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ACTION H-06

INFO LOG-00 INLB-01 ARA-01 INL-01 OASY-00 DS-00 EUR-01  
TEDE-00 L-01 ADS-00 SS-00 DSCC-00 DRL-09 /020W  
-----BF4E06 282345Z /38

P 282251Z MAY 97 ZDK  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6654  
INFO DIA WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC  
DIRONDCP WASHDC  
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 2341  
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
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SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//  
FBI WASHDC  
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD

[REDACTED] SECTION 01 OF 13 BOGOTA 005129

STATE FOR ARA/AND, INL, DRL, L/HRR, H, EUR/RPM (MFITZPATRICK)  
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
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 NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS  
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 DEA FOR OF, OFL, OC, AX  
 JUSTICE FOR CRIM. WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET  
 FBI FOR CID/IRS/IRU2  
 USIA FOR AR, I/GAR  
 TREASURY FOR FINCEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/02  
 TAGS: OREP, PREL, SNAR, MASS, PHUM, PGOV, PINR, PINS, PTER, ECON,  
 KJUS, KCRM, CO  
 SUBJECT: CODEL HASTERT'S MAY 24-27 VISIT TO COLOMBIA

REF: BOGOTA 5107

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

1. (C) SUMMARY: CONGRESSMAN DENNIS HASTERT AND FOUR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT AND REFORM COMMITTEE VISITED COLOMBIA MAY 24-27 TO DISCUSS COUNTERNARCOTICS ISSUES. DURING A MAY 24 COUNTRY TEAM BRIEFING, CODEL MEMBERS ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT END USE MONITORING, HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY, EMBASSY STAFFING AND ASSISTANCE TO THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE (CNP) AND MILITARY. GENERAL HAROLD BEDOYA, COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES, AND NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL SERRANO, HOSTED THE CODEL FOR A COCKTAIL RECEPTION MAY 24. ON MAY 25, THE CODEL TRAVELED TO SAN JOSE DEL GUAVIARE AND VISITED CNP AND MILITARY FACILITIES. STAFFER JOHN MACKAY HAD A SEPARATE SCHEDULE ON MAY 25, VISITING THE CNP AVIATION FACILITY IN MARIQUITA AND SUBSEQUENTLY VISITING LA PICOTA MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON (SEE REFTEL). ON MAY 26, THE DEFENSE MINISTER

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 HOSTED THE CODEL FOR A BREAKFAST BRIEFING ON THE MILITARY'S COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORTS AND COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF REPRESENTATIVE MARK SANFORD (R-SC), THE CODEL THEN TRAVELLED TO A CNP BASE AT GUAYMARAL AND TO THE CNP AVIATION SCHOOL AT MARIQUITA. CONGRESSMAN SANFORD HAD MEETINGS WITH PRIVATE PENSION FUND EXPERTS. THAT EVENING, THE AMBASSADOR HOSTED A

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RECEPTION FOR THE CODEL, PRECEDED BY A MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER MEJIA. END SUMMARY.

2. (S) CONGRESSMAN DENNIS HASTERT (R-IL), CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE, TRAVELLED TO COLOMBIA MAY 24, ACCOMPANIED BY SUBCOMMITTEE VICE CHAIRMAN REPRESENTATIVE MARK SOUDER (R-IN) AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS CONGRESSMAN ROBERT BARR (R-GA); CONGRESSMAN MARK SANFORD (R-SC); CONGRESSMAN ROD BLAGOJEVICH (D-IL); STAFFERS JOHN MACKAY, BOBBY CHARLES, ROB MOBLEY, SEAN LITTLEFIELD, AND KEVIN LONG; AND DOD ESCORTS. THEIR FIRST STOP WAS A COUNTRY TEAM BRIEFING AT THE EMBASSY, [REDACTED]

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SAN JOSE DEL GUAVIARE  
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19. (U) THAT EVENING, THE COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES, GENERAL BEDOYA, AND NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL SERRANO HOSTED A COCKTAIL PARTY IN THE CODEL'S HONOR. THE FOLLOWING MORNING, THE CODEL TRAVELLED TO SAN JOSE DEL GUAVIARE. THE AMBASSADOR, NAS [REDACTED]

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DIRECTOR, DEA COUNTRY ATTACHE, MILGROUP COMMANDER, AND OTHER EMBASSY OFFICERS ACCOMPANIED THEM AS THEY VISITED COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE (CNP), COLOMBIAN ARMY (COLAR) INFANTRY AND SPECIAL FORCES, AND MARINE RIVERINE UNITS. REPRESENTING THE HOST GOVERNMENT WERE AMBASSADOR ESGUERRA, COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTOR MAJOR GENERAL ROSSO SERRANO, COLOMBIAN ARMY (COLAR) 15TH BRIGADE COMMANDER BRIGADIER GENERAL RAMIREZ, SECOND MOBILE BRIGADE COMMANDER BRIGADIER GENERAL OSPINA, AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE COLAR AND THE CNP. THE CNP ANTI-NARCOTICS UNIT BRIEFED THE CODEL GROUP AND TOOK IT TO A RECENTLY AERIALY ERADICATED COCA FIELD AND A SEIZED COCAINE LAB. COLAR BRIEFINGS EMPHASIZED THE NARCO-FARC CONNECTION, ALONG WITH THE SUCCESS OF LAST YEAR'S "OPERATION CONQUISTA." THE DAY'S HIGHLIGHTS WERE A FLYOVER AND SPRAY OPERATION BY THRUSH AIRCRAFT SPRAYING WATER AND SMOKE ON A COCA FIELD AS THEY OVERFLEW AT LOW ALTITUDE, AND A JOINT LIVE FIRE DEMONSTRATION CONDUCTED AT THE SPECIAL FORCES SCHOOL AT BARRANCON.

