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E120

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ACTION ARA-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-08 ACDE-00 AID-00 ACQ-01 OASY-00 DS-00
UTED-00 IM-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 ADS-00 MMP-00 SCT-00
ASDS-01 DSCC-00 DRL-04 /016W

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P 242224Z NOV 97
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0038
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD
FBI WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
DIRONDCP WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
NSC WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 3528

RELEASED IN FULL

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STATE FOR ARA/AND, DRL
NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
ONDCP FOR JANET CRIST
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
FBI FOR CID/IRS/IRU2
USIA FOR AR, I/GAR

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PTER, PHUM, PINS, PINR, ASEC, PGOV, CO
SUBJECT: PARAMILITARY MASSACRES LEAVE 21 DEAD

1. SUMMARY: PARAMILITARIES ARE BEING BLAMED FOR A NOVEMBER 21
MASSACRE THAT SHOCKED THE COUNTRY BOTH FOR ITS SAVAGERY -- FOURTEEN
PEOPLE, INCLUDING TWO MINORS, WERE SHOT TO DEATH NEAR TOCAIMA,
CUNDINAMARCA -- AND ITS PROXIMITY TO BOGOTA (100 KILOMETERS AWAY).
PARAMILITARIES ARE ALSO BELIEVED RESPONSIBLE FOR A NOVEMBER 23

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MASSACRE IN ANTIOQUIA THAT LEFT SEVEN DEAD. MEANWHILE, 700 PEASANTS HAVE FLED ANOTHER PART OF ANTIOQUIA IN THE WAKE OF A MASSACRE EARLIER THIS MONTH. END SUMMARY.

2. COLOMBIANS WERE SHOCKED TO LEARN NOVEMBER 21 OF A MASSACRE EARLIER THAT DAY NEAR TOCAIMA, CUNDINAMARCA DEPARTMENT. ACCORDING TO SURVIVORS, SEVERAL HEAVILY ARMED AND UNIFORMED MEN ENTERED THE AREA AT DAWN NOVEMBER 21 AND TOOK OVER THE HOME OF FARM ADMINISTRATOR AND SHOPKEEPER GERMAN LOAIZA. AFTER LOCKING UP LOAIZA'S CHILDREN AND FORCING HIS WIFE TO COOK BREAKFAST, THE INTRUDERS TIED UP LOAIZA AND HIS WIFE AND BROUGHT THEM TO THE NEARBY VILLAGE OF LA HORQUETA. MEANWHILE, OTHER HEAVILY ARMED AND UNIFORMED MEN, "WITH LIST IN HAND," HAD DRAGGED SEVERAL RESIDENTS OUT OF THEIR HOMES IN LA HORQUETA AND THE NEARBY VILLAGE OF ZELANDIA, TIED AND GAGGED THEM, AND FORCED THEM TO LIE FACE DOWN ON THE STREET. WHEN THE LOAIZAS AND THEIR CAPTORS ARRIVED IN LA HORQUETA AT AROUND 11:30 AM, THE WIFE WAS UNTIED AND TOLD TO GO HOME WITHOUT LOOKING BACK. A FEW MOMENTS LATER, SHE HEARD THE BURST OF GUNFIRE THAT LEFT HER HUSBAND AND OTHERS DEAD. THE TOTAL NUMBER KILLED WAS FOURTEEN IN BOTH LOCATIONS, INCLUDING ONE WOMAN AND TWO BROTHERS, AGED FIFTEEN AND SIXTEEN, AS WELL AS ONE OF THE ATTACKERS, IDENTIFIED AS LUIS CARLOS MERCADO. THREE VILLAGERS WERE

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WOUNDED, INCLUDING ONE WHOSE LEG LATER HAD TO BE AMPUTATED.

