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TITLE: SUBJECT: WHY PABLO ESCOBAR HASN'T BEEN CAUGHT--THE
SECURITY FORCES EXPLAIN

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TEXT:

TAGS: SNAR, CO

SUBJECT: WHY PABLO ESCOBAR HASN'T BEEN CAUGHT--THE
SECURITY FORCES EXPLAIN

REF A) BOGOTA 7818

1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

2. AN ARTICLE IN THE MAY 20 EDITION OF LEADING BOGOTA DAILY EL TIEMPO PROVIDES SURPRISING DETAIL ON THE LOCATION AND DAILY ROUTINE OF NARCO KINGPIN PABLO ESCOBAR. THE ARTICLE IS BASED ON SENSITIVE INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE NEWSPAPER BY TOP OFFICIALS OF THE VARIOUS GOC SECURITY FORCES. THE OFFICIALS APPARENTLY WENT PUBLIC IN AN ATTEMPT TO COMBAT RECENT CRITICISM FROM SOME QUARTERS OVER THEIR INABILITY TO CAPTURE ESCOBAR, DESPITE NINE MONTHS OF ALL-OUT EFFORT.

3. THE NARCO KINGPIN HAS ABANDONED HIS RURAL RANCHES AND IS NOW HIDING IN MODEST RESIDENCES IN THE SLUMS OF MEDELLIN, THE NEARBY CITY OF ENVIGADO, OR IN SURROUNDING TOWNS, ACCORDING TO THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE SECURITY OFFICIALS. HE CONSTANTLY CHANGES HIS PLACE OF REFUGE, MOVING AROUND THE MEDELLIN AREA IN NONDESCRIPT VEHICLES, SUPPOSEDLY OFTEN HIDDEN IN THE TRUNK. ESCOBAR EMPLOYS SOME 40 BODYGUARDS, ACCORDING TO THE EL TIEMPO ARTICLE, SIX OF WHOM ARE USUALLY WITH HIM AT ANY GIVEN TIME. TWO OF THE MOST LOYAL REMAIN PERMANENTLY WITH THE TRAFFICKER WHILE THE REST ARE ROTATED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT THEY NEVER HAVE ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRAFFICKER'S LOCATION.

4. ALTHOUGH THE NARCO'S INFORMANTS WITHIN THE NATIONAL

REVIEW AUTHORITY: James Cooper, Senior
Reviewer

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POLICE AND THE DEFENSE MINISTRY ARE A MAJOR PROBLEM, THE BIGGEST FACTOR IN ESCOBAR'S ABILITY TO ELUDE THE AUTHORITIES IS THE NETWORK OF LOYAL SUPPORTERS THAT HE HAS BUILT UP OVER THE YEARS IN THE SLUMS WHERE HE HAS NOW GONE TO GROUND. ESCOBAR, WHO ROSE FROM CAR THIEF AND STREET THUG TO BECOME ONE OF THE WORLDS RICHEST MEN, REMAINS A WIDELY ADMIRER FOLK-HERO AMONG MEMBERS OF ANTIQUA'S LOWER ECONOMIC CLASS, MANY OF WHOM HOPE TO TO EMULATE HIS EXAMPLE. MOREOVER, THE SUBSTANTIAL SUMS THAT ESCOBAR HAS INVESTED IN THE REGION ON CIVIC WELFARE PROJECTS FOR THE POOR HAVE NOT BEEN FORGOTTEN.

5. THE SECURITY FORCES FREQUENTLY INTERCEPT RADIO CONVERSATIONS IN WHICH ESCOBAR'S VOICE CAN BE CLEARLY IDENTIFIED. THEY ASSERT, HOWEVER, THAT THEIR RADIO INTERCEPT EQUIPMENT DOES NOT COME CLOSE TO PROVIDING THEM WITH THE HIGHLY ACCURATE INFORMATION ON THE LOCATION OF THE BROADCASTING RADIO WHICH THEY NEED TO LOCATE THE KINGPIN IN HEAVILY POPULATED URBAN AREAS. THE AUTHORITIES CLAIM, HOWEVER, THAT THEY LAST MONTH CRIPPLED ESCOBAR'S COMMUNICATION NETWORK WITH THE OCCUPATION OF MEDELLIN'S MUNICIPAL PAGING SERVICE, WHICH IS SAID TO HAVE PLAIED A VITAL ROLE IN MEDELLIN CARTEL COMMUNICATIONS. SOME OFFICIALS TOLD EL TIEMPO, HOWEVER, THAT SEIZING THE PAGING SERVICE WAS A MISTAKE, BECAUSE THE AUTHORITIES HAD BEEN ABLE TO GLEAN VALUABLE INTELLIGENCE BY MONITORING IT.

