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ACTION DRL-09

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-10	ACDE-00	INLB-01	AID-00	ARA-01	ACQ-01
	INL-01	OASY-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	OIGO-01	TEDE-00
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P 102238Z JAN 97  
 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3961  
 DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
 INFO CIA WASHDC  
 DIRONDCP WASHDC  
 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM  
 NSC WASHDC  
 USIA WASHDC 1139  
 DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
 SECDEF WASHDC  
 USMISSION GENEVA  
 DEA WASHDC  
 NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA  
 SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//  
 DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD  
 FBI WASHDC  
 DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 000274

STATE FOR DRL, ARA/AND, INL, L/LEI  
NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS

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ONDCP FOR BILL BOZIN  
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEA FOR OF, OFL, OC, AX  
JUSTICE FOR CRIM. WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET  
FBI FOR CID/IRS/IRU2  
USIA FOR AR, I/GAR  
TREASURY FOR FINCEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/27/01  
TAGS: PHUM, PREL, PGOV, SNAR, PINR, KJUS, KCRM, CO  
SUBJECT: RETIRED ARMY COLONEL LAMBASTES MILITARY FOR INACTION  
AGAINST PARAMILITARIES

REF:

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECONOFF SUSAN ABEYTA. REASON 1.5(D).

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SUMMARY  
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2. (U) RETIRED ARMY COLONEL CARLOS ALFONSO VELASQUEZ, PUBLICLY DENOUNCED THE ARMY JANUARY 9 FOR FAILING TO COMBAT PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN URABA. KNOWN AND ADMIRER AS FORMER COMMANDER OF THE ARMY COMPONENT OF THE SPECIAL ANTI-NARCOTICS TASK FORCE IN CALI (BLOQUE DE BUSQUEDA), VELAZQUEZ IS CREDITED WITH UNCOVERING INFORMATION THAT FORMED THE BASIS FOR CASO 8,000. VELAZQUEZ CLAIMS THAT HE WAS FORCED INTO RETIREMENT BECAUSE OF A HIGHLY CRITICAL REPORT HE DRAFTED CHARGING THE ARMY WITH INACTION AND NEGLIGENCE IN THE FACE OF GROWING PARAMILITARISM IN URABA, WHERE HE WAS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE 17TH BRIGADE. END SUMMARY.

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HIGHLY RESPECTED COLONEL PUBLICLY CALLS ARMY TO ACCOUNT  
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3. (U) RETIRED ARMY COLONEL CARLOS ALFONSO VELASQUEZ WENT ON

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NATIONAL TV JANUARY 9 TO BLAST THE ARMY FOR ITS WILLFUL FAILURE TO COMBAT PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN COLOMBIA. LOCAL DAILIES GAVE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO VELASQUEZ STATEMENTS JANUARY 10, BUT VELASQUEZ HAD EVIDENTLY BEEN PREPARING TO GO PUBLIC FOR SOME TIME. AN EXTENSIVE INTERVIEW WITH VELASQUEZ APPEARED IN THE JANUARY 15-FEBRUARY 15 ISSUE OF "ALTERNATIVA" AS WELL. VELASQUEZ WAS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE 17TH BRIGADE IN URABA FROM JUNE 1995 UNTIL THE FALL OF 1996. ON MAY 31, 1996, VELASQUEZ SUBMITTED AN INTERNAL REPORT TO THE GENERAL STAFF, CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF THE 17TH BRIGADE FOR FAILURE OF THE BRIGADE TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN URABA. THE REPORT WAS CRITICAL OF THE 17TH BRIGADE COMMANDER GENERAL RITO ALEJO DEL RIO WHO, VELASQUEZ CHARGED, WAS NOT ENGAGED IN FIGHTING PARAMILITARIES AND WHO TOOK SPECIAL MEASURES TO KEEP VELASQUEZ OUT OF THE LOOP WITH REGARD TO KEY BRIGADE ACTIONS. VELASQUEZ SAID HE ALSO WROTE TO GENERAL BEDOYA, THE ARMY COMMANDER AND LATER MET WITH HIM. BEDOYA WAS NOT SYMPATHETIC, SAID VELASQUEZ. A RESULT, AN INVESTIGATION AGAINST VELASQUEZ HIMSELF WAS LAUNCHED, AS HE TOLD THE PRESS, FOR "INSUBORDINATION AND DISLOYALTY." ON AUGUST 23, THE ARMY GENERAL ASSIGNED TO INVESTIGATE THE CASE ISSUED A RESOLUTION OF "REPRENSION SEVERA" OR SEVERE REPRIMAND AGAINST VELASQUEZ FOR "INSUBORDINATION, BREACH OF SERVICE AND COMRADESHIP." VELASQUEZ' EFFORTS TO APPEAL FAILED, AND ON NOVEMBER 20, HE WAS ORDERED INTO RETIREMENT, WHICH TOOK EFFECT JANUARY 1. HE TOLD "ALTERNATIVE" THAT DURING THE

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APPEAL HEARING, HE WAS CRITICIZED FOR HAVING RECOMMENDED THAT AN INTERNATIONAL NGO GIVE SPECIAL RECOGNITION TO MONSIGNOR DUARTE CANCINO AND MAYOR GLORIA CUARTAS OF APARTADO FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN FAVOR OF PEACE.

