



INTERNATIONAL
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DepSec Action

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
(Mr. Peter W. Rodman, 695-4351)

04 MAR 2002

SUBJECT: Colombia (U)

(S) I understand that one of the arguments for the cautious Principals' decision on Colombia was a decision to wait for Pastrana's successor.

(S) This is a mistake.

(S) Pastrana, because he is a liberal and had committed himself to the famous peace process, has credibility with the left -- here and internationally. It is because of him, I believe, that Democrats here have seen a U.S. stake in supporting Colombia's democratic government broadly, not just for counternarcotics.

(S) Any step-up in our military support should therefore be done while Pastrana is in office. Under a conservative successor, the left may well coalesce against him (and us), especially in conditions of escalation. It will look like a "war-mongering" policy.

- Recall how the Democrats, split over Vietnam policy while LBJ was in office, rapidly coalesced against Nixon.

(S) We also have to ask ourselves what kind of a signal we are sending to Pastrana's successor if we give weak support when Pastrana is turning tough. We may only convey a message of U.S. unreliability.

COORDINATION: At TAB A

Classified by: ASD/ISA Peter W. Rodman
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