20. (U) AT THE RECENTLY ERADICATED FIELD, THE CODEL WAS BRIEFED

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P 282251Z MAY 97  
 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6660  
 INFO DIA WASHDC  
 CIA WASHDC  
 DIRONDCP WASHDC  
 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM  
 NSC WASHDC  
 USIA WASHDC 2347  
 DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
 SECDEF WASHDC  
 DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
 AMEMBASSY LIMA  
 AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
 AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
 DEA WASHDC

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NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA  
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 DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD

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 DEA FOR OF, OFL, OC, AX  
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BY GOC ENVIRONMENTAL AUDITOR DR. LUIS EDUARDO PARRA ABOUT THE VARIOUS CROP PLANTING SUBTERFUGES EMPLOYED BY NARCOTRAFFICKERS, INCLUDING PLANTING COCA UNDER THE COVER OF BANANA TREES AND THEN BLAMING THE GOC FOR "DESTROYING" CAMPESINOS' LIVELIHOOD VIA ERADICATION. PARRA EXPLAINED THAT THE TWO-HECTARE FIELD OF FOUR-YEAR OLD COCA HAD A KILL RATIO OF ABOUT 90 PERCENT, WITH ALL THE LEAVES STRIPPED FROM THE PLANTS, WHICH WERE EITHER COMPLETELY DRIED UP OR IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING SO. SOME PLANTS WERE TRYING TO REGENERATE THEMSELVES, BUT DR. PARRA POINTED OUT THAT THE REGENERATION WOULD BE UNSUCCESSFUL. CONGRESSMAN HASTERT AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP ASKED QUESTIONS ON ERADICATION TECHNIQUES AND COCA YIELDS, WHICH WERE ANSWERED BY PARRA AND NAS STAFF. AFTER A BRIEFING AT THE SEIZED COCA BASE LAB ABOUT COCA PROCESSING PROCEDURES, CNP PERSONNEL BURNED THE LAB.

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 COLAR VISIT  
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21. (U) THE CODEL THEN VISITED THE COLAR'S 19TH INFANTRY "JOAQUIN PARIS" BATTALION, WHERE BRIGADIER GENERAL RAMIREZ (COMMANDER OF THE 15TH (SCHOOLS) BRIGADE, WHICH OVERSEES THE SPECIAL FORCES SCHOOL AT BARRANCON) AND GENERAL OSPINA (COMMANDER OF THE 2ND MOBILE BRIGADE) BRIEFED THE GROUP ON THEIR COLLECTIVE AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY: COUNTERINSURGENCY NARCOTICS INTERDICTION. THE LATTER INVOLVES CONTROL OF COCA PRODUCING PLOTS/LABS AND THE ENTIRE COCA PRODUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE (CEMENT AND GASOLINE SUPPLIES, LAND TRANSPORTATION, AIR TRANSPORTATION, AND LANDING STRIPS) IN AN AREA COVERING MORE THAN 434,169 SQUARE KILOMETERS IN SEVEN DEPARTMENTS. BG RAMIREZ THEORIZED THAT THE FARC, BY REFUSING TO RELEASE THE SIXTY SOLDIERS CAPTURED IN AN AUGUST 30 ATTACK UNTIL THE MILITARY WITHDRAWS FROM NARCOTIC PRODUCING AREAS, IS TRYING TO RECOUP THEIR FINANCIAL LOSSES SUFFERED DURING LAST YEAR'S GOC OPERATIONS IN GUAVIARE AND IN OTHER AREAS OF COLOMBIA.

22. (U) BOTH GENERAL OSPINA AND GENERAL RAMIREZ EMPHASIZED STRONGLY THAT THEY WERE CONFRONTING A "DRUG CARTEL" OPERATING IN THE MIRAFLORES AND GUAVIARE REGION. GENERAL OSPINA INDICATED THAT THE FARC IS AND ACTS AS A CARTEL, CONTROLLING PRODUCERS, LAB WORKERS, AND TRAFFICKERS WITH FARC SECURITY ELEMENTS. GENERAL OSPINA ALSO SPOKE AT LENGTH ABOUT THE TAXES BEING IMPOSED BY THE FARC ON COCA GROWERS, LAB OPERATORS, PRODUCERS AND SHIPPERS.

