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ACTION INL-01

INFO LOG-00 ARA-01 COME-00 DEAE-00 OASY-00 SRPP-00 EB-01
OIGO-01 INLB-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 L-01 ADS-00 STR-00
TRSE-00 DRL-09 /015W

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P 191804Z JAN 96
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5865
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE
FBI WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
DIRONDCP WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
NSC WASHDC
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 8125
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA

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STATE FOR INL, ARA/AND; ARA/P; L/LEI
STATE PASS USTR FOR K. LEZNY
NSC FOR RICHARD FEINBERG
ONDCP FOR RICH PORTER
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEA FOR OF, OFL, AO, AX
JUSTICE FOR CRIM. WARREN, RICHARD AND NDDS/VAN VLIET
FBI FOR DIV. 6
USIA FOR AR, I/GAR

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EXTEND CLASSIFICATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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E.O. 12958: DECL 01-17-99
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, PREL, ECON, SNAR, CO

SUBJ: TAPPING THE EMBASSY'S PHONES

REF: BOGOTA 246

1. CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECON COUNSELOR WILLIAM LOFSTROM. REASON:
1.5 (C) AND (D).

SUMMARY

2. (C) THE TAPPING OF EMBASSY TELEPHONES THAT BECAME EVIDENT WITH THE SENSATIONALIST PRESENTATION OF THE "DEA TAPES" BY REP. CARLOS ALONSO LUCIO IN EARLY OCTOBER HAS NEVER BEEN CLARIFIED AND PROBABLY CONTINUES TO THIS DAY. WITH EMBASSY'S MOVE TO A NEW CHANCERY, THE DISTRACTION OF POLITICAL EVENTS, AND THE END-OF-THE-YEAR HOLIDAYS THE ISSUE HAS NOT BEEN MUCH IN THE PUBLIC EYE.

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THE AMBASSADOR'S RECENT COMMENT TO A "JOURNAL OF COMMERCE" REPORTER TO THE EFFECT THAT WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THE GOC IS TAPPING OUR PHONES PROVOKED GREAT UMBRAGE ON THE PART OF COLOMBIAN OFFICIALS, AND INSISTENCE FROM THE HIGHEST LEVELS THAT THE GOC "DID NOT AUTHORIZE" THE TAPS. THE AMBASSADOR'S INTERVIEW MAY HAVE INADVERTENTLY AVERTED THE LEAKING OF MORE DEA TAPES, WHICH PRESIDENT SAMPER MENTIONED TO THE AMBASSADOR. END SUMMARY

MORE DEA TAPES

3. (C) PRESIDENT SAMPER VOLUNTEERED TO THE AMBASSADOR ON JANUARY 12 (SEPTTEL) THAT THE GOC HAS "FIVE OR SIX" MORE TAPES OF DEA BCO SENNECA'S CONVERSATIONS, SIMILAR TO THE ONES PRESENTED TO CONGRESS BY REP. CARLOS ALONSO LUCIO IN OCTOBER. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED THE PRESIDENT POINT BLANK WHERE HE GOT THE TAPES, BUT SAMPER SMILED AND CHANGED THE SUBJECT. THE SAME DAY JOSE SANTACRUZ LONDONO'S DEFENSE ATTORNEY, WHO HAD ACCOMPANIED HIS CLIENT AT THE JANUARY 11 AM INTERVIEW WITH THE PROSECUTOR JUST PRIOR TO HIS ESCAPE, TOLD A TV NEWS REPORTER THAT HIS CLIENT PROBABLY HAD BEEN "KIDNAPPED BY THE DEA," AND CITED AS PROOF SEGMENTS OF THE "DEA TAPES" PLAYED TO CONGRESS BY REP. LUCIO IN OCTOBER IN WHICH U.S. OFFICIALS DISCUSSED "CREATIVE WAYS" OF

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GETTING COLOMBIANS TO THE U.S., PRESUMABLY FOR TRIAL, TESTIMONY OR COOPERATION.

THE JOURNAL OF COMMERCE INTERVIEW

4. (C) SAMPER'S ALLUSION TO THE INTERCEPTED EMBASSY PHONE CONVERSATIONS WAS PROBABLY TRIGGERED BY A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW THE

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AMBASSADOR GAVE TO A REPORTER FOR THE "JOURNAL OF COMMERCE," PRIMARILY ON TRADE AND ECONOMIC ISSUES. THE AMBASSADOR PREFACED HIS REMARKS BY NOTING THAT EVERYTHING HE SAID ON THE PHONE WAS "ON THE RECORD" BECAUSE HIS PHONES ARE TAPPED, AND THAT THE EMBASSY SUSPECTED THE GOC OF BEING BEHIND IT. THE ARTICLE APPEARED ON JANUARY 11. THE FOLLOWING DAY THE COLOMBIAN MEDIA GAVE BROAD COVERAGE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S REMARK, VIRTUALLY IGNORING THE SUBSTANCE OF THE INTERVIEW.

5. (C) FOREIGN MINISTER RODRIGO PARDO DENIED THAT THE EMBASSY'S PHONES WERE TAPPED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE ON JANUARY 12, DEMANDING THAT EMBASSY PROVIDE "PROOF," AND TRYING TO MAKE THE NIGGLING DISTINCTION THAT THE GOC HAD NOT "OFFICIALLY AUTHORIZED" ANY PHONE TAPS ON THE EMBASSY. AT THE SAME TIME, NEWLY-APPOINTED JUSTICE MINISTER CARLOS MEDELLIN TOLD THE MEDIA THAT THE EMBASSY'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT THE "DEA TAPES" WERE GENUINE HAD "SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS" FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS, ECHOING THE IDEA THAT SEGMENTS OF THOSE TAPES SUGGEST THAT THE USG IS CONSIDERING "KIDNAPPING" COLOMBIAN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS.

