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B1, 1.5(D)

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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-01	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00
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	PC-01	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00
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R 052133Z APR 01  
 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0780  
 INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
 AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
 AMEMBASSY QUITO  
 AMEMBASSY LIMA  
 USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
 DOJ WASHDC  
 SECDEF WASHDC  
 JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
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SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 003172

E.O. 12958: DECL 04/02/11  
 TAGS: PREL, SNAR, PHUM, MAPP, CO, KPAO, ASEC  
 SUBJECT: (U) AMERICANS IN DANGER IN COLOMBIA. HOW MANY?

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WHERE? WHAT DO THEY DO?

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR ANNE W. PATTERSON.  
REASONS 1.5 (B&D).
2. (U) SUMMARY: EMBASSY SEEKS TO CLARIFY WHAT AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE DOING IN SUPPORT OF PLAN COLOMBIA AND OTHER USG PROGRAMS HERE IN COLOMBIA. AMERICANS MOST LIKELY TO BE IN HARM'S WAY WORK IN TWO PROGRAMS. THE FIRST IS THE INL AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM, WHICH USES AMERICAN CONTRACTORS AS SPRAY PILOTS AND AS PILOTS AND MEDICS IN

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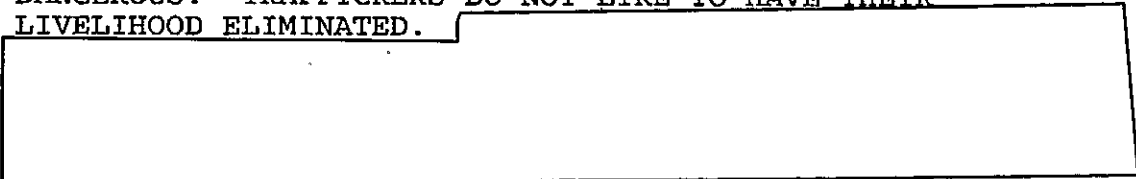
ESCORT AND SEARCH AND RESCUE HELICOPTERS. THE SECOND IS THE INL UH-1N PROGRAM WHICH SUPPORTS COLOMBIAN MILITARY OPERATIONS IN PUTUMAYO. THE UH-1N PROGRAM EMPLOYS AMERICAN CONTRACTORS FOR LOGISTICS, TRAINING, AND MAINTENANCE. IN OUR JUDGEMENT, ABOUT THIRTY AMERICAN CITIZENS, PARTICULARLY THE SPRAY PILOTS, ARE AT A HIGH RISK. DUE TO WIDESPREAD MISCONCEPTIONS, EMBASSY HAS BEEN AGGRESSIVELY BRIEFING CONGRESSIONAL VISITORS ABOUT THIS ISSUE AND RECOMMENDS DEPARTMENT DO LIKEWISE. OUR VISITORS, AS WELL AS THE PRESS, OFTEN HAVE A WILDLY EXAGGERATED VIEW OF THE DOD PRESENCE AND ROLE IN COLOMBIA. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE COLOMBIAN POLICE ARE FULL PARTICIPANTS IN AERIAL ERADICATION EFFORTS BUT PRESENTLY THERE ARE SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH SPRAY AIRCRAFT ASSIGNED TO THE POLICE FOR THEM TO CARRY OUT THE MISSION ALONE. FOR THE NEAR TERM, WE MAY NEED MORE AMERICAN CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL AS NEW SPRAY PLANES AND HELICOPTERS PROVIDED UNDER PLAN COLOMBIA ARE DELIVERED. END SUMMARY.

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3. (U) EMBASSY HAS BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING THE ROLE OF AMERICAN CITIZENS IN SUPPORT OF PLAN COLOMBIA. VISITORS OFTEN BELIEVE THERE IS A LARGE, AT-RISK DOD PRESENCE (THERE IS NOT), HAVE SUSPICIONS ABOUT "CONTRACTING" THE DRUG WAR, OR BELIEVE THERE IS SOMETHING SINISTER OR SECRET ABOUT THE AMERICAN ROLE. EMBASSY HAS BEEN TRYING TO SHED LIGHT ON THIS ISSUE BY BRIEFING CONGRESSIONAL VISITORS AND, AS APPROPRIATE, THE PRESS. WE RECOMMEND THE DEPARTMENT DO LIKEWISE. WE WANT FULL TRANSPARENCY WITH THE PRESS, AS LONG AS IT DOES NOT PUT U.S. OR COLOMBIAN PERSONNEL AT RISK FOR INJURY OR CAPTURE BY DISCLOSING SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS OR LOCATIONS/DEPLOYMENT DATES.

