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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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INFO MEMO

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MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs
(Peter W. Rodman, (b)(6))

08 JAN 2003

SUBJECT: U.S. - Colombia Defense Bilateral Working Group

The 4th U.S. - Colombia Defense Bilateral Working Group, our key high-level planning forum, is scheduled for 12-13 February 2003 in Washington, D.C.

- This is long overdue---the last was held in 2000. It is also timely, in light of President Uribe's newly-issued National Security Strategy.

What we want from the Bilateral Working Group:

- Provide feedback on Uribe's draft National Military Strategy (long-overdue counterpart of the National Security Strategy), and urge the Colombians to complete it. We need this for our own operational planning purposes and in order to maintain support for Colombia on the Hill.
- Improved Colombian accountability ---including benchmarks and timetables--- with regard to progress on the battlefield and use of US assistance.
 - In particular, we want a credible control and oversight mechanism for Uribe's proposed "auxiliary rural militias". We have withheld support for this aspect of Uribe's strategy in the absence of such a mechanism.
- Provide input on Uribe's initiative to hold talks with the guerrillas, and on his campaign to build regional support for his military and diplomatic initiatives.

Minister of Defense Marta Ramirez, who you met in Santiago, Chile, will head the Colombian delegation. We have scheduled an office call with you.

Prepared by: LTC (b)(6), ISA/WHA, (b)(6)

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