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P 242133Z MAY 88
 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6691
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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: OVIP(MURTHA, REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P., MARSH, SEC OF
 ARMY JOHN O.), MASS, PINS, SNAR, CO
 SUBJECT: MURTHA AND MARSH VISIT CONCENTRATES ON NARCO
 POWER AND INSURGENCY

REF: BOGOTA 7639

1. [REDACTED] - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: REP JOHN P. MURTHA AND SECRETARY OF THE
 ARMY JOHN O. MARSH DISCUSSED WITH PRESIDENT BARCO AND
 MINISTER OF DEFENSE SAMUDIO THE TREMENDOUS INTIMIDATING
 POWER OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS OVER COLOMBIA'S
 GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY, THE EFFORTS BEING MADE IN BOTH
 THE US AND COLOMBIA TO COMBAT THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM, AND
 THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING AND
 INSURGENCY. PRESIDENT BARCO'S UPCOMING VISIT TO THE US
 WAS ALSO DISCUSSED AT LENGTH WITH HIM. THE 24 HOUR STOP

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IN BOGOTA MAY 22 AND 23 ALSO BROUGHT THE VISITORS INTO
CONTACT WITH MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS FERNANDO CEPEDA,

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: SAM A. MOSKOWITZ
 DATE/CASE ID: 9 JUL 2001 200003834

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THE MILITARY SERVICE CHIEFS, MID-LEVEL OFFICERS WITH RECENT FIELD EXPERIENCE, AND OTHER IMPORTANT COLOMBIANS. MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS HIGHLIGHTED THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEMS THE BARCO ADMINISTRATION FACES IN PROTECTING THE COUNTRY'S DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS FROM A VIRILE NARCO-INSURGENCY WITH A MILITARY/POLICE ESTABLISHMENT THAT IS UNDERSOURCED AND THAT ONLY RECEIVES MINIMAL HELP FROM OUTSIDE. END SUMMARY

3. THE VISITORS. IN ADDITION TO REPRESENTATIVE MURTHA AND SECRETARY MARSH, VISITORS INCLUDED DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS STAFFER JOHN PLASCHAL, GENERAL WAYNE DOWNING (US ARMY) OF US SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND, WILLIAM OLSON FROM ASD SO-LIC, LTCOL CLOSE AND MAJOR NEUMAN OF SEC MARSH'S OFFICE, AND LTCOL RICHARD BROWN FROM DOD/ISA. OBJECTIVE OF THE VISIT WAS TO OBTAIN FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE OF THE SERIOUSNESS AND COMPLEXITY OF THE CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRATICALLY CONSTITUTED AUTHORITY IN COLOMBIA AND HOW THE UNITED STATES MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP.

4. WHO THEY SAW. THE VISITORS WERE WELCOMED UPON ARRIVAL AT 3:00 PM MAY 22 BY GENERAL BOTERO, COMMANDER OF THE ARMY, AND MAJOR GENERAL MURILLO, SUBSECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. FOLLOWING A LATE AFTERNOON COUNTRY TEAM BRIEFING AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, THE VISITORS SHARED AN INFORMAL BUFFET DINNER WITH MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS CEPEDA, PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR RODRIGO PARDO, EX-FINANCE MINISTER RODRIGO BOTERO AND OTHERS. ON MONDAY, MAY 23, THE CONGRESSMAN, SECRETARY MARSH, MR. PLASCHAL AND MR. OLSON ACCOMPANIED

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THE AMBASSADOR AND POLCOUNS TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT BARCO. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A SESSION AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WITH MINISTER SAMUDIO, ARMED FORCES COMMANDER GENERAL GUERRERO PAZ, CHIEF OF THE JOINT STAFF GENERAL NELSON MEJIA, COMMANDER OF THE ARMY GENERAL OSCAR BOTERO, AIR FORCE COMMANDER MAJOR GENERAL ALFREDO ORTEGA, AND DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE NAVY VICE ADMIRAL MANUEL AVENDANO. GENERAL MEJIA THEN HOSTED A LUNCH AT THE COLOMBIAN WAR COLLEGE FOR THE VISITORS PLUS THE AMBASSADOR AND MILGROUP COMMANDER COL. TORRES. THE VISITORS DEPARTED AT 2:30 PM MAY 23.

