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CONTROLS
STATE 127701

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/05/2010

TEXT
TAGS: PHUM, PGOV, PREL, MARR, MASS, SNAR, CO
SUBJECT: APPROACH TO MOD ON 24TH BRIGADE

REF: A. (A) BOGOTA 5571
B. (B) BOGOTA 3972

1. CLASSIFIED BY WHA/AND OFFICE DIRECTOR PHIL CHICOLA, REASON 1.5(B) AND (D).
2. (C) SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST: THE DEPARTMENT HAS NO OBJECTION TO THE DEPLOYMENT MENTIONED IN REFTTEL A. THE EMBASSY IS REQUESTED TO APPROACH THE COLOMBIAN MOD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO DISCUSS THE STATUS OF THE 24TH BRIGADE, AND MAY DRAW ON THE TALKING POINTS IN PARA 7. END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.
3. (C) WITH REGARD TO THE PROPOSED DEPLOYMENT IN REFTTEL A, THE DEPARTMENT HAS NO OBJECTION. WE NOTE THAT IT IS ACCEPTABLE FOR A UNIT CURRENTLY APPROVED TO RECEIVE USG

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
() Release (X) Excise () Deny (X) Declassify in full
Date 8/10/05 Exemption B1 (d)

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ASSISTANCE TO ACCEPT MATERIAL SUPPORT FROM OR OPERATE JOINTLY WITH A UNIT THAT IS NOT. HOWEVER, U.S. ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE UNIT THAT HAS BEEN APPROVED MAY NOT BE SHARED WITH THE UNIT THAT HAS NOT.

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6. (U) THE DEPARTMENT AGREES THAT EMBASSY SHOULD APPROACH THE COLOMBIAN MOD TO EXPRESS OUR CONCERNS ABOUT THE 24TH BRIGADE AND PRESS FOR PROMPT AND THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF THE SAN MIGUEL INCIDENT AND REPORTS OF PARAMILITARY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE 24TH BRIGADE. EMBASSY MAY DRAW UPON THE FOLLOWING TALKING POINTS.

7. (U) TALKING POINTS

-- WE ARE CONCERNED BY ALLEGATIONS OF 24TH BRIGADE INVOLVEMENT IN THE KILLING OF CIVILIANS ON JANUARY 17, 1998 NEAR THE TOWN OF SAN MIGUEL. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE 24TH BRIGADE STILL HAS A PENAL INVESTIGATION OF THIS INCIDENT UNDER WAY.

-- WE URGE THE GOC TO COMPLETE THIS INVESTIGATION AND ISSUE FINDINGS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

-- THE USG TAKES THESE ALLEGATIONS VERY SERIOUSLY, AND CANNOT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THE 24TH BRIGADE UNTIL THE INVESTIGATION IS COMPLETED, AND THEN ONLY IF THAT INVESTIGATION IS THOROUGH AND EITHER DISPROVES THE ALLEGATIONS OR RECOMMENDS APPROPRIATE SANCTIONS FOR THOSE INVOLVED.

-- THE PARTICIPATION OF THE 24TH BRIGADE IS CRITICAL FOR COUNTERNARCOTICS OPERATIONS AND THE SUCCESS OF PLAN COLOMBIA. WE VERY MUCH WANT TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO IT, AND URGE YOU TO DO WHATEVER POSSIBLE TO ENSURE A RAPID AND CREDIBLE INVESTIGATION OF THE SAN MIGUEL INCIDENT.

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-- WITH REGARD TO THIS CASE, WE ALSO NOTE THAT THE EMBASSY LEARNED OF THIS INVESTIGATION FROM NGOS OTHER SOURCES, AND NOT FROM THE MOD. THE EXPLANATION GIVEN WAS THAT THIS AS ONLY A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION, NOT YET A FORMAL ONE BECAUSE NO DEFENDANT HAD YET BEEN NAMED.

-- WE THINK IT IMPORTANT THAT THE MOD INFORM THE EMBASSY OF EVEN PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS OF UNITS THAT ARE RECEIVING U.S. ASSISTANCE. IT IS IN THE MOD'S INTEREST TO DO SO, SO THAT THE EMBASSY CAN HAVE MORE TO RELY ON THAN JUST NFO REPORTS ON INCIDENTS OF THIS TYPE.

-- FINALLY, WE ALSO NOTE WITH CONCERN PERSISTENT REPORTS THAT THE 24TH BRIGADE, AND THE 31ST COUNTERGUERRILLA BATTALION IN PARTICULAR, HAS BEEN COOPERATING WITH ILLEGAL PARAMILITARY GROUPS THAT HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY ACTIVE IN PUTUMAYO. 12

-- WE URGE YOU TO TAKE STRONG AND RAPID ACTION TO ENSURE THAT THE 24TH BRIGADE AND ITS MEMBERS REMAIN FREE OF ALL TIES TO ILLEGAL PARAMILITARY GROUPS. THIS BRIGADE IS VITAL TO THE SUCCESS OF COUNTERNARCOTICS OPERATIONS IN THE REGION, BUT ANY TAINT ARISING FROM ASSOCIATION WITH ILLEGAL PARAMILITARY GROUPS WILL MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE USG TO PROVIDE SUPPORT.

END TALKING POINTS.
ALBRIGHT

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE
[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]