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THE SPRAY PROGRAM  
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4. (C) THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT AERIAL ERADICATION IS DANGEROUS. TRAFFICKERS DO NOT LIKE TO HAVE THEIR LIVELIHOOD ELIMINATED.



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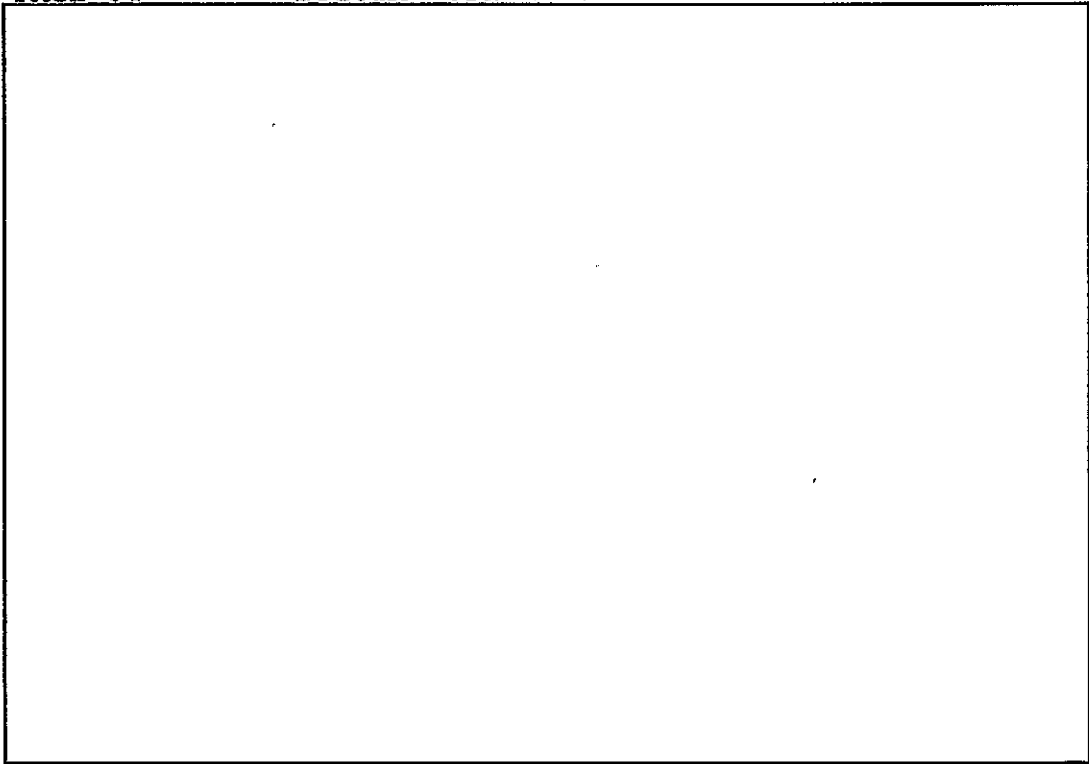
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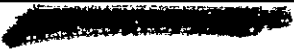
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EXTREMELY CLOSE TO THE GROUND, OVER CHALLENGING TERRAIN, SOMETIMES UNDER HOSTILE CONDITIONS. INL'S CONTRACTOR IS DYNCORP, ONE OF THE LARGEST DEFENSE CONTRACTORS IN THE WORLD. ABOUT TWELVE (HALF IN COUNTRY AT ANY GIVEN TIME) OF THE SPRAY PILOTS ARE AMERICANS, FLYING THE OV-10S. THESE MEN (THEY ARE ALL MEN) INCLUDE CROP DUSTERS AND  
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INFO	LOG-00	MFA-01	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00
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R 052133Z APR 01  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0781  
INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
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AMEMBASSY QUITO  
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USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
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6. (U) VISITORS ASK US WHY COLOMBIANS DO NOT CARRY OUT THESE MISSIONS. IN FACT, THEY DO AND WOULD HAVE BEEN PREPARED TO ASSUME TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THESE MISSIONS EARLIER, IF NOT OVER-LOADED WITH THE REQUIREMENTS TO ABSORB NEW HELICOPTERS (ADDITIONAL PILOTS, MECHANICS, ETC). DURING THE PUTUMAYO SPRAY CAMPAIGN THE COLOMBIAN POLICE ERADICATION TASK FORCE OPERATED FROM TRES ESQUINAS. THE POLICE SPRAY PACKAGE CONSISTED OF 4-5 T-65'S AND ONE HELICOPTER ESCORT UNIT. DURING THIS OPERATION THE POLICE SPRAYED MORE THAN 16,000 HECTARES OF COCA. TO DATE THIS YEAR, THE COLOMBIAN POLICE HAVE UNILATERALLY SPRAYED MORE THAN 18,000 HECTARES OF COCA WITH ONE-ENGINE T-65S, ROUTINELY ENCOUNTERING HEAVY RESISTANCE. DURING THE CURRENT OPERATION IN THE SOUTH OF BOLIVAR DEPARTMENT, SPRAYING PARAMILITARY AND ELN COCA FIELDS, THE POLICE HAVE SPRAYED

