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DOCUMENT_ID: 178798311
INQNO: DOC44D 00192700
DOCNO: [REDACTED]
PRODUCER: JCS
SOURCE: DODTR
DOCTYPE: [REDACTED]
DOR: 19971224
TOR: 071529
DOCPREC: R
ORIGDATE: 199712241154
MHFNO: 97 0085494
DOCCLASS: S

(b)(2)

HEADER
RR RUEAIIA
DE RUEHBO #208C/01 3581154
ZNY ~~SSSSS~~
R 241154Z DEC 97
FM [REDACTED]
TO RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC/
INFO RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL/
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC/
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC/
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

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CONTROLS

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SERIAL: (U) IIR [REDACTED]

TEXT

COUNTRY: (U) COLOMBIA (CO); PANAMA (PM).

//IPSP: (U) [REDACTED]

COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJ: IIR [REDACTED] CASHIERED COLONEL TALKS FREELY
ABOUT THE ARMY HE LEFT BEHIND (LASER STRIKE) (U)

WARNING: (U) THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT
FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE. REPORT CLASSIFIED
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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DOI: (U) 971117.

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REQS: (U) [REDACTED]

SOURCE: A. (U) [REDACTED]

B. (U) [REDACTED]

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SUMMARY: ~~(S)~~ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] SEEMS TO KNOW A LOT ABOUT PARAMILITARIES AND THEIR LINKS TO DRUG TRAFFICKERS AND THE ARMY.

TEXT: 1. ~~(S)~~ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THE 17TH BRIGADE LOCATED AT CAREPA IN THE URABA REGION OF NORTHWESTERN ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT. THIS IS THE UNIT HAVING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CURRENTLY TENSE BORDER WITH PANAMA, WHICH IS EXPERIENCING THE SPILLOVER EFFECTS OF GUERRILLAS AND PARAMILITARIES ACTING WITH RELATIVE IMPUNITY AGAINST INNOCENT CIVILIANS, MANY OF WHOM HAVE BEEN DISPLACED OR MURDERED, ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER.

2. ~~(S)~~ [REDACTED] SPECIAL COMMAND (COMANDO ESPECIAL CONJUNTO, OR CEC), WHICH IS THE COLAR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORT TO CAPTURE DRUG KINGPINS KNOWN AS THE "BLOQUE DE BUSQUEDA" (SEARCH BLOC), LOCATED IN CALI (VALLE DEL CAUCA).

[REDACTED]

3. ~~(S)~~ [REDACTED]



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4. ~~TS~~ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] THERE IS A "BODY COUNT SYNDROME" IN THE COLAR WHEN IT COMES TO PURSUING THE GUERRILLAS. ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] THIS MINDSET TENDS TO FUEL HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY OTHERWISE WELL-MEANING SOLDIERS TRYING TO GET THEIR QUOTA TO IMPRESS SUPERIORS. IT COULD ALSO LEAD TO A CAVALIER, OR AT LEAST PASSIVE, APPROACH WHEN IT COMES TO ALLOWING THE PARAMILITARIES TO SERVE AS PROXIES FOR THE COLAR IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE GUERRILLA BODY COUNT.

5. ~~TS~~ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] SAID THAT [REDACTED] WAS INTIMATELY FAMILIAR WITH THE RECORD OF TWO 17TH BRIGADE COMMANDERS. THE FIRST WAS BG VICTOR JULIO ((ALVAREZ)) VARGAS, WHOM [REDACTED] SAID [REDACTED] REALLY LIKED AND RESPECTED. ALVAREZ COMMANDED THE BRIGADE IN 1995 AND WAS REPLACED IN JAN 96 BY BG RITO ALEJO ((DEL RIO)) ROJAS, ABOUT WHOM HE HAD FEWER NICE THINGS TO SAY.