6. CLEARLY, ESCOBAR STILL HAS SUFFICIENT COMMUNICATION WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD TO LAUNCH ACTS OF TERRORISM AND TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF HIS COCAINE TRAFFICKING OPERATIONS. HE APPARENTLY LEAVES MUCH OF THE OPERATIONAL DETAILS OF TERRORISM AND TRAFFICKING TO CLOSE ASSOCIATES, MOST NOTABLY TO HIS COUSIN (AND POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR SHOULD ESCOBAR BE KILLED) GUSTAVO DE JESUS GAVIRIA. JOHN JAIRO ARIAS TASCON (AKA "PININA") AND TWO INDIVIDUALS KNOWN AS "POPEYE" AND "TYSON" ALSO SERVE AS KEY LINKS BETWEEN ESCOBAR AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

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7. MUCH OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DIFFICULT TASK OF HUNTING DOWN ESCOBAR RESTS WITH THE ELITE CORPS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE, WHICH HAS STATIONED UNITS IN MEDELLIN SINCE LAST SEPTEMBER. EL TIEMPO WAS TOLD THAT CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 02 OF 02 BOGOTA 08132

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E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

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SUBJECT: WHY PABLO ESCOBAR HASN'T BEEN CAUGHT--THE THE CUERPO ELITE UNITS ARE EFFECTIVELY ISOLATED ON THE GROUNDS OF THE CARLOS HOLGUIN POLICE SCHOOL--CONTACTS WITH THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE AND WITH MEMBERS OF HIGHLY CORRUPTED LOCAL POLICE UNITS ARE SHARPLY RESTRICTED. AS A FURTHER SECURITY MEASURE, MEMBERS OF THE ELITE CORPS ARE CONSTANTLY ROTATED IN AND OUT OF MEDELLIN. APPARENTLY UNABLE TO EFFECTIVELY CORRUPT THE CORPS, ESCOBAR HAS TRIED TO DISRUPT ITS OPERATIONS BY PUBLICLY ACCUSING IT OF SYSTEMATIC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND BY ORDERING TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST ITS MEMBERS.

8. ALTHOUGH ESCOBAR HAS NOT BEEN CAUGHT, HE IS CLEARLY SUFFERING FROM THE SECURITY FORCE'S RELENTLESS PERSECUTION. HIS CURRENT FURTIVE EXISTENCE IN THE SLUMS OF THE MEDELLIN AREA IS A FAR CRY FROM THE LIFE OF UNRIVALED LUXURY WHICH HE WAS LIVING BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT'S CRACKDOWN BEGAN LAST AUGUST. GENERAL MIGUEL MAZA MARQUEZ, HEAD OF THE DAS (COLOMBIA'S ROUGH FBI EQUIVALENT) RECENTLY CLAIMED TO A LOCAL NEWS MAGAZINE THAT GOVERNMENT PRESSURE HAD CONVERTED ESCOBAR INTO AN INCREASINGLY DESPERATE MARIJUANA SMOKING "PSYCOPTH."

9. COMMENT: WE ARE CONVINCED THAT MOST OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED TO EL TIEMPO ON ESCOBAR'S CURRENT WHEREABOUTS AND LIFE-STYLE IS ACCURATE. MUCH OF THIS INFORMATION IS FROM HIGHLY SENSITIVE SOURCES, HOWEVER, AND WE ARE CONCERNED THAT, IN RESPONSE TO CRITICISMS OF

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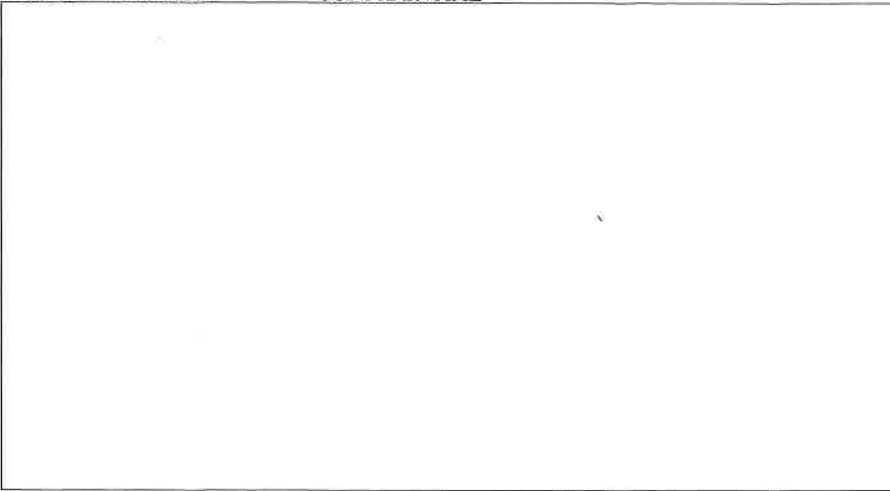
THEIR PERFORMANCE, TOP OFFICIALS OF THE SECURITY FORCES ARE WILLING TO REVEAL TO THE PRESS ALMOST EVERYTHING THEY KNOW ABOUT THE NARCO KINGPIN. ESCOBAR'S SUPPORT FROM THE LOCAL POPULATION AND HIS NETWORK OF INFORMANTS IN THE SECURITY SERVICES LIMIT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OPERATIONS DESIGNED TO CAPTURE THE NARCO CAPO, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHICH INVOLVE LARGE NUMBERS OF POLICE AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY FORCES. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS COME CLOSE TO SNARING ESCOBAR ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN RECENT MONTHS AND WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT, IF THE CURRENT LEVEL OF OPERATIONS ARE MAINTAINED, HE WILL EVENTUALLY BE KILLED OR CAPTURED.

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END OF MESSAGE

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