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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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INFO MEMO

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: Douglas J. Feith, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

5/4/05
DJF by GWT

SUBJECT: VISIT WITH PRESIDENT URIBE OF COLOMBIA

On May 4, Peter Rodman and I met with President Uribe, MOD Uribe, and the military leaders.

President Uribe used almost all his time with me to warn about President Chavez and the danger he poses for the region. Uribe feels isolated. He said "we need to get prepared for the coming political battle in South America."

- President Uribe feels that last week's election of the OAS Secretary General, which Chavez swung by enticing the Caribbean states with oil, is a sure sign of trouble ahead for the Inter-American system. "We can whitewash it, but this election was a defeat for us"---meaning the US and its friends. (Chavez can credibly claim to have been the kingmaker in the OAS election.)
- Both the President and the MOD feel pressure (from Colombia's congress and the military) to address the imbalance caused by Chavez' arms buildup. That may draw attention and resources away from their war against narcoterrorists.
- Although President Uribe did not mention it, the (b)(1),1.4(b),1.4(d)

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With regard to the war, the Colombians have done impressive strategic thinking about the way ahead. Following Uribe's guidance, their objective is not "to manage the problem of narcoterrorists, but to eliminate it."

- They define their objective NOT in terms of eliminating drugs, but in terms of eliminating the threat to Colombian democracy. Their goal is to strengthen the authority and institutions of the democratic state.

This is the essence of Uribe's "Democratic Security Strategy." The Colombians presented a well-drafted long-range strategic plan.

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Reason: 1.5 (b) and (d)

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- The Colombians' plan envisions---and they are openly discussing---the termination of US aid within 5 years. They say they seek "temporary support for permanent objectives."

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