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TEXT
TAGS: PINS, PTER, MASS, PHUM, SNAR, CO
COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJECT: (C) PARAMILITARY TIES OF ARMY'S 4TH BRIGADE

REFS: A) BOGOTA 995
B) "DRAFT/CONFIDENTIAL" LETTER FROM KEN ROTH,
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, TO SECRETARY ALBRIGHT
(FEBRUARY 1, 2000)

CLASSIFIED BY AMB. CURTIS W. KAMMAN. REASONS: 1.5(B&D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: BOTH THE ACCU PARAMILITARIES AND THE
COLOMBIAN ARMY HAVE SEPARATELY CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY --
BUT IN DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES -- FOR THE RECENT KILLINGS
OF TWO LONG-DEMOBILIZED CRS GUERRILLAS NEAR MEDELLIN.
THE ACCU (WHICH WITNESSES SAY KIDNAPPED THE TWO) CLAIMS
ITS FORCES EXECUTED THEM, WHILE THE ARMY'S FOURTH BRIGADE
(WHICH RELEASED THE BODIES THE NEXT DAY) PRESENTED THE

DEPT OF STATE APPEALS REVIEW PANEL (ARP)

FOIA/PA	Mandatory Review
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DEAD AS ELN GUERRILLAS KILLED IN COMBAT WITH THE ARMY. AFTER THESE COMPETING CLAIMS SPARKED LOCALIZED FEAR AND CONFUSION, ARMED MEN STOLE THE TWO CADAVERS FROM THE MORGUE - [THEREBY DRAWING ADDITIONAL PUBLIC ATTENTION TO WHAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS A CLEAR CASE OF ARMY-PARAMILITARY COMPLICITY. THIS INCIDENT WILL FURTHER INCREASE THE ALREADY HIGH-LEVEL OF INTERNATIONAL NGO INTEREST IN THE ISSUE OF 4TH BRIGADE TIES TO PARAMILITARIES.] END SUMMARY.

[A RECENT INCIDENT WHICH THEY BELIEVE DEMONSTRATES DIRECT TIES BETWEEN THE COLOMBIAN ARMY'S FOURTH BRIGADE (HEADQUARTERED IN MEDELLIN) AND ILLEGAL ACCU PARAMILITARIES.] TWO CRS MEMBERS WERE AMONG THOSE KILLED IN THE JANUARY 23-24 INCIDENT.

(NOTE: THE CRS IS A SMALL POLITICAL MOVEMENT FORMED AROUND SOME 750 GUERRILLAS WHO DEMOBILIZED FOLLOWING A 1994 PEACE TREATY WITH THE GOVERNMENT. [REF A NOTED OTHER RECENT ALLEGATIONS OF FOURTH BRIGADE INVOLVEMENT IN PAR ACTIVITIES. TO DATE, THE UNIT HAS NOT BEEN PROP VETTED, FOR USG COUNTER-NARCOTICS ASSISTANCE.] END NOTE.)

THE ACCU COMES A'CALLING.

3. (C) ACCORDING TO MEDIA REPORTS [

N ESTIMATED 40 UNIFORMED PARAMILITARIES (SPORTING ACCU ARMBANDS, CARRYING LONG-ARMS AND USING WALKIE-TALKIES) ENTERED THE HAMLET OF SAN ANTONIO (MONTEBELLO MUNICIPALITY, ANTIOQUIA) SHORTLY AFTER SUNRISE ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 23. IN FRONT OF SEVERAL DOZEN WITNESSES, THE PARAMILITARIES KIDNAPPED TWO CRS MEMBERS (UBERNEY GIRALDO AND JOSE EVELIO GALLO), PLUS A LOCAL TEACHER, AND THE 17-YEAR OLD SON OF A LOCAL CAMPESINO LEADER. THE PARAMILITARIES THEN MARCHED TO THE CRS' NEARBY "LA GALLETA" FARMING COOPERATIVE, WHERE THEY SPRAY-PAINTED PRO-PARAMILITARY AND ANTI-GUERRILLA SLOGANS AND KIDNAPPED YET ANOTHER CRS MEMBER, PLUS HIS BROTHER.

4. (C) AFTER ABOUT ONE HOUR'S MARCH FROM LA GALLETA, THE PARAMILITARIES SHOT THE TEACHER TO DEATH. AND LEFT HIS BODY ON THE TRAIL.]

