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STATE 068233

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/7/02 TAGS: PGOV, MARR, PREL, CO

SUBJECT: BEDOYA CALL FOR MILITIA

REF: BOGOTA 3072



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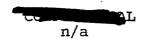
- 1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY ARA PDAS PETER F. ROMERO. REASON SECTION 1.5 (D).
- 2. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST. SEE PARA. 6.
- 3. (C) COMMANDER OF MILITARY FORCES (AND ACTING MINISTER OF DEFENSE) BEDOYA'S APRIL 1 CALL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF

n/a AL

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L. MILLS DATE/CASE ID: 22 MAY 2001 200004409

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NATIONAL MILITIAS IS A POSSIBLE INDICATION OF BEDOYA'S FRUSTRATION WITH THE INCREASED INSTABILITY IN COLOMBIA, OCCASIONED BY GROWING GUERRILLA, PARAMILITARY, NARCO AND COMMON CRIMINAL VIOLENCE. HOWEVER, ESTABLISHING YET ANOTHER SET OF ARMED COMBATANTS WOULD, IF EXPERIENCE IS ANY GUIDE, BRING A HOST OF MORE FLAGRANT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES. THESE MILITIAS WOULD LIKELY HAVE EVEN LESS TRAINING THAN MILITARY CONSCRIPTS, AND THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE EVEN LESS CONTROL AND AUTHORITY OVER THEM. DEPARTMENT SINCERELY HOPES THAT THE BEDOYA PROPOSAL DOES NOT PROSPER.

OTHER COUNTRIES, NOTABLY EL SALVADOR AND (U) GUATEMALA, HAVE EXPERIMENTED WITH MILITIAS, WITH CLEAR AND UNEQUIVOCALLY NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON FUNDAMENTAL RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. COLOMBIA HAS A VERY RECENT EXAMPLE IN ITS CONVIVIR PROGRAM. AS STATED IN OUR 1996 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT, IN 1994 THE GOC INITIATED A PROGRAM TO ORGANIZE AND REGISTER LEGAL CIVILIAN DEFENSE COOPERATIVES TO PROVIDE COUNTERINSURGENCY INTELLIGENCE TO LOCAL MILITARY COMMANDERS. ALTHOUGH INTENDED TO BE UNARMED, A NUMBER OF CONVIVIRS BY MID-1996 HAD GOC AUTHORIZATION TO CARRY BY YEAR'S END, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAD RECEIVED ARMS. FIAL



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THE FIRST CITIZEN COMPLAINTS THAT SOME OF THESE GROUPS HAD
EXCEEDED THEIR AUTHORITY AND WERE ACTING AS VIGILANTES.

- 5. (U) COLOMBIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS OMBUDSMAN'S 1996 REPORT TO CONGRESS REITERATED HIS OPPOSITION TO THE CONVIVIR PROGRAM. CITING THE GOVERNMENT1 S INABILITY TO CONTROL SUCH GROUPS IN PAST ADMINISTRATIONS, THE OMBUDSMAN EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE CONVIVIR COOPERATIVES WOULD LACK ACCOUNTABILITY. OTHER GOVERNMENT HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORS EXPRESSED SIMILAR CONCERNS.
- 6. (C) WHILE BEDOYA'S CALL SPRUNG FROM FRUSTRATION ABOUT A DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, ARMED MILITARY GROUPS ARE NOT THE ANSWER. ACTION REQUEST: AMBASSADOR SHOULD WHEN APPROPRIATE RELAY TO BEDOYA OUR SKEPTICISM OF THIS CONCEPT.



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