

**SECRET/NOFORN**

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**INFO MEMO**

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**FOR: UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (POLICY)**

**FROM: Mr. Thomas P. O'Connell, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict** (b)(6) 10/15/03

**SUBJECT: Sharing of State Owned Helicopters in Colombia (U)**

(U) The Secretary's memorandum to Secretary Powell on helicopter sharing has energized State, the American Embassy Bogotá, and SOUTHCOM to focus on this issue.

- (U) At this time, a SecDef phone call is not necessary.

(U) State asked the Embassy for a plan and the Deputy Chief of Mission (Richard Baca) believes he will have a response to State by tomorrow.

- (U) The Military Group Commander and the Deputy Commander, Southern Command (MG Bishop) are fully involved in developing the response.

(U) According to the Deputy Chief of Mission and Military Group Commander, the general thrust of the paper is:

- ~~(S/NF)~~ State Department helicopters are normally available when our military Planning and Assistance Teams and the Embassy are involved early in the Colombian Army planning process.

~~(S/NF)~~ A bigger issue is the poor availability of Colombian helicopters, which is why the Colombian Army continues to request use of State's helicopters. SOLIC Counternarcotics is working with the Embassy and SOUTHCOM on a plan to:

- (U) Fix their broken helicopters using the \$12M in FMF currently available
- (U) Maintain the helicopters at a good operational ready rate through disciplined scheduling
- (U) Consolidate maintenance facilities
- (U) Improve Joint planning and coordinated use of all Colombian helicopters

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