, HIS
COMMENT ABOUT THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY HATING GUERRILLAS BUT NOT
NARCOTRAFFICKERS FAILS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE OVERLAP OF THESE TWO IN
THE PHENOMENON OF THE NARCOGUERRILLA, WHICH THE MILITARY IS
COMBATTING, PARTICULARLY IN THE COCA GROWING REGIONS. GARZA

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