

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Paul Hilburn, Senior Reviewer

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LP INCOMING TELEGRAM cc: AS Anti PHUM

PAGE 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 03971 00 OF 03 242047Z SHB9288 ACTION ARA-00

BOGOTA 03971 00 OF 03 242047Z SHB9288 FELLOW LEGISLATORS FOR "NEVER LEAVING BOGOTA" OR THEIR DEPARTMENTAL CAPITAL CITIES, ADDING THAT "THEY HAVE NO IDEA HOW BAD THE VIOLENCE IS IN RURAL AREAS." FOR THE NEXT NINETY MINUTES, VALENCIA (STRICTLY PROTECT) RECOUNTED HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AS A RURAL LANDOWNER AND COMMUNITY LEADER, DESCRIBING BEING KIDNAPPED BY BOTH GUERRILLAS AND PARAMILITARIES. SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE MEETING, HE URGED POLOFF AND FSN NOT TO REVEAL WHAT HE WAS SAYING, SINCE HIS CANDOR WAS "RISKY."

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-10 ACDE-00 INLB-01 CIAE-00 INL-01 OASY-00 DODE-00 SRPP-00 DS-00 EUR-00 H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 L-00 ADS-00 M-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OMB-01 PA-00 PM-00 PRS-00 P-00 CIO-00 SCT-00 SP-00 SS-00 TRSE-00 USIE-00 PMB-00 DSCG-00 DRL-09 G-00 /026W -----837575 242048Z /20

R 242027Z APR 97 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6118 INFO NSC WASHDC USIA WASHDC 2142 SECDEF WASHDC SECDEF WASHDC//OGDEPS// DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD DIA WASHDC CIA WASHDC USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC AMEMBASSY LIMA

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STATE FOR ARA/AND, DRL, EUR/RPM (WFITZPATRICK) NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS ONDCP FOR JANET CRIST JUSTICE FOR CRIM. WARREN, RICHARD AND NDD5/VAN VLIET USIA FOR AR, I/GAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/24/02 TAGS: PTER, PHUM, PINR, PINS, PGOV, SNAR, CO SUBJECT: ANTIOQUIA CONGRESSMAN ON GUERRILLA AND PARAMILITARY VIOLENCE

REF: BOGOTA 3860

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECONOFF PEG WILLINGHAM. REASON 1.5 (U).

2. (C) SUMMARY: POL/ECONOFF MET APRIL 23 WITH CONSERVATIVE CONGRESSMAN JORGE ALVEIRO VALENCIA, WHO DEcriED HIS FELLOW REPRESENTATIVES FOR FAILING TO TAKE THEIR LEGISLATIVE WORK SERIOUSLY. HE ALSO DESCRIBED A DIRE SECURITY SITUATION IN RURAL EASTERN ANTIOQUIA. THE MILITARY AND GUERRILLAS TEND TO AVOID DIRECT CONFRONTATIONS WITH EACH OTHER; PARAMILITARIES STEP INTO THE BREACH, KILLING INNOCENT CIVILIANS IN THEIR WAKE. VALENCIA SAID SOME CONVIVIRS PROVIDE INFORMATION TO PARAMILITARIES BECAUSE THE LATTER WILL TAKE ACTION MORE OFTEN THAN THE MILITARY. PROSECUTORS ARE REPORTEDLY INTIMIDATED INTO FREEING ARRESTED GUERRILLAS. LIKE MANY COLOMBIANS, HE PRAISED PRESIDENT FUJIMORI'S SUCCESSFUL DECISION TO RESCUE THE HOSTAGES AT THE JAPANESE EMBASSY. END SUMMARY.

