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RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
INFO RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5748
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 3599
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 8226
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 5924
BT
UNCLAS BOGOTA 006039

CAD
Actim
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PA, LA
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAG: PREL, MAPP, SNAR, CO

SUBJECT: DOD DEPLOYMENTS VITAL FOR PLAN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY REQUESTS INTERAGENCY DISCUSSION OF STATUS OF DOD TRAINING DEPLOYMENTS TO COLOMBIA. RECENT DECISIONS RESTRICTING AND/OR CANCELING DOD COUNTERDRUG DEPLOYMENTS RISK UNDERMINING PLAN COLOMBIA IMPLEMENTATION. DOD DEPLOYMENTS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT IN COLOMBIA FOR ALMOST TWENTY YEARS. THE IMPLICATIONS OF CANCELING OR RESTRICTING THESE TRAINING MISSIONS -- WHICH WOULD REPRESENT A SHARP CHANGE IN POLICY -- SHOULD BE ADDRESSED BROADLY BY INTERESTED USG AGENCIES AND BRIEFED TO CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEES. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY REQUESTS INTERAGENCY DISCUSSION OF DOD TRAINING DEPLOYMENTS TO COLOMBIA. IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, SEVEN OF NINE REQUESTED COUNTERDRUG DEPLOYMENTS HAVE BEEN CANCELLED ON GROUNDS OF FORCE PROTECTION, COURSE CONTENT, SAFETY AND COST. THESE INCLUDE:

- 1) MARINE MARKSMANSHIP RIVERINE MOBILE TRAINING TEAM

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(MTT), SCHEDULED FOR JULY 9-AUGUST 17, CANCELLED BECAUSE OF COURSE CONTENT AND FORCE PROTECTION CONCERNS.

2) ADVANCED RIVERINE SKILLS, SCHEDULED FOR JULY 2-AUGUST 1, CANCELLED BECAUSE OF LACK OF FUNDING.

3) RIVERINE ASSISTANCE TRAINING DEPLOYMENT SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 27-SEPTEMBER 1, CANCELLED BECAUSE OF LACK OF FUNDING.

4) RIVERINE TRAINING SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 1-27, CANCELLED BECAUSE OF LACK OF FUNDING.

5) RIVERINE SEAL TRAINING TEAM, SCHEDULED AUGUST 27-SEPTEMBER 1, CANCELLED BECAUSE OF FORCE PROTECTION CONCERNS.

6) MH60 TRAINING SUPPORT FOR THE SPECIAL FORCES TRAINING OF THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE, AT ESPINAL, SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 1-SEPTEMBER 30, CANCELLED BECAUSE OF POLICY CONCERNS AND BECAUSE SAFETY MESSAGE GROUNDING THE HELICOPTERS.

7) TRAINING OF THE 12TH BRIGADE STAFF AT LARANDIA, WHICH WAS INCLUDED IN THE SAME DEPLOYMENT ORDER AS THE MH60 HELO TRAINING SUPPORT FOR THE CNP (ITEM SIX). BOTH DEPLOYMENTS WERE THEREFORE CANCELLED EVEN THOUGH 12TH BRIGADE STAFF TRAINING WAS UNRELATED TO THE HELICOPTER PROBLEMS. (NOTE THAT THE 12TH BRIGADE IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE JOINT TASK FORCE SOUTH IN PUTUMAYO, THE FOCUS OF PLAN COLOMBIA EFFORTS).

EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT ALL MILITARY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES FOR THE 4TH QUARTER ARE ALSO UNDER REVIEW.

3. AS MANY IN WASHINGTON ARE AWARE, DOD DEPLOYMENTS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT, THROUGHOUT COLOMBIA, SINCE 1982. MANY ARE COUNTERDRUG DEPLOYMENTS FUNDED BY DEPARTMENT OF STATE (INL) OR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ANTI-NARCOTICS APPROPRIATIONS AND ARE DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE ABILITY OF THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY AND POLICE TO IMPEDE THE SHIPMENT OF DRUGS TO THE UNITED STATES. THEY ARE REQUESTED BY USG COUNTERDRUG AGENCIES.

4. DOD TRAINING OF COUNTERNARCOTICS POLICE HAS RESULTED IN WELL-TRAINED, EFFECTIVE POLICE AIRMOBILE FORCES THAT HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN INTERDICTING COCAINE HYDROCHLORIDE AND BASE LABS IN THE RURAL AREAS AS WELL AS PROVIDING GROUND SUPPORT TO THE AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM. US ARMY SPECIAL FORCES TEAMS HAVE PROVIDED KEY SUPPORT TO VETTED COLOMBIAN ARMY UNITS ENGAGED IN COUNTERNARCOTICS OPERATIONS. DOD HAS

PROVIDED IMPORTANT TRAINING TO THE COLOMBIAN NAVY'S RIVERINE PROGRAM. UNDERWAY SINCE 1991, THE US MARINE CORPS AND NAVY SEAL RIVERINE TRAINING TEAMS HAVE BEEN MARKEDLY SUCCESSFUL IN IMPROVING COLOMBIAN (AS WELL AS OTHER ANDEAN NATIONS') CAPABILITIES TO CONTROL THEIR 12,000 KILOMETERS OF NAVIGABLE RIVERS IN COLOMBIA ALONE. THE USAF HAS BEEN KEY IN IMPROVING THE MAINTENANCE, SAFETY, AND FLIGHT PROCEDURES OF COLOMBIAN AIR FORCE'S FIXED-WING ASSETS ENGAGED IN COUNTERDRUG ACTIVITIES. IN GENERAL, THESE DEPLOYMENTS HAVE LONG BEEN DEEMED TO BE IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST, SUPPORTING OUR LONG-STANDING, BIPARTISAN STRATEGY TO INTERDICT DRUGS IN SOURCE COUNTRIES.