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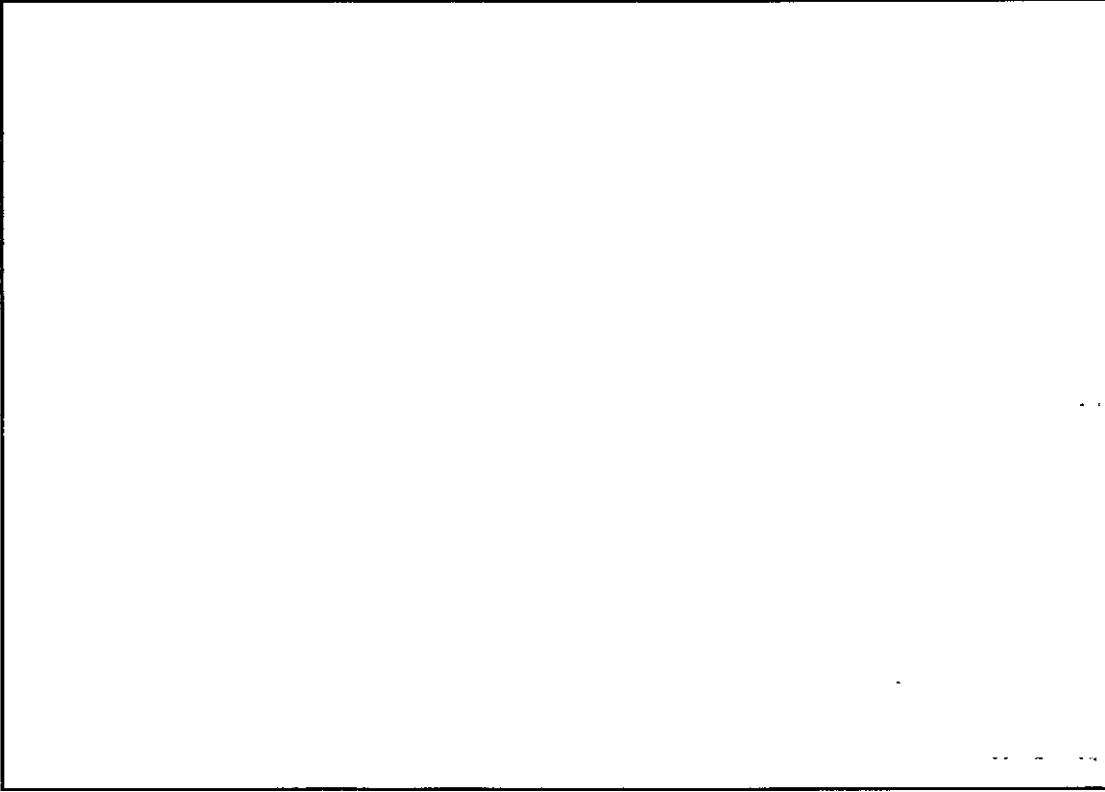
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SOME 5,400 HECTARES WHILE TAKING OVER 10 GROUND FIRE HITS. THERE ARE SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH TRAINED COLOMBIAN PILOTS AND POLICE SPRAY AIRCRAFT TO PERFORM THE FULL MISSIONS. WITH THE PROGRAMMED DELIVERY IN LATE 2001/EARLY 2002 OF NINE NEW SPRAY AIRCRAFT (T-65 LIKE), THE COLOMBIAN POLICE, WITH NAS ASSISTANCE, WILL BE