3. EYEWITNESSES ESTIMATED THAT THERE WERE ABOUT FIFTEEN ATTACKERS, DESCRIBED AS "TALL, DARK-SKINNED, AND ROBUST" AND SPEAKING WITH "COSTENO" (NORTH COAST) ACCENTS. AT LEAST SOME WORE MASKS. ACCORDING TO ONE ACCOUNT, THE MEN APPEARED TO BE FROM CORDOBA DEPARTMENT, HOME OF CARLOS CASTANO'S PARAMILITARY GROUP ACCU (PEASANT SELF-DEFENSE GROUP OF CORDOBA AND URABA), BUT THIS HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED. THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF MERCADO ALSO REMAIN UNCLEAR; ONE REPORT CLAIMED THAT MERCADO WAS KILLED BY ONE OF THE VILLAGERS, BUT OTHER ACCOUNTS SUGGEST HE DIED AS A RESULT OF "FRIENDLY FIRE" BY HIS FELLOW ATTACKERS.

4. TERRIFIED SURVIVORS WERE RELUCTANT TO GIVE DETAILS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE MOTIVE BEHIND THE ATTACK, PRESUMABLY FEARING FUTURE REPRISALS. NONE WAS AWARE OF ANY PREVIOUS WARNING, HOWEVER, AND ALL CLAIMED THAT THE TOWNSPEOPLE WERE INNOCENT OF ANY WRONGDOING. HOWEVER, THE AREA HAS A LONG TRADITION OF LEFTIST POLITICAL LEANINGS, DATING FROM COMMUNIST PARTY ACTIVITY SURROUNDING THE LAND REFORM MOVEMENT IN THE 1930S. INDEED, TOCAIMA AND ENVIRONS WERE ONCE KNOWN AS "MOSCUCITO" (LITTLE MOSCOW). IN THE PAST THREE

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YEARS, THE FARC'S 22ND FRONT (CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS ALSO REFER TO THE 42ND FRONT) HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN THE REGION. A FEW WEEKS AGO, THE FARC WERE BLAMED FOR BURNING SOME BEER TRUCKS IN THE AREA; THE ARMY'S THIRTEENTH BRIGADE, BASED IN BOGOTA BUT RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF CUNDINAMARCA, SENT PATROLS TO THE AREA SHORTLY THEREAFTER.

5. MOST OBSERVERS, INCLUDING THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND POLICE DIRECTOR SERRANO, WERE QUICK TO PIN THE BLAME ON PARAMILITARIES. ARMY AND POLICE REINFORCEMENTS WERE SENT TO THE AREA AND AN ARMY HELICOPTER OVERFLEW THE ATTACK SITE, BUT TO DATE NO TRACE OF THE

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KILLERS HAS BEEN FOUND. PRESIDENT SAMPER DEPLORED THE MASSACRE AS "COWARDLY AND BARBAROUS," AND VARIOUS OFFICIALS VOWED TO INVESTIGATE FULLY. VIOLENTOLOGIST ALFREDO RANGEL NOTED THAT THE LA HORQUETA KILLINGS COME IN THE WAKE OF THE JULY MAPIRIPAN MASSACRE AND THE RECENT EXODUS FROM TENJO, CUNDINAMARCA (SEE REFTEL AND SEPTTEL). HE NOTED THAT THE TOCAIMA AREA HAS BEEN REGARDED AS A GUERRILLA TRANSIT ZONE AND SOURCE OF FINANCING, APPARENTLY ATTRACTING PARAMILITARY ATTENTION. THE LA HORQUETA MASSACRE, HE SAID, SENT A MESSAGE TO THE FARC THAT THE PARAMILITARIES CAN GO ANYWHERE AND DO ANYTHING. RANGEL PREDICTED THAT THESE AND OTHER PARAMILITARY OUTRAGES WOULD MAKE 1997 ONE OF THE WORST YEARS IN COLOMBIA'S RECENT HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. HE CHARACTERIZED THE PARAMILITARIES AS "THE PRINCIPAL AGENTS (WHO) VIOLATE HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE COUNTRY AND THE MOST IMPORTANT EXECUTORS OF POLITICAL MURDERS."

