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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2400 *APR 15 PM 5:08*

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I-02/005692

DepSec Action _____

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, ISA *12 APR 2002*
(Peter W. Rodman, 695-4351)

SUBJECT: Hearings on Colombia (U)

~~(C)~~ I have testified on Colombia twice in the last two days, to two different House subcommittees (Foreign Ops and Western Hemisphere). I accompanied (first) Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman and (second) Assistant Secretary of State Otto Reich, as well as Acting CINCSOUTH MG Gary Speer.

~~(C)~~ House Republicans strongly supported the Administration's new approach of broadening U.S. policy beyond counternarcotics.

~~(C)~~ I was intrigued, however, by the Democrats' line of questioning:

- Democrats who were skeptical did not attack the policy frontally on ideological grounds, or on "another Vietnam" grounds. Rather, they invoked pragmatic concerns: Why weren't the Colombians doing more to help themselves? Wasn't it going to take a long time to "win"?
- At the same time, some liberals (e.g., Rep. Delahunt of Massachusetts) seemed to be laying the groundwork for an ideological challenge to Uribe (the front-runner to succeed Pastrana) by citing allegations that he has ties with rightist paramilitaries.

~~(C)~~ This confirms, in my view, that it is in our interest to move out with a new policy while Pastrana is still in office and not wait for his successor:

- Pastrana has credibility with many Democrats because of his earlier commitment to the peace process.
- His successor, if it is Uribe, may well be confronted by a coalescence of liberal forces against him (and us), both here and internationally.

COORDINATION: TAB A

Prepared by: Peter Rodman, 695-4351

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Reason(s) 1.5(d)
DECLASSIFY ON 11 March 2012



04-12-02 19:13 IN

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