Declassified Case: NW# 60876 Date: 03-23-2026


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~~S E C R E T~~ STATE 118019

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WH FOR DR. BRZEZINSKI

FOLLOWING REPEAT CARACAS 5110 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 21 MAY

QTE

~~S E C R E T~~ CARACAS 5110

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EYES ONLY FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR VAKY

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS: PFOR US CO
SUBJ: COLOMBIA
REF: STATE 114998

1. I AM PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE MISSION DESCRIBED REFTEL. ACCEPTING THE INVITATION IN LAST PARA REFTEL, HOWEVER, I DO FEEL COMPELLED TO LAY OUT CANDIDLY AND FRANKLY FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION EXACTLY WHAT I UNDERSTAND THE COLOMBIAN STATE OF MIND AND CONCERNS TO BE, BASED

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UPON MY KNOWLEDGE OF COLOMBIA AND PRESIDENT LOPEZ SPECIFICALLY.

2. THE PROBLEM IS NOT CABRANES' QUALIFICATIONS. IT IS NOT THAT LOPEZ IS JUST UNCONVINCED THAT CABRANES IS CAPABLE AND THAT OUR TASK IS THEREFORE SIMPLY TO CONVINCE HIM THAT HE IS. THE ISSUE IS NOW SYMBOLIC TO LOPEZ, INVOLVES SOME DEEP NATIONAL TRAITS AND SOME EVEN DEEPER PERSONAL SENSITIVITIES. LOPEZ BELIEVES THIS APPOINTMENT AND THE SANCHEZ ONE BEFORE IT INDICATE LITTLE US REGARD -- EVEN DISREGARD-- FOR HIM AND COLOMBIA. HE SEES IT AS MEANING WE FEEL WE CAN AFFORD TO USE COLOMBIA TO MEET OUR OWN DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WITHOUT WORRYING TOO MUCH ABOUT HIM. TO THE COLOMBIANS, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH AND AS DISTINCT FROM MANY COUNTRIES, THE HIGHEST COMPLIMENT YOU CAN PAY THEM IS TO DESIGNATE A PROFESSIONAL. ARGUMENTS ABOUT PERSONAL AND POLITICAL CONNECTIONS ARE NOT PERSUASIVE. THIS MAY ALL BE UNFAIR AND ILLOGICAL BUT IT IS A FACT THAT THAT IS HOW THEY THINK.

3. THIS ALSO HAS TO BE UNDERSTOOD AGAINST THE HISTORY OF THE SANCHEZ APPOINTMENT. LOPEZ WAS VERY LOATHE TO ACCEPT SANCHEZ. WHEN HE DID, HE DID SO RELUCTANTLY AND GRUDGINGLY.HE TOOK THE APPOINTMENT PERSONALLY AND RESENTED IT,-UNJUSTLY PERHAPS, BUT AGAIN THAT WAS THE FACT. WHATEVER THE EXPERIENCE WITH SANCHEZ, HE, TO SOME DEGREE, NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO BEGIN WITH. FROM LOPEZ' POINT OF VIEW, THEN, HE SEES US AS DOING IT TO HIM AGAIN.

4. THIS SHADES IN TO THE GENERAL COLOMBIAN REFLEXIVE REACTION TO DESIGNATION OF HISPANIC AMERICANS. HOWEVER WE MAY DEPLORE IT AND DISAGREE WITH IT, THE FACT IS THAT COLOMBIANS SEE SUCH DESIGNATIONS NOT AS A COMPLIMENT OR MARK OF CONSIDERATION BUT AS CONDESCENCION

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PAGE 03 STATE 118019

AND INSENSITIVITY. THERE IS CLEAR DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE OF THIS IN THE MAY 13 COMMENTS OF EL TIMEPO'S EDITOR, HERNANDO SANTOS, ONE OF THE NATION'S SENIOR POLITICAL COMMENTATORS AND GENERALLY A WEATHER VANE OF HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL OPINION. (SEE USIS MEDIA REACTION BOGOTA FOR MAY 13.) I COMMEND THOSE COMMENTS TO YOU BECAUSE THEY ARE VERY TYPICAL OF WHAT I HAVE KNOWN COLOMBIAN PERCEPTIONS TO BE, AND BECAUSE THEY ARE CLEARLY INTENDED AS A SIGNAL TO US IN THIS CASE. COLOMBIANS PARTICULARLY REACT TO PUERTO RICO. THIS MAY BE UNJUST BUT THAT THE FEELING IS THERE IS A FACT. THUS WHEN LIEVANO SAYS (BOGOTA 4235) THAT THE PUERTO RICAN CONNECTION WILL MAKE THE SITUATION DIFFICULT HE SINCERELY BELIEVES IT. WHEN HE SAYS IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO SEND AN HISPANIC AMERICAN HERE TO BE AMBASSADOR HE IS BEING MORE CANDID THAN WHEN HE SAYS IT IS NOT A FACTOR. AGAIN IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE INDIVIDUAL'S QUALIFICATIONS DO NOT OVERCOME THE OBJECTIONS AND ARE NOT EVEN RELEVANT TO WHAT THE COLOMBIANS SEE AS THE ISSUE. ARGUMENTS ABOUT CONNECTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS ARE SIMPLY NOT GRASPABLE BY THEIR MINDSET, WHATEVER THE EQUITIES OR LOGIC.

