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PTQ3479

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ACTION ARA-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-08 ACDE-00 AID-00 ACQ-01 OASY-00 DS-00
FBIE-00 IM-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 ADS-00 MMP-00 SCT-00
VO-03 ASDS-01 DSCC-00 DRL-04 /019W

-----0DAE4F 092222Z /38

R 092145Z JAN 98
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0786
INFO DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 3721
NSC WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
DIRONDCP WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD
SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 000120

STATE FOR ARA/AND, DRL
NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
ONDCP FOR JANET CRIST
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
JUSTICE FOR CRIM. WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET
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USIA FOR AR, I/GAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 1/9/03
TAGS: PHUM, PTER, PGOV, PINR, KVPR, CO
SUBJECT: COLOMBIANS STRIKE TWO BLOWS AGAINST THE PARAS

REF: A) 97 BOGOTA 11120 B) 97 BOGOTA 11332 C) 97 BOGOTA 11865
D) 97 BOGOTA 12099

CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECONOFF RBITTER. REASON 1.5(D).

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
DATE/CASE ID: 06 AUG 2008 200800647

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1. (U) IN TWO SEPARATE INCIDENTS ON JANUARY 7, COLOMBIAN FORCES DEALT BLOWS TO THE PARAMILITARY AUTODEFENSAS CAMPESINAS DE CORDOBA Y URABA (ACCU) OPERATING IN THE URABA REGION OF NORTHWEST COLOMBIA. IN THE FIRST INCIDENT, TWO PARAMILITARIES WERE KILLED BY MEMBERS OF THE ARMY'S 17TH BRIGADE IN A CONFRONTATION NEAR UNGUIA, IN CHOCO DEPARTMENT. AFTER AN HOUR-LONG FIRE FIGHT THE PARAMILITARIES RETREATED DOWN THE BEACH, BUT TOOK TWENTY HOSTAGES, INCLUDING THE PARISH PRIEST, AS HUMAN SHIELDS. THE HOSTAGES WERE RELEASED A SHORT TIME LATER WHEN THE PARAS REACHED SAFETY. IN THE SECOND INCIDENT, POLICE CAPTURED TWO PARAMILITARIES IN THE VILLAGE OF ITUANGO IN NORTHERN ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT, AFTER THEIR VEHICLE WAS FIRED UPON DURING A ROUTINE PATROL. DURING THE FIRE FIGHT, JOSE GONZALO (SANCHEZ, ALLEGEDLY COMMANDER OF THE ACCU "MINERS BLOCK," WAS WOUNDED IN THE LEG.

2. (C) COMMENT. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE 17TH BRIGADE CONFRONTATION TOOK PLACE ONLY ABOUT A WEEK AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF THE BRIGADE'S COMMANDER, BRIG. GEN. RITO ALEJO DEL RIO, WHO WAS LONG-ALLEGED TO BE NOT UNFRIENDLY TOWARD
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PARAMILITARIES. HIS OWN FORMER DEPUTY, COL. CARLOS ALFONSO VELASQUEZ, WAS RETIRED FROM THE ARMY UNDER A CLOUD IN JANUARY 1997 FOR PRIVATELY CRITICIZING DEL RIO'S REFUSAL TO COMBAT THE PARAMILITARIES HEADQUARTERED IN THE REGION. ALTHOUGH THE ARMY HAS CLAIMED FOR SOME TIME THAT THE 17TH BRIGADE HAS MOVED AGAINST THE PARAMILITARIES, WE ARE UNAWARE OF ANY OTHER SUCH ENCOUNTERS THAT HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY CONFIRMED. THESE TWO INCIDENTS TAKEN TOGETHER MAY SIGNAL THAT SOME IN THE GOC ARE TAKING A TOUGHER STAND AGAINST SELF-DEFENSE GROUPS. NO DOUBT RECENT PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE REGION (REFTELS) HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE GOC'S HEIGHTENED SENSITIVITY. END COMMENT. GARZA

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