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5. WHAT THEY DISCUSSED. DURING A 40 MINUTE PRIVATE MEETING AT THE CASA DE NARINO, PRESIDENT BARCO EMPHASIZED THE EFFORTS THAT COLOMBIA HAS BEEN MAKING OVER THE YEARS IN ITS BATTLES WITH THE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. HE SAID A REPORT WOULD BE COMPLETED SHORTLY DETAILING THOSE EFFORTS AND HE INTENDS TO TAKE IT WITH HIM TO WASHINGTON JUNE 3 THROUGH JUNE 8 TO BE ABLE TO HAND IT OUT, TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH, TO THOSE HE WILL MEET. CONGRESSMAN MURTHA THANKED THE PRESIDENT FOR THE EFFORTS HIS ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN MAKING, ESPECIALLY OVER THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS, TO ATTACK TRAFFICKER HOLDINGS IN MEDELLIN, CALI AND THE EASTERN PLAINS. HE SAID THE NARCOTICS ISSUE HAS QUICKLY BECOME THE NUMBER ONE POLITICAL ISSUE IN THE US AS ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS HEAT UP. THE CONGRESSMAN SAID THAT THE US PUBLIC IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED WITH THE INABILITY TO SEE ANY VISIBLE PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST NARCOTICS. THE USG HAS SPENT \$9 BILLION OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS ON ALL ASPECTS OF THE NARCOTICS ISSUE AND HAS NOTHING TO SHOW FOR IT. CONSUMPTION

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: OVIP(MURTHA, REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P., MARSH, SEC OF

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ARMY JOHN O.), MASS, PINS, SNAR, CO
SUBJECT: MURTHA AND MARSH VISIT CONCENTRATES ON NARCO
CONTINUES AT HIGH RATES, DRUG RELATED CRIME AND
CORRUPTION ARE GROWING, AND MORE COCAINE THAN EVER IS
ENTERING THE COUNTRY.

6. BARCO AGREED WITH BOTH REP MURTHA AND SECRETARY MARSH
THAT HE SHOULD STRESS THE NARCOTICS ISSUE WHEN HE MEETS
WITH CONGRESSMEN IN JUNE. BARCO SAID THE GUERRILLA
ISSUE IS TOO COMPLICATED TO TRY TO EXPLAIN, HALF
JOKINGLY NOTING THAT EVEN HE IS NOT SURE HE FULLY
UNDERSTANDS THE LONG HISTORY OF GUERRILLA RELATED
VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA. IN RESPONSE TO BARCO'S REQUEST,
THE AMBASSADOR PROMISED TO SEND HIM THE EMBASSY'S
ANALYSIS OF THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE INSURGENCY AND
THE TRAFFICKERS. MURTHA THEN SAID HE WOULD TRY TO
ENSURE THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS SESSIONS WITH A WIDE RANGE

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OF CONGRESSMEN. IN ADDITION TO THE HOUSE FOREIGN
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, REP MURTHA STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF
A MEETING WITH SPEAKER WRIGHT AND THE HOUSE LEADERSHIP.
HE SAID HE WOULD WORK WITH REP RANGEL TO TRY TO ARRANGE
GOOD CONGRESSIONAL INTERACTION.

7. SECRETARY MARSH RELAYED GREETINGS FOR BARCO FROM
ATTORNEY GENERAL MEESE, EXPLAINING THAT THE AG HAD BEEN
IMPRESSED WITH HIS MEETING APRIL 7 WITH THE PRESIDENT,
AND ESPECIALLY PROFITED FROM THE BRIEFING BY BRIGADIER
GENERAL RUIZ, COMMANDER OF THE FOURTH BRIGADE IN
MEDELLIN. THE SECRETARY REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE THE
US CONGRESS GIVES TO NARCOTICS NOW, AND THE HELP REP
MURTHA COULD BE IN COLOMBIA'S STRUGGLE FOR MORE
RESOURCES. HE SAID CONGRESS WILL BE ENORMOUSLY
INTERESTED IN PRESIDENT BARCO'S VIEWS ON WHAT CAN BE
DONE TO STOP THE NARCOTICS TRADE. BARCO REITERATED HIS
INTENTION TO STRESS THE NARCOTICS THEME ON HIS VISIT
AND, ADDITIONALLY, HOW IT IS AIDED AND ABETTED BY THE
GUERRILLAS AND WHAT THE MILITARY/POLICE CAPABILITY IS TO
CONFRONT BOTH.

8. THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM. BARCO THEN DESCRIBED THE
CARNAGE CAUSED TO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM OVER THE YEARS BY
THE TRAFFICKERS. JUDGES AND THEIR FAMILIES, HE SAID,

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HAVE BEEN THREATENED WITH DEATH AND ONE JUSTICE MINISTER AND AN ATTORNEY GENERAL KILLED SINCE 1984. THE AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT SOME 40 SENIOR JUDICIAL OFFICIALS HAVE DIED OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS AT THE HANDS OF THE NARCOS. BARCO SAID THAT SINCE THE ATTACK ON THE PALACE OF JUSTICE IN WHICH 11 SUPREME COURT JUDGES WERE KILLED, JUDICIAL STANDARDS HAVE BEEN LOWERED. HE LAMENTED THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND CANDIDATES FOR THE SUPREME COURT

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NOW, "...AND WHEN YOU DO THEY DO NOT STAY LONG." HE HINTED THAT INTIMIDATION PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE RECENT COUNCIL OF STATE RULING AGAINST EXTRADITION, NOTING THAT ONE OF THE MAGISTRATES WAS ON A PLANE TO MIAMI WITHIN HOURS OF THE DECISION. BARCO AGREED WITH THE AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT THAT IF ANOTHER CARTEL LEADER IS ARRESTED IT WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO EXTRADITE HIM. BARCO SAID THE NARCOS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN CONVINCING COLOMBIANS THAT NO COLOMBIAN SHOULD BE EXTRADITED. HE SAID RECENT SURVEYS SHOW 82 PERCENT OF COLOMBIANS ARE STRONGLY AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING, AND YET 85 PERCENT OPPOSE EXTRADITION OF COLOMBIAN NATIONALS UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. ONE REASON FOR THE LATTER STATISTIC, BARCO SAID, MAY BE THAT COLOMBIANS DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW SOMEONE CAN BE SENTENCED TO LIFE PLUS 150 YEARS, THE SENTENCE CARLOS LEHDER FACES. IN COLOMBIA, WHERE 30 YEARS IS THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR ANY OFFENSE, THE PUBLIC BELIEVES SUCH LENGTHY SENTENCES ARE CRUEL AND UNUSUAL. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE BELIEVES IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO PUSH NEW LEGISLATION IMPLEMENTING THE 1979 TREATY THROUGH THE COLOMBIAN CONGRESS THIS YEAR.

9. REP MURTHA SAID HE WOULD STRESS TO HIS COLLEAGUES IN WASHINGTON THE ENORMOUS POWER OF INTIMIDATION THE TRAFFICKERS WIELD. UNTIL HE VISITED BOGOTA, IT SIMPLY DID NOT REGISTER THAT THESE JUSTICES HAVE LITERALLY NO PROTECTION AND ARE BEING ASKED TO MAKE DECISIONS UNDER THREAT OF DEATH TO THEMSELVES OR THEIR FAMILIES. THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT THIS WAS ANOTHER POINT BARCO MIGHT WANT TO STRESS ON HIS WASHINGTON VISIT.

10. SECRETARY MARSH ASKED FOR BARCO'S OPINION ON WHAT THE US SHOULD DO. BARCO ADMITTED TO THE DIFFICULTY OF

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TAGS: OVIP (MURTHA, REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P., MARSH, SEC OF
ARMY JOHN O.), MASS, PINS, SNAR, CO
SUBJECT: MURTHA AND MARSH VISIT CONCENTRATES ON NARCO
COMING UP WITH AN ANSWER AND THEN CONCENTRATED ON THE
COLOMBIAN END OF THE PROBLEM. HE SAID PRODUCTION IS NOT
VERY HIGH IN COLOMBIA BECAUSE "WE HAVE FOUGHT THEM."
THAT PLUS POOR SOIL CONDITIONS IN THE JUNGLE AREAS HAVE
KEPT COLOMBIAN PRODUCTION OF COCA LOW, ONLY A FRACTION
OF WHAT IS GROWN IN BOLIVIA AND PERU. CONSEQUENTLY,
COLOMBIA IS MAINLY A PROCESSING AND EXPORT COUNTRY AT
THIS POINT.