23. (U) BG RAMIREZ ALSO FOCUSSED ON THE SUCCESSFUL JOINT TASK FORCE CONCEPT, CITING THE ADVANTAGES OF COMBINED ARMY, POLICE, NAVY AND AIR FORCE OPERATIONS. OSPINA'S MAIN CONCLUSION WAS THAT THE COMBINED ACTIONS OF THE GOC PUBLIC FORCES HAD BROKEN THE BACK OF NARCOTRAFFICKING CENTERED IN MIRAFLORES AND THAT HIS SECOND MOBILE [REDACTED]

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BRIGADE WOULD ATTEMPT TO DO THE SAME IN CAQUETA. OSPINA EMPHASIZED  
THAT CROP ERADICATION WAS KEY IN DAMAGING FARC ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL  
THE AREA. OSPINA ESTIMATED THAT "OPERATION CONQUISTA" HAS COST THE  
FARC OVER USD 80 MILLION. OSPINA ALSO POINTED OUT THE FACT THAT HE  
LOST 36 MEN KILLED IN ACTION DURING "OPERATION CONQUISTA."

24. (U) AFTER A QUICK BRIEFING ON SPECIAL FORCES OPERATIONS, THE  
CODEL WITNESSED A JOINT LIVE FIRE DEMONSTRATION INVOLVING COLAR  
SPECIAL FORCES, A MARINE RIVERINE COMBAT ELEMENT (RCE), AND A CNP  
HELICOPTER. DURING THE EXERCISE, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN A HEAVY  
DOWNPOUR, THE SPECIAL FORCES AND MARINES SIMULATED AN ATTACK ON A  
HEAVILY DEFENDED, REMOTE COCAINE PRODUCING LAB. THE EXERCISE  
STRESSED COORDINATION, SPEED, AND EFFICIENCY. A POLICE HELICOPTER  
WAS USED TO DEPLOY AND EXFILTRATE SPECIAL FORCES COMBAT SWIMMERS  
USING HOVER TACTICS, WHILE OTHER TROOPS PROVIDED SUPPORT FIRE FROM  
ACROSS THE RIVER. THE USG-PROVIDED RCE BOATS ALSO LAUNCHED SPECIAL  
FORCES TROOPS DURING THE SUCCESSFUL JOINT EXERCISE. AFTER THE  
JOINT EXERCISE, THE CODEL RETURNED TO THE DANTE 7TH COMPANY

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P 282251Z MAY 97  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6661  
INFO DIA WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC  
DIRONDCP WASHDC  
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 2348  
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
DEA WASHDC  
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FBI WASHDC  
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD

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ONDCP FOR JANET CRIST

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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
 DEA FOR OF, OFL, OC, AX  
 JUSTICE FOR CRIM. WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET  
 FBI FOR CID/IRS/IRU2  
 USIA FOR AR, I/GAR  
 TREASURY FOR FINCEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/02  
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HEADQUARTERS AT SAN JOSE FOR THE 90-MINUTE FIXED WING FLIGHT BACK  
 TO BOGOTA. PHOTOS OF CODEL MEMBERS TAKEN DURING THE SAN JOSE  
 PORTION OF THEIR VISIT APPEARED IN THE MAY 26 EDITIONS OF LEADING  
 BOGOTA DAILIES "EL TIEMPO" AND "EL ESPECTADOR."

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 MILITARY BRIEFING ON COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORTS, HUMAN RIGHTS  
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25. (U) ON MAY 26, MINISTER OF DEFENSE GILBERTO ECHEVERRI HOSTED  
 A WORKING BREAKFAST AT THE MILITARY CLUB, INCLUDING PRESENTATIONS  
 ON THE MILITARY'S ANTI-DRUG EFFORTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM.  
 GENERAL BEDOYA AND SERRANO AND MILITARY SERVICE CHIEFS ALSO  
 ATTENDED. MOD ECHEVERRI, IN HIS OPENING REMARKS, LINKED JOBS AND  
 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO THE PEACE PROCESS. HE SAID THAT 8 MILLION  
 COLOMBIANS WERE OUT OF WORK, WHICH GREATLY HINDERED A PEACEFUL  
 RESOLUTION TO THE GUERRILLA CONFLICT. "WITHOUT PEACE, THERE WILL  
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 BE NO INVESTMENT, AND WITHOUT INVESTMENT THERE WILL BE NO NEW JOBS  
 CREATED," SAID ECHEVERRI. HE DECLARED THAT THE MILITARY HAD MADE  
 A BIG EFFORT WITH A SMALL BUDGET, LOSING MANY LIVES IN THE PROCESS.

26. (U) THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE OF THE JOINT MILITARY FORCES  
 (D-2), BRIGADIER GENERAL MARIO ROA, OUTLINED THE COLOMBIAN  
 MILITARY'S COUNTERNARCOTICS ACHIEVEMENTS. HIS PRESENTATION  
 EMPHASIZED THE LINK BETWEEN NARCOTRAFFICKERS AND THE GUERRILLAS.  
 ROA SAID THE COLAR BASED ITS CONCLUSIONS ON INFORMATION PROVIDED BY

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FORMER GUERRILLAS, PUBLISHED STATEMENTS REPORTEDLY MADE AT A FARC "SUMMIT," EVIDENCE OF FARC SUPPORT OF NARCOTRAFFICKERS, AND ALLEGATIONS OF EXCHANGES OF DRUGS FOR WEAPONS. ROA NOTED THAT AREAS OF GUERRILLA PRESENCE COINCIDE WITH NARCOTRAFFICKING ACTIVITY. HE CLAIMED THAT MASS PROTESTS BY COCA GROWERS IN JULY AND AUGUST 1996 WERE ORGANIZED AND MANIPULATED BY GUERRILLAS. HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT NARCOTRAFFICKERS PAY THE FARC FOR PROTECTION AND THAT THE FARC EARN MORE MONEY FROM NARCOTRAFFICKING THAN FROM KIDNAPPING.

