SUBJECT: GENERAL RAMIREZ LASHES OUT AT STATE DEPARTMENT; TWO MORE GENERALS UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR PARAMILITARY LINKS

REF: A) BOGOTA 292141Z MAY 98 B) BOGOTA 071647Z APR 98

SUMMARY

1. (C) COLOMBIAN PRESS REPORTED AUGUST 12 AN ANGRY DENIAL BY (APPARENTLY-EX) ARMY INSPECTOR GENERAL IVAN RAMIREZ OF CHARGES CONTAINED IN AN AUGUST 11 "WASHINGTON POST" ARTICLE, IN WHICH HE ACCUSED THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF BETRAYAL AND OF MALIGNING HIS "HONOR." IN ADDITION TO REPORTING HIS FOMENTING OF ILLEGAL PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS, THE POST ARTICLE CHARGED RAMIREZ WAS A CIA INFORMANT, AND LINKED HIM TO HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND
SECRET

NARCOTRAFFICKING. ALSO IN THE NEWS ARE GENERAL OFFICERS FERNANDO MILLAN PEREZ AND RITO ALEJO DEL RIO ROJAS, BOTH OF WHOM ARE SUBJECTS OF FEDERAL PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE INVESTIGATIONS INTO ALLEGED LINKS TO ILLEGAL PARAMILITARY GROUPS. THESE INVESTIGATIONS WILL SERVE AS A MARKER TO OFFICERS WHO CONTINUE TO ILLEGALLY ASSIST PARAMILITARY GROUPS. END SUMMARY.

GEN. RAMIREZ ANGRILY DENIES "WASHINGTON POST'S" ALLEGATIONS

2. (U) BOGOTA PRESS CARRIED AUGUST 12 ANGRY DENIALS BY MAJOR GENERAL IVAN RAMIREZ QUINTERO OF ACCUSATIONS CONTAINED IN AN AUGUST 10 "WASHINGTON POST" ARTICLE. (NOTE: ALTHOUGH HE HAS NOT OFFICIALLY RESIGNED, BOGOTA PRESS REPORTS THAT HE "WAS ARMY INSPECTOR GENERAL UNTIL AUGUST 10," AND THAT HE IS "PACKING UP THE BOXES IN HIS OFFICE." END NOTE). THE ARTICLE QUOTED "U.S. AND COLOMBIAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS" AS SAYING THAT THE USG HAD BEGUN TO "HEAR OF RAMIREZ'S TIES TO NARCOTRAFFICKERS AND ILLEGAL PAR"...
COMMUNITIES, RAMIREZ AGAIN PUBLICLY TRACED HIS DIFFICULTIES DIRECTLY TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT. AFTER HIS VISA WAS REVOKED IN MAY, HE SAID ON BOGOTA RADIO THAT HIS PROBLEMS EMANATED DIRECTLY FROM "TWO MEMBERS OF THE EMBASSY POLITICAL SECTION."

TWO GENERALS UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR TIES TO PARAMILITARIES

---


6. (U) THE FEDERAL PROSECUTOR ALSO CONFIRMED THAT A PRELIMINARY ACTION

SECRET

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>
INVESTIGATION OF GENERAL RITO ALEJO DEL RIO ROJAS, COMMANDER OF
THE ARMY'S 13TH BRIGADE (BOGOTA), IS ALSO UNDERWAY. ACCORDING TO
PRESS, THE GENERAL'S ALLEGED LINKS TO ACCU PARAMILITARIES IN THE
URABA REGION WHILE HE COMMANDED THE 17TH BRIGADE FROM DECEMBER
1995 TO DECEMBER 1997 ARE THE SUBJECT OF THE INVESTIGATION.

7. (S) BIOGRAPHIC NOTE: ALTHOUGH BRIGADE COMMANDS ARE GENERALLY
ROTATED EVERY YEAR, GENERAL DEL RIO WAS ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN
COMMAND OF THE 17TH BRIGADE IN HIGHLY-CONFLICTIVE URABA REGION
FOR TWO YEARS, APPARENTLY BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN
BLOODYING THE FARC'S NOSE DURING THE PERIOD OF HIS COMMAND. HIS
SYSTEMATIC ARMING AND EQUIPPING OF AGGRESSIVE REGIONAL
PARAMILITARIES WAS PIVOTAL TO HIS MILITARY SUCCESS AT THE TIME.
GENERAL DEL RIO HAS LONG BEEN ACCUSED OF LINKS TO PARAMILITARIES:
HE WAS INVESTIGATED FOR ALLEGEDLY DELIVERING 100 MP5 SUBMACHINE
GUNS IN 1985 TO PARAMILITARIES IN THE MAGDALENA MEDIO REGION. HE
IS REPUTED TO BE A PROTEGE OF MAJOR GENERAL IVAN RAMIREZ. THANKS
TO ACCUSATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES LEVELLED BY NGO'S CINEP
(RESEARCH AND POPULAR EDUCATION CENTER) AND JUSTICIA Y PAZ (PEACE
AND JUSTICE), DEL RIO'S RELATIONS WITH THOSE AND OTHER NGO'S ARE
PARTICULARLY STRAINED. END NOTE.

COMMENT

8. (C) AS DEMONSTRATED BY HIS INVECTIVE, MAJOR GENERAL RAMIREZ
TENDS TO SINGLE OUT THE STATE DEPARTMENT AS THE SOURCE OF HIS
TROUBLES. THE "WASHINGTON POST" ARTICLE PROVIDED HIM OCCASION TO
MAKE A FINAL JAB AT THE DEPARTMENT BEFORE RETIREMENT. WE ARE
UNSURPRISED THAT HE DECLINED TO DIVULGE THE "EVIDENCE OF HIS
INNOCENCE" -- THE DEPARTMENT FOUND THAT EVIDENCE OF HIS
COMPlicity IN REPEATED, GRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WAS
SUFFICIENT TO REVOKE HIS VISA. HIS APPARENTLY IMPENDING DEPARTURE
FROM THE RANKS OF THE COLOMBIAN ARMY WILL CONTRIBUTE TO ITS
ONGOING PROFESSIONALIZATION. SEPARATELY, WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY
THE FEDERAL PROSECUTOR'S APPARENT DILIGENCE IN INVESTIGATING
LINKS BETWEEN SENIOR ARMY OFFICERS AND PARAMILITARIES. THESE
INVESTIGATIONS WILL SERVE AS A MARKER TO THOSE ARMY OFFICERS WHO
CONTINUE TO ILLEGALLY ASSIST OR OTHERWISE WORK WITH PARAMILITARY
GROUPS.

KAMMAN

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>