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TRAINING MORE POLICE PILOTS AND MAY HAVE TO CONTRACT SOME MORE COLOMBIAN SPRAY PILOTS; ONE OR TWO AMERICAN INSTRUCTOR PILOTS ALSO MAY BE CONTRACTED. THE POLICE RECENTLY CONFIRMED THE ORIGINAL NATIONALIZATION GOAL OF PHASING OUT THE AMERICANS FROM THE SPRAY MISSIONS TWO YEARS AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE ADDITIONAL SPRAY PLANES. (NOTE: DETAILED PLAN TO DO SO IS NOT YET COMPLETED. END NOTE.)

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UH-1N HELICOPTER PROGRAM  
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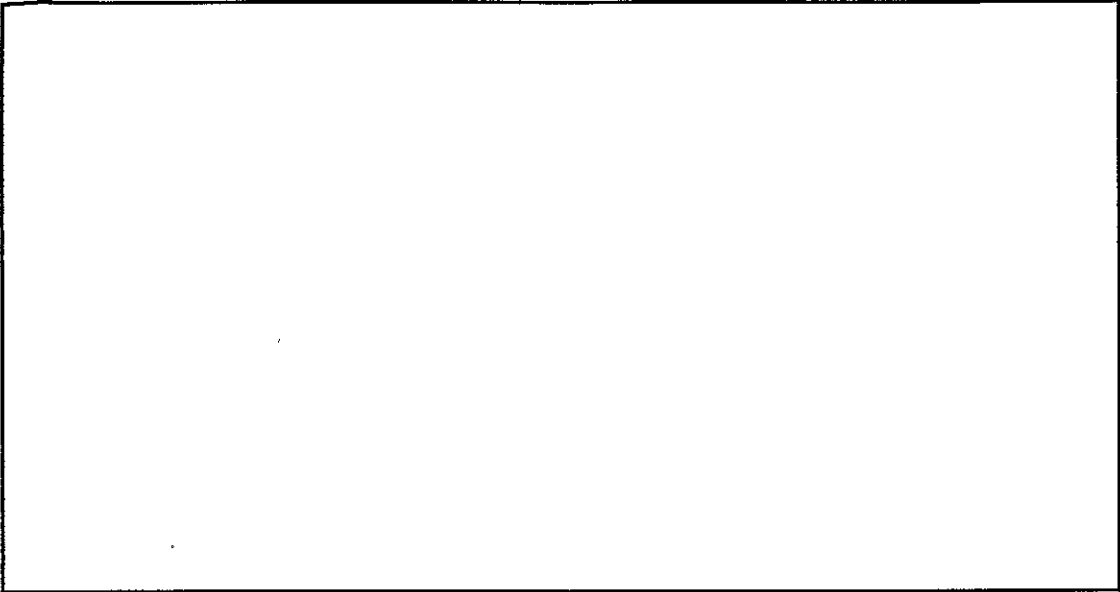


