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TITLE: SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH VICE MINISTER OF JUSTICE

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SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH VICE MINISTER OF JUSTICE

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. VICE MINISTER OF JUSTICE EDUARDO MENDOZA TOLD POLCOUNS ON THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 4 THAT THE UPGRADING OF SECURITY AT ENVIGADO AND ITAGUI PRISONS WAS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN BEFORE CHRISTMAS. IT IS TO BE THE GOC'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT TO ESCOBAR AND THE OCHOA BROTHERS.

3. MENDOZA SAID THAT HE HAD WORKED WITH AN ISRAELI FIRM TO DRAW UP PLANS FOR TIGHTENING SECURITY AT THE TWO PRISONS. HE SAID TWO RINGS OF CONCERTINA WIRE WOULD CIRCLE ENVIGADO'S PERIMETER. BOTH WOULD BE SET INTO CONCRETE. THE INNER CIRCLE OF CONCERTINA WIRE WOULD ALSO HAVE ELECTRONIC SENSORS. MINES WILL BE LAID BETWEEN THE TWO CIRCLES. SOME NINE ARMORED AND CHEMICAL AND/OR GAS RESISTANT WATCH TOWERS WILL BE ERECTED JUST INSIDE THE INNER CIRCLE. SOME 37 CAMERAS ARE TO BE MOUNTED ON THE WALLS AND INSIDE ENVIGADO. HIGH SECURITY DOORS WILL REPLACE EXISTING DOORS INSIDE THE PRISON.

4. SIMULTANEOUSLY CONSTRUCTION WILL BEGIN AT ITAGUI. THERE A NEW WALL COMPLETELY SEPARATING THE MAXIMUM SECURITY FACILITY FROM THE REST OF THE PRISON WILL BE CONSTRUCTED. OTHER PRISON WALLS WHICH MENDOZA SAID COULD PROBABLY BE DESTROYED BY RUNNING A CAR INTO THE WALL WILL BE REPLACED.

5. CONSTRUCTION AT ENVIGADO WILL PROCEED FROM THE OUTWARD PERIMETER INWARD. THE IDEA, MENDOZA SAID, IS TO

REVIEW AUTHORITY: James Cooper, Senior
Reviewer

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ARRIVE WITH THE WORK FORCE AND A NEW OUTER GUARD FORCE AT THE SAME TIME SO AS TO INSURE CONTROL OF THE AREA. ONCE CONSTRUCTION IS BEGUN, WORK WILL BE CONTINUOUS WITH THREE SHIFTS WORKING 24 HOURS A DAY. MENDOZA ESTIMATES THAT CONSTRUCTION CAN BE FINISHED IN FOUR MONTHS.

6. MENDOZA WILL BE SHOWING HIS PLANS TO EXPERTS IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR COMMENT. "I DO NOT WANT TO MAKE A MISTAKE," HE SAID. HE WANTS SECURITY MEASURES TO BE EXACTLY RIGHT AND WELCOMES ANY AND ALL COMMENT.

7. MENDOZA, WHO HAS A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH PRESIDENT GAVIRIA, DESCRIBED GAVIRIA AS BEING GENERALLY QUIET DURING BRIEFINGS, BUT HE SAID, WHEN HE FINISHED PRESENTING HIS SECURITY PLAN TO GAVIRIA, THE PRESIDENT SAID, "THAT IS EXCELLENT." MENDOZA SAID GAVIRIA HAS BEEN PERSONALLY VERY SUPPORTIVE THROUGHOUT THE EARLY PHASES OF THIS PROJECT AND WHENEVER A BUREAUCRATIC ROADBLOCK SURFACED GAVIRIA PERSONALLY GOT ON THE PHONE AND GOT THINGS BACK ON TRACK.

8. MENDOZA SAID THAT PRECAUTIONS WERE ALSO BEING TAKEN TO GUARD AGAINST HELICOPTER ESCAPES AND TO CONTROL ALL COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD. FINALLY, HE SAID, STATE-OF-THE-ART PRISON DOORS WOULD REPLACE CURRENT DOORS. CURRENTLY COMMERCIALY PURCHASED LOCKS ARE ON THE DOORS, AND THE GUARDS WHO MENDOZA PRESUMES TO BE ON THE ESCOBAR OR OCHOA PAYROLL HAVE THE KEYS.

9. AS FOR GUARDS THEMSELVES, THE CONTROLS THAT COUNT WILL HAVE TO BE THOSE ON THE OUTSIDE. MENDOZA DID NOT BELIEVE IT LIKELY THAT ANY GUARD COULD BE CLOSE TO ESCOBAR OR THE OCHOAS FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME WITHOUT BEING COMPROMISED EITHER BY BRIBERY OR INTIMIDATION.

10. MENDOZA SAID HE WAS AMAZED THAT SO FAR NEWS OF THE GOC PLANS TO GET CONTROL OF THE PRISONS HAD NOT LEAKED. "NOT EVEN THE ARMY KNOWS," HE SAID. MINDEF RAFAEL PARDO OF COURSE KNOWS, HE ADDED. HE EXPECTS, HOWEVER, THAT PABLO ESCOBAR WILL GET WIND THAT SOMETHING IS UP IN THE

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NEAR FUTURE.

11. MONEY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS, USDOLS 4 MILLION, HAS ALREADY BEEN OBTAINED, THOUGH A FEW FORMALITIES REMAIN. ON DECEMBER 5 THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MUST PUT ITS OFFICIAL IMPRIMATUR ON THE EXPENDITURE. IT'S TO BE AN ACCOUNT IN WHICH THE NATURE OF THE EXPENDITURE IS NOT IDENTIFIED. FOLLOWING THE ACCOUNT'S APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, IT WILL BE PASSED TO THE COUNCIL OF STATE. AT THAT POINT THE FACT THAT THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE HAS AN UNIDENTIFIED EXPENDITURE IN ITS BUDGET MAY BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND ESCOBAR'S LAWYERS ARE ALMOST SURE TO SUSPECT THAT THE ACCOUNT MAY HAVE SOME RELATION TO PRISON FACILITIES.

12. MENDOZA SAID GAVIRIA WAS SPENDING A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF TIME THINKING ABOUT WHO SHOULD BE THE NEW FISCAL GENERAL (PROSECUTOR GENERAL). THAT INDIVIDUAL HAD TO BE SOMEONE COMMITTED TO THE POLICY AND FULLY TRUSTED BY GAVIRIA. THERE ARE ALSO LEGALLY SPECIFIED QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE SELECTEE. HE MUST BE A LAWYER. HE MUST HAVE PRACTICED OR TAUGHT LAW FOR 10 YEARS OR HAVE BEEN A SUPREME COURT MAGISTRATE. TWO INDIVIDUALS ALREADY ON THE GAVIRIA TEAM, ATTORNEY GENERAL CARLOS GUSTAVO ARRIETA AND FERNANDO BRITTO, HAVE THOSE QUALIFICATIONS, AND MENDOZA BELIEVES THEY ARE ON THE LIST. BRITTO, HE SAID, APPEARS TO BE THE FRONT RUNNER.

13. FINAL SELECTION OF THE FISCAL DOES NOT REST WITH GAVIRIA BUT WITH THE SUPREME COURT. GAVIRIA WILL SUBMIT TO THE COURT A LIST OF THREE NAMES. THE COURT MUST SELECT THE FISCAL FROM THAT LIST.

14. COMMENTING ON THE GAVIRIA TEAM, MENDOZA SAID RAFAEL PARDO WAS DOING AN ABSOLUTELY OUTSTANDING JOB AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE [REDACTED]

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