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	ADS-00	M-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
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P 262245Z SEP 96
 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1851
 INFO DOSAIRWING PATRICK AFB FL
 USIA WASHDC 0331
 NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
 DIA WASHDC
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 SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L. MILLS
DATE/CASE ID: 29 AUG 2001 200101108

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 DEPARTMENT INL A/S GELBARD FROM AMBASSADOR
 STATE FOR ARA; ARA/AND; L/LEI
 NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
 ONDCP FOR BILL BOZIN
 DEA FOR OF, OFL, AO, AX
 JUSTICE FOR CRIM/WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET
 TREASURY FOR FINCEN
 SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
 FBI FOR CID/IRS/IRU2
 USIA FOR AR, I/GAR
 PASS AIRWING PASA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 9/26/00
 TAGS: PGOV SNAR PREL KJUS CO
 SUBJECT: NAS/GOC AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM

REF: STATE 199458

1. THIS CABLE IS SENSITIVE. PLEASE PROTECT.
2. CLASSIFIED BY MYLES R. R. FRECHETTE, AMBASSADOR, AMEMBASSY BOGOTA, REASON 1.5(D).
3. THIS IS AN ACTION CABLE. SEE PARA 18.
4. (U) SUMMARY: COLOMBIAN DEFENSE MINISTER ESGUERRA AND COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE AGREE TO THE USE OF AMERICAN PILOTS ALONGSIDE COLOMBIAN T-65 PILOTS IN OPERATIONAL MISSIONS. COLOMBIANS UNDERSTAND THAT U.S. PILOTS WOULD ERADICATE COCA AND OPIUM CROPS WITHIN A DETERMINED TIME PERIOD AND PROVIDE ON-THE-JOB TRAINING FOR THE COLOMBIANS. COLOMBIANS WOULD LIKE TO

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 RECEIVE SOME OF THE RETROFITTED BRONCOS AND PROCEED WITH MINIMAL RISK NIGHT MISSIONS AS WELL AS DAY MISSIONS. THEY HAVE STRESSED STRONGEST INTEREST IN PROCEEDING ALONG THESE LINES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. EMBASSY REQUESTS INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO MOVE FORWARD WITH NAS/GOC AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM WITH MINIMAL DELAY.

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END SUMMARY.

5. (U) THE AMBASSADOR MET WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE ESGUERRA FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF ON SEPTEMBER 25 TO DISCUSS VARIOUS ISSUES (SEPTELS). ABOUT 60 MINUTES OF THE MEETING WAS DEVOTED TO A DISCUSSION OF THE NAS/GOC AERIAL DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM.

6. (U) THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL MINISTER OF DEFENSE ESGUERRA HAS APPROACHED THE AMBASSADOR SEVERAL TIMES SINCE THE AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM WAS STOPPED ON AUGUST 31 TO PLEAD FOR RESTARTING IT. THE AMBASSADOR HAS TOLD HIM REPEATEDLY THAT THE USG WAS REASSESSING THE PROGRAM AND WOULD SHORTLY SEND INSTRUCTIONS. REPTTEL ARRIVED AT BOGOTA THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 25 AND THE AMBASSADOR MET WITH THE MINISTER AT 3:30 P.M. SINCE THE MINISTER EXPECTED TO DISCUSS THE AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL MONTENEGRO (GENERAL SERRANO, THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTOR, IS IN WASHINGTON) AND COUNTERNARCOTICS CHIEF COLONEL GALLEGU. THE MINISTER SAID HE WAS DELIGHTED THE AMBASSADOR HAD FINALLY RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS. THE MINISTER REPEATED WHAT HE HAS SAID TO THE AMBASSADOR SINCE AUGUST 31. THE WEATHER HAS BEEN EXCELLENT IN THE AREAS WHERE CROP ERADICATION SHOULD BE TAKING PLACE AND OPPORTUNITIES HAVE BEEN WASTED IN THE MORE THAN THREE WEEKS THAT THE PROGRAM HAD BEEN SHUT DOWN. THE MINISTER AND COLONEL GALLEGU BOTH SAID THAT IT IS IMPERATIVE TO BEGIN SPRAYING COCA IMMEDIATELY IN THE GUAVIARE AND PARTICULARLY

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 IN THE MIRAFLORES AREA SO AS NOT TO GIVE THE NARCOS AND THE GUERRILLAS, WHO HAD INSPIRED THE PEASANT DEMONSTRATIONS, THE BELIEF THAT BY ARRANGING DEMONSTRATIONS THEY COULD STOP OR EVEN SLOW DOWN THE DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM.