5. FINALLY THERE IS LOPEZ' INTENSE SENSITIVITY, HIS STUBBORNESS AND HIS GRUDGES. WHETHER HE SHOULD OR NOT, HE HAS FELT SLIGHTED AND HURT. THAT MAKES HIM STUBBORN AND ANGRY. AS I READ IT HE HAS ALREADY MADE UP HIS MIND, AND BOGOTA 4235 RIGHTLY POINTS OUT THAT HE HAS IN EFFECT ASKED US NOT TO PUSH HIM SO HE WILL NOT HAVE TO SAY NO OPENLY. IF I GO TO SEE HIM WE WILL IN EFFECT SO PUSH HIM. I SHOULD ALSO POINT OUT THAT THERE IS NO WAY I CAN SIMPLY "SHOW UP" IN BOGOTA AND ASK TO SEE HIM. MY REPRESENTATIONS WOULD LOSE FORCE BY THEIR APPARENT CASUALNESS, AND MORE LIKELY BE SEEN BY LOPEZ AS A PRESUMPTION THAT I COULD JUST SHOW UP AND EXPECT TO SEE HIM, AS OLD FRIENDS AS WE ARE.

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PAGE 04 STATE 118019

THEREFORE, TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS, LOPEZ WILL HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE BEEN SENT ON A MISSION TO HIM, AND I WOULD PROPOSE TO TELEPHONE HIM DIRECTLY, TELL HIM SO AND ASK TO SEE HIM. THAT OF COURSE IS HEAVY STUFF AND IT CONSTITUTES HEAVY PRESSURE. WE WILL CROSS THE BURICON. FINALLY EVEN WERE WE TO PERSUADE HIM TO CHANGE HIS MIND, I HAVE NO DOUBT AT ALL BUT THAT HE WOULD DO SO GRUDGINGLY AND THAT HE WOULD TAKE IT OUT ON CABRANES WHO MAY NEVER

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REALLY HAVE A CHANCE EITHER.

6. SINCE RECEIVING REFTEL I HAVE HAD THE VISIT HERE OF THE GROUP ADVANCING MRS. CARTER'S VISIT. THEY DESCRIBED TO ME THEIR COLD RECEPTION IN BOGOTA (I WOULD APPRECIATE IF IF BOGOTA'S CABLE ON THIS COULD BE REPEATED TO ME.) THEIR EXPERIENCE IS BAD NEWS. IT DEMONSTRATES THE DEPTH TO WHICH LOPEZ HAS FELT AGGRIVED BY THE CABRANES DESIGNATION AND THE SANCHEZ ONE BEFORE IT AND HOW ANGRY HE IS.LOPEZ IS TERRIBLY SENSITIVE AND THIN SKINNED. WHEN HIS TEMPER PUSHES HIM TO A FEELING OF HAVING BEEN OFFENDED HE REACTS JUST THIS WAY, AND IT IS NOT THEN EASY TO REASON HIM OUT OF THE CORNERS HE PAINTS HIMSELF INTO.

7. FROM THE FOREGOING IT WILL BE OBVIOUS TO YOU THAT I AM LESS THAN SANGUINE THAT LOPEZ CAN BE PERSUADED TO CHANGE HIS MIND. I BELIEVE THAT IF WE INSIST ON PRESSING GOPEZ ON THIS NOMINATION WE WILL RISK DIGGING BOTH SIDES IN DEEPER AND PERHAPS LIMITING OUR OWN FUTURE FLEXIBILITY. MAY I VOLUNTEER ONE OTHER THOUGHT. IT WOULD BE EQUALLY AND IN SOME WAYS MORE TRAGIC FOR US-COLOMBIAN RELATIONS WERE WE TO REACT TO LOPEZ' STUBBORNESS BY SIMPLY NOT NAMING ANYONE, HOWEVER JUSTIFIED WE MIGHT FEEL IN DOING SO AND HOWEVERCATHARTIC THAT MAY BE FOR US. LOPEZ AND COLOMBIANS GENERALLY WOULD SEE THAT FOR WHAT IT IS, AND IT REALLY WOULD PUSH OUR RELATIONS OVER THE CLIFF.

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8. I HAVE LAID OUT THE ABOVE IN DETAIL, IN CONFIDENCE AND IN CANDOR, BECAUSE I FEEL I OWE IT TO YOU TO GIVE YOU MY HONEST ASSESSMENT OF HOW I READ LOPEZ AND THE COLOMBIAN PERCEPTION. I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF, AFTER CONSIDERING THE ABOVE AS WELL AS WHATEVER NEW INSIGHTS THE EXPERIENCE OF MRS. CARTER'S ADVANCE GROUP MAY HAVE PROVIDED, YOU WOULD CONFIRM TO ME THAT YOU STILL THINK I SHOULD GO TO BOGOTA. IF YOU DO I AM PREPARED TO DO SO AND WILL DO MY BEST.
VAKY UNQTE CHRISTOPHER

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