3. (C) POL/ECONOFF AND POLITICAL FSN MET APRIL 23 WITH CONSERVATIVE CONGRESSMAN JORGE ALVEIRO VALENCIA CARDONA OF ANTIOQUIA AT THE LATTER'S REQUEST. VALENCIA, A DENTIST AND RANCHER, IS A "SUPLENTE" (ALTERNATE) FOR ANOTHER CONSERVATIVE CONGRESSMAN, JUAN IGNACIO CASTRILLON ROLDAN. A NEWCOMER WHO IS ONLY SERVING DURING THE CURRENT LEGISLATIVE PERIOD (MARCH 16-JUNE 20), VALENCIA HAD SOMEWHAT OF A "MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON"

REACTION TO THE VAGARIES OF THE COLOMBIAN CONGRESS. HE DEcriED HIS COLLEAGUES' HABITUAL ABSENTEEISM AND SAID HE WAS SO DISGUSTED BY THEIR LACK OF SERIOUSNESS THAT HE WAS TEMPTED TO RETURN HOME TO ANTIOQUIA BEFORE THE END OF THE SESSION.

4. (C) VALENCIA HAD BEEN A GUEST TWO WEEKS PREVIOUSLY AT AN EMBASSY-HOSTED RECEPTION FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, AND SAID HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE DEPTH OF VARIOUS EMOFFS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION IN COLOMBIA. HE CRITICIZED HIS

5. (C) VALENCIA SAID THAT RURAL SECURITY COOPERATIVES (CONVIVIRS) ARE SUPPOSED TO PROVIDE INTELLIGENCE TO THE ARMED FORCES. HOWEVER, THIS PROCESS DOES NOT REALLY WORK, HE DECLARED, AND SOME CONVIVIRS REPORTEDLY NOW PASS INFORMATION TO PARAMILITARY GROUPS INSTEAD. WHEN POLOFF ASKED HIM TO EXPLAIN, VALENCIA STATED THAT IF A CONVIVIR TELLS THE ARMED FORCES ABOUT A SUSPECTED GUERRILLA IN THEIR COMMUNITY, AND THE ARMED FORCES ARREST THIS INDIVIDUAL AND TURN HIM OVER TO A REGIONAL PROSECUTOR, OTHER GUERRILLAS THREATEN THE PROSECUTOR'S LIFE OR INTIMIDATE COMMUNITY RESIDENTS INTO SIGNING A PETITION TO SECURE THE GUERRILLA'S RELEASE. AFTER A WHILE, VALENCIA SAID, CONVIVIRS CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS NO POINT IN ASKING THE ARMED FORCES TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST GUERRILLAS. HE SAID THAT WHEN HE TOLD THE COMMANDER OF THE NEAREST ARMY BASE ABOUT A

NEARBY GUERRILLA ROADBLOCK, THE OFFICER REPLIED THAT HE WOULD NOT SEEK A CONFRONTATION WITH THE GUERRILLAS BECAUSE IF ANY WERE KILLED, THE OFFICER AND HIS TROOPS WOULD FACE SANCTIONS FOR VIOLATING HUMAN RIGHTS.

6. (C) VALENCIA REPORTED THAT LOCAL LANDOWNERS, DISGUSTED WITH GUERRILLAS' CONSTANT SHAKEDOWNS, THREATS, AND KIDNAPPING ATTEMPTS AND FRUSTRATED BY THE MILITARY'S SEEMING PARALYSIS, SEE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO HIRE PARAMILITARIES TO PROTECT THEM. "EVERYONE PAYS," VALENCIA DECLARED. HE SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY KNOWS OF AT LEAST ONE INCIDENT IN WHICH THE MILITARY IN HIS DISTRICT (MACEO AND SAN ROQUE IN EASTERN ANTIOQUIA) COLLABORATED BY ABANDONING CHECKPOINTS TO ALLOW CARLOADS OF ARMED PARAMILITARIES TO PASS BY UNHINDERED. "THEY LOOK THE OTHER WAY," VALENCIA ASSERTED. HOWEVER, HE WAS UNAWARE OF MORE CONCRETE COOPERATION BETWEEN PARAMILITARIES AND LOCAL MILITARY UNITS. VALENCIA DECLARED THAT MOST PEOPLE WANT TO SEE THE GUERRILLAS' DEFEAT AND DO NOT CARE IF THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED BY THE ARMED FORCES, PARAMILITARIES, "OR AN ATOMIC BOMB." POLOFF ASKED IF NARCOTRAFFICKERS IN THE REGION FINANCE THE PARAMILITARIES. VALENCIA REPLIED THAT THEY PROBABLY DID, ADDING THAT MOST PEOPLE WITH PROPERTY TO DEFEND, NO MATTER WHAT THE SOURCE OF THEIR WEALTH, TENDED TO SUPPORT PARAMILITARIES.

