UNCLASSIFIED [redacted] EXCISE INM-4 P B1

To C Wirth 5/9
for 5/10 Mtg. w/Secretary

TALKING POINTS: IMPLICATION OF DOD'S FORCEDOWN DECISION

cc: RSG INM/P B1

Issue and Background:

On May 1, DOD unilaterally suspended the provision of "real time" tracking information on suspected narcotics smuggling aircraft to the Governments of Colombia and Peru, a move that has undercut our counternarcotics efforts and damaged our credibility in the hemisphere.

- DOD's decision is a reaction to GOC and GOP policy to fire on suspected narcotics aircraft that refuse to obey internationally recognized signals ordering them to land.
- It is based on DOD's belief--supported by L--that any use of weapons against civil aircraft is a violation of international law, and that by providing intelligence linked to a shoot-down, DOD would be complicit in such a violation.
- DOD's action occurred as USG agencies, through the INM-chaired IWG, were examining how to respond to the Colombia and Peru policies.

Reaction and Implications:

Our Embassies were caught completely off-guard but immediately conveyed the orders to the host governments which were stunned and have responded swiftly and angrily. Several of our fundamental foreign policy and narcotics control interests are now at risk. [redacted]

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The withdrawal from the air interdiction effort projects to our Latin American allies an image of weakness and of a USG in retreat.

- [ ] told Ambassador Busby that the US has become "an unreliable partner in a very serious business" and that this action will add to growing anti-American sentiment among the Colombian public.
- Ambassador Adams in Peru predicts the decision will provoke more tensions and disrupt counternarcotics programs and other areas of cooperation.

The decision [ ]

- It sends a "green light" to traffickers and eases the shipment of drugs to the United States. Colombia asserts that air trafficking has already increased since the decision went into effect.

We will likely face a bipartisan backlash on the Hill.

- The decision will be characterized as a "soft on drugs" policy by the interdiction supporters.
- It will also be attacked by our supporters as a retreat from the President's policy that pledges to support those countries who demonstrate a commitment to narcotics control, seeks to build host nation counternarcotics institutions, and shifts the focus of interdiction from transit zones to source countries.

Outlook:

The Department needs to develop a position on the policy as well as legal implications of DOD's decision soon.

- The NSC will call a DC meeting this week.
- A decision memo with opposing views--L and EB versus INM and ARA--is on its way.
- We must find a way to restore our credibility and have an effective counternarcotics policy in the hemisphere.

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