4. (U) VELASQUEZ TOLD BOGOTA DAILY "EL TIEMPO" THAT THE ARMY IS NOT CONVINCED THAT PARAMILITARY ELEMENTS CONSTITUTE A DANGEROUS FACTOR IN THE PUBLIC DISORDER AND VIOLENCE IN URABA. HE FURTHER CHARACTERIZED ELEMENTS IN THE ARMY AS BEING EXTREMELY RADICALIZED TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY CONCEIVE THE GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS AS PERSONAL ENEMIES RATHER THAN AS ENEMIES OF SOCIETY. FOR HIS PART, VELASQUEZ SAID THE ARMY SHOULD COMBAT EVERY FACTOR THAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE VIOLENCE AFFECTING COLOMBIAN SOCIETY.

VELASQUEZ WARNED THAT THE TENDENCY TO IGNORE THE PRESENCE OF  
PARAMILITARIES COULD LEAD IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO A SITUATION  
ANALAGOUS TO WHAT HE CALLED COLOMBIA'S FORMER "COHABITATION" WITH  
NARCOTRAFFICKERS. HE TOLD "ALTERNATIVA" THAT THERE WAS NO  
OBJECTIVE AND IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION OF HIS ALLEGATIONS,  
EXPLAINING, "THE ARMY IS SUCH A HIERARCHICAL INSTITUTION THAT

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P 102238Z JAN 97 ZDK  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3962  
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
INFO CIA WASHDC  
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USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM  
 NSC WASHDC  
 USIA WASHDC 1140  
 DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
 SECDEF WASHDC  
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 DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD  
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THERE STILL EXISTS THE PRINCIPLE THAT ONE'S SUPERIOR IS RIGHT ABOVE ALL ELSE, AND FOR THAT REASON THEY GIVE MORE CREDENCE TO THE BRIGADE COMMANDER'S STATEMENT." VELASQUEZ STATED FURTHER THAT ARMY COMMANDER BEDOYA HAD REPROACHED HIM FOR SUBMITTING HIS REPORT WITHOUT "INCONTROVERTIBLE EVIDENCE," TO WHICH HE COUNTERED THE PURPOSE OF THE REPORT WAS TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THE INFORMATION HE PROVIDED WAS SUFFICIENT TO LAUNCH AN INVESTIGATION

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THAT WOULD PRODUCE HARD EVIDENCE.

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AN ADMIRER AND MUCH-DECORATED OFFICER  
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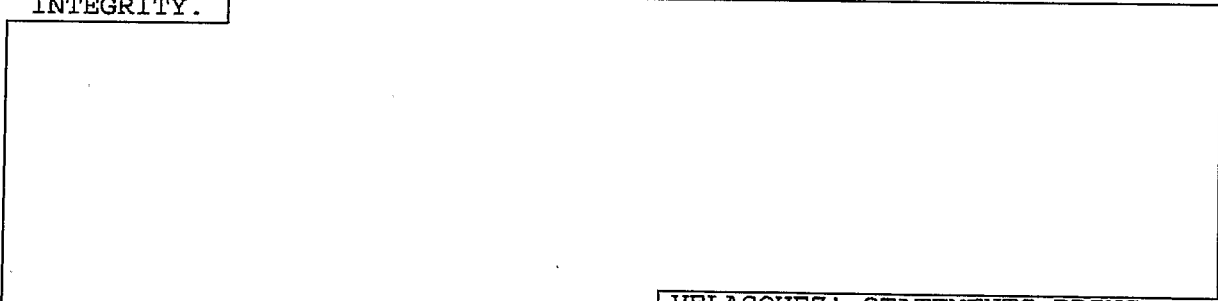
5. (U) VELASQUEZ WAS BEST KNOWN AS THE COMMANDER OF ARMY COMPONENT OF THE SPECIAL ANTI-NARCOTICS JOINT COMMAND OR TASK FORCE ("BLOQUE DE BUSQUEDA") IN CALI. HE COMMANDED THE UNIT WHEN IT CONDUCTED RAIDS ON THE OFFICE OF THE CALI CARTEL'S FORMER ACCOUNTANT, GUILLERMO PALOMARI, WHOSE RECORDS REVEALED THE  
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PENETRATION OF NARCODONATIONS IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AND FORMED THE BASIS OF CASO 8,000. HE GARNERED ADDITIONAL RESPECT AMONG THE COLOMBIAN PUBLIC WHEN HE STOOD UP TO A BLACKMAIL ATTEMPT BY THE CARTEL BY GOING PUBLIC ABOUT AN EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIR.

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COMMENT  
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6. (C) EMBOFFS WHO KNOW VELASQUEZ SPEAK HIGHLY OF HIS PERFORMANCE AS HEAD OF THE ANTI-NARCOTICS SPECIAL JOINT COMMAND'S ARMY COMPONENT IN CALI. WHEN THE CARTEL TRIED TO BLACKMAIL HIM, THEN MINISTER OF DEFENSE BOTERO SAVED HIM FROM DISMISSAL. BOTERO CHARACTERIZED HIM AS CLEAN, AMONG THE BEST, AND OF UNQUESTIONABLE INTEGRITY.



1.4(D)

VELASQUEZ' STATEMENTS BRING EXTRA PRESSURE TO BEAR ON THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY AS THEY PREPARE FOR A NEW DEFENSE MINISTER. THEY WILL ADD CREDIBILITY TO OUR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT.

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