

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1996STATE199458

Page: 1
RELEASED IN FULL
Channel: n/a

<<<<.>>>>
PTQ4453

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ4453

PAGE 01 STATE 199458 250045Z
ORIGIN INL-01

INFO	LOG-00	INLB-01	AID-00	AMAD-01	ARA-01	CG-00	CIAE-00
	CTME-00	DEAE-00	OASY-00	DINT-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	OIGO-01
	WMAC-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	FBO-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	JUSE-00	L-01	ADS-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01
	PM-00	P-00	SP-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	FMP-00	PMB-00
	G-00	/010R					

199458
SOURCE: KODAKB.250023
DRAFTED BY: INL: JMCLAUGHLIN/SANCHEZ-CARLO/BBJ
APPROVED BY: INL : RSGELBARD
INL : JEBECKER ARA : PFROMERO
INL/RM: MWSRYAN
INL/LP: PLHALL

-----689515 250047Z /38
P R 250041Z SEP 96
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY
INFO DOS AIR WING PATRICK AFB FL

UNCLAS STATE 199458

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: SNAR, CO
SUBJECT: NAS/GOC AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 1

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L. MILLS
DATE/CASE ID: 29 AUG 2001 200101108

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1996STATE199458

Page: 2
Channel: n/a

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 199458 250045Z
REFS: (A) BOGOTA 8567 (B) BOGOTA 9171

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM INL/AS

1. THIS CABLE IS SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.
2. THIS IS AN ACTION CABLE. SEE PARA 12.
3. SUMMARY: DESPITE PROGRESS IN COLOMBIA'S ERADICATION PROGRAM LAST YEAR ITS SLOW PACE AND WHAT APPEARS TO BE OBVIOUS POLITICAL RESISTANCE AT THE TOPMOST COLOMBIAN LEVELS LEADS TO SOME FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ON THE VIABILITY OF THE PROGRAM. THIS CABLE PRESENTS THREE OPTIONS FOR THE GOC TO CHOOSE FROM, ALL OF WHICH ARE ACCEPTABLE TO THE USG PROVIDING THAT THE GOC ACCEPTS FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RESULT IN TERMS OF PROGRESS IN ERADICATION OF COCA AND OPIUM POPPY CROPS. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

4. THE GOC'S INTENSIFIED AERIAL COCA ERADICATION PROGRAM HAS BEEN UNDERWAY FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS. THE PROGRAM BEGAN ON NOVEMBER 4, 1994, WHEN FORMER MINDEF BOTERO APPROVED A COORDINATED ACTION PLAN WHEREIN THE USG WOULD PROVIDE A LARGE NUMBER OF ERADICATION AIRCRAFT, TECHNICAL ADVISORS, INSTRUCTOR PILOTS, AND SUBSTANTIAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM. UNDER THE APPROVED PLAN, THE COCA AND OPIUM POPPY CROPS WERE TO BE ERADICATED AND CNP PILOTS AND MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 199458 250045Z
TRAINED TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY WITHIN 18 MONTHS.

5. NOTWITHSTANDING THE PLAN AND SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE USG AND THE CNP, THE PROGRAM GOALS HAVE

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 2

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
 Current Handling: n/a
 Document Number: 1996STATE199458

Page: 3

Channel: n/a

NOT BEEN ACHIEVED. AFTER NEARLY TWO YEARS OF EFFORT, ONLY ABOUT 15 PERCENT OF THE CROP HAS BEEN ERADICATED. PROGRAM MAINTENANCE CONTINUES TO BE PERFORMED MAINLY BY U.S. TECHNICIANS RATHER THAN COLOMBIANS WHO SHOULD BE CARRYING THE PRIMARY LOAD AT THIS JUNCTURE. THE FEW COLOMBIAN PILOTS TRAINED TO FLY THE MISSION HAVE LOST THEIR FLIGHT CURRENCY BECAUSE U.S. INSTRUCTOR PILOTS HAVE BEEN BARRED FROM FLYING WITH COLOMBIANS. THUS, IT IS TIME TO REEVALUATE WHERE WE ARE AND HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH THE CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED BY THE GOC ALONG THE WAY.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/PROBLEMS:

6. THE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION ON AERIAL ERADICATION HAS BEEN CONSISTENT:

-- IT IS AN EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE APPROACH FOR ELIMINATING DRUGS AT THE SOURCE;