7. (C) VALENCIA SAID HE WAS KIDNAPPED SEVERAL YEARS AGO FOR A WEEK BY GUERRILLAS. THE LATTER DID NOT DEMAND A RANSOM, BUT RATHER HELD VALENCIA WHILE THEY "INVESTIGATED" A LOCAL DISPUTE IN WHICH HE HAD BEEN INVOLVED. AT THE END OF THE WEEK, THE GUERRILLA COMMANDER RELEASED VALENCIA, SAYING HE HAD BEEN "CLEARED." HOWEVER, THE GUERRILLA CONTINUED, SOMEONE ELSE IN THE TOWN WOULD BE PUNISHED FOR

"SPREADING RUMORS AND GOSSIP" RELATED TO THE DISPUTE. THE FOLLOWING DAY, ONE OF VALENCIA'S NEIGHBORS WAS MURDERED, AND A GUERRILLA SUBSEQUENTLY INFORMED VALENCIA THAT THIS WAS IN FACT THE INDIVIDUAL TARGETED FOR REPRISAL.

8. (C) VALENCIA WAS DETAINED IN OCTOBER 1996 BY TEN OR TWELVE ARMED, UNIFORMED MEN WHO FORCED HIM OUT OF HIS CAR, TIED HIS HANDS BEHIND HIS BACK, HELD RIFLES TO HIS HEAD, AND THREATENED TO KILL HIM IF HE REFUSED TO ADMIT TO BEING A GUERRILLA COLLABORATOR. VALENCIA DENIED THE CHARGES, EVEN WHEN A HOODED MAN, PURPORTING TO BE A GUERRILLA, ACCUSED HIM OF HELPING TO HIDE GUERRILLAS' WEAPONS ON HIS RANCH. WHEN THE MAN REMOVED HIS HOOD, VALENCIA REALIZED HE WAS NOT A GUERRILLA, BUT RATHER ONE OF THE PARAMILITARIES IN DISGUISE WHO HAD USED THIS PLOY IN AN ATTEMPT TO FORCE HIM TO CONFESS. VALENCIA SAID THAT, TERRIFIED FOR HIS LIFE, HE OFFERED

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HIS CAPTORS MONEY. THEY LAUGHED AND SAID THEY HAD PLENTY OF MONEY AND WEAPONS; WHAT THEY WANTED WAS INFORMATION. VALENCIA REPEATED THAT HE HAD NO INFORMATION. WHAT SAVED HIM IN THE END, ACCORDING TO VALENCIA, WERE SOME DOCUMENTS IN HIS BRIEFCASE THAT SHOWED HE KNEW ANTIOQUIA GOVERNOR ALVARO URIBE VELEZ. SAYING "OH, YOU KNOW "EL VIEJO," HIS CAPTORS RELEASED HIM AND HAVE NOT BOTHERED HIM SINCE.