27. (U) THE NEXT SPEAKER, INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE JOINT MILITARY FORCES MAJOR GENERAL MARIO GALAN, SAID HE IS IN CHARGE OF THE MILITARY'S HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM. GALAN SAID THAT THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT HAD A LONG HISTORY OF RESPECTING HUMAN RIGHTS, DATING FROM COLONIAL-ERA PROTECTIONS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND ENSHRINED IN THE 1991 CONSTITUTION. NOTING THAT HE HAD SPENT 35 YEARS IN THE MILITARY, GALAN HELD UP A 20-YEAR-OLD MILITARY TRAINING MANUAL WHICH, HE DECLARED, PROHIBITED ABUSE OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION. HE DESCRIBED THE ONGOING HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM WITHIN THE MILITARY AS HAVING THREE FOCI: RAISING STANDARDS, MONITORING AND OBSERVANCE, AND INCREASING AND IMPROVING EFFICIENCY. DATABASES, TRAINING COURSES, COMMISSIONS, AND EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS HAVE BEEN CREATED,

[REDACTED]

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 AND COMMANDERS AT ALL LEVELS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING THEIR TROOPS' HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE. IN 1996, AS A RESULT OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLAINTS, 33 MILITARY MEMBERS WERE FOUND GUILTY, 31 WERE FOUND INNOCENT, AND OVER 100 CASES REMAIN PENDING.

28. (U) CONGRESSMAN SANFORD ASKED MILITARY FORCES COMMANDER GENERAL BEDOYA IF U.S. CONDITIONS ON SECURITY ASSISTANCE HAD BEEN COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. BEDOYA RESPONDED WITH A SUMMARY OF THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE SECURITY FORCES, INCLUDING LOSSES OF OVER 350 SOLDIERS 1996, AND OVER 3000 CNP MEMBERS IN THE LAST THREE YEARS. "WITH STATISTICS LIKE THESE, YOU ARE AT WAR," HE SAID. COLOMBIA IS A COUNTRY THAT IS ONE-HALF JUNGLE, AND ONE-HALF MOUNTAINS, WITH LITTLE INFRASTRUCTURE, MAKING THE MILITARY'S JOB VERY DIFFICULT, HE STATED. THE MILITARY SHOULD BE VIEWED AS HEROES FIGHTING A BATTLE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE WORLD. WE SHOULD ALL BE ALLIED IN THIS BATTLE, NOT DIVIDED BY THE U.S. CERTIFICATION PROCESS, BEDOYA

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P 282251Z MAY 97  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6662  
INFO DIA WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC  
DIRONDCP WASHDC  
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 2349  
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

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SECDEF WASHDC  
 DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
 AMEMBASSY LIMA  
 AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
 AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
 DEA WASHDC  
 NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA  
 SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//  
 FBI WASHDC  
 DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD

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 KJUS, KCRM, CO  
 SUBJECT: CODEL HASTERT'S MAY 24-27 VISIT TO COLOMBIA

29. (U) DEFENSE MINISTER ECHEVERRI RESPONDED TO A QUESTION ABOUT LINKING U.S. MILITARY AID TO HUMAN RIGHTS. HE EXPLAINED THE LEGAL COMPLEXITIES THAT MAKE THE PROPOSED END USE MONITORING AGREEMENT DIFFICULT, FROM THE MILITARY'S PERSPECTIVE, ASSERTING THAT THE RIGHTS OF AN ACCUSED MILITARY MEMBER ACCUSED OF ABUSES TO DEFEND HIMSELF MUST BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION. ECHEVERRI CLAIMED THAT THE PROPOSED END USE MONITORING AGREEMENT EXPOSED THE MILITARY TO THE RISK OF BEING INUNDATED WITH UNFOUNDED COMPLAINTS. HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT HE WAS WORKING WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND OTHERS WITHIN THE

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EMBASSY TO FIND AGREEMENT IN THIS ISSUE. GOC AMBASSADOR (AND FORMER MOD) ESGUERRA ADDED THAT U.S. MILITARY AID TO COLOMBIA DATES BACK TO THE 1950'S, AND WAS PROVIDED WITHOUT CONDITIONS UNTIL RECENTLY. HE DESCRIBED THE COLOMBIAN JUDICIAL PROCESS IN CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE AS VERY RIGID IN COMPARISON TO THE MORE FLEXIBLE U.S. LEGAL SYSTEM. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES CAN FIND A WORKABLE MIDDLE GROUND.