-- THOUGH AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION IS A VERY COMPLEX UNDERTAKING, IT HAS BEEN PROVEN TIME AND AGAIN THAT MISSIONS CAN BE FLOWN SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY BY TRAINED PERSONNEL;

-- OVER THE YEARS, THE DEPARTMENT HAS DEVELOPED THE UNIQUE TECHNOLOGY NEEDED TO FLY THE ERADICATION
 UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 199458 250045Z
 MISSION. THIS SPECIAL TECHNOLOGY AND OUR WELL DEVELOPED PILOT PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN ALL OTHER COUNTRY PROGRAMS WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN APPLIED WITHOUT IMPEDIMENT.

7. SIGNIFICANT DRUG CROP CULTIVATION HAS BEEN

ELIMINATED IN GUATEMALA, BELIZE, VENEZUELA, PANAMA, AND, IN THE CASE OF MARIJUANA, IN COLOMBIA. THUS, THERE IS NO REASON WHY THE DEPARTMENT'S AERIAL COCA AND OPIUM ERADICATION PROGRAM SHOULD FALTER IN COLOMBIA. DESPITE

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 3

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
 Current Handling: n/a
 Document Number: 1996STATE199458

Page: 4

Channel: n/a

COLOMBIA'S SUCCESS IN ERADICATING 9,000 HECTARES OF COCA IN 1995, A CONSTANT SERIES OF OBSTACLES HAVE OCCURRED. PRINCIPAL AMONG THESE WERE: PROLONGED CUSTOMS DELAY FOR RELEASE OF BADLY NEEDED AIRCRAFT SPARE PARTS; FAILURE TO MAINTAIN THE SUPPLY OF HERBICIDES; UNCOORDINATED OPERATIONS; PROLONGED REFUSAL TO USE BASIC SEARCH AND RESCUE PROCEDURES AND FUNDAMENTAL OPERATIONS TACTICS; INEFFECTIVE LIAISON AMONG PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS; LACK OF EFFECTIVE GOC CONTROL OF CNP CONTRACT SPRAY PILOTS; AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE IMPOSITION OF OPERATIONAL STRICTURES ON AMCIT INSTRUCTOR PILOTS THAT MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO TRAIN A COMPETENT CNP CREW FORCE.

8. RECENT MEETINGS BETWEEN INL A/S GELBARD AND AMBASSADOR FRECHETTE WITH COLOMBIAN FONMIN MEJIA AND MINDEF ESGUERRA DID NOT RESOLVE THE ISSUE OF U.S. INSTRUCTOR PILOTS FLYING OPERATIONAL MISSIONS AND TRAINING CNP PILOTS. USG INSTRUCTOR PILOTS ARE NOW PROHIBITED FROM FLYING ON OPERATIONAL MISSIONS WITH THE CNP; THE FLIGHT CURRENCY OF COLOMBIAN PILOTS HAS

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 199458 250045Z
 EXPIRED; AND AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION HAS COME TO A HALT. WITH MORE THAN TEN PERCENT OF THE OVERALL INL BUDGET AND 50 PERCENT OF THE INL COLOMBIA BUDGET DEDICATED TO THIS EFFORT, WE MUST ASK OURSELVES SOME DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW MUCH MORE WE ARE WILLING TO SPEND ON AN EFFORT THAT IS NOT PRODUCING ADEQUATE RESULTS. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WE BEGAN THIS PROGRAM WITH A STRONG SHARED OBJECTIVE TO ERADICATE AS MUCH OF THE CROP AS FAST AS POSSIBLE. THE US FOR ITS PART HAS REMAINED DEDICATED TO THAT END, BUT GIVEN EVENTS IN THE RECENT PAST, WE QUESTION WHETHER THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT AT ALL LEVELS IS EQUALLY COMMITTED TO THIS GOAL.

