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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2723

INFO DEA HQS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
THE WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 6760

STATE FOR S/NM
WHITE HOUSE FOR DR. BOURNE
DEA FOR MR. BENSINGER
EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, CD
SUBJECT: MEETING OF DR. BOURNE AND MR. BENSINGER WITH
PRESIDENT LOPEZ

1. SUMMARY: DR. BOURNE AND DEA ADMINISTRATOR BENSINGER HAD SUCCESSFUL MEETING WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ JULY 21 DURING WHICH THEY BRIEFED HIM ON EVIDENCE USG HAS DEVELOPED CONCERNING NARCOTICS-RELATED CORRUPTION AMONG GOC OFFICIALS. LOPEZ WAS RECEPTIVE, CANDID AND FORTH-COMING AND SAID HE PLANNED TO SET UP AN ELITE CIVILIAN LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIT TO COPE WITH CRIME AND CORRUPTION, REPLACING THE F-2 (DETECTIVE) UNIT OF THE NATIONAL POLICE. BOURNE AND BENSINGER ALSO MET WITH UK AMBASSADOR ON NARCOTICS PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

2. DR. PETER BOURNE OF THE WHITE HOUSE AND DEA ADMINISTRATOR PETER BENSINGER MET FOR AN HOUR AND A QUARTER WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ JULY 21 ACCOMPANIED BY LAWRENCE LASER AND CHARGE. MR. BENSINGER BEGAN HIS BRIEFING BY OBSERVING THAT COLOMBIA WAS BECOMING PRIMARY SOURCE FOR COCAINE AND MARIHUANA SMUGGLED INTO US AND SEVERAL OTHER NATIONS, AND THAT THERE WAS CONCERN THAT IT MAY ALSO BECOME SOURCE FOR OPIUM. HE EM-PHASIZED THAT PROBLEMS WHICH THIS SITUATION POSES MUST BE SOLVED JOINTLY BY PRODUCER AND USER NATIONS. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT SUCH COOPERATION IS THREATENED BY NARCOTICS-RELATED CORRUPTION.

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BOURNE

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WHICH IS A PROBLEM US SHARES WITH COLOMBIA. CORRUPTION IN COLOMBIA IN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUDICIAL SECTORS RENDERS EFFECTIVE LEGAL ACTION IN NARCOTICS FIELD VERY DIFFICULT AND THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT TRAFFICKERS ARE HELPED AND PROTECTED BY SOME INFLUENTIAL GOC OFFICIALS. IT WAS FOR THAT REASON, MR. BENSINGER EXPLAINED, THAT USG WANTED TO SHARE WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ INFORMATION WHICH WE HAD DEVELOPED ON SUCH CORRUPTION, KNOWING THAT HIS SINCERE INTEREST IN ATTACKING NARCOTICS PROBLEM WILL LEAD HIM TO MAKE FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS OF HIS OWN INTO THESE MATTERS.

3. MR. BENSINGER THEN PROVIDED INFORMATION ON ABOUT THIRTY CASES WHICH EXEMPLIFIED NARCOTICS-RELATED CORRUPTION INVOLVING MINISTERIAL AND JUDICIAL OFFICIALS, MILITARY AND LAW-ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL AND HIGH-LEVEL FIGURES. TEXT OF THIS BRIEFING MATERIAL WAS HANDED OVER TO THE PRESIDENT, WHO FOLLOWED MR. BENSINGER'S EXPOSITION INTENTLY. IN SOME CASES, LOPEZ PROVIDED FURTHER IDENTIFYING DATA ON THE OFFICIALS CITED. FOLLOWING MR. BENSINGER'S PRESENTATION, LOPEZ CANDIDLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PROBLEM WAS VERY BAD AND INDICATED THAT HIS OWN REPORTS AND INFORMATION GENERALLY SUPPORTED THE THRUST OF THE BRIEFING. LOPEZ REGISTERED SKEPTICISM ONLY WITH RESPECT TO THE INFORMATION CONCERNING DEFENSE MINISTER GENERAL VARON. HE SAID HE DOUBTED ANY MINISTER WOULD RUN THE RISK OF OPENLY WRITING TO A JUDGE CONCERNING A NARCOTICS CASE, AS VARON WAS ALLEGED TO HAVE DONE. LOPEZ ADDED THAT THERE HAD FOR SOME TIME BEEN A LOT OF GOSSIP ABOUT VARON, CHARGING HIM WITH A VARIETY OF DEEDS AND PLOTTINGS. LOPEZ INDICATED THAT HE SUSPECTED THIS LARGELY REFLECTED ATTEMPTS BY VARON'S ENEMIES TO BLACKEN HIS REPUTATION AND STANDING WITH THE PRESIDENT. LOPEZ DID, HOWEVER, TAKE SPECIAL NOTE OF VARON'S PROTECTION OF FORMER CUSTOMS CHIEF HUMBERTO CARDONA AND SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO THAT CASE PERSONALLY.

4. LOPEZ COMMENTED THAT AS A RESULT OF HIS OWN INVESTIGATIONS HE HAD ALREADY REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT IN COLOMBIA THEY WERE "FIGHTING CRIME WITH CRIMINALS." HE STRESSED PARTICULARLY THE CORRUPTION AND CRIMINALITY WITHIN THE F-2 (DETECTIVE) UNIT OF THE NATIONAL POLICE, ATTRIBUTING IT IN LARGE PART TO THE LOW SALARIES AND LOW EMPLOYMENT QUALIFICATIONS OF ITS PERSONNEL. LOPEZ RELATED SEVERAL CASES IN

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WHICH THE F-2 WAS ACTUALLY DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN MURDERS AND KIDNAPPINGS. HE STATED THAT AS A RESULT HE HAD DECIDED TO DISBAND THE F-2 AND SET UP AN ELITE, WELL-PAID, CIVILIAN LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIT TO FIGHT CRIME AND CORRUPTION. LOPEZ PRODUCED FROM HIS POCKET A SHEAF OF PAPERS CONTAINING THE PLANS FOR THIS UNIT, WHICH APPARENTLY WILL BE CONNECTED WITH THE EXISTING DAS LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY THAT NOW REPORTS DIRECTLY TO HIM. LOPEZ ASKED THAT THIS INFORMATION BE HELD VERY CLOSELY BECAUSE IT WAS HIGHLY SENSITIVE AND LIKELY TO BE UNPOPULAR WITH THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY COMMAND (WHICH HAS THE NATIONAL POLICE AND THUS THE F-2 UNDER ITS AUTHORITY).

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