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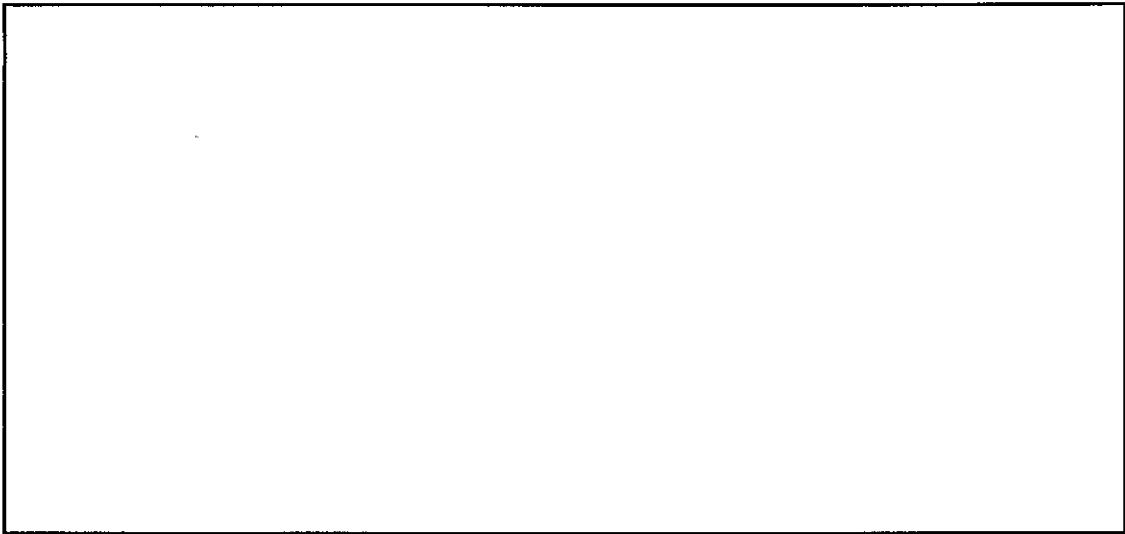
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U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
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11. (U) USAID ALSO HAS EIGHT AMCIT CIVILIAN CONTRACTORS BASED IN BOGOTA WORKING IN SUPPORT OF PLAN COLOMBIA. THESE CONTRACTORS ARE ENGAGED IN ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, DEMOCRACY BUILDING, INCLUDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EXPANDED ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVITIES, AND MANAGING THE DISPLACED PERSONS PROGRAM. ALTHOUGH BASED IN BOGOTA, THESE CONTRACTORS WILL TRAVEL PERIODICALLY TO VARIOUS PROJECT  
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SITES TO SUPERVISE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION BY LOCAL COLOMBIAN PARTNERS. SINCE MANY OF THESE SITES ARE IN DANGEROUS AREAS, THESE CONTRACTORS, TOO, WILL RUN RISKS.

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EVERYDAY THREATS

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12. (U) THE 1,200 AMERICAN AND COLÓMBIAN PERSONNEL CURRENTLY ASSIGNED, EITHER PERMANENTLY OR AS TEMPORARY AUGMENTATION, TO THE EMBASSY IN BOGOTA ARE ALSO AT RISK. BOGOTA CAN BE A VIOLENT CITY, WITH 2,274 HOMICIDES REPORTED IN CALENDAR YEAR 2000, OR SLIGHTLY OVER SIX HOMICIDES PER DAY. EMBASSY PERSONNEL ARE ALSO AT RISK OF BEING VICTIMIZED BY THEFT, RESIDENTIAL BREAK-INS, CARJACKINGS, ROBBERY AND OTHER VIOLENT CRIMES. A PROACTIVE AND RESOURCE-INTENSIVE SECURITY PROGRAM IS IN PLACE AND IS A NECESSITY TO KEEP RISKS AT MANAGEABLE LEVELS FOR USG PERSONNEL IN BOGOTA.

13. (U) COMMENT: THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT AMERICANS ARE AT RISK IN PLAN COLOMBIA IMPLEMENTATION; WE WANT TO BE CLEAR ABOUT THAT. WE WANT TO BE EQUALLY CLEAR THAT, DESPITE THE PERCEPTION FOSTERED BY THE PERSONNEL CAPS OF 500 MILITARY AND 300 CIVILIAN CONTRACTORS, THE PEOPLE AT MOST RISK ARE A HANDFUL OF CIVILIAN CONTRACTOR PILOTS EXPOSED ON ANY GIVEN SPRAY MISSION.  
PATTERSON



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