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30. (U) CONGRESSMAN HASTERT THANKED THE MILITARY FOR HOSTING THE BREAKFAST AND SAID THAT HE AND THE COMMITTEE WOULD WORK TO REMOVE CONDITIONS ON ASSISTANCE. HE SAID HE AND LIKE-MINDED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ARE "SICK AND TIRED OF PEOPLE WHO SPEND MOST OF THEIR LIVES LIVING OUTSIDE OF THE U.S. INHIBITING THE PROCESS BY PLACING CONDITIONS ON MILITARY AID WHEN THE LIVES OF U.S. CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE BEING DESTROYED BY DRUGS." HE DECRIED "LEFTIST-DOMINATED" U.S. CONGRESSES OF YEARS PAST WHO "USED HUMAN RIGHTS AS AN EXCUSE TO AID THE LEFT IN OTHER COUNTRIES," AND VOWED THAT HE WAS COMMITTED TO "CORRECTING" THAT SITUATION AND EXPEDITING AID TO U.S. ALLIES IN THE WAR ON DRUGS. HE CLOSED BY TELLING THE MILITARY AND POLICE THAT THEY ALREADY KNEW THEY COULD BYPASS THE U.S. EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH THE CONGRESS; HE ENCOURAGED THEM TO CONTINUE TO DO SO.

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 GUAYMARAL AND MARIQUITA TOURS  
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31. (U) AFTER BREAKFAST, THE GROUP (MINUS REPRESENTATIVE SANFORD, WHO HAD A SEPARATE SCHEDULE -- SEE BELOW) VISITED THE CNP AIR SERVICE BASE AT GUAYMARAL, A 10-MINUTE HELICOPTER RIDE FROM BOGOTA. THE BASE IS THE PRIMARY MAINTENANCE AND SERVICE AREA FOR CNP HELICOPTERS USED IN ITS SPRAY OPERATIONS. THE GROUP TOURED THE SPARE PARTS WAREHOUSE AND TWO SERVICE HANGARS, STAFFED BY 70 TECHNICIANS. THE CNP TECHNICIANS ARE ABLE TO PERFORM SOME EIGHTY PERCENT OF THE WORK REQUIRED ON THE HELICOPTERS; THE REST, SUCH AS WHEN A HELICOPTER HAS BEEN BADLY DAMAGED BY GROUND FIRE, MUST BE CONTRACTED OUT. THE CNP IS NONETHELESS STRIVING TO UPGRADE ITS WORKSHOPS TO ALLOW THE TECHNICIANS TO PERFORM EVEN MORE OF THE

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REQUIRED SERVICE, MAINTENANCE, AND REPAIRS AT GUAYMARAL.  
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32. (U) GEN. SERRANO THEN LED THE GROUP TO A RESIDENCE ADJACENT TO THE AIR SERVICE BASE WHICH HAD BEEN SEIZED BY POLICE FROM LEONIDAS VARGAS VARGAS, A ONE TIME MAJOR FIGURE IN THE MEDELLIN DRUG MAFIA WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF TWO CNP OFFICERS. (VARGAS' NEW RESIDENCE IS THE MAXIMUM SECURITY WING OF LA PICOTA PRISON, WHERE HE IS SERVING A LENGTHY SENTENCE FOR MURDER.) THE CNP NOW USES VARGAS' HOUSE AS AN OFFICERS' CLUB, AND A PLUSH, IF TACKY, CLUB IT MAKES: A TWO-LANE BOWLING ALLEY, SEVERAL SAUNAS, A GYMNASIUM, INDOOR SQUASH COURT, A BAR OUTFITTED TO LOOK LIKE AN OLD SAILING GALLEY, AND THE CENTERPIECE, A KIDNEY-SHAPED INDOOR POOL SURROUNDED BY TWO STORIES OF FAKE ROCK FORMATIONS SUPPORTING A SLIDE FROM THE MASTER BEDROOM INTO THE POOL. THE CODEL WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE DISPLAY OF WEALTH REPRESENTED IN THE HOUSE AND ITS FURNISHINGS AND WAS PLEASED WITH THE JUSTICE OF ITS NOW BEING A CNP OFFICERS' CLUB.

33. (U) THE NEXT STOP WAS NEWLY INAUGURATED CNP "ROSSO JOSE

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-----BF4DDD 282344Z /38

P 282251Z MAY 97  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6663  
INFO DIA WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC  
DIRONDCP WASHDC  
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 2350  
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
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 SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
 DEA FOR OF, OFL, OC, AX  
 JUSTICE FOR CRIM. WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET  
 FBI FOR CID/IRS/IRU2  
 USIA FOR AR, I/GAR  
 TREASURY FOR FINCEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/02  
 TAGS: OREP, PREL, SNAR, MASS, PHUM, PGOV, PINR, PINS, PTER, ECON,  
 KJUS, KCRM, CO  
 SUBJECT: CODEL HASTERT'S MAY 24-27 VISIT TO COLOMBIA

