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TITLE: SUBJECT: A BAD WEEK FOR NEGOTIATIONS; NEW KIDNAPPINGS,
- GUERRILLA ATTACKS PROMPT SUSPENSION OF TALKS

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SUBJECT: A BAD WEEK FOR NEGOTIATIONS; NEW KIDNAPPINGS,
- GUERRILLA ATTACKS PROMPT SUSPENSION OF TALKS

REF: A) BOGOTA 17898, B) BOGOTA 17897, C) BOGOTA 7911

1. (U) SUMMARY: THE NOVEMBER 7 KIDNAPPING OF TWO MORE MEDIA PERSONALITIES HAS TEMPORARILY HALTED THE QUASI-NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN A GROUP OF PROMINENT CITIZENS (THE "NOTABLES") AND AN ATTORNEY FOR THE MEDELLIN CARTEL. SIMILARLY, THE BLOODY NOVEMBER 10 GUERRILLA ATTACK ON TWO RURAL TOWNS IN ANTIOQUIA HAS LED THE GOC TO ANNOUNCE A SUSPENSION OF DIRECT TALKS WITH THE INSURGENT GROUPS RESPONSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

NEW KIDNAPPINGS PUT NARCO TALKS "ON ICE"

2. (U) THE EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN NARCO LAWYER GUIDO PARRA AND THE "NOTABLES" (EX-PRESIDENTS ALFONSO LOPEZ AND MISAEL PASTRANA, BOGOTA CARDINAL MARIO REVOLLO AND LEFTIST LEADER DIEGO MONTANA) HAS TEMPORARILY ENDED IN THE WAKE OF THE NOVEMBER 7 KIDNAPPING OF MARUJA PACHON (DIRECTOR OF THE GOVERNMENT FILM INSTITUTE "FOCINE") AND HER ASSISTANT (REF A).

3. (C) PARRA, A SELF-PROCLAIMED SPOKESMAN FOR THE "EXTRADITABLES" (A GROUP OF MEDELLIN CARTEL TRAFFICKERS CONTROLLED BY PABLO ESCOBAR) HAD BEEN SERVING AS AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN THE NARCOS AND THE NOTABLES GROUP, WITH THE PROCLAIMED OBJECTIVE OF SECURING FREEDOM FOR THE HOSTAGES PREVIOUSLY TAKEN BY THE CARTEL AND

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PROMOTING PEACE IN COLOMBIA. AFTER THE TWO LATEST KIDNAPPINGS, HOWEVER, PARRA SAID HE WOULD "TEMPORARILY SEPARATE HIMSELF" FROM THIS ENDEAVOR.

4. (C) THE NOTABLES DENOUNCED THE NEW KIDNAPPINGS BUT DREW DIFFERENT CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CRIMES. MONTANA TOLD THE PRESS THAT CONTINUING THE TALKS "DIDN'T MAKE ANY SENSE" IN VIEW OF THE NARCOS' EVIDENT INTENTION TO CARRY OUT MORE KIDNAPPINGS. (ONE OF MONTANA'S CLOSE ASSOCIATES TOLD POLOFF THAT THE LEFTIST LEADER FELT HE WAS "WASTING HIS TIME" WITH PARRA). PASTRANA, HOWEVER, SAID THE MEDIATION EFFORTS OF THE NOTABLES SHOULD CONTINUE.

GOC SUSPENDS DIALOGUE WITH GUERRILLAS AFTER ATTACK

5. (U) THE NOVEMBER 10 ATTACK BY ONE ELN (NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY) AND TWO FARC (REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA) GUERRILLA FRONTS ON THE TOWNS OF CACERES AND TARAZA IN NORTHEASTERN ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT HAS LED THE GOC TO SUSPEND DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH BOTH INSURGENT GROUPS. THE ATTACK LEFT 10 SOLDIERS AND POLICE AGENTS DEAD AND CAME WITHIN HOURS OF THE RETURN FROM FARC HEADQUARTERS OF A "PEACE" COMMISSION LED BY CARLOS ROMERO, PRESIDENT OF THE LEFTIST PATRIOTIC UNION (UP) PARTY. WITH GOC APPROVAL, ROMERO'S GROUP HAD SOLICITED THE GUERRILLA COMMAND'S VIEWS ON THE PEACE PROCESS AND THE UPCOMING CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

