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INCOMING
TELEGRAM

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ACFIOM 694-03

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ACTION OFFICE CO-02
INFO FILE-01 00-01 APA-05 PPC-02 ECP-01 OAS-01 PPA-01 DAND-02
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INFO LOG-00 ADS-03 IAS-10 SS-03 H-01 MSC-01 NSCE-00
NSAE-00 HA-09 L-03 TRSE-00 PH-10 PA-01 OMB-01
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CONFIDENTIAL BOGOTA 07075

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINS, PTER, PHUM, PGOV, SHAR, CO
SUBJECT: VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN COLOMBIA: DAS REPORT HINTS
AT MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN URABA; MORE ON
CORDOBA

REF: BOGOTA 6711 AND BOGOTA 5442 .

1. (C) SUMMARY: MILITARY OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN IMPLICATED
IN THE MARCH 4 KILLINGS IN URABA. A RECENTLY COMPLETED
STUDY BY THE DAS (FBI EQUIVALENT), OF WHICH THE PRESS
HAS OBTAINED A COPY, HAS CONCLUDED THAT MILITARY MEMBERS
OF THE B-2 (INTELLIGENCE) IN URABA IDENTIFIED PEOPLE
BELONGING TO THE SUPPORT NETWORK FOR THE EPL (ARMY OF
POPULAR LIBERATION). THESE SAME PEOPLE WERE
SUBSEQUENTLY MURDERED ON MARCH 4. A MILITARY SPOKESMAN
DENIED THAT THE REPORT INCRIMINATED THE MILITARY,
CONTENDING THAT IT MERELY RELATED UNPROVEN TESTIMONY
ACCUSING THE MILITARY OF INVOLVEMENT. MINISTER OF
DEFENSE SAMUDIO DENIED ANY MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN
REMARKS TO THE PRESS ON MAY 5. HE SAID "SINISTER
FORCES" WERE TRYING TO DEFAME THE MILITARY. POLOFF'S
VISIT TO MONTERIA, THE CAPITAL OF CORDOBA DEPARTMENT,
REINFORCED THE VIEW THAT THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN
COLOMBIA REMAINS COMPLEX AND RESISTS EASY SOLUTIONS.
END SUMMARY

2. (C) THE URABA REPORT: THE WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE
SEMAMA PUBLISHED MAY 3 A REPORT ON THE MURDERS IN URABA
IN EARLY MARCH. THE REPORT DRAWN FROM A CONFIDENTIAL
DAS REPORT CONCLUDED THAT IN THE KILLINGS AT THE "LA
HONDURAS" AND "LA NEGRA" FARMS IN URABA ON MARCH 4, THE
VICTIMS WERE PART OF THE EPL GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION'S
SUPPORT GROUP; THAT IN THE WEEKS PRECEDING THE
KILLINGS, MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY CARRIED OUT OPERATIONS
DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY MEMBERS OF THE GUERRILLA GROUP;
THAT DESERTERS FROM THE EPL COLLABORATED WITH THE
MILITARY IN MAKING THE IDENTIFICATIONS; AND THAT THE
DESERTERS MAY HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY PARTICIPATED IN THE
KILLINGS. THE REPORT DID NOT RULE OUT THE FACT THAT
MILITARY PERSONNEL MIGHT ALSO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE
KILLINGS. IT CONCLUDED THAT THIS TYPE OF "CLEAN-UP
OPERATION" ("OPERACION LIMPIEZA") WAS BEING FINANCED BY
LOCAL LANDOWNERS WHO WERE FED UP (DESESPERADOS) WITH THE
GUERRILLAS. SOME OF THE EPL DESERTERS SAID THAT
SECURITY FORCES FORCED THEM TO IDENTIFY WORKERS INVOLVED
IN EPL EXTORTION (BOLETO) OR OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES.

3. (U) REACTION: THE MAY 4 EDITION OF BOGOTA
CONSERVATIVE DAILY "EL SIGLO" QUOTES EX-PRESIDENT LLERAS

RESTREPO AS SAYING THAT ANY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE
MILITARY AND SELF DEFENSE GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE
MASSACRE SHOULD BE BROUGHT BEFORE MILITARY COURTS.
MINISTER OF JUSTICE LOW MUSTRA AND ATTORNEY GENERAL
HORACIO SERPA AGREED WITH THE SENTIMENT, BUT SAID
CIVILIAN COURTS WOULD TRY THE OFFENDERS. SERPA, IN A
MAY 4 PRESS CONFERENCE, ALSO SAID THAT MEMBERS OF THE
MILITARY ARE UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS, BUT HE DENIED THAT THEY ACTED IN THE NAME OF
THE STATE. HE ALSO SAID THAT "WITHOUT A COURT THE BEST
RESPONSE TO OFFER THE CITIZENRY AND INTERNATIONAL
OPINION IS TO DISCOVER AND PUNISH THE MATERIAL AND
INTELLECTUAL AUTHORS OF THESE CRIMES..."

4. (U) THE LEFTIST PATRIOTIC UNION (UP) HAS USED THE
REPORT TO CONTINUE ITS ATTACK AGAINST THE NEWLY NAMED
MILITARY CHIEF IN URABA, CLAIMING THE APPOINTMENT GIVES
SECURITY FORCES A "GREEN LIGHT" FOR FURTHER HUMAN RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS.

