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*10/14*

INFO MEMO

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: Thomas W. O'Connell, Assistant Secretary of Defense (SO/LIC)

*10/8/03*

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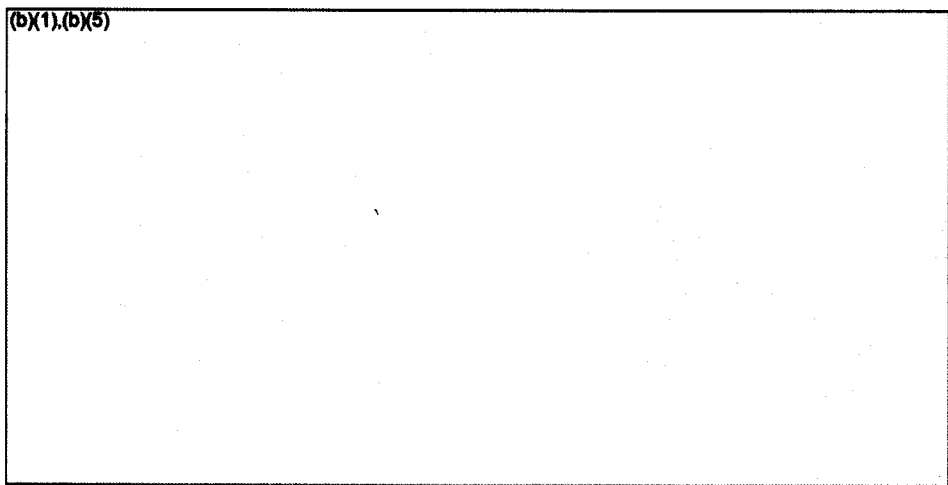
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Classified by: DASD SO/LIC SO-CT, Michael Westphal  
Reasons: 1.5(a)(c)  
Declassify on: October 8, 2013

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SECDEF CONTROL

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~

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Attachments: As Stated

COORDINATION: TAB B

Prepared by:  SO/LIC SOCT, 

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**Colombia: Update on Hostages**

**Question: What is U.S. policy with regard to American hostages?**

- IT IS OUR POLICY TO USE EVERY APPROPRIATE RESOURCE TO GAIN THE SAFE RELEASE OF UNITED STATES CITIZENS HELD HOSTAGE ABROAD, REGARDLESS OF THE IDENTITY OR MOTIVATION OF THEIR CAPTORS. WE HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SEEK TO ENSURE THAT THOSE WHO TAKE UNITED STATES CITIZENS HOSTAGE ARE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE, PROSECUTED AND PUNISHED. TAKING OF OUR CITIZENS HOSTAGE ANYWHERE OVERSEAS IS A VIOLATION OF UNITED STATES FEDERAL LAW.
- WE WILL MAKE NO CONCESSIONS TO INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS HOLDING AMERICAN CITIZENS HOSTAGE.

**Question: How long have the three American hostages been held in Colombia?**

- THEY HAVE BEEN HELD FOR NEARLY 8 MONTHS (237 DAYS – COUNTING OCT 7; 8 MONTHS ON OCT 13).

**Question: In the case of Colombia and the American hostages, what is the United States doing to find them, free them, punish the FARC and by doing so, deter them from taking more Americans hostage?**

- WORKING WITH THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT, THE FULL EXTENT OF OUR GOVERNMENT, TO INCLUDE DOD AND ALL OTHER PERTINENT AGENCIES, IN WASHINGTON AND IN OUR EMBASSY IN BOGOTA, HAS BEEN EMPLOYED TO COORDINATE

AND MAXIMIZE RESOURCES, FLEXIBILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES IN RESPONSE TO THE KIDNAPPING OF THESE U.S. CITIZENS.

- MORE SPECIFICALLY AND WITHOUT DIVULGING OPERATIONAL DETAILS, OVER 7,000 COLOMBIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL AND HUNDREDS OF U.S. PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE SEARCH AND RESCUE EFFORTS SINCE THE PLANE CARRYING THE AMERICANS WENT DOWN. THE LEVEL OF COMMITMENT BY THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT REMAINS HIGH, PROVIDING THE FULLEST COOPERATION POSSIBLE.
- TRAGICALLY, 3 AMERICANS AND 8 COLOMBIANS HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE SEARCH AND RESCUE EFFORT. WE ARE WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT TO ENHANCE COLOMBIA'S CAPACITY TO COMBAT THE RELATED SCOURGE OF KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM, ONE OF THE PRIMARY FINANCIAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE FARC AND ELN.
- WE CONTINUE TO PROVIDE INTELLIGENCE AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT TO COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCES. THE FOCUS OF OUR EFFORTS IS ON LOCATING AND RESCUING OUR THREE CITIZENS.
- THE UNITED STATES ALSO HAS A STANDING REWARD OFFER OF APPROXIMATELY \$340,000 AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A U.S. VISA



FOR ANYONE OFFERING INFORMATION LEADING TO THE SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION OF THIS HOSTAGE CRISIS.