7. (U) COMMENT: JUST TO ENSURE THE AMBASSADOR GOT THE MESSAGE, THE MINISTER HAD HAND DELIVERED THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 26 A LETTER (DATED SEPTEMBER 26) EXPRESSING THE GOC'S WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE ERADICATING CROPS AND TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. ON NEW PROCEDURES. THE LETTER STATES THAT DESPITE GOC EXPRESSIONS OF "UNBREAKABLE WILL" AND DESIRE TO RESTART ERADICATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THE MINISTRY SEES TIME PASSING

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AND GREAT OPPORTUNITIES WASTING. MINISTER NOTES THAT THIS IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOC. (LETTER TO BE SUMMARIZED SEPTTEL).

8. (U) THE AMBASSADOR THEN MADE ALL THE POINTS IN REFTTEL (PARAS 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, AND 9) IN ORDER TO GIVE THE MINISTER AND THE TWO POLICE OFFICERS A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF WHY THE UNITED STATES HAS REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT THE AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM, AS IT

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1852

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INFO DOSAIRWING PATRICK AFB FL
 USIA WASHDC 0332
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 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
 DIA WASHDC
 DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
 SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
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 FBI WASHDC
 NSC WASHDC
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 DEPARTMENT INL A/S GELBARD FROM AMBASSADOR
 STATE FOR ARA; ARA/AND; L/LEI
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HAS BEEN RUN, IS NOT SATISFACTORY.

9. (C) THE REACTION OF THE COLOMBIANS VARIED BETWEEN ANGER,

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INDIGNATION, AND OUTRAGE IN THE CASE OF COLONEL GALLEGO. THE MINISTER PALED CONSIDERABLY AND COMMENTED THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSION THAT ALL OF THIS WAS "ANCIENT HISTORY" BUT THAT COLOMBIA AND THE U.S. NOW HAD TO GO FORWARD WITH A REINVIGORATED ERADICATION PLAN. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT SOME OF THESE POINTS MAY INDEED HAVE BEEN "HISTORY" BUT THEY WERE A GOOD INDICATION THAT THE WILL TO SUPPORT THE ERADICATION PROGRAM OUTSIDE OF THE NATIONAL POLICE HAS BEEN AND IS LACKING. THE LATEST DECISION OF THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT IMAZAPYR AS THE ONLY GRANULAR HERBICIDE FOR TESTING WAS ONE MORE INDICATION THAT THE COLOMBIANS DID THE MINIMUM, OFTEN DRAGGED THEIR FEET AND APPEARED, AT LEAST TO THE U.S.G., NOT TO BE COOPERATIVE. THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED

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 THROUGHOUT THAT THIS WAS NOT A CRITICISM OF THE NATIONAL POLICE, POLICE INTEREST IN MOVING FORWARD WITH THE PROGRAM OR THE BRAVERY OF COLONEL GALLEGO AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COUNTERNARCOTICS UNIT (DANTI).

10. (C) GENERAL MONTENEGRO SAT THROUGHOUT WITH HIS ARMS CROSSED, LIPS TIGHTLY SEALED, STARING FIRMLY AT THE CEILING. COLONEL GALLEGO, AT TIMES WITH TEARS RUNNING DOWN HIS CHEEKS, ATTEMPTED TO RESPOND POINT BY POINT TO THE AMBASSADOR'S CRITICISMS. HE ARGUED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SHORTCOMINGS, BUT ON BOTH SIDES, NOT JUST BY COLOMBIA. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT THE USE OF THIRD COUNTRY PILOTS HAD BEEN APPROVED BETWEEN NAS AND THE GOC AT ONE TIME, GALLEGO ARGUED HEATEDLY THAT AT THE TIME INL HAD BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE ANY THIRD COUNTRY PILOTS. THEREFORE THE PROGRAM HAD CONTINUED FORWARD ONLY WITH COLOMBIAN PILOTS SINCE THE GOC WOULD NOT APPROVE THE USE OF AMERICAN PILOTS. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHY AT ONE TIME THE COLOMBIANS HAD ALLOWED AMERICAN PILOTS TO FLY AND YET WOULD NOT DO SO UNDER THE SAMPER ADMINISTRATION, MINISTER ESGUERRA POINTED OUT THAT POLICIES CHANGE FROM ADMINISTRATION TO ADMINISTRATION IN THE U.S. AS WELL.