6. "EL TIEMPO" RECALLED THAT CARLOS CASTANO, IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THAT NEWSPAPER TWO MONTHS AGO, PREDICTED THAT THERE WOULD BE "MANY MORE MAPIRIPANS." ANALYSTS SPECULATED THAT THIS AND OTHER RECENT MASSACRES REPRESENT A NEW STRATEGY BY THE PARAMILITARIES. RATHER

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INFO SECDEF WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD
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DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
DIRONDCP WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
NSC WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 3529

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THAN SWEEPING A PREVIOUSLY CONFLICTIVE AREA "CLEAN" AS IN NORTHERN COLOMBIA, THEY NOW APPEAR TO WAGE PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE BY CONDUCTING SPECIFIC TERROR ATTACKS IN MANY DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. BY STRIKING SO CLOSE TO BOGOTA, "EL TIEMPO" SUGGESTED, THE PARAMILITARIES ARE SHOWING THEIR STRENGTH, PERHAPS IN A BID TO PARTICIPATE IN FUTURE PEACE TALKS, AND ARE ALSO SENDING A SIGNAL TO GUERRILLAS TO CEASE THEIR OWN EFFORTS TO APPROACH THE CAPITAL.

7. VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE RESIDENTS OF LA HORQUETA HAVE ABANDONED THE VILLAGE. ONE RESIDENT LAMENTED, "WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, THE PEASANTS ARE BETWEEN THE SWORD AND THE WALL. IMAGINE THAT IF SOMEONE GIVES A GLASS OF WATER OR LIQUOR TO SOMEONE UNKNOWN, SOMEONE AROUND THERE IS WATCHING THEM TO KILL THEM FOR IT." ANOTHER SAID, "I AM GOING TO SELL MY HOUSE, BECAUSE IF IN BROAD DAYLIGHT THEY KILLED THOSE PEOPLE, THERE IS NO MORE SECURITY FOR

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ANYTHING."

8. ON NOVEMBER 23, ARMED MEN ENTERED THE TOWN OF URAO, ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT, ABOUT 170 KILOMETERS SOUTHWEST OF MEDELLIN, AND IDENTIFIED SEVEN MEN FOR ASSASSINATION, INCLUDING A TOWN COUNCILLOR FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE PRESIDENT OF A COMMUNITY ACTION ORGANIZATION. AFTER BEING SHOT TO DEATH, THE VICTIM'S BODIES WERE TOSSED IN A NEARBY RIVER. ACCORDING TO NEWSPAPER REPORTS, THE AREA HAS SEEN BOTH GUERRILLA AND PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE PAST YEAR, BUT PARAMILITARIES ARE BELIEVED RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LATEST ATTACK.

9. MEANWHILE, HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE (CONFLICTING NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS
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PUT THE TOTAL AT 700 OR 1200) HAVE FLED AN AREA IN NORTHERN ANTIOQUIA NEAR ITUANGO IN THE WAKE OF AN EARLY NOVEMBER PARAMILITARY MASSACRE THAT LEFT OVER 15 PEOPLE DEAD IN THE NEIGHBORING VILLAGE OF EL ARO. THE UNITED AUTODEFENSAS OF COLOMBIA (AUC) CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MASSACRE AND FOR BURNING FIFTY HOMES, THE CHURCH, AND SEVERAL FARMS IN THE VICINITY.

10. COMMENT: THE TOCAIMA KILLINGS REPRESENT THE FIRST TIME PARAMILITARIES HAVE CARRIED OUT A MASSACRE SO CLOSE TO BOGOTA. THIS FACTOR, ON TOP OF THE HEAVY PUBLICITY GIVEN TO SUCH PARAMILITARY OUTRAGES AS THE MAPIRIPAN MASSCRE, RATCHETS UP PRESSURE ON THE GOC TO TAKE ACTION -- BUT THE FACT THAT NO TRACE OF THE KILLERS HAS TURNED UP YET DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF HUNDREDS OF POLICE AND SOLDIERS IN THE WAKE OF THE KILLINGS IS NOT ENCOURAGING.
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