- USG COUNTERNARCOTICS ASSETS AND FUNDS WERE USED TO TRANSPORT SEARCH AND RESCUE TROOPS, AS WELL AS PURCHASE AND DELIVER FOOD RATIONS TO THE THOUSANDS OF COLOMBIAN SAR TROOPS. BEYOND THAT, FOR SECURITY CONCERNS AND THE SAFETY OF THE HOSTAGES, WE CANNOT GO INTO FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT ONGOING USG EFFORTS TO RECOVER THE HOSTAGES.
- WE HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT WE WILL NOT PRESS THE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA TO MAKE CONCESSIONS NOR WILL WE MAKE CONCESSIONS TO THE FARC TO OBTAIN THEIR RELEASE.
- WE CONTINUE TO STATE THAT WE HOLD THE FARC RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THESE THREE INDIVIDUALS. WE DEMAND THAT THE FARC RELEASE THE AMERICANS IMMEDIATELY AND UNHARMED.

Question: Why is it so difficult to find them? How can you not know where they are?

- OUR EFFORTS ARE ONGOING. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT THE FARC HAS THE THREE IN A VERY REMOTE AREA OUTSIDE THE IMMEDIATE REACH OF THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY. THIS AREA IS MOUNTAINOUS, DENSE JUNGLE AREA -- ONE OF THE MOST REMOTE AREAS ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH. IN ADDITION,

THE FARC CAPTORS HAVE BEEN OPERATING WITHOUT GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IN THIS AREA FOR DECADES - IT IS TERRITORY THEY KNOW WELL AND WHERE THEY HAVE SETUP AN EXTENSIVE SUPPORT NETWORK. HOWEVER, EFFORTS TO FIND THEM ARE ONGOING.

**Question:** Why don't you rescue? If you locate them, will you plan a rescue?

- OUR GREATEST CONCERN IS THE SAFE RETURN OF THE HOSTAGES TO THEIR FAMILIES. AS TACTICAL SEARCH OPERATIONS INVOLVING LARGE-SCALE DEPLOYMENTS OF TROOPS ARE LESS FEASIBLE, INSTEAD, GOOD, ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT. WE CONTINUE AN ACTIVE CAMPAIGN WITH THE COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES TO LOCATE THE HOSTAGES.
- HOWEVER, WE WILL NOT TAKE ANY ACTION THAT WOULD JEOPARDIZE THEIR SAFE RETURN. THE FARC HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED ITS FLAGRANT DISREGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE, BY MURDERING THOMAS JANIS AND LUIS ALCIDES CRUZ.

**Question:** What is being done for the families?

- THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN CLOSE, REGULAR CONTACT WITH THE FAMILIES OF THE THREE HOSTAGES, KEEPING THEM APPRISED OF EVENTS ON THE GROUND IN COLOMBIA.

**Question:** What can you say about the reported videotape of the three American hostages held by FARC terrorists in Colombia?

- RECENTLY A GROUP OF TOURISTS VISITING A PRE-COLOMBIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE IN THE SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS OF COLOMBIA WERE TAKEN HOSTAGE. THE ELN HAS ACKNOWLEDGED ITS INVOLVEMENT, IN SEIZING EIGHT FOREIGNERS: FOUR ISRAELI, TWO BRITISH, ONE GERMAN AND ONE SPANISH.
- I WOULD REFER YOU TO THE RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS FOR COMMENT ON STATUS /ACTIONS CONCERNING THEIR KIDNAPPED CITIZENS.

Context: On 13 February 2003, a SOUTHCOM reconnaissance system aircraft with four Americans and one Colombian official on board reported an engine failure and crash landed in the Colombian department of Caqueta. All five persons on board survived the crash and were almost immediately taken hostage by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Shortly thereafter, U.S citizen Thomas Janis, the senior pilot, and Luis Alcides Cruz, the Colombian official, were murdered by the FARC and their bodies left near the crash site. The remaining three U.S. citizens were moved away from the crash site as hostages of the FARC.

A video recently obtained by a freelance journalist show the three U.S. hostages to be alive and apparently in good health. The video appears to have been taken after 15 July and both Colombian/U.S. media have now picked up the story. Most reports have limited themselves to recounting the details of the kidnapping and the contents of the video. However, El Tiempo and some other media outlets have also carried statements by the mother of one of the hostages to the effect that the US and Colombian Governments should negotiate a prisoner exchange in order to free the hostages. Additional media coverage is anticipated with the HBO premiere of a documentary on Ingrid Betancourt (DC screening took place at the Ritz Carlton on Oct 1; premiere on Cinemax expected Nov 2003) and a 60 Minutes II segment on the hostages scheduled for the 8th of October. (Dan Rather promoted segment as "Forgotten Hostages")



Original Drafted:

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Cleared:

S/CT: (b)(6)  
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 WHA

CA: Ian Brownlee - ok

(b)(7)(E)

Revised: (b)(6)

7-3142

Oct 7, 2003

Revised version cleared by:

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WHA: (b)(6)  
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ok

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S/P: M Zarin

ok

D: S Beecroft

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