SERRANO" AVIATION SCHOOL IN MARIQUITA (ON THE BORDER OF TOLIMA AND  
 CUNDINAMARCA DEPARTMENTS). BEFORE DEPARTING, EMBASSY OFFICERS  
 NOTICED THAT THREE MEN WHO WERE NOT PART OF THE CODEL WERE  
 ATTEMPTING TO BOARD THE CNP AIRCRAFT SET ASIDE FOR THE CODEL'S TRIP  
 TO MARIQUITA. ONE WAS GIL MACKLIN, AN AMERICAN CITIZEN EMPLOYED BY  
 THE D.C. BASED "NATIONAL DEFENSE INSTITUTE," WHO HAD ALSO BEEN AT  
 THE AIRPORT TO GREET THE CODEL ON ARRIVAL MAY 24. (NOTE: MACKLIN  
 ALSO APPEARED AT THE AIRPORT MAY 27 TO BID THE CODEL FAREWELL. END  
 NOTE.) THE OTHERS APPEARED TO BE AMERICANS BUT REFUSED TO IDENTIFY  
 THEMSELVES AND CLAIMED THEY HAD PERMISSION FROM THE CNP TO  
 PARTICIPATE IN THE TRIP. NAS DIRECTOR, ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE MEN  
 HAD NO SECURITY CLEARANCES AND, TO THE BEST OF EMBASSY'S KNOWLEDGE,  
 HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH EITHER THE COLOMBIAN OR U.S. GOVERNMENTS,  
 OBJECTED TO THEIR BOARDING THE AIRCRAFT. AFTER A BRIEF DISCUSSION,  
 INCLUDING AN APPEAL BY REPRESENTATIVE HASTERT TO PERMIT THEM TO  
 BOARD, THE THREE MEN WERE ALLOWED ON THE PLANE. GENERAL SERRANO  
 TOLD THE AMBASSADOR MAY 27 THAT STAFFER MACKKEY HAD ASKED THE THREE

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 AMERICANS TO VISIT COLOMBIA DURING THE CODEL VISIT AND HAD ASKED  
 THE POLICE TO INCLUDE THEM IN THE VISIT TO MARIQUITA. SERRANO SAID  
 A "WEALTHY BENEFACTOR NAMED DR. ELKINS" HAD PAID FOR THEIR TRIP.

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34. (U) THE CODEL RECEIVED A BRIEFING BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS ON THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE HANGAR AND CLASSROOM FACILITIES. THE SCHOOL, WHICH GENERAL SERRANO DESCRIBED AS A FULFILLMENT OF HIS DREAM, HOSTS STUDENTS FROM SEVEN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. IN ADDITION TO TRAINING CNP MEMBERS, IT ALSO SCHOOLS ARMY AND NAVY PILOTS. SERRANO ACKNOWLEDGED THE CRITICAL SUPPORT OF THE USG IN MAKING THE SCHOOL A REALITY IN BRIEF REMARKS BEFORE DANTI DIRECTOR COL. LEONARDO GALLEGO SPOKE ON CNP COUNTERDRUG ACHIEVEMENTS. GALLEGO GAVE A DETAILED BRIEFING ON THE CNP'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ITS 12-FRONTED NARCOTICS EFFORT, TO INCLUDE ERADICATION, LAB DETECTION AND DESTRUCTION, AND DRUG AND CHEMICAL SEIZURES. GALLEGO THEN OUTLINED CNP SEIZURE STATISTICS, FROM COCAINE, TO AIRCRAFT, TO LABS, TO WEAPONS AND VEHICLES. NONE OF THE SUCCESSES WERE WITHOUT COSTS, GALLEGO POINTED OUT, ENUMERATING THE NUMBER OF CNP KILLED AND WOUNDED SINCE 1994. HE NOTED AS WELL THE 123 ATTACKS AGAINST CNP HELICOPTERS SINCE 1994. CODEL MEMBERS WERE INTERESTED TO HEAR THAT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY HAS EMBRACED THE SCHOOL, THANKS TO AN ASSERTIVE OUTREACH PROGRAM UNDERTAKEN BY THE SCHOOL'S DIRECTOR. FOR EXAMPLE, A LOCAL NURSERY HAS DONATED PLANTS AND TREES AND HAS HELPED LANDSCAPE THE GROUNDS.

35. (U) THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE MARIQUITA TOUR WAS THE DEMONSTRATION OF A SIMULATED DRUG LAB RAID BY CNP FORCES. THE GROUP WAS FLOWN BY HELICOPTER TO A NEARBY SITE WHERE, FROM ATOP A HILL, THEY WERE AFFORDED AN EXCELLENT VIEW OF TWO CNP TEAMS CONVERGING ON THE LAB SITE. ONE FIVE-MAN TEAM EXITED A UH-1H HELICOPTER VIA A "FAST ROPE," WHILE ANOTHER TEAM WAS DROPPED INTO THE WATER FROM A SECOND

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HELICOPTER AND SWAM TO SHORE. THE TEAMS COORDINATED THEIR ACTIONS AND SHOWED HOW A REAL RAID TEAM MIGHT TAKE OVER AND DESTROY A LAB. ONE OF THE TEAMS WAS THEN EXFILTRATED, BEING LIFTED BY A UH-1H TRAILING A ROPE AND WHISKED TO A DROP-OFF SITE.