M-19 CONDEMNS GUERRILLA VIOLENCE

6. (U) INCLUDED IN THE TORRENT OF CONDEMNATIONS THAT FOLLOWED THE BRUTAL GUERRILLA ASSAULT WAS A STATEMENT BY EX-GUERRILLA COMMANDER AND M-19 LEADER ANTONIO NAVARRO WOLFF. NAVARRO DECLARED THAT THE ATTACKS INDICATED THE FARC AND ITS ALLIES "WERE NOT INTERESTED IN THE PEACE PROCESS" AND THAT THE GOC'S DECISION TO SUSPEND THE DIALOGUE WAS "QUITE CORRECT."

7. (C) ROMERO, TRYING TO SALVAGE SOMETHING FROM THE

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WRECKAGE OF HIS PEACE MISSION, CALLED FOR THE DIALOGUE TO CONTINUE AND FOR A "BILATERAL CEASEFIRE" BETWEEN THE FARC AND THE ARMY (A PROPOSAL THE GOC HAS REPEATEDLY REJECTED). ROMERO ALSO CHARGED THAT AIR FORCE PLANES HAD BOMBED AREAS CLOSE TO FARC HEADQUARTERS DURING HIS VISIT. HE DID, HOWEVER, CRITICIZE THE GUERRILLA ATTACKS. IN THE UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE YEAR, HE ANNOUNCED THAT THE ASSAULT "DID NOT HELP ADVANCE THE PEACE PROCESS."

COMMENT: "ON AGAIN, OFF AGAIN" TALKS

8. (C) FOR THE MOMENT, THE QUASI-NEGOTIATIONS (ALSO KNOWN AS EXCHANGE OF LETTERS, EXPLORATORY DIALOGUE ETC) BY VARIOUS PARTIES WITH THE GUERRILLAS AND THE NARCOS HAVE COME TO A HALT. BOTH GROUPS HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT NEITHER PEACE NOR HUMAN RIGHTS IS THEIR FIRST CONCERN. THE NOTABLES AND THE NARCOS "EXCHANGED LETTERS" IN FEBRUARY 1990 USING PARRA AS AN INTERMEDIARY (REF C). THESE CONTACTS CAME TO NOTHING. THE FARC, FOR ITS PART, USED NEGOTIATIONS WITH PRESIDENT BETANCUR IN 1984-85 TO REST AND REEQUIP ITS FORCES FOR CONTINUED COMBAT.

9. (C) IN SPITE OF THIS LEGACY OF BAD FAITH, TALKS ARE UNLIKELY TO REMAIN FROZEN FOR LONG. COLOMBIANS HAVE A PROPENSITY TOWARD DIALOGUE AS A MEANS OF DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PROBLEMS, INSTEAD OF CONFRONTING THEM HEAD-ON (THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IS ONE FRUIT OF THIS CULTURAL TRAIT). THE GOC HAS NOW REJECTED DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH BOTH THE NARCOS AND THE GUERRILLAS, BUT MANY POSSIBILITIES FOR INDIRECT CONTACTS EXIST. THE GOC MAINTAINS RELATIONS WITH THE U.P., WHICH HAS CLOSE LINKS TO THE FARC. A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT POLITICIANS SUCH AS EX-MEDELLIN MAYOR JUAN GOMEZ MARTINEZ (REF B) CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE NARCO DIALOGUE, AND ARE EAGER TO SERVE AS "INTERMEDIARIES" BETWEEN THE TRAFFICKERS AND THE GOVERNMENT. MCNAMARA

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