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TITLE: SUBJECT: BARCO'S COMMENTS ON EXTRADITION: A TACTICAL
- MANUEVER IN THE ANTI-NARCO WAR

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SOURCE: STATE

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TEXT:

TAGS: PGOV, PINR, CJAN, SNAR, CO

SUBJECT: BARCO'S COMMENTS ON EXTRADITION: A TACTICAL
- MANUEVER IN THE ANTI-NARCO WAR

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PERS/ORG

REF: A) BOGOTA 5187, B) BOGOTA 4741, C) BOGOTA 4841

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT

2. PRESIDENT BARCO'S REMARKS IN STRASBOURG WHICH TO MANY (PARTICULARLY PRESS) OBSERVERS IMPLIED THAT NARCO KINGPIN PABLO ESCOBAR WOULD BE TRIED IN COLOMBIA IF HE SURRENDERED (REFTEL A) HAVE RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GOC'S COMMITMENT TO EXTRADITION AND THE DRUG WAR. A SOURCE IN THE CASA DE NARINO (COLOMBIA'S WHITE HOUSE) TOLD THE PRESS THAT BARCO'S WORDS DO NOT SIGNIFY A "WEAKENING" OF THE GOC'S RESOLVE TO FIGHT THE NARCOS. HE SAID THE GOC VIEWS EXTRADITION AS A "TOOL" IN THE ANTI-DRUG WAR THAT THE PRESIDENT CAN APPLY AT HIS DISCRETION. (COMMENT: WE ARE CHECKING WITH A AUTHORITATIVE CONTACT IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE TO SEE IF THE ANONYMOUS PRESS SOURCE IS IN FACT SPEAKING FOR THE PRESIDENT AND WHAT THE IMPLICATIONS ARE.)

3. THE UNIDENTIFIED PALACIO SOURCE DIFFERENTIATED BETWEEN NARCO TRAFFICKERS WHO "SHOW GOOD FAITH OR TURN THEMSELVES IN TO THE AUTHORITIES" AND THOSE WHO CONTINUE FIGHTING THE GOC. THE FORMER WOULD BE TREATED "WITH GREATER BENEVOLENCE" THAN THE LATTER, AND COULD BE TRIED IN COLOMBIA RATHER THAN EXTRADITED. AS AN EXAMPLE, THE SOURCE CITED THE CASE OF NARCO TRAFFICKER JOSE RAFAEL ABELLO, STATING THAT ABELLO "PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN EXTRADITED" IF HE HAD TURNED HIMSELF IN VOLUNTARILY. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, THIS "FLEXIBLE" ATTITUDE TOWARD EXTRADITION SIGNIFIES THAT THE GOC COULD "ACCEPT THE

REVIEW AUTHORITY: James Cooper, Senior Reviewer

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NARCOS' SURRENDER WITHOUT NEGOTIATING ANY DEALS WITH THEM."

COMMENT: TACTICAL MANUEVERS IN A FLUID DRUG WAR

4. REFTEL (B) DESCRIBED THE "CULTURE OF DIALOGUE" WITHIN WHICH BARCO HAS TO OPERATE. HE CANNOT APPEAR TO BE INFLEXIBLE IN THE FACE OF A "NARCO SURRENDER OFFER" (ITSELF A TACTICAL GAMBIT ON THE PART OF THE TRAFFICKERS), WHICH SEEMS TO OFFER A SOLUTION TO THE VEXING PROBLEM OF NARCO TERRORISM. CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE RODRIGO LLOREDA HAS ALSO MADE THE GOC'S "RIGID" ANTI-NARCO POLICY A CAMPAIGN ISSUE (REFTEL C). BARCO, THEREFORE, MUST ENGAGE IN A SERIES OF TACTICAL COUNTERMOVES THAT WILL MAKE HIM APPEAR FLEXIBLE AND DEFLECT THE OPPOSITION'S CRITICISM. BARCO'S STRASBOURG COMMENTS MUST BE VIEWED IN THIS CONTEXT AND DO NOT IMPLY A SOFTENING OF HIS HARD LINE ANTI-NARCO STRATEGY.

5. THE CHANCES OF PABLO ESCOBAR TURNING HIMSELF IN ON THE BASIS OF BARCO'S REMARKS ARE VIRTUALLY NIL. THE RECENT WAVE OF POLICE KILLINGS IN MEDELLIN AND THE APRIL 5 PLANTING OF A POWERFUL CAR BOMB IN BOGOTA (THAT FORTUNATELY FAILED TO EXPLODE) ARE THOUGHT TO BE THE WORK OF ESCOBAR'S ORGANIZATION. THESE ARE NOT THE ACTIONS OF A MAN READY TO THROW IN THE TOWEL. FOR ITS PART, THE GOC CONTINUES TO LAUNCH STRONG MILITARY AND POLICE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE TRAFFICKERS. BARCO HAS AFFIRMED TO THE AMBASSADOR ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS THAT HE WILL EXTRADITE "CAPTURED" NARCOS AND HE HAS SO FAR KEPT HIS WORD. GIVEN THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE COLOMBIAN CULTURAL PENCHANT FOR DIALOGUE, HOWEVER, BARCO CANNOT CONTINUE TO APPLY THE "STICK" AGAINST THE CARTEL WITHOUT APPEARING TO DANGLE A "CARROT" OF SORTS. MCLEAN

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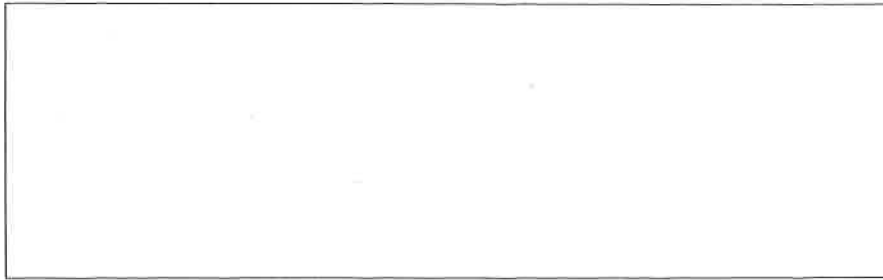


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