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37. (U) CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES PARTICIPATED IN A BRIEF PRESS CONFERENCE UPON THEIR RETURN TO THE CNP BASE AT EL DORADO AIRPORT. ALTHOUGH THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN [REDACTED]

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IMPROMPTU, IT APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN ORCHESTRATED IN ADVANCE, AS EVIDENCED BY A RATHER SURPRISING QUESTION COMING FROM A LOCAL JOURNALIST, WHO ASKED HOW THE U.S. EMBASSY IN PARTICULAR MIGHT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DELAYS IN COLOMBIA RECEIVING COUNTERDRUG-RELATED EQUIPMENT. REP. HASTERT EXPLAINED THAT CONGRESS HAS OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND, ACCORDINGLY, ONE OF THE PURPOSES OF THE DELEGATION'S VISIT WAS TO TALK TO PEOPLE AT THE EMBASSY AND PEOPLE WHO DEAL WITH THE EMBASSY, IN ORDER TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN-COUNTRY AND DETERMINE IF THERE ARE AREAS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT. EACH MEMBER MADE REMARKS REGARDING THEIR VISIT TO COLOMBIA, REP. BARR NOTING THAT HE WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT GENERAL SERRANO HAD THE SUPPORT HE NEEDS TO FIGHT COLOMBIA'S NARCOTERRORISTS. MEMBERS PAID TRIBUTE TO THE VALIANT EFFORTS OF THE CNP IN THE DRUG FIGHT, WHICH THEY ALL ASSERTED WE CAN WIN IF THE U.S. AND COLOMBIA CONTINUE TO WORK HAND IN HAND. WHEN ASKED ABOUT CERTIFICATION, REP. HASTERT RESPONDED THAT HE BELIEVED THAT COLOMBIA SHOULD HAVE BEEN CERTIFIED IN MARCH 1997, THAT THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS IS FLAWED, AND THAT THE U.S. CONGRESS MUST EXAMINE THE ISSUE AND LOOK FOR WAYS TO FIX THE PROCESS. WHEN ASKED BY A REPORTER WHAT EXACTLY THE REPRESENTATIVES INTEND ON DOING ONCE THEY ARE BACK IN THE U.S. TO HELP COLOMBIA, REP. SOUDER SAID THAT THEY WOULD WORK TO LIFT RESTRICTIONS ON FMS AND TO GET THE 614 WAIVER TO ALLOW FOR RESUMED ASSISTANCE TO THE POLICE AND MILITARY -- WHICH HE SAID HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE INTENT OF

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THE CONGRESS. TO A QUESTION ON THEIR VIEWS ON EXTRADITION LEGISLATION PENDING IN THE COLOMBIAN CONGRESS, REP. HASTERT SAID THAT EXTRADITION IS AN INTERNAL COLOMBIAN ISSUE AND THEREFORE IT WAS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR HIM OR HIS FELLOW REPRESENTATIVES TO OFFER COMMENT.

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CONGRESSMAN SANFORD -- MEETINGS ON PRIVATIZED SOCIAL SECURITY  
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38. (U) ALSO ON MAY 26, CONGRESSMAN SANFORD VISITED COLFONDOS AND HORIZONTE, TWO COMPANIES ADMINISTERING PRIVATE PENSION PLANS, AS WELL AS ASOFONDOS, THE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION FOR SUCH COMPANIES, TO DISCUSS THE COLOMBIAN PROGRAM FOR PRIVATIZING PENSIONS AND OTHER SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMS. BEGINNING ON JANUARY 1, 1994, COLOMBIAN WORKERS WERE GIVEN THE CHOICE OF EITHER BELONGING TO THE GOVERNMENT PENSION PLAN OR JOINING A PRIVATE PENSION PLAN. AT PRESENT, 40 PERCENT OF ALL WORKERS HAVE JOINED PRIVATE PENSION PLANS. ABOUT 50,000 WORKERS PER MONTH ARE CURRENTLY JOINING PRIVATE PENSION PLANS. THE HEAD OF ASOFONDOS ATTRIBUTED THE STRONG SHIFT TOWARD PRIVATE PENSION PLANS TO TWO MAJOR FACTORS: COLOMBIANS HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN PRIVATE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS THAN IN THE GOVERNMENT; THE PRIVATE PENSION PLANS OFFER GREATER BENEFITS THAN THE GOVERNMENT PLAN. FOR EXAMPLE, THE PRIVATE PLANS KEEP CONTRIBUTIONS FOR EACH WORKER IN SEPARATE ACCOUNTS AND SEND THE

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-----BF4DF2 282345Z /38

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6665  
INFO DIA WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC  
DIRONDCP WASHDC  
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 2352  
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SECDEF WASHDC  
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
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AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
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 FBI FOR CID/IRS/IRU2  
 USIA FOR AR, I/GAR  
 TREASURY FOR FINCEN

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WORKER A STATEMENT OF THE ACCOUNT EVERY THREE MONTHS. THE  
 GOVERNMENT PLAN PROVIDES NO SUCH SERVICE.

-----  
 FOREIGN MINISTER MEJIA MEETS WITH THE CODEL  
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39. (U) PRIOR TO A RECEPTION AT THE RESIDENCE MAY 26, FOREIGN  
 MINISTER MARIA EMMA MEJIA MET WITH THE CODEL AND THE AMBASSADOR.  
 CHAIRMAN HASTERT EXPLAINED THE CODEL'S COMMITMENT TO STOPPING THE  
 TRAFFICKING OF DRUGS TO THE U.S. THAT IS RESULTING IN THE DEATHS OF  
 THOUSANDS OF YOUNG AMERICANS. CODEL MEMBERS EMPHASIZED THAT THE  
 CONGRESS SEEKS WAYS TO INCREASE COOPERATION WITH THE GOC TO COMBAT  
 NARCOTRAFFICKING. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT THE GOC HAS MADE  
 SOME REAL PROGRESS IN PASSING AN ASSET FORFEITURE LAW, AS WELL AS  
 A LAW TO INCREASE SENTENCES FOR NARCOTRAFFICKING AND TO COMBAT  
 MONEY LAUNDERING. SHE SAID THE GOC WISHES COOPERATION AND NOT

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CONFRONTATION. SHE EXPRESSED CONCERN, HOWEVER, THAT A RECENT  
OPINION POLL SHOWED THAT COLOMBIANS, WHO HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN  
VERY FRIENDLY TOWARD THE U.S., ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY ANTI-  
AMERICAN.