11. MEETING WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND SERVICE
CHIEFS: AFTER THANKING THE CONGRESSMAN FOR HIS
APPRECIATION OF WHAT COLOMBIA HAS DONE IN THE NARCOTICS
FIGHT, DEFENSE MINISTER SAMUDIO STRESSED THAT THE
GUERRILLA IS THE TRADITIONAL ENEMY OF THE MILITARY.
NEVERTHELESS, BECAUSE OF THE PERCEIVED NEED IN THE

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COUNTRY TO FIGHT THE TRAFFICKERS, THE GOVERNMENT MADE AN IMPORTANT DECISION TO USE ITS LIMITED MILITARY RESOURCES TO GO AFTER THE TRAFFICKERS. THIS WAS A MAJOR DECISION IN LIGHT OF THE RISKS, IMPLYING THAT THE GUERRILLAS WOULD GROW STRONGER BECAUSE RESOURCES WOULD HAVE TO GO TO FIGHTING NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. SAMUDIO LAMENTED THAT THE US AND COLOMBIA, AS WELL AS OTHER NATIONS, HAVE ALLOWED THE DRUG PROBLEM TO GET OUT OF HAND. IN ADDITION LEFTIST GUERRILLA MOVEMENTS HAVE GROWN AND SPREAD IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND COLOMBIA. HE SAID WE MUST JOINTLY COOPERATE TO FIGHT BOTH PROBLEMS.

12. THE DEFENSE MINISTER THEN SAID THAT SUCH COOPERATION SHOULD BE IN THE FORM OF MAP, FMS CREDITS, AND EXIM FINANCING. HE APPRECIATED THE MAP AND FMS RECEIVED IN THE PAST, BUT MENTIONED THAT TOTALS HAD BEEN SMALL AND NONE HAD BEEN ALLOCATED TO COLOMBIA IN FY 1988. HE FOUND HARD TO UNDERSTAND EXIM INABILITY TO FINANCE COLOMBIAN PURCHASES OF FORD TRUCKS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT WOULD BE USED TO FIGHT BOTH THE GUERRILLAS AND THE NARCOS, SINCE THE FORMER ARE A PART OF THE NARCOTICS INDUSTRY HERE. SAMUDIO SAID THE MILITARY PREFERS US ASSISTANCE BUT MUST TURN TO EUROPEAN AND OTHER SUPPLIERS IN THE ABSENCE OF US CREDIT. HE NOTED THAT THE NATIONAL POLICE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR OVER ONE MONTH FOR AN EXIM DECISION ON WHETHER THE VEHICLES THE POLICE WANT TO PURCHASE WILL QUALIFY FOR EXIM BACKING OR WILL BE CONSIDERED "MILITARY." AFTER ALL, HE SAID, "WE ARE NOT ASKING FOR F-16S."

13. SAMUDIO APPRECIATED THE HELP COLOMBIA RECEIVES THROUGH THE NARCOTICS ASSISTANCE UNIT, BUT AGAIN THOUGHT IT TO BE RELATIVELY SMALL AND HARD TO OBTAIN. HE TOLD

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REP MURTHA THAT HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE AMBASSADOR'S INTERVENTION, THE POLICE WOULD NOT HAVE RECEIVED THE ONE MILLION DOLLAR ADVANCE THAT ALLOWED THEM TO PLAN THE RECENT MEDELLIN STRIKES AGAINST NARCO LABS AND OTHER HOLDINGS. HE WAS PLEASED TO LEARN THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT WILL KEEP THIS YEAR'S ALLOCATION AT \$10 MILLION.

n/a

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14. REP MURTHA AND SECRETARY MARSH THEN OUTLINED MOVES IN CONGRESS TO BRING THE US MILITARY MORE INTO THE ANTI-NARCOTICS FIGHT. THEY SAID CONGRESS WOULD LIKELY APPROVE UP TO \$600 MILLION FOR SUCH AN INITIATIVE AND ASKED SAMUDIO ABOUT PROBLEMS COLOMBIAN MILITARY HAS IN MAKING ARRESTS AND CARRYING OUT TRADITIONAL POLICE DUTIES. SAMUDIO SAID THAT SINCE COLOMBIA IS A DEMOCRACY, ITS MILITARY HAS THE SAME PROBLEM AS THE US MILITARY IN CAPTURING AND QUESTIONING LAW BREAKERS. NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID, WE ARE LIVING IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES AND IN SUCH A CONDITION SPECIAL EMERGENCY MEASURES ARE REQUIRED. IF THE MILITARY HERE DOES NOT HAVE THE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ITS EFFORTS, THOSE EFFORTS WILL FAIL. HE CONTINUED BY SAYING THAT PRESIDENT BARCO'S DECREES IN DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY HAVE BEEN A BIG HELP IN GIVING THE MILITARY THE AUTHORITY TO INCREASE ITS EFFORTS AGAINST THE NARCOS.

