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TITLE: SUBJECT: ARREST OF MEDELLIN CARTEL "CHIEF OF
OPERATIONS" AND SON OF "EL MEJICANO"

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DECONTROLLED

TEXT:

TAGS: SNAR, CO

SUBJECT: ARREST OF MEDELLIN CARTEL "CHIEF OF
OPERATIONS" AND SON OF "EL MEJICANO"

(U) 1. SUMMARY: THE FOURTH BRIGADE OF THE COLOMBIAN ARMY ARRESTED WHAT THE PRESS IS CALLING THE "CHIEF OF OPERATIONS" OF THE SO-CALLED MEDELLIN CARTEL AND THE SON OF CARTEL LEADER JOSE GONZALO RODRIGUEZ GACHA IN A HIGHLY SECRET OPERATION ON MAY 1 IN MEDELLIN. THE ARREST WAS NOT MADE PUBLIC FOR THREE DAYS, POSSIBLY TO GIVE TIME TO MOVE THE SUSPECTS TO A SECURE, UNIDENTIFIED LOCATION. END SUMMARY.

(U) 2. THE ARMY ARRESTED FIVE PASSENGERS AND THREE CREWMAN AS THEY WALKED OFF A PRIVATE AIRCRAFT AT THE MEDELLIN AIRPORT HEAVILY ARMED ON MAY 1. A SEARCH OF THE AIRCRAFT REVEALED DOCUMENTS SAID TO CONTAIN EVIDENCE OF INTERNATIONAL COCAINE TRANSACTIONS, BUT NO DRUGS.

(U) 3. THE LEADING NAME IN THE LIST OF ARRESTEES IS FREDDY GONZALO RODRIGUEZ SALADES, THE 19 YEAR OLD SON OF MEDELLIN CARTEL LEADER JOSE GONZALO RODRIGUEZ GACHA KNOWN AS "EL MEJICANO." NOT MUCH IS KNOWN ABOUT "EL POCILLO," AS THE SON IS CALLED, NOR THE EXTENT OF HIS INVOLVEMENT IN HIS FATHER'S TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION. ONE NEWSPAPER REPORT SAYS HE HAD DEDICATED HIMSELF TO THE FORMATION OF A SCHOOL FOR MERCENARIES FOR HIS FATHER'S ORGANIZATION.

(LOU) 4. THE BIG FISH IN THIS CATCH IS THE ORGANIZATION'S "CHIEF OF OPERATIONS," CAMILO ANTONIO

REVIEW AUTHORITY: James Cooper, Senior
Reviewer

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RUIZ VEGA. DEA REPORTS THAT THERE ARE NO OUTSTANDING WARRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES AGAINST ANY OF THE MEN ARRESTED; HOWEVER, RUIZ MAY BE KNOWN TO DEA UNDER ANOTHER NAME.

(LOU) 5. COMMENT: IF RUIZ IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE PRESS IS INDICATING, HE IS THE HIGHEST RANKING DRUG FIGURE TO BE ARRESTED IN COLOMBIA SINCE THE ARREST OF JORGE OCHOA IN NOVEMBER 1987 (OCHOA SUBSEQUENTLY WALKED OUT OF JAIL IN THE COMPANY OF THE JAIL DIRECTOR). THE FALLOUT FROM THIS COULD BE ENORMOUS, GIVEN THE DOUBLE BLOW THE ARMY PULLED OFF -- CUTTING INTO BOTH RODRIGUEZ' FAMILY AND HIS BUSINESS. RODRIGUEZ HAS A REPUTATION FOR VIOLENCE AND IS SAID TO HAVE A 2,000 MAN RIGHT-WING DEATH SQUAD AT HIS DISPOSAL. HE AND PABLO ESCOBAR HAVE PENDING WARRANTS FOR THEIR ARREST FOR A MASSACRE THAT OCCURRED IN 1988 IN THE GULF OF URABA AREA.

(LOU) 6. THE FOURTH ARMY BRIGADE HAD PREVIOUSLY RAIDED RUIZ'S FINCA OUTSIDE MEDELLIN, AS PART OF A SERIES OF MAJOR OPERATIONS AGAINST THE CARTEL BETWEEN APRIL AND JULY 1988, BUT HE MANAGED TO ESCAPE. THESE ARRESTS ARE THE FIRST MAJOR ACTION BY THE BRIGADE AGAINST CARTEL MEMBERS SINCE THE ARREST OF FABIO OCHOA (JORGE'S FATHER) IN JULY 1988. FOLLOWING THE ARREST OF RODRIGUEZ (JUNIOR) AND RUIZ, THE COLOMBIAN POLICE REPORTED TO MISSION THAT THEY PROVIDED SOME OF THE INTELLIGENCE WHICH LED TO THE RAID.

(LOU) 7. THIS IS A GREAT VICTORY FOR THE GOVERNMENT, BUT RODRIGUEZ AND RUIZ WILL STILL HAVE TO BE PROCESSED THROUGH THE COLOMBIAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM. THE ASSASSINATION LAST NIGHT OF THE FATHER OF THE JUDGE WHO ISSUED ARREST WARRANTS AGAINST RODRIGUEZ AND ESCOBAR (BEING REPORTED SEPTEL), IS A STRONG REMINDER TO ALL JUDGES OF THE RUTHLESSNESS OF THE DRUG EMPIRE IN COLOMBIA.

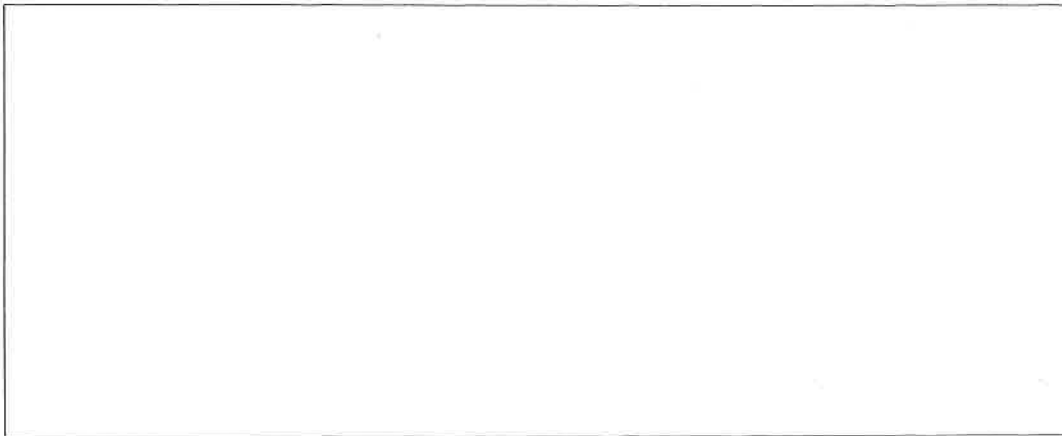
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