[THE BODY OF THE KIDNAPPED YOUTH, HILDEBRANDO CANAVERAL, WAS DISCOVERED THE NEXT DAY (MONDAY, JANUARY 24) IN A NEIGHBORING MUNICIPALITY (LA CEJA). CRS MEMBERS GIRALDO AND GALLO WERE NEVER SEEN ALIVE AGAIN.

BUT THE ARMY CLAIMS COMBAT KIA'S

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5. (U) ON MONDAY, JANUARY 24, THE ARMY'S FOURTH BRIGADE RELEASED A STATEMENT ANNOUNCING THE DEATHS IN COMBAT OF TWO "ELN GUERRILLAS." MEDELLIN'S MAJOR NEWS DAILY, "EL COLOMBIANO" QUOTED THE ARMY NEWS AGENCY'S OFFICIAL BULLETIN AS STATING THAT, "TWO GUERRILLAS OF THE CARLOS ALIRIO BUITRAGO FRONT OF THE ELN WERE KILLED DURING A MILITARY OFFENSIVE UNDERTAKEN BY THE ARMY TO PROTECT THE ELECTRICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT." THE TWO WERE SAID TO HAVE BEEN INTERRUPTED BY TROOPS OF THE JUAN DE CORRAL MECHANIZED BATTALION AS THEY WERE TRYING TO BLOW UP ELECTRICAL TOWERS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF EL CARMEN DE VIBORAL. ACCORDING TO CRS LEADERS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE LOCAL PROSECUTOR, THE ARMY FOLLOWED PROPER PROCEDURES AND CALLED THE LOCAL OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR GENERAL (FISCALIA) TO RECOVER THE BODIES. THE LOCAL PROSECUTOR AND CTI POLICE DETECTIVES COLLECTED THE TWO BODIES -- ONE IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES, ONE IN MILITARY-STYLE CAMOUFLAGE FATIGUES - AND DELIVERED THEM TO THE LOCAL MORGUE.

6. (C) AFTER PERFORMING AUTOPSIES, THE FISCALIA IDENTIFIED THE DEAD MEN AS GIRALDO AND GALLO, THE TWO MISSING CRS "REINSERTADOS" WHO HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED THE DAY BEFORE BY ACCU PARAMILITARIES. ACCORDING TO MEDELLIN PRESS REPORTS, A PUBLIC SCANDAL ERUPTED ONCE IT BECAME KNOWN THAT THE ARMY WAS CLAIMING TO HAVE KILLED IN COMBAT TWO PERSONS WHOM MULTIPLE WITNESSES HAD ALREADY PUBLICLY DENOUNCED AS HAVING BEEN KIDNAPPED (UNARMED, IN CIVILIAN ATTIRE) IN ANOTHER MUNICIPALITY THE DAY BEFORE BY ACCU PARAMILITARIES.

EVEN AS THE ACCU ALSO CLAIMS CREDIT

7. (C) THE SITUATION WAS FURTHER COMPLICATED WHEN THE "BLOQUE METRO" OF THE ACCU RELEASED A PUBLIC COMMUNIQUE IN WHICH IT CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE KIDNAPPINGS AND EXECUTIONS. THE STATEMENT SAID THE FOUR MEN ORIGINALLY KIDNAPPED (GIRALDO AND GALLO PLUS THE TEACHER AND THE YOUTH) WERE KILLED FOR HAVING DIRECTLY PARTICIPATED IN FARC-SPONSORED ROADBLOCKS AND KIDNAPPINGS ("PESCAS MILAGROSAS"). THE COMMUNIQUE ALSO ACCUSED THE CRS COOPERATIVE AT LA GALLETA OF PROVIDING "DIRECT SUPPORT" FOR ARMED ACTIONS BY BOTH THE FARC AND ELN GUERRILLAS (WHICH TYPICALLY DO NOT COLLABORATE WITH ONE ANOTHER IN ANTIOQUIA, ALTHOUGH BOTH ARE KNOWN TO OPERATE IN THE LOCAL AREA). THE MISSIVE CONCLUDED BY CALLING INTO QUESTION WHETHER THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE CRS TRULY HAD BEEN UNAWARE OF THE ACTIONS SAID TO HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN BY THE CRS MEMBERS.