9. (C) POLOFF ASKED IF THIS MEANT THAT GOVERNOR URIBE HAS CLANDESTINE LINKS TO PARAMILITARIES. VALENCIA, WHO ADMIRES URIBE EVEN THOUGH THEY HAIL FROM OPPOSING POLITICAL PARTIES, SAID NO. HE DREW A DIAGRAM TO SHOW THE WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE GOVERNOR, CONVIVIRS, LANDOWNERS, PARAMILITARIES, AND GUERRILLAS. ACCORDING TO VALENCIA, URIBE STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE CONVIVIRS AND HATES THE GUERRILLAS, IN PART BECAUSE THE LATTER MURDERED HIS FATHER. URIBE HAS TIES TO LOCAL CATTLE RANCHERS AND OTHER

LANDOWNERS, AND WAS HIMSELF A CATTLE RANCHER. THESE LANDOWNERS IN TURN PAY PARAMILITARIES TO GO AFTER GUERRILLAS. HOWEVER, VALENCIA INSISTED, URIBE HIMSELF IS "CLEAN AND HONEST" AND IS NOT INVOLVED WITH PARAMILITARIES, ALTHOUGH THE LATTER RESPECT HIM FOR HIS ANTI-GUERRILLA STANCE AND BELIEVE THEY SHARE A COMMON ENEMY. VALENCIA ALSO SAID THAT SOME CONVIVIRS PROBABLY COOPERATE ACTIVELY WITH PARAMILITARIES. POLOFF ASKED VALENCIA IF THE MEN WHO DETAINED HIM WERE PART OF CARLOS CASTANO'S ACCU (AUTODEFENSAS CAMPESINAS DE CORDOBA Y URABA). VALENCIA LAUGHED RATHER BITTERLY AND SAID "WHO ELSE?"

10. (C) VALENCIA SAID THAT PEOPLE WHO COOPERATE WITH GUERRILLAS GENERALLY DO SO OUT OF INTIMIDATION, RATHER THAN BECAUSE THEY IDENTIFY WITH THEIR IDEOLOGY. IF A FARMER HAS TWENTY COWS, VALENCIA SAID, THE GUERRILLAS COME ALONG AND DEMAND ONE. THE FARMER HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO COMPLY. POLOFF ASKED IF PARAMILITARIES PUNISH PEOPLE FOR THIS KIND OF COERCED COOPERATION. "THAT'S THE ONE BAD THING ABOUT PARAMILITARIES," VALENCIA REPLIED. "THEY ARE VERY CRUEL AND OFTEN GO AFTER PEOPLE WHO DON'T DESERVE IT." HE ESTIMATED THAT IN THE DISTRICT IN WHICH HE LIVES, ABOUT 100 OF THE 35,000 INHABITANTS HAVE BEEN MURDERED IN THE PAST YEAR. OF THOSE 100, ACCORDING TO VALENCIA, ABOUT TEN WERE GUERRILLAS, TEN WERE ACTIVE GUERRILLA SUPPORTERS, AND THE REST WERE UNLUCKY VICTIMS OF UNFAIR REPRISALS. HE DESCRIBED THE RECENT, BRUTAL "PUNISHMENT KILLING" BY PARAMILITARIES NEAR SAN ROQUE OF AN ELDERLY FARM WORKER. "THEY HELD THE FUNERAL FOR HIS BODY ON MONDAY AND FOR HIS HEAD ON TUESDAY," VALENCIA SAID. HE ADDED THAT PARAMILITARIES USE BARBARIC TECHNIQUES LIKE HACKING THEIR VICTIMS WITH MACHETES TO REINFORCE THEIR MESSAGE THAT COOPERATING WITH GUERRILLAS IS UNACCEPTABLE AND DANGEROUS.

11. (C) VALENCIA OPINED THAT THE RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT (SEE REFTTEL) THAT PARAMILITARIES HAD FORMED A NATIONAL COORDINATING GROUP SIGNALLED THEIR INTEREST IN TAKING PART IN EVENTUAL PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, RECEIVING AMNESTY IN THE PROCESS AND PAVING THE WAY TO FUTURE PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL ARENA. HE SAID THAT CARLOS CASTANO, IN PARTICULAR, HAS POLITICAL AMBITIONS AND WOULD LIKE TO BECOME THE LEADER OF PARAMILITARIES NATIONWIDE.