11. (U) AFTER LISTENING TO COLONEL GALLEGO'S IMPASSIONED DEFENSE OF THE CNP THE AMBASSADOR CUT THE DISCUSSION SHORT BY SAYING THAT WHAT IS AT ISSUE IS THAT THE U.S.G. HAS CONCLUDED THAT THE GOC HAS SIMPLY NOT SHOWN ENOUGH POLITICAL WILL TO GO

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FORWARD. THE U.S.G. HAS CONSISTENTLY STUCK TO ITS OBJECTIVES AND FAITHFULLY KEPT ASSISTANCE TO THE POLICE FLOWING. BECAUSE OF THAT, SAID THE AMBASSADOR, THE U.S.G. HAD THREE OPTIONS TO OFFER. HE THEN GAVE AN EXTRACT OF THE THREE OPTIONS TO THE MINISTER AND WENT THROUGH EACH ONE CAREFULLY SO THAT THE COLOMBIANS UNDERSTOOD

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WHAT WAS AT ISSUE.

12. (C) THERE WAS A STUNNED SILENCE AFTER THE AMBASSADOR FINISHED HIS EXPOSITION. THE MINISTER SAID BEFORE RESPONDING TO THE OPTIONS, THAT HE HAD TO MAKE CLEAR IT IS HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT THE GOC AND THE U.S.G. SHARE THE SAME OBJECTIVE, THAT IS, THE DESTRUCTION OF AS MUCH OF THE ILLEGAL CROPS IN COLOMBIA AS POSSIBLE. IN LOOKING AT THE OPTIONS HE DID NOT WANT TO ADOPT THE THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS OPTION BECAUSE THAT WOULD ENGAGE COLOMBIA IN "ENDLESS COMPLICATIONS" WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. HE ALSO SAID THAT THIS WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO DEFEND IN THE COLOMBIAN CONGRESS. HE THEN SAID THAT HE REJECTED THE THIRD OPTION OF ALLOWING THE COLOMBIANS TO DO IT ALONE BECAUSE CONTINUED U.S.G. INVOLVEMENT, RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL ADVICE ARE NECESSARY FOR THE COLOMBIANS TO LEARN HOW TO DO THIS RIGHT.

13. (C) THEREFORE, SAID THE MINISTER, RELUCTANTLY, HE IS PREPARED TO RECOMMEND TO PRESIDENT SAMPER, AND HE HAD NO DOUBT PRESIDENT SAMPER WOULD APPROVE, THE USE OF AMERICAN PILOTS FLYING

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P 262245Z SEP 96
 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1853
 INFO DOSAIRWING PATRICK AFB FL
 USIA WASHDC 0333
 NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
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 DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
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NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
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ALONGSIDE THE COLOMBIAN T-65 PILOTS IN OPERATIONAL MISSIONS. HE SAID THAT IN EXPLAINING THIS TO HIS CONGRESS HE WOULD HAVE TO DESCRIBE THE AMERICANS AS INSTRUCTORS AND THE COLOMBIANS AS THE PILOTS. IRONICALLY, HE OBSERVED, IT WOULD BE EASIER TO DEFEND IN CONGRESS AND BEFORE PUBLIC OPINION THE USE OF U.S. INSTRUCTOR PILOTS RATHER THAN THE OTHER TWO OPTIONS. HERE, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE AMBASSADOR'S EXPERIENCE, COLONEL GALLEGO INTERRUPTED THE MINISTER URGING HIM TO RECONSIDER THE THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS OPTIONS. COLONEL GALLEGO AND GENERAL MONTENEGRO BOTH SAID THEY THOUGHT THAT IN TERMS OF PUBLIC OPINION THE USE OF THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS WOULD BE EASIER TO ACCEPT THAN AMERICANS.

14. (C) COLONEL GALLEGO THEN MADE AN IMPASSIONED PLEA FOR GOING AHEAD WITH THE ERADICATION. HE SAID THAT DURING THE THREE WEEKS

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THAT THE PROGRAM HAD BEEN STALLED THE NATIONAL POLICE (CNP) HAD BEEN TRYING TO GO FORWARD WITH ITS SINGLE T-65 BUT THE RESULTS WERE "MINIMAL." THE COLOMBIAN ARMY IS IN PLACE PROVIDING SECURITY FOR THE SPRAY AIRCRAFT AND HE HAD EXPLOSIVES STOCKPILED IN MIRAFLORES TO DESTROY NARCO AIRFIELDS. NOW IS THE TIME TO STRIKE, HE ARGUED. GENERAL MONTENEGRO, THE MINISTER AND COLONEL GALLEGU ALL ARGUED THAT IT IS CRUCIAL FOR THE GOC TO GO FORWARD WITH THE ERADICATION PROGRAM SO THAT THE GUERRILLAS AND NARCOS COULD NOT SPREAD THE STORY THAT, IF THERE ARE PEASANT DEMONSTRATIONS THE GOC WILL SLOW DOWN OR STOP ERADICATION. ALL THREE COLOMBIANS SAID IT IS CRUCIAL TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM. COLONEL GALLEGU ASSERTED THAT IF THE U.S. WOULD RESTART ERADICATION USING AMERICAN PILOTS THERE WOULD BE "GREAT" RESULTS AND THE GOC'S POLICY OF COURAGEOUSLY MOVING FORWARD WITH ERADICATION, DESPITE PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, WOULD BE VINDICATED. THE TWO POLICE OFFICERS ALSO ARGUED THAT THE U.S.G. SHOULD NOT "DISCARD" THE HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURE AVAILABLE IN THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE. THIS HAD BEEN DEDICATED TO COOPERATING WITH THE U.S.G. FOR MANY YEARS. TURNING THE WHOLE PROGRAM OVER TO THE COLOMBIAN AIR FORCE AND "WALKING AWAY" WAS UNCONSCIONABLE.