WHAT TO DO? STEAL THE BODIES!

8. (C) ACCORDING TO MEDELLIN MEDIA REPORTS, IN THE EARLY PREDAWN HOURS OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, AS MANY AS TEN PICK-UP TRUCKS

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ARRIVED AT THE EL CARMEN DE VIBORAL MORGUE. NUMEROUS MEN ENTERED THE MORGUE AND TOOK POSSESSION OF THE TWO BODIES AT GUNPOINT.

ALTHOUGH THE BODIES HAVE NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE, THE RAIDERS FAILED TO SEIZE THE AUTOPSY REPORTS (WHICH REPORTEDLY INDICATED SIGNS OF PRE-DEATH TORTURE AND CONFIRMED THE IDENTITIES OF THE DEAD).

9. (U) THE LOCAL FISCALIA PROSECUTOR SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD MEDELLIN MEDIA THAT THERE COULD BE NO CONFUSION AS TO WHETHER THESE WERE THE SAME BODIES OR NOT. "THE TWO CADAVERS WERE THE ONLY ONES WHICH THE FISCALIA RECOVERED AFTER VIOLENT DEATHS IN THAT JURISDICTION DURING THAT PERIOD," WHICH, HE ADDED, HAD BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE FISCALIA BY THE ARMY. FOUND ON THE BODY OF ONE OF THE DECEASED, SAID THE PROSECUTOR, WAS A COPY OF THE IDENTITY DOCUMENT OF ONE OF THE MISSING CRS MEMBERS. THE RESULT OF THIS BODY-SNATCHING HAS BEEN ONLY TO DRAW MORE PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE CONFLICTING ARMY AND PARAMILITARY CLAIMS.

THE FALLOUT

10. (C) THE AUTOPSY RESULTS HAVE SINCE BEEN FORWARDED TO THE OFFICES OF BOTH THE PROSECUTOR GENERAL AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, WHICH HAVE OPENED CRIMINAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS INVESTIGATIONS (RESPECTIVELY).

THE MEDELLIN OFFICE OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS (ICRC) ARRIVED IN THE AREA TO INVESTIGATE THE INCIDENT, BUT DECIDED NOT GO TO LA GALLETA DUE TO CONCERNS FOR THEIR OWN SECURITY.

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COMMENTS

13. (C) POST HAS NO WAY OF KNOWING WHETHER THE DECEASED WERE INVOLVED WITH THE ELN OR THE FARC, BOTH OR NEITHER. BUT THREE THINGS APPEAR UNDENIABLE: PLENTY OF WITNESSES SAW ACCU PARAMILITARIES KIDNAP THE UNARMED MEN ONE DAY; THE ACCU PUBLICLY CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS; AND, THE ARMY'S FOURTH BRIGADE RELEASED THE BODIES THE DAY AFTER THE KIDNAPPING, PUBLICLY PROCLAIMING THEM TO HAVE BEEN GUERRILLAS KILLED IN COMBAT WITH A BATTALION OF THE FOURTH BRIGADE. THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE FOR THE DEMOBILIZATION OF FORMER GUERRILLAS ("REINsercion") SEPARATELY RAISED THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CASE TO POL/ECON. COUNSELOR ON 3 FEBRUARY. WE HAVE ASKED THE COLOMBIAN ARMY'S HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE TO LOOK INTO THE CASE; IT IS MAKING ENQUIRIES WITH BOTH THE 4TH BRIGADE AND THE MILITARY JUDICIARY.

revised

14. (C) WE NOTE THAT, EVEN BEFORE THIS LATEST INCIDENT, BOTH "AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL" (AI) AND "HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH" (HRW) HAD BEGUN PUBLICLY SINGLING OUT THE FOURTH BRIGADE, ACCUSING IT OF HAVING REPEATEDLY ENGAGED IN JUST THIS TYPE OF ACTIVITY WITH PARAMILITARIES. IN THE INSTANT CASE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONCLUDE ANYTHING OTHER THAN THAT THE PARAMILITARY AND ARMY MEMBERS INVOLVED SIMPLY FAILED TO GET THEIR STORIES STRAIGHT IN ADVANCE.

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DAO COMMENT

*revised 10 Feb
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KAMMAN

ADMIN
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