

INFO MEMO

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FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: Thomas W. O'Connell, Assistant Secretary of Defense (SO/LIC) *OL 11/20/03*

SUBJECT: Plan Colombia Helicopters

On October 4, 2003 you sent a note to Secretary Powell (Tab A) regarding the shortage of helicopters in Colombia to support both eradication and large-scale military operations against narcoterrorists.

The two issues were:

- The Colombian military wants more access to State Plan Colombia UH-60 helicopters, and
- The low operational readiness rate of the Colombian military's helicopters.

I believe that progress has been made on both of these issues. As a result of your note, Secretary Powell responded (Tab B) that:

- There is little need to approach the Hill for a change to the current system since it is being fixed,
 - Ambassador Wood is effectively managing requests for State helicopter support, and
 - The Embassy is exploring initiatives such as joint maintenance facilities, faster delivery of spare parts, and expedited Embassy mission clearance.

SOLIC, the Joint Staff, and SOUTHCOM believe that these measures have resolved the recent problem.

I will continue to monitor this issue, and will revisit if further problems arise.

Coordination: Tab C

Attachments: As stated

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Colombia

20 Nov 03

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