9. ALTHOUGH WE ARE AWARE OF THE GOC'S POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES TO THE ISSUE OF U.S. PILOTS, WE QUESTION WHAT IS DIFFERENT NOW THAN IN THE PRE-SAMPER DAYS WHEN US PILOTS ERADICATED THE MARIJUANA CROPS. WE OWE IT TO

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 4

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1996STATE199458

Page: 5

Channel: n/a

THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM TO APPROACH APPROPRIATE GOC OFFICIALS AND CONVINCING THEM THAT OUR PILOTS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO PERFORM THEIR FULL RANGE OF DUTIES. AFTER ALL, IF SERIOUS, THE COLOMBIANS SHOULD BE SUPPORTIVE OF OUR MOST INTENSIVE EFFORTS TO USE ALL RESOURCES ---BOTH CNP AND US. SUPPORTING OUR POSITION TO ALLOW U.S.

PILOTS TO FLY ARE THE FOLLOWING FACTS:

-- AMCIT INSTRUCTOR PILOTS ERADICATED THE MAJOR COLOMBIA MARIJUANA CROP DURING THE LATE 1980S;

-- AMCIT PILOTS PRESENTLY FLY OTHER FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 06 STATE 199458 250045Z
IN THE SAME OPERATING AREAS WITHIN COLOMBIA AS THE SPRAY AIRCRAFT;

-- AMCIT PILOTS ARE TRAINED TO FLY UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS INCLUDING HOSTILE FIRE.

-- AND, THEY HAVE A PROVEN RECORD IN THE FIELD FOR THE ERADICATION OF COCA AND OPIUM POPPY PLANTS WITHIN ACCEPTABLE TIME FRAMES.

RESPONSE TO GOC PROPOSAL

10. IN REFTTEL, POST SUGGESTS THAT THE GOC MIGHT ALLOW AMCIT PILOTS TO FLY WITH COLOMBIAN PILOTS IN SAFE AREAS. DEPARTMENT CANNOT ACCEPT THIS APPROACH SINCE FLYING IN SAFE AREAS WILL NOT, AS A FINAL RESULT, GET THE CROP ERADICATED AND THAT IS, AFTER ALL, THE GOAL OF THE MISSION. IN ADDITION, IT WILL NOT PROVIDE OPTIMUM TRAINING AND EVALUATION FOR THE COLOMBIAN PILOTS. ALSO, WE CANNOT ACCEPT LEGAL STIPULATIONS, SINCE NO PARTY CAN WAIVE THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF A PILOT OR ANY AMEMBASSY DIRECT HIRE OFFICER OR USG EMPLOYEE. WHETHER WAIVED OR NOT, THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH A RIGHT WOULD, IN ANY EVENT, BE DETERMINED BY JUDICIAL PROCESS IF BROUGHT TO COURT.

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED.

Page: 5

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1996STATE199458

Page: 6
Channel: n/a

OPTIONS

11. IN LIGHT OF FAILURE TO REACH ACCEPTABLE ERADICATION LEVELS AFTER TWO YEARS, THE DEPARTMENT (INL) IS
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 07 STATE 199458 250045Z
EVALUATING WHETHER OR NOT TO CONTINUE THE PROGRAM IN ITS PRESENT FORM AND WHETHER TO AUGMENT THRUSSHES WITH TWO ENGINE OV-10S (BRONCOS). THOUGH IT APPEARS THAT THE CNP ARE COMMITTED TO DOING THE BEST POSSIBLE JOB, THE OVERALL OBSTACLES PRESENTED AT POLITICAL LEVELS IS UNACCEPTABLE. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ALL THE EFFORTS MADE BY THE EMBASSY, THE CNP AND U.S. RESOURCES INVESTED UP TO THIS POINT, WE BELIEVE THAT THREE OPTIONS REMAIN FOR THE GOC, LISTED BELOW IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE.

A. USE OF AMERICAN PILOTS ALONGSIDE COLOMBIAN T-65

PILOTS IN OPERATIONAL MISSIONS. U.S. PILOTS WOULD ERADICATE THE COCA AND OPIUM CROPS WITHIN A DETERMINED TIME PERIOD AND PROVIDE ON-THE-JOB TRAINING FOR THE COLOMBIANS WHO, AS THEY BECOME CERTIFIED PILOTS AND INSTRUCTORS, WOULD FORM A FOLLOW-UP CORPS TO ERADICATE SUBSEQUENT GROWTH. IN A VARIATION OF THIS APPROACH, U.S. PERSONNEL WILL SOON BE IN A POSITION TO FLY MINIMAL RISK NIGHT MISSIONS IN BRONCOS RETROFITTED WITH HERBICIDE DISPENSING EQUIPMENT.