5. (U) NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN CORDOBA KILLINGS:
MEANWHILE, BOGOTA DAILY "EL TIEMPO" ON MAY 6 REPORTED
THAT AUTHORITIES HAVE ARRESTED NINE PEOPLE SUSPECTED OF
INVOLVEMENT IN THE MEJOR ESCUINA, BUENA VISTA, "EASTER"
MASSACRE IN CORDOBA (BOGOTA 5442). THE NEWSPAPER REPORT
CLAIMS THAT THE NINE ARRESTED WERE PLANNING ADDITIONAL
ATTACKS AGAINST MEMBERS OF THE UP AND OTHERS THEY VIEWED
AS SUPPORTERS OF THE GUERRILLAS.

6. (C) CORDOBA -- NO EASY ANSWERS: ON APRIL 22, POLOFF
TRAVELED TO MONTERIA, CORDOBA DEPARTMENT, TO DISCUSS THE
SECURITY SITUATION WITH [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THE
CONVERSATION FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON THE EPL THREAT IN
CORDOBA. [REDACTED] ESTIMATED THAT TOTAL GUERRILLA STRENGTH
IN THE DEPARTMENT WAS LESS THAN 300 FIGHTERS, BUT THAT
THAT NUMBER IS BOLSTERED BY AN INTELLIGENCE AND SUPPORT
NETWORK (MOSCA--FLIES) THAT SUPPLIES THE GUERRILLAS WITH
INFORMATION ON TROOP MOVEMENTS. SINCE THE BRIGADE HAS
NO HELICOPTERS OR SUFFICIENT TRANSPORT FOR ITS 4000
TROOPS, THEY MUST MOVE ON FOOT.

7. (C) TO MAKE UP FOR MATERIAL SHORTAGES, ACCORDING TO
[REDACTED] THE BRIGADE RELIES ON UNORTHODOX TACTICS
AND INTELLIGENCE. [REDACTED] EXPLAINED THAT HE DECIDES
WHEN, WHERE AND HOW HE WILL ATTACK, SAYING "I DON'T ASK
THOSE ABOVE FOR ANYTHING BUT HELICOPTERS, VEHICLES, AND
BULLETS." [REDACTED] ACKNOWLEDGED OCCASIONAL MATERIAL
SUPPORT, SAYING THAT FOR ONE OPERATION DURING HOLY WEEK
HE RECEIVED FOUR HELICOPTERS. THIS ALLOWED HIM TO
ASSAULT GUERRILLA STRONGHOLDS IN THE SERRANIA OF SAN
JERONIMO, RESULTING IN THE DEATH OR WOUNDING OF 30
INSURGENTS.

[REDACTED]

NARCO?

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MILITARY, CARRYING OUT
OBSTACLES, LEGAL BARRIERS

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Department of State

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9. (C) [] THEN ADDRESSED THE KILLING OF 40 PEOPLE NEAR BUENA VISTA (BOGOTA 5442), WHICH HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO NARCOTRAFFICKER RETALIATION AGAINST EPL EXTORTION. [] SAID THAT SOME RANCHERS, DRIVEN TO EXTREMES BY GUERRILLA DEMANDS, WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MASSACRE. PLACING THE REAL BLAME ON THE EPL, [] ASKED HOW LONG CAN ANYONE PUT UP WITH INSURGENTS WHO REPEATEDLY HARRASS, BURN, AND MURDER WITH VIRTUAL IMPUNITY. THIS IS THE REAL SOURCE OF RURAL VIOLENCE, HE SAID, NOT THE TRAFFICKERS. (NOTE: [] AVOIDED THE ISSUE OF WHETHER SOME LANDOWNERS WERE NARCOS, AS OTHERS HAVE TOLD US.)

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10. (C) COMMENT: NORTHERN COLOMBIA CONTAINS ELEMENTS OF ALL THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN THE COUNTRY. EVEN HENRY VELASCO, THE CIVILIAN HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH DOG FOR THE MILITARY, HAS TOLD POLICONS THAT THE MILITARY IS INVOLVED. HE WAS CAREFUL TO POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THE MILITARY IS INVOLVED AS INDIVIDUALS. THERE IS NO INSTITUTIONAL SANCTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, AND THOSE WHO ARE INVOLVED IN BREAKING THE LAW WILL BE PUNISHED, HE SAID. WHAT EMERGES FROM THE ABOVE IS THAT COMMANDERS IN RURAL AREAS ARE OFTEN LEFT ON THEIR OWN WITH FEW RESOURCES IN AREAS WITH HIGH RATES OF VIOLENCE. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY ARE PRONE TO USE THE RESOURCES AT HAND, WHICH MAY BE LOCAL RANCHERS (INCLUDING NARCOS) WHO, IN THE ABSENCE OF LEGALLY CONSTITUTED AUTHORITY, PAY "SELF DEFENSE" GROUPS TO PROTECT THEIR INTERESTS. COMMANDERS FACED WITH MAINTAINING SOCIAL ORDER, BUT WITH LITTLE MATERIAL SUPPORT, MAY VIEW COOPERATION WITH LOCAL GROUPS AS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.
GILLESPIE

- good + bad RESULTS

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