15. SEC. MARSH ASKED ABOUT THE EMPLOYMENT OF RIVERINE CRAFT IN THE EASTERN PLAINS AREA TO COMBAT GUERRILLA AND NARCO OPERATIONS. GENERAL GUERRERO PAZ SAID THAT RESOURCES WERE SO LIMITED THAT THE MARINE INFANTRY HAD TO BE USED IN THE MAGDELENA MEDIO REGION WHERE NARCO AND GUERRILLA RIVER TRAFFIC WAS HEAVIER. THIS, HE SAID, TOOK AWAY FROM PATROLLING COLOMBIA'S EXTENSIVE COAST

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TAGS: OVIP (MURTHA, REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P., MARSH, SEC OF ARMY JOHN O.), MASS, PINS, SNAR, CO

SUBJECT: MURTHA AND MARSH VISIT CONCENTRATES ON NARCO AND, THEREFORE, FROM BEING BETTER ABLE TO STOP THE SMUGGLING OUT OF NARCOTICS AND THE SMUGGLING IN OF PRECURSOR CHEMICALS AND WEAPONS FOR THE BOTH GUERRILLA AND NARCO OPERATIONS. SAMUDIO ADDED THAT THE GOC PLANS TO BUY LARGER COAST GUARD VESSELS, AND THAT THE NAVY HAS BEEN NEGOTIATING FOR OVER A YEAR TO BUY TWO 110 FOOT COASTAL PATROL BOATS IN THE US. AGAIN, HE SAID, CREDITS ARE THE PROBLEM BECAUSE THE BANKS WILL ONLY FINANCE 85 PERCENT OF THE PURCHASE FOR THESE VESSELS. AS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW US ASSISTANCE IS USED, SAMUDIO SAID THAT IN THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS 600 BOATS HAVE BEEN STOPPED AND SEARCHED BY GOC FORCES THANKS TO A USG FUEL SUBSIDY.

16. SECRETARY MARSH CLOSED THE MEETING BY NOTING THAT WE HAD COMMON PROBLEMS AND THAT THE US HAD A LOT TO LEARN

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FROM COLOMBIA'S EXPERIENCES. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE USG COULD BE MORE FORTHCOMING WITH FUTURE ASSISTANCE.

17. THE PARTY THEN PROCEEDED TO LUNCH AT THE WAR COLLEGE, WHERE THE SAME THEMES MENTIONED ABOVE WERE DISCUSSED WITH GENERAL MEJIA AND MIDDLE LEVEL COLOMBIAN OFFICERS.

18. COMMENT: THE VISIT SUCCESSFULLY BROUGHT OUT THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF COLOMBIA'S SECURITY PROBLEMS, ITS LIMITED RESOURCES WITH WHICH TO TACKLE THOSE PROBLEMS, AND THE CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IT HAS BEEN HAVING OF LATE AGAINST THE NARCOS DESPITE THE CONSTRAINTS. THE COLOMBIANS ALL EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR US HELP AND UNDERSTANDING, BUT NOTED THE NEED FOR MORE ASSISTANCE GIVEN THE SCOPE OF THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM BOTH IN COLOMBIA AND THE US. BOTH PRINCIPAL GUESTS WERE ESPECIALLY APPRECIATIVE OF PRESIDENT BARCO FOR SEEING THEM ALONE, WITHOUT HIS STAFF. BARCO TOLD THE AMBASSADOR HE THOUGHT SUCH VISITS VERY IMPORTANT, BUT

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REMARKED THAT 24 HOURS IS JUST NOT ENOUGH TIME FOR VISITORS TO GET AN ACCURATE PICTURE OF COLOMBIA'S PROBLEMS.

(NOTE: THIS CABLE WAS NOT CLEARED PRIOR TO DEPARTURE OF REP MURTHA, SECRETARY MARSH AND PARTY.)

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