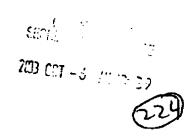
REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA



MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE



Bogotá, 26 August 2003

12308

4 1

The Honorable
DONALD H. RUMSFELD
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld,

It was an honor and a pleasure to have you with us at the Ministry of Defense. Your visit could not have been more timely, as the Government completes its first year in office. As you kindly remarked, we have developed a clear strategy and we have already achieved significant results; but we need greatly to accelerate the pace if we are to take full advantage of the favorable conditions and to push past the tipping point. So we are particularly grateful for your show of support and for the opportunity we had to share with you our view of the way ahead.

As we had occasion to discuss, success in Colombia is the key to stabilizing the region. There is a coincidence of interests between the FARC and certain regimes in drawing attention away from themselves by encouraging political instability abroad. That bodes ill for Colombia and for other countries in the region. The FARC has the means to finance radical groups and the evidence shows that they are doing so now. More worrying still is the prospect of FARC money and territorial control luring international terrorist networks into our country. We have no desire to become a base for terrorist multinationals and are already paying a high price for the terrorist know-how that the FARC has acquired through its foreign connections.

President Uribe's Democratic Security and Defense strategy is intended precisely to avert this danger by re-establishing the rule of law throughout the country. That is not just the job of the Armed Forces; the judiciary in particular must take a leading role, and all state institutions must contribute to the consolidation of state presence. But the Armed Forces will spearhead the strategy in many areas. That is why an adequate force structure and a strong and accountable Ministry of Defense are essential for success.

The problems we are facing in transforming the Armed Forces, while certainly of an entirely different order of magnitude, are not unlike those that the Department of Defense has successfully addressed. So we are keen to learn from your experience and to continue the dialogue between our two ministries.

REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA



MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

In particular, to be effective we must be flexible. That means training more special forces and long-range patrols, using technology to our advantage, increasing mobility and addressing terrorist and narco-trafficking threats as one and the same. And we must also make sure that we can sustain the intensity of our operations and our efforts over the medium and long term by strengthening our own capabilities, especially in maintenance.

The United States can make the difference between a speedy victory and a drawn-out and costly campaign. So we very much look forward to discussing these issues further with the Department of Defense. I have no doubt that with your support we will restore peace and security in Colombia and in the region as a whole.

Yours sincercly,

MARTA LUCIA RAMIREZ DE RINCON

Minister of National Defense