40. (U) AT THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S REQUEST, COLOMBIAN AMBASSADOR  
TO THE U.S. JUAN CARLOS ESGUERRA EXPLAINED THAT THE GOC WOULD LIKE  
TO SEE APPROVAL OF THE 614 WAIVER REQUEST, AS WELL AS TO RECEIVE AS  
SOON AS POSSIBLE THE REMAINDER OF THE 506 DRAWDOWN EQUIPMENT.  
"ONLY 5 OF 30 MILLION USD HAVE ARRIVED," ESGUERRA SAID. HE  
LAMENTED THAT THE COLOMBIAN ARMY WOULD NOT RECEIVE ANY OF THE 506  
EQUIPMENT BECAUSE OF THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS; HE SAID THE ARMY  
RESENTS THE TREATMENT IT IS GETTING BECAUSE THE ARMY IS COMMITTED  
TO FIGHTING NARCOTRAFFICKING. CHAIRMAN HASTERT AND CONGRESSMAN  
BARR SAID THE CONGRESS WILL DO AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WHEN IT  
RECONVENES IN JUNE TO INCREASE COOPERATION IN COMBATTING  
NARCOTRAFFICKING.

41. (U) THE AMBASSADOR ASKED THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO EXPLAIN TO  
THE CODEL WHY THE GOC HAS NOT APPROVED TESTING OF GRANULAR  
HERBICIDES, WHICH WOULD MAKE THE COCA ERADICATION PROGRAM MUCH MORE  
EFFECTIVE. THE FOREIGN MINISTER TALKED ABOUT THE HERBICIDE  
IMAZAPYR (WHICH WOULD BE TOO EXPENSIVE TO USE AGAINST COCA),  
WITHOUT ADDRESSING THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF GOC FOOT-DRAGGING ON  
GRANULAR HERBICIDE TESTING. CHAIRMAN HASTERT SAID COLOMBIA WAS NOT  
DECERTIFIED SIMPLY BECAUSE OF THE GRANULAR HERBICIDE ISSUE AND THAT  
HE WAS SURE THE COLOMBIANS WOULD COOPERATE.

42. (U) CONGRESSMAN SOUDER SAID THAT WHILE EVERYONE IS PLEASED BY  
THE RECORD OF THE CNP, HE DOES WANT TO SEE HONEST EFFORTS TOWARD  
EXTRADITION, IMPROVEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS BY THE ARMY, AND PROGRESS

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ON THE GRANULAR HERBICIDE ISSUE. HE SAID HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT  
THE POLL SHOWING GROWING ANTI-AMERICANISM, BUT THAT HE MUST INSIST  
ON THE COLOMBIANS DOING THEIR PART IN THE COUNTERNARCOTICS  
STRUGGLE. HE POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS HIS SECOND TRIP TO COLOMBIA

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AND THAT HE IS TRULY CONCERNED ABOUT CORRUPTION IN THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THE GOC AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS HAS SERIOUS COMMITMENTS TO COMBAT NARCOTRAFFICKING. SHE ASSERTED THAT THE DIRECTOR OF THE CNP, GENERAL SERRANO, WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT HE HAS DONE WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRESIDENT SAMPER.

43. (U) THIS CABLE DOES NOT COVER THE VARIOUS CONVERSATIONS CODEL MEMBERS HAD WITH COLOMBIANS AND AMERICANS INVITED TO AMBASSADOR'S MAY 26 RECEPTION. NOR DOES IT COVER FINAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS HELD AFTER THE RECEPTION BETWEEN CODEL AND SOME STAFFERS AND AMBASSADOR AND HIS SENIOR COUNTERNARCOTICS STAFF.

44. (U) CODEL MEMBERS DID NOT HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO CLEAR THIS

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 -----BF4DF3 282345Z /38

P 282251Z MAY 97  
 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6666  
 INFO DIA WASHDC  
 CIA WASHDC  
 DIRONDCP WASHDC  
 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM  
 NSC WASHDC  
 USIA WASHDC 2353  
 DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
 SECDEF WASHDC  
 DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
 AMEMBASSY LIMA  
 AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
 AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
 DEA WASHDC  
 NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA  
 SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//  
 FBI WASHDC  
 DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD

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 TREASURY FOR FINCEN

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KJUS, KCRM, CO  
SUBJECT: CODEL HASTERT'S MAY 24-27 VISIT TO COLOMBIA

REPORT BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE. EMBASSY ASKS THAT IT BE CONVEYED TO  
THEM.  
FRECHETTE



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