15. (C) MINISTER ESGUERRA RECALLED IN DETAIL HIS CONVERSATION WITH INL A/S GELBARD IN WASHINGTON IN WHICH ASSISTANT SECRETARY GELBARD SAID THAT INL WOULD MAKE AVAILABLE SOME RETROFITTED BRONCOS WHICH COULD BE USED FOR SPRAYING. HE SAID THAT WITH THE ACCEPTANCE BY THE GOC OF THE USE OF AMERICAN PILOTS HE HOPED THAT INL WOULD FURNISH THE RETROFITTED BRONCOS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. THE AMERICAN AND COLOMBIAN PILOTS COULD BEGIN FLYING NOT ONLY MINIMAL RISK NIGHT MISSIONS BUT ALSO DAY TIME MISSIONS.

16. (C) THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF ANIMATED DISCUSSION AND

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DISAGREEMENT AMONG THE THREE COLOMBIANS ABOUT WHETHER TO BRING COLOMBIAN AIR FORCE PILOTS ON DETAIL INTO THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE TO HELP WITH THE SPRAYING RIGHT AWAY AND WHETHER TO UTILIZE ALL EIGHT T-65 SPRAY PLANES PLUS THE RETROFITTED BRONCOS. THE IDEA OF AIR FORCE PILOTS HELPING THE POLICE OBVIOUSLY TICKLED GENERAL MONTENEGRO AND COLONEL GALLEGU BUT THE MINISTER FELT THIS

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WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE FAC.

17. (C) COMMENT: AS IN ALL ASPECTS OF HUMAN ENDEAVOR, TIMING IS EVERYTHING. THE AMBASSADOR, WHO HAD BELIEVED THAT THE COLOMBIANS WOULD NOT AGREE TO THE USE OF AMERICAN PILOTS WAS AMAZED TO SEE THE COLOMBIANS GIVE WAY SO EASILY. THE REASONS ARE AS FOLLOWS: FIRST, THE GOC IS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO ERADICATION. IT HAS COURAGEOUSLY WITHSTOOD WIDESPREAD, LARGE SCALE DEMONSTRATIONS IN SOUTHERN COLOMBIA WHICH, EARLIER IN THE SAMPER ADMINISTRATION, WOULD HAVE CAUSED THE GOC TO CAVE IN QUICKLY. SECOND, THE GOC CANNOT GO FORWARD ANY TIME SOON WITH AN AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM WITHOUT U.S. ASSISTANCE. THIRD, THE COLOMBIANS RECOGNIZE THAT THE U.S.G. CRITICISM OF LACK OF WILL IS

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 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1854
 INFO DOSAIRWING PATRICK AFB FL
 USIA WASHDC 0334
 NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
 DIA WASHDC
 DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
 SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
 SECDEF WASHDC
 DEA WASHDC
 FBI WASHDC
 NSC WASHDC
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 DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
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 NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
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 JUSTICE FOR CRIM/WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET
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VALID AND THEY ARE VERY MUCH AWARE THAT THE RECENT DECISION ON
IMAZAPYR HAS ANGERED THE U.S.G. END COMMENT.

18. (U) ACTION REQUESTED: THAT INL RESPOND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
TO HOW THE AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM COULD BE RESTARTED WITH THE
LEAST POSSIBLY DELAY. EMBASSY PROPOSES WE BEGIN WITH THE TWO
U.S. INSTRUCTOR PILOTS NOW IN COUNTRY AS THIS WOULD BE AN
EXCELLENT SIGN TO THE COLOMBIANS THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO MOVE THE
ERADICATION PROGRAM FORWARD TO MEET BOTH THE GOC'S AND USG'S
OBJECTIVES. FRECHETTE

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