5. MOREOVER, THE TIMING OF THESE CANCELLATIONS IS BAD. THE IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGING OUR POLICY JUST AS WE ARE BEGINNING TO MAKE A MAJOR INVESTMENT IN COLOMBIA (AND THE REST OF THE ANDES THROUGH THE ARI) SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DOD IS NOW FORMULATING NEW CRITERIA FOR DEPLOYMENTS. THE INTERAGENCY NEEDS TO EVALUATE WHETHER THESE CRITERIA WOULD HAVE ALLOWED US TO TRAIN THE FIRST-EVER COUNTERNARCOTICS BRIGADE. THE EQUIPPING AND TRAINING OF THIS BRIGADE IN PUTUMAYO HAS BEEN A CRITICAL ELEMENT OF PHASE I OF PLAN COLOMBIA. THREE CONSECUTIVE SPECIAL FORCES COMPANIES (85 PERSONNEL EACH) DEPLOYED TO SOUTHERN COLOMBIA TO PROVIDE 18-WEEK TRAINING PROGRAMS TO EACH OF THE THREE BATTALIONS OF THE CD BRIGADE. IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF OPERATIONS, THE CD BRIGADE HAS ACHIEVED NOTABLE RESULTS, A DIRECT RESULT OF THE US TRAINING EFFORT. IT IS CRUCIAL THAT THESE TRAINING DEPLOYMENTS BE AVAILABLE TO COLOMBIAN UNITS PARTICIPATING IN PHASES II AND III OF PLAN COLOMBIA AS OUR EFFORTS MOVE TO OTHER DRUG PRODUCING AREAS OF COLOMBIA, AS WELL AS PROVIDING SUSTAINMENT AND ENHANCEMENT TRAINING TO PREVIOUSLY TRAINED UNITS.

6. THESE DEPLOYMENTS ALSO PLAY AN IMPORTANT SECONDARY ROLE IN PROFESSIONALIZING (AND HUMANIZING) THE COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES AND THE COLOMBIAN POLICE. (FOR INSTANCE, NOT A SINGLE HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLAINT HAS BEEN LODGED AGAINST THE CD BRIGADE.) THE GOC AND COLOMBIAN MILITARY DO NOT WANT THE USG TO HAVE A MORE DIRECT ROLE IN THEIR OPERATIONS BUT THEY NEED AND SEEK CONTINUED US SUPPORT TO ENHANCE THEIR SKILLS THROUGH TRAINING.

7. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THERE ARE SERIOUS FORCE PROTECTION CONCERNS ABOUT THESE DEPLOYMENTS, ABOUT THEIR BENEFITS TO US TROOPS, AND THE USEFULNESS OF THE TRAINING. FORCE PROTECTION OF ALL PERSONNEL IS A MAJOR CONCERN OF THIS EMBASSY. WE HAVE REPORTED AND BRIEFED TO OUR CONGRESSIONAL AND EXECUTIVE BRANCH VISITORS THAT AMERICAN CASUALTIES AND INJURIES ARE POSSIBLE IN THIS

DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENT WITH 1200 AMERICAN AND COLOMBIAN EMPLOYEES. WE ARE FULLY AWARE THAT OUR POLICY WOULD BE ENDANGERED IF AN AMERICAN SOLDIER, SAILOR OR AIRMAN WERE TO DIE IN COLOMBIA. WE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT OUR DOD SERVICE MEMBERS ARE DEPLOYED ONLY TO LOCATIONS WHERE CONTACT WITH HOSTILE ELEMENTS IS UNLIKELY AND CLOSELY MONITOR THE SECURITY SITUATION AT EACH TRAINING SITE DURING THE DEPLOYMENT.

8. WE ARE SIMPLY PUZZLED ABOUT THE ARGUMENT THAT WE NEED TO REDUCE THESE DEPLOYMENTS BECAUSE OF COST. FUNDING FOR COLOMBIA IS AT HISTORICALLY HIGH LEVELS. SURELY WE CAN FIND RESOURCES FOR SUCH COST EFFECTIVE COUNTERDRUG ACTIVITIES.

9. IN SHORT, WE ASK FOR REVIEW OF THESE FACTORS SO THAT WE DO NOT "BACK INTO" WHAT WE CONSIDER A POLICY CHANGE WHICH WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT MAJOR USG POLICY INITIATIVES LIKE THE ARI.

PATTERSON
BT

JOINT STAFF V1
ACTION

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CMAS(*) USTRANSCOMWO(1) JSAMS(1) JSAMS UNCLAS DMS
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SECDEF V2

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