SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PTER, PHUM, SNAR, CO
SUBJECT: OPERATION DEMOCRACY AND PEACE: DAS ATTACKS NARCO ASSASSIN TRAINING CAMP, MORE RAIDS EXPECTED

REF: A) BOGOTA 5131: B) BOGOTA 4835

1. (C) SUMMARY: FOLLOWING THE CURRENT GOC CAMPAIGN AGAINST NARCOTICS RELATED PRIVATE ARMED GROUPS, THE POLICE DISCOVERED ANOTHER TRAINING CENTER IN THE EASTERN PLAINS OF META ON APRIL 7. THE DISCOVERY OF A MASS GRAVE POINTS TO THE INVOLVEMENT OF THESE GROUPS IN MANY OF THE KILLINGS AND KIDNAPPINGS AFFECTING THIS REGION WHERE THE LEFT-WING UNION PATRIOTICA (UP) HAS SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES. ANOTHER TRAINING CAMP SOME 150 MILES AWAY
WAS SO WELL PREPARED THAT EMBASSY PERSONNEL BELIEVE FOREIGN EXPERTS WHERE INVOLVED IN ITS PREPARATION (SEE REF A). END SUMMARY

2. (U) ON APRIL 7, 100 DAS (DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SECURITY) AGENTS RAIDED A RANCH NEAR PUERTO LOPEZ IN META DEPARTMENT AND DISCOVERED A RECENTLY ABANDONED TRAINING CAMP FOR 40 ASSASSINS ALONG WITH MASS GRAVES CONTAINING AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF BODIES, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS. SOME OF THE BODIES ARE THOUGHT TO BE THOSE OF PATRIOTIC UNION (UP) ACTIVISTS WHO HAVE DISAPPEARED AND OF ASSASSIN TRAINEES WHO BROKE THE RULES. THE RANCH REPORTEDLY BELONGED TO VICTOR CARRANZA (A RODRIGUEZ GACHA ASSOCIATE), SUSPECTED OF ORGANIZING AND FINANCING SEVERAL MAJOR MASSACRES. THE RAID WAS THE FIRST MAJOR STRIKE OF "OPERATION DEMOCRACY AND PEACE," A DAS OFFENSIVE AGAINST PRIVATE ARMED GROUPS IN COLOMBIA. THE PRESS HAS BEEN PUBLISHING LEAKED DAS REPORTS DESCRIBING THE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THESE GROUPS IN DETAIL.

3. (U) DAS EXPECTED A BATTLE WITH THE ASSASSINS BUT SOURCES SAID THE RANCH WAS ABANDONED THE DAY BEFORE THE RAID. ONLY A FEW ARMS WERE FOUND IN A LARGE UNDERGROUND DEPOSITORY. NEAT HAMMOCKS FOR FORTY MEN, AND COOKED FOOD FOR ONE HUNDRED ALONG WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF LITERATURE (TRAINING GUIDES ETC.) WERE LEFT BEHIND.

4. (C) COMMENT: DAS HAS BEEN COLLECTING INFORMATION ON THESE GROUPS FOR SOME TIME (SEE REFTELS). THE PRESS REPORTS STATE THAT THE BAND OF RODRIGUEZ GACHA ASSASSINS PICKED UP IN BOGOTA LAST WEEK HAS GIVEN UP MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT. APPARENTLY THIS WAS A BRANCH "SCHOOL" OF THE MAIN OPERATIONS IN THE MAGDALENA MEDIO AREA. PRESIDENT BARCO RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF A SPECIAL UNIT TO FIGHT THE PRIVATE NARCO-ARMIES. THE DISCOVERY OF THE BODIES SHOULD CLEAR UP AT LEAST SOME OF THE "DISAPPEARANCE" CASES THAT HAVE BEEN CLOGGING GOC FILES FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS, AND GIVE IMPETUS TO BOTH SIDES OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEBATE HERE. ON THE ONE HAND, THERE IS A DEFINITE COORDINATED CONSPIRACY TO KIDNAP, TORTURE AND MURDER LEFTISTS ON A LARGE SCALE; ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT
5. (C) THE SITE OF THE CARRANZA RANCH IS ABOUT 150 MILES AWAY FROM ANOTHER TRAINING CAMP SEEN BY EMBASSY DEA AND NAU PERSONNEL LAST MONTH NEAR A PROPERTY SUPPOSEDLY OWNED BY RODRIGUEZ GACHA HIMSELF. THE POLICE WENT TO THIS SECOND RANCH IN THE BELIEF THAT IT WAS A NARCOTICS LAB. IN FACT, NO EVIDENCE OF INDICTABLE CRIMES WAS FOUND, BUT THE SLOGANS POSTED AROUND THE CAMP AND ITS PROFESSIONALLY LAYED OUT TRAINING AND SECURITY APPARATUS SUGGEST IT WAS A CENTER FOR RIGHT WING ACTIVISTS, PROBABLY RELATED TO RODRIGUEZ. MCLEAN