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ACTION INL-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5866

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INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE
FBI WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
DIRONDCP WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
NSC WASHDC
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 8126
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA

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STATE FOR INL, ARA/AND; ARA/P; L/LEI
STATE PASS USTR FOR K. LEZNY
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6. (C) THE "JOURNAL OF COMMERCE" INTERVIEW ALSO CAME UP IN A JANUARY 12 PHONE CONVERSATION WITH NEWLY-DESIGNATED DAS (FBI EQUIVALENT) CHIEF MARCO TULLIO GUTIERREZ AND IN A JANUARY 17 MEETING BETWEEN THE AMBASSADOR AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER RODRIGO PARDO. GUTIERREZ JOKING TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE FELT "OUT" BECAUSE HIS TELEPHONE WAS NOT BUGGED.

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7. (C) THE AMBASSADOR TOLD FOREIGN MINISTER JANUARY 17 THAT "WE HAVE TO TALK" ABOUT THE TELEPHONE ISSUE. AMBASSADOR SAID IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT MOST TELEPHONE TAPS IN COLOMBIA ARE ILLEGAL -- I.E. NOT EXPLICITLY AUTHORIZED BY THE FISCALIA -- AND REMINDED PARDO OF A RECENT DISCOVERY BY THE FISCALIA OF WIDESPREAD ILLEGAL TELEPHONE TAPPING BY DAS AND THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE (CNP)

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IN CALI. AMBASSADOR CONTINUED THAT THE POLICE AND THE DAS ARE RELUCTANT FORMALLY TO REQUEST FISCALIA AUTHORIZATION TO TAP TELEPHONES BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE PEOPLE IN THE FISCALIA CAN BE BRIBED. THE AMBASSADOR SAID "THAT'S EXACTLY WHY MOST TAPS IN COLOMBIA ARE UNAUTHORIZED. THEREFORE YOUR PUBLIC PROTESTATIONS THAT THERE ARE NO 'AUTHORIZED' TAPS OF THE EMBASSY IS EMPTY." THE AMBASSADOR THEN REMINDED PARDO THAT PRESIDENT SAMPER HAD IN THE PAST BRAGGED TO THE AMBASSADOR ABOUT HIS SECURE TELEPHONES BECAUSE HE FEARED "EVERYONE" IS TAPPING HIS LINES. HE ADDED THAT SAMPER EVEN SUSPECTS THE PALACE PHONES ARE MONITORED BY THE SECURITY SERVICES. FINALLY, THE AMBASSADOR MENTIONED THAT HE HAD HEARD RUMORS THAT HIS OWN PHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND OTHER SENIOR GOC OFFICIALS HAD BEEN INTERCEPTED AND TAPED, PERHAPS TO BE USED LATER BY ULTRA-NATIONALISTS IN THE SAMPER ADMINISTRATION TO "PROVE" THAT CERTAIN COLOMBIAN OFFICIALS ARE "TOO CLOSE" TO THE EMBASSY. SEEMINGLY ACKNOWLEDGING THESE ARGUMENTS, PARDO SAID THAT HE MUST PUBLICLY DENY THAT THE EMBASSY'S PHONES ARE TAPPED AND DEMAND "PROOF" OF THE AMBASSADOR'S ASSERTIONS FOR A VARIETY OF POLITICAL REASONS, INCLUDING BECAUSE THE VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO COLOMBIA HAS PUBLICLY ACCUSED THE GOC OF BUGGING HIS PHONES TOO.

COMMENT

8. (S-NOFORN) EMBASSY SUSPECTS THAT THE GOC MAY HAVE BEEN PLANNING TO RELEASE THE "FIVE OR SIX" TAPES MENTIONED BY SAMPER, BUT IT THOUGHT BETTER OF THE IDEA AFTER THE AMBASSADOR'S "JOURNAL OF COMMERCE" INTERVIEW AND THE ESCAPE OF SANTACRUZ. WE DO NOT DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THESE TAPES OR OTHER TAPES MAY BE

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LEAKED IN THE FUTURE. DURING THE DEUTCH VISIT, POLICE COMMANDER, ROSSO JOSE SERRANO, [REDACTED] LEARNED THAT

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THE GOC HAS A TAPE OF HIM TALKING ON THE PHONE WITH THE
AMBASSADOR. SERRANO SUSPECTS SOMEONE MAY TRY TO USE THE TAPE TO
DISCREDIT HIM BY DEMONSTRATING HIS CLOSENESS TO THE EMBASSY.
GIVEN THE ABSOLUTE LOYALTY OF NEW DAS CHIEF MARCO TULIO GUTIERREZ
TO SAMPER (REFTEL), EMBASSY HAS NO DOUBT THE DAS WILL CONTINUE TO
MONITOR THE EMBASSY'S TELEPHONES AND, IF IT SUITS SAMPER'S
POLITICAL STRATEGY AT THE MOMENT, TRY TO COMPROMISE THE EMBASSY
WITH RECORDINGS OF THOSE CONVERSATIONS.
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