

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

*** ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ***

***** This Message Has Been Altered *****

Page 1 of 3

82

PTTCZYUW RUMIAAA6365 1161505-CCCC--RUEKNMA.
ZNY CCCCC
P 261347Z APR 03
FM CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
TO SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
INFO SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//DEPUTY//
CJCS WASHINGTON DC
VCJCS WASHINGTON DC
CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL//SCCC//

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ PERSONAL FOR

SUBJ: PRESIDENT URIBE VISIT

GENERAL HILL CDR USSOUTHCOM SENDS PERSONAL FOR HONORABLE DONALD RUMSFELD, SECDEF; INFO HONORABLE PAUL WOLFOWITZ, DEPSECDEF; GENERAL MYERS, CJCS; GENERAL PACE, VJCJS

1. ~~(C/NF)~~ SIR, I UNDERSTAND DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ WILL MEET WITH PRESIDENT URIBE NEXT WEEK DURING YOUR ABSENCE. AS YOU ARE AWARE, THERE HAS BEEN AN ONGOING RIFT, OFTEN PLAYED OUT IN PUBLIC, AMONG THE COLOMBIAN LEADERSHIP, SPECIFICALLY BETWEEN DEFENSE MINISTER RAMIREZ AND GENERAL MORA, THE CHIEF OF DEFENSE FORCES. AMBASSADOR PATTERSON SENT A CABLE RECOMMENDING SENIOR USG OFFICIALS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF URIBE'S VISIT TO ENCOURAGE HIM TO QUICKLY REPLACE GENERAL MORA AND THE COMMANDERS OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE. I HAVE REVIEWED AMBASSADOR PATTERSON'S CABLE AND HAVE HAD MANY DISCUSSIONS WITH HER REGARDING THE SITUATION. WHILE THERE IS NO DOUBT THE RIFT IS REAL AND WILL NOT GET ANY BETTER, I DO NOT AGREE WITH THE "DIRE" PICTURE AMBASSADOR PATTERSON PAINTS IN THE CABLE. ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN A DISTRACTION, IT HAS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED MILITARY OPERATIONS. MY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMANDER, BG BUTLER, WHO HAS BEEN IN COLOMBIA SINCE FEBRUARY WORKING VERY CLOSELY WITH THE COLOMBIANS AND EMBASSY ON THE SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS, ALSO DISAGREES WITH THE AMBASSADOR'S ASSESSMENT AS DOES THE MILITARY GROUP COMMANDER.

2. ~~(C/NF)~~ MORE IMPORTANTLY, I FEEL WE SHOULD STAY OUT OF THIS. IF FOUND PLAYING A ROLE IN EMBASSY PROPOSED CHANGES, WE LOSE CREDIBILITY WITH OUR COUNTERPARTS, AND RISK BEING BLAMED IF SUCCESSORS DO NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS. COLOMBIAN CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS IS SOMETHING THAT PRESIDENT URIBE NEEDS TO WORK OUT HIMSELF. PRESIDENT URIBE UNDERSTANDS THAT THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO COLOMBIA'S CONFLICT MUST BE DEvised, FOUGHT, AND WON BY COLOMBIANS. I AM OPTIMISTIC HE CAN TURN THE TIDE DURING HIS TENURE. WE NEED TO PROVIDE HIM THE PATIENCE AND STEADY SUPPORT TO EXECUTE.

OSD - SECDEF CABLE DISTRIBUTION:

SECDEF: / DEPSEC: / SPL ASST: / EXECSEC: /
C&E: / CCD: / CABLE CH: / FILE: /
USDP: / DIA: / OTHER: /
USDI: / PER SEC: / COMM: /

*** ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ***

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

SECDEF CONTROL

X01456 /03

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

*** ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ***
***** This Message Has Been Altered *****

Page 2 of 3

3. (C/NF) WE NEED TO REMEMBER, PRESIDENT URIBE HAS ONLY BEEN IN OFFICE FOR EIGHT MONTHS, AND TURNING THE GOVERNMENT FROM A CONCILIATORY POSTURE TO AN AGGRESSIVELY FOCUSED ONE IS NOT AN EASY TASK. NEVERTHELESS, SINCE HIS INAUGURATION, THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY HAS IN FACT MADE SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS ON THE BATTLEFIELD. THEY ARE OPERATING IN AND DISRUPTING THE FARC IN AREAS THEY HAVE NOT BEEN IN FOR 10-15 YEARS. THEY ARE CONDUCTING COMPLEX OPERATIONS, EXPONENTIALLY BETTER THAN THEY HAVE EVER PREVIOUSLY RUN. ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED YET IN TAKING DOWN THE HEADS OF THE NARCOTERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS, THEY HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES IN THEIR JOINT PLANNING AND EXECUTION, AND THEY ARE GETTING BETTER WITH THE HELP OF SOUTHCOM TUTELAGE AND TRAINING. THEY HAVE KILLED OR CAPTURED SEVERAL MID-LEVEL FARC, AUC, AND ELN LEADERS. IN SOUTHERN COLOMBIA, WHERE THE U.S TRAINED COUNTERNARCOTICS BRIGADE OPERATES, A MAJOR FARC FRONT COMMANDER WAS KILLED, FARC OPERATIONS SIGNIFICANTLY DISRUPTED TO THE POINT WHERE MORALE IS LOW AND DESERTIONS HIGH, AND COCAINE PRODUCTION OPERATIONS DISPLACED. THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY AND NATIONAL POLICE HAVE BEEN MORE AGGRESSIVE IN STEMMING THE NUMBER OF KIDNAPPINGS, AND RESCUING A NUMBER OF KIDNAP VICTIMS, TO INCLUDE AN ARCHBISHOP AND THE DAUGHTER OF A PROMINENT BUSINESSMAN. ADDITIONALLY, ERADICATION EFFORTS SHOWED MARKED IMPROVEMENT IN 2002 AS COCA CULTIVATION IN COLOMBIA WAS DOWN BY 15%. THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY IS DOING EVERYTHING WE HAVE ASKED THEM TO DO AND ARE GETTING BETTER AND MORE PROFICIENT. I KEEP REMINDING THE PERENNIAL CRITICS OF THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY OUR OWN MILITARY DID NOT BECOME THE TREMENDOUS FORCE THAT WE ARE NOW OVERNIGHT. WE HAVE EVOLVED JOINTLY SINCE 1986 AT THE POINT OF A CONGRESSIONAL GUN, AND WE ARE NOT FULLY JOINT TODAY.

4. (C/NF) I CAUTION PATIENCE IN DEALING WITH PRESIDENT URIBE AND HIS HANDLING OF THE MILITARY. WE MUST FOCUS ON OUR LONG-TERM INTERESTS. CONVINCING URIBE TO FIRE THESE GENERALS WOULD NOT BE IN THE BEST INTEREST FOR THE LONG-TERM PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE COLMIL. INSTEAD, IT RISKS "POLITICIZING" THE MILITARY EVEN FURTHER, AND AN INTERPRETATION THAT THE REPLACEMENTS ARE IN POSITION AT THE BEQUEST OF THE U.S. AND NOT URIBE. RAMIREZ WILL NOT BE ANY STRONGER, AS IT WILL COME ACROSS AS THE U.S. DOING HER DIRTY WORK SINCE SHE CANNOT. REMOVING THE GENERALS IMMEDIATELY WILL NOT CHANGE MUCH AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL IN THE SHORT TERM. INDICATIONS ARE MORA WILL RETIRE THIS SUMMER, WHICH WILL GIVE PRESIDENT URIBE A ROUTINE METHOD OF RESOLVING THE PROBLEM. THERE WILL NOT BE AN OPERATIONAL IMPACT BY ALLOWING PRESIDENT URIBE TO WORK THIS OUT HIMSELF AND THE SITUATION TO RUN ITS COURSE.

5. (U) VERY RESPECTFULLY, TOM.

CLASSIFIED BY: CDR USSOUTHCOM
REASON: X1
DECLASSIFY ON: 25 APR 2013

+++PERSONAL FOR+++
SPECIAL HANDLING \$\$\$REQUIRED \$\$\$
 \$\$\$ \$\$\$COPY NUMBER----- \$\$\$

*** ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ***

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

*** ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ***

***** This Message Has Been Altered *****

Page 3 of 3

JOINT STAFF V1

ACTION

(M)

1

INFO CHAIRMAN DISTRIBUTION REQUIRED(*) SJS-C(*)
SJS-C(1) NMCC:CWO(*) JSAMS(*) JSAMS UNCLAS DMS(*)

SECDEF V2

ACTION

(M)

1

INFO SECDEF-C(1) SECDEF DISTRIBUTION REQUIRED(*)
SECDEF-C(*)

TOTAL COPIES REQUIRED

2

#6365

NNNN

*** ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ***

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~