

(EIS)

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Case Number: 2000002859

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ACTION ARA-00

INFO OCT-00 COPY-01 ADS-00 AID-00 INR-10 SS-00 CIAE-00  
IO-15 NSCE-00 NSAE-00 SSO-00 CTME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01  
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O 142156Z MAY 84  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3315  
DEPTJUSTICE WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
INFO DEA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: PREL, SNAR, CO  
SUBJECT: COLOMBIA'S ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORTS: STRIKE  
- WHILE THE IRON IS HOT

REF: A) BOGOTA 5097  
- B) BOGOTA 5250  
- C) BOGOTA 5306

- 1. [REDACTED] - ENTIRE TEXT.
- 2. SUMMARY: THE EMOTIONAL RESPONSE OF THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE TO THE MURDER OF RODRIGO LARA BONILLA HAS BEEN INTENSE AND HAS RESULTED IN AN ENTIRELY NEW ATTITUDE TOWARD DRUG TRAFFICKERS IN COLOMBIA. THE HIGH LEVEL OF EMOTION CANNOT CONTINUE INDEFINITELY, HOWEVER, AND THERE ARE SIGNS THAT UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S WAR ON NARCOTRAFICANTES IS BEGINNING TO ERODE. THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TO PRESS FOR STRONGER GOC ACTION AGAINST DRUG

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PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING IS BEGINNING TO CLOSE. USG EFFORTS TO HELP THE GOC TAKE POSITIVE  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SAM A. MOSKOWITZ  
Current class: CONFIDENTIAL  
DATE/CASE ID: 22 JAN 2001 200002859

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ACTION MUST BE QUICK AND DECISIVE, BEFORE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR A STRONG ANTI-NARCOTICS PROGRAM ERODES FURTHER. END SUMMARY.

3. THE REACTION IN COLOMBIA TO THE ASSASSINATION OF RODRIGO LARA BONILLA HAS BEEN INTENSE: A COMBINATION OF OUTRAGE THAT A CABINET MINISTER COULD BE KILLED FOR DOING HIS DUTY; SORROW THAT A YOUNG, ATTRACTIVE AND PROMISING POLITICIAN SHOULD DIE PREMATURELY; AND GUILT THAT HE WAS LARGELY UNSUPPORTED IN HIS VALIANT FIGHT AGAINST AN ELEMENT THAT THREATENED TO DESTROY THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FABRIC OF COLOMBIAN SOCIETY. SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT BETANCUR'S DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST THE PRESUMED PERPETRATORS OF THE CRIME AND FOR THE TOUGH ANTI-NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING MEASURES OF THE STATE OF SIEGE HAS BEEN WHOLEHEARTED AND ALMOST UNANIMOUS. HOWEVER, THE EMOTIONAL OUTPOURING THAT PROMPTED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXTRADITION TREATY, THE WHOLESALE ARREST OF NARCOTRAFICANTES, AND THE POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF A HERBICIDAL ERADICATION PROGRAM, IS TOO INTENSE TO LAST; A WANING OF THE CRACKDOWN AND A BACKLASH AGAINST THE USG FOR OBVIOUSLY BENEFITING FROM THE DEATH OF LARA, AND THE CHANGED ATTITUDE IT PROMPTED, CAN BE EXPECTED.

4. ANTI-AMERICANISM HAS ALREADY REARED ITS HEAD IN THE FORM OF THE AGE-OLD QUESTION IN ANY CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION: "CUI BONO?" ENRIQUE

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SANTOS CALDERON, NO FRIEND OF THE U.S., FIRST RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN LARA'S DEATH IN HIS "EL TIEMPO" COLUMN ON MAY 7, LISTING IT AS ONE OF FOUR POSSIBILITIES. ON MAY 9, THE DISREPUTABLE AFTERNOON TABLOID "EL BOGOTANO" FRONT-PAGED AN ARTICLE, BASED ON A REPORT FROM THE ANDEAN LABOR PARTY (FOUNDED BY U.S. CITIZEN LYNDON H. LAROCHE), SUGGESTING THE CIA OR DEA KILLED LARA. THE ANDEAN LABOR PARTY MAINTAINED THE PLOT WAS HATCHED BY HENRY KISSINGER TO PREVENT LARA FROM DISRUPTING THE DRUG TRADE, WHICH PROVIDES THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE NECESSARY TO COLOMBIA TO PAY ITS BANK LOANS. SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COLOMBIAN COMMUNIST PARTY GILBERTO VIEIRA IS REPORTEDLY

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PUSHING THE CULPABILITY OF THE DEA/CIA, AND HAS ALLEGEDLY VOLUNTEERED TO GIVE INTERVIEWS TO EXPOUND ON THIS THEORY. HE HAS HAD NO TAKERS YET. ON MAY 10, SANTOS NOTED, AS OTHER COLUMNISTS HAVE, THAT THE GOC'S REACTION TO LARA'S ASSASSINATION HAS BEEN, IN EFFECT, TO SUPPORT THE LONG-STANDING OBJECTIVES OF THE USG. THAT THE GOC IMPOSED A COUNTRY WIDE STATE OF SIEGE WHICH EMPOWERED THE MILITARY--THE MOST PRO-U.S. ELEMENT IN COLOMBIAN SOCIETY--TO LEAD THE ANTI-NARCOTICS FIGHT IS ALSO LOOMING AS A BONE OF CONTENTION, AS IS THE VIEW EXPRESSED BY A GROWING NUMBER OF POLITICAL COMMENTATORS THAT THE GOC IS DOING MORE THAN THE USG TO COMBAT THE TRAFFICKERS.

5. EMBOFFS' COLOMBIAN INTERLOCUTORS ARE UNANIMOUS IN SAYING THAT THE GOC HAS ONLY A LIMITED TIME

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FRAME IN WHICH TO WAGE ITS WAR ON DRUGGERS WITH POPULAR SUPPORT. THE SHORT ATTENTION SPAN ON MOST BODIES POLITIC, NEW CRISES AND POLITICAL REALITIES WILL ALL CONSPIRE TO REDUCE INTEREST IN AND SUPPORT FOR STRONG ANTI-NARCOTICS MEASURES. THERE ARE EVEN REPORTS THAT PRESIDENT BETANCUR WILL END THE STATE OF SIEGE--AND HENCE MILITARY PURSUIT AND JUDGMENT OF TRAFFICKERS--BY MAY 28 WHEN THE TRUCE WITH THE FARC IS SCHEDULED TO

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GO INTO EFFECT. THE BETANCUR ADMINISTRATION SEEMS AWARE OF ITS LIMITED MANDATE, HENCE ITS REQUEST TO THE EMBASSY (THROUGH THE ACTING MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND THE PRESIDENT'S LEGAL ADVISOR) TO SUBMIT PROVISIONAL REQUESTS AND/OR EXTRADITION DOCUMENTS AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE. (REFTELS B AND C.)

6. THUS, AS WE HAVE SUGGESTED FROM THE OUTSET OF THIS CRISIS, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT USG ASSISTANCE--INCLUDING HELICOPTERS, AS WELL AS EXTRADITION REQUESTS--BE PROVIDED AS FORTHCOMINGLY AND QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER

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TO ENCOURAGE PRESIDENT BETANCUR TO PROCEED WITH HIS CAMPAIGN VIGOROUSLY. ADDITIONAL USG SUPPORT WILL ENABLE THE GOC TO INSTITUTIONALIZE LONG-RANGE ANTI-NARCOTICS OPERATIONS WHICH WILL CONTINUE AFTER THE IMMEDIATE TURMOIL SUBSIDES. WATSON

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