6. ~~TS~~ [REDACTED] WAS ASKED IF THE PARAMILITARY WAVE OF VIOLENCE IN THE URABA REGION AND THE RELATED MILITARY COLLUSION WERE RECENT PHENOMENA. [REDACTED] REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE, SAYING THAT MILITARY COOPERATION WITH THE PARAMILITARIES HAD BEEN OCCURRING FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, BUT THAT IT HAD GOTTEN MUCH WORSE UNDER DEL RIO. [REDACTED] AFTER HIS BRIGADE COMMAND, BG ALVAREZ BECAME DIRECTOR OF THE ESCUELA MILITAR DE CADETES "JOSE MARIA CORDOVA" (THE COLAR EQUIVALENT OF WEST POINT), WHERE HE

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HAS SERVED THE PAST TWO YEARS WITH DISTINCTION. ALVAREZ IS NOW HEADED TO SANTA MARTA (MAGDALENA) IN EARLY JAN 98 TO TAKE OVER THE FIRST DIVISION FROM MG IVAN ((RAMIREZ)) QUINTERO, THOUGH ALVAREZ IS ONE YEAR AWAY FROM 2-STAR PROMOTION ELIGIBILITY. BG DEL RIO, ONE YEAR JUNIOR TO ALVAREZ, IS DUE TO RETURN TO BOGOTA TO TAKE OVER THE URBAN-BASED 13TH BRIGADE. FOR DETAILS ON THESE AND OTHER GENERAL OFFICER REASSIGNMENTS, [REDACTED]

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7. ~~(S)~~ OBSERVING THAT BG DEL RIO'S NEW BOSS WILL BE THE FIFTH DIVISION COMMANDER, MG JORGE ENRIQUE ((MORA)) RANGEL, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] CONCURRED THAT THIS FORMER JOINT OPERATIONS DIRECTOR (D-3) AND WAR COLLEGE DIRECTOR DOES INDEED HAVE AN UNBLEMISHED PUBLIC REPUTATION. NEVERTHELESS, [REDACTED] OPINED THAT, WHEN IT CAME TO HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PARAMILITARIES, MORA "PROBABLY WAS ONE OF THOSE WHO LOOKED THE OTHER WAY." [REDACTED] WAS REFERRING IN PARTICULAR TO THE TIME FRAME WHEN MORA WAS A BG COMMANDING THE LARGE AND CRITICAL 4TH BRIGADE IN MEDELLIN (ANTIOQUIA), THE SISTER UNIT TO THE 17TH, BACK IN 1994-95. [REDACTED] ALSO FELT THAT AN EARLIER COMMANDER OF THAT UNIT, FORMER COLAR AND MILITARY FORCES COMMANDER GEN HAROLD ((BEDOYA)) PIZARRO, FELL INTO THE SAME CATEGORY. IN OTHER WORDS, OFFICERS SUCH AS MORA AND THE NOW RETIRED BEDOYA NEVER ALLOWED THEMSELVES TO BECOME DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN ENCOURAGING OR SUPPORTING PARAMILITARY ACTIVITIES, BUT THEY TURNED THEIR BACKS TO WHAT WAS HAPPENING AND FELT THE COLAR SHOULD IN NO WAY BE BLAMED FOR ANY RESULTING HUMAN RIGHTS ATROCITIES COMMITTED.

8. ~~(S)~~ WHILE [REDACTED] WAS SERVING IN URABA, NEXT HIGHER HEADQUARTERS FOR BOTH THE 17TH AND 4TH BRIGADES WAS THE FIRST DIVISION, WHICH WAS COMMANDED BY MG RAMIREZ AT THE TIME AND STILL WILL BE FOR A COUPLE MORE WEEKS UNTIL BG ALVAREZ TAKES OVER IN SANTA MARTA AND RAMIREZ RETURNS TO BOGOTA TO BECOME COLAR INSPECTOR GENERAL (IG). [REDACTED] IS NO FAN OF RAMIREZ, WHO [REDACTED] IS CONVINCED HAS GONE FAR BEYOND THE PASSIVE PHASE WITH PARAMILITARIES AND IS ACTIVELY SUPPORTING THEM.

[REDACTED] IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL DIRECTION THE COLAR COULD TAKE IF RAMIREZ ABUSES HIS POSITION AS IG OR, WORSE, IF HE IS ALLOWED TO RISE TO EVEN HIGHER POSITIONS IN THE ARMED FORCES HIERARCHY. [REDACTED] IS NOT OVERLY OPTIMISTIC THAT THE MILITARY CURRENT LEADERSHIP WILL TAKE ANY FIRM ACTION TO GET RID OF RAMIREZ IN THE SHORT TERM.

COMMENTS: 1. ~~(S)~~ [REDACTED]

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