B. USE OF THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS. THE INL AIR DIVISION HAS A CADRE OF TRAINED THIRD COUNTRY NATIONAL INSTRUCTOR PILOTS, SUCH AS COSTA RICANS AND/OR PANAMANIAN WITH EXPERIENCE IN SPRAYING IN CONDITIONS UNDER HOSTILE FIRE, WHO ARE WILLING TO FLY OPERATIONAL T-65 MISSIONS IN COLOMBIA. INL WOULD CONTRACT WITH THESE TCN PILOTS TO DESTROY THE CROPS IN PLACE OF US PILOTS, AND TRAIN THE COLOMBIANS TO TAKE OVER AS DESCRIBED ABOVE. IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN SAFETY AND BASIC

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 6

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1996STATE199458

Page: 7
Channel: n/a

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 08 STATE 199458 250045Z
EFFICIENCY STANDARDS, THESE PILOTS WOULD BE INCORPORATED INTO THE INL AIR DIVISION TECHNICAL SUPERVISION STRUCTURE BUT WOULD ALSO FALL UNDER CNP MISSION COMMAND AND CONTROL. (NB: THE GOC AND THE POST AGREED TO THIS PROPOSAL EARLY ON IN THE PROGRAM.)

C. COLOMBIANS DO IT ALONE. INL IS WILLING TO RETROFIT FAC BRONCO AIRCRAFT TO FLY ERADICATION MISSIONS. INL AIR DIVISION IS PRESENTLY DEVELOPING AND TESTING A SPRAY SYSTEM THAT COULD BE FITTED TO THE OV-10 BRONCO. POST MAY INFORM THE GOC THAT WE WOULD RETROFIT SOME OF THEIR BRONCO AIRCRAFT WITH THE SYSTEM, AND THE COLOMBIAN AIR FORCE COULD THEN ERADICATE COCA AND POPPY CROPS. SHOULD THE GOC CHOOSE THIS OPTION, THE FAC WOULD TAKE ON SOLE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM SINCE THEY WOULD HAVE THE REQUIRED TECHNICAL RESOURCES. THIS OPTION MAY APPEAL TO THE GOC AS IT DOES NOT INVOLVE AMCITS, AND WOULD SIMPLIFY PROGRAM MANAGEMENT FOR THE POST. IT WOULD REQUIRE, HOWEVER, DIVERTING FAC RESOURCES TO THE CN PROGRAM. POST SHOULD REMIND THE GOC THAT THE USG HAS ALREADY PROVIDED THE BRONCOS, SPARES, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE FAC. THE DEPARTMENT'S OFFER OF ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE IS LIMITED TO FITTING OUT THEIR BRONCO'S WITH SPRAY EQUIPMENT ONLY.

12. ALL OF THE OPTIONS WILL REQUIRE SOME LEAD TIMES TO IMPLEMENT FULLY. WHATEVER OPTION IS SELECTED BY THE GOC, POST SHOULD EMPHASIZE THE NEED TO TAKE PRUDENT AND REASONABLE STEPS FOR SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM, SAFETY OF

THE PILOTS, AND PRESERVATION OF THE EQUIPMENT. FOR THE
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 7

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1996STATE199458

Page: 8
Channel: n/a

PAGE 09 STATE 199458 250045Z
LONGER TERM, WHATEVER THE GOC DECISION, THE MEASUREMENT
OF SUCCESS FOR ANY ONE OPTION WILL BE ACCEPTABLE
ERADICATION RESULTS WITHOUT ADDITIONAL FALSE STARTS OR
DELAYS. IT IS NOW UP TO THE GOC TO DECIDE WHICH WAY
THEY WANT TO GO.

ACTION REQUESTED

13. THE AMBASSADOR IS REQUESTED TO APPROACH APPROPRIATE
GOC MINISTERS WITH THE ERADICATION OPTIONS OUTLINED
ABOVE AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE. AMBASSADOR SHOULD
STRESS THE URGENT NEED TO MOVE THIS PROGRAM FORWARD
DELIBERATELY AND QUICKLY, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS
PROGRAM TO COLOMBIA'S CERTIFICATION.
TALBOTT

UNCLASSIFIED

NNNN

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 8

UNCLASSIFIED