12. (C) VALENCIA COMMENTED THAT NEITHER GUERRILLAS NOR THE

MILITARY ACTIVELY SEEK DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH EACH OTHER. IN GENERAL, HE SAID, IF EITHER SIDE HEARS THE OTHER IS IN THE VICINITY, THEY TEND TO TAKE OFF IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. THE GUERRILLAS PREFER HIT AND RUN OPERATIONS AGAINST POLICE STATIONS OR ISOLATED ARMY FACILITIES, HE NOTED. THE MEDIA "SENSATIONALIZES" THE CONFLICT AND ACCEPTS WITHOUT QUESTION POLICE AND MILITARY CLAIMS ABOUT BEING ATTACKED BY OVERWHELMINGLY SUPERIOR GUERRILLA FORCES. VALENCIA DISCOUNTED TYPICAL NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS DEPICTING ASSAULTS BY 200 GUERRILLAS AGAINST A POLICE STATION OR ARMY PATROL. HE SAID THAT HE HAS RARELY SEEN SIGNS OF MORE THAN 25 GUERRILLAS ON

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PATROL IN THE RURAL AREA WHERE HE LIVES; THE SECURITY FORCES EXAGGERATE IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THEIR REPUTATION.

13. (C) BY CONTRAST, VALENCIA DECLARED, PARAMILITARIES ACTIVELY SEEK TO ENGAGE GUERRILLAS (OR, MORE COMMONLY, SUSPECTED COLLABORATORS). HE DESCRIBED A RECENT INCIDENT IN HIS DISTRICT INVOLVING FIVE PARAMILITARIES WHO WERE TOLD THAT A GROUP OF GUERRILLAS SEVERAL MILES AWAY. ACCORDING TO VALENCIA, WHO HEARD THE STORY FROM AN EYEWITNESS, THE PARAMILITARIES RETURNED SEVERAL HOURS LATER, DISAPPOINTED THAT THEY HAD ONLY BEEN ABLE TO SCARE

AWAY, RATHER THAN WIPE OUT, THE THIRTY GUERRILLAS THEY ENCOUNTERED.

14. (C) VALENCIA CLOSED BY PRAISING PERUVIAN PRESIDENT FUJIMORI'S BOLD RESCUE ACTION TO FREE THE HOSTAGES IN THE JAPANESE EMBASSY IN LIMA. POLOFF ALSO SPOKE WITH SEVERAL OTHER COLOMBIANS WHO EXPRESSED ADMIRATION FOR FUJIMORI'S DECISIVENESS AGAINST THE MRTA, SAYING "THAT'S WHAT WE NEED HERE." ONE WEALTHY BOGOTA MATRON TOLD POLOFF "THEY KILLED ALL FOURTEEN OF THE GUERRILLAS IN LIMA! ISN'T THAT GREAT? WE SHOULD DO THAT IN COLOMBIA!"

15. (C) COMMENT: VALENCIA'S DESCRIPTION OF THE MULTIFACETED AND VIOLENT STRUGGLE IN EASTERN ANTIOQUIA HAS THE RING OF TRUTH, ECHOING SIMILAR ACCOUNTS WE HAVE HEARD FROM OTHER INTERLOCUTORS. HE SEEMED TO ACCEPT PARAMILITARISM AS AN INEVITABLE, ALTHOUGH TERRIBLE, CONSEQUENCE OF THE ARMED FORCES' UNWILLINGNESS OR INABILITY TO WAGE A VIGOROUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE GUERRILLAS. THE WIDELY-EXPRESSED ADMIRATION HERE OF THE PERUVIAN PRESIDENT'S BOLD ACTION AGAINST THE MRTA TERRORISTS REFLECTS COLOMBIANS' WISH FOR A MAGIC BULLET TO SOLVE THEIR SERIOUS SECURITY PROBLEMS. FRECHETTE

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