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TITLE: SUBJECT: VIDEOTAPE BRIBE SCANDAL REFUSE TO DIE

ORIGDATE: 199109032232

SOURCE: STATE

DOCNO: BOGOTA 13588

TEXT:

TAGS: SNAR, PGOV, CO

SUBJECT: VIDEOTAPE BRIBE SCANDAL REFUSE TO DIE

RELEASED IN PART B3 CIA
PERS/ORG

REF: BOGOTA 12725 (NOTAL)

1. (U) A SCANDAL OVER A VIDEO TAPED ATTEMPTED BRIBE OF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CA) CANDIDATE BY A LAWYER LINKED TO PABLO ESCOBAR CONTINUES TO DOG THE GOC. THE TAPE SHOWS A CA DELEGATE RECEIVING 2.5 MILLION PESOS (USD 4,200) FROM A LAWYER WHO SAYS THE MONEY IS FROM ESCOBAR AND IS MEANT TO SUPPORT A CONSTITUTIONAL EXTRADITION BAN (WHICH PASSED OVERWHELMINGLY).

2. (U) THE ISSUE REMAINS THE SUBJECT OF EDITORIALS AND POLITICAL CARTOONS, AND OPPOSITION CONSERVATIVE NEWSPAPER LA PRENSA CONTINUES TO STOKE THE SCANDAL WITH TABLOID-STYLE HEADLINES SUCH AS "TIES, LIES, AND VIDEO TAPE." IT IS ALSO FUELED PARTLY BY CONTRADICTIONARY RESPONSES FROM THE GAVIRIA ADMINISTRATION.

3. (U) GAVIRIA CLAIMS NOT TO HAVE SEEN THE TAPE, BUT SAID THAT NO BRIBE TOOK PLACE (THE TAPE WAS A STING OPERATION, AND THE CA DELEGATE IMMEDIATELY HANDED THE MONEY TO THE POLICE). GAVIRIA CLAIMED THE TAPE (OR THE FACT OF ITS EXISTENCE) WAS MADE KNOWN TO THE THREE CA PRESIDENTS (ALVARO GOMEZ, HORACIO SERPA URIBE AND ANTONIO NAVARRO WOLFF) SOON AFTER IT WAS MADE IN MARCH. GOMEZ DENIES IT, SERPA ADMITS IT, AND NAVARRO IS MUM. ADDING TO THESE INCREDIBLE ANSWERS WAS GOVMIN DE LA CALLE'S FLIP RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRIES ("I DON'T HAVE TIME TO WATCH TELEVISION"). THE RESPECTED NEWSWEEKLY SEMANA TOOK GAVIRIA TO TASK FOR HIS "PASSIVE" RESPONSE.

4. COMMENT: GAVIRIA'S FAILURE TO ADEQUATELY EXPLAIN

REVIEW AUTHORITY: James Cooper, Senior Reviewer

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WHY HE FAILED TO TAKE ANY ACTION AND THE CONTRADICTIONARY
RESPONSES OF THE CA PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA HAS GIVEN THE
CONTROVERSY NEW LIFE. NEVERTHELESS, THE NEW
CONSTITUTION IS A FAIT ACCOMPLI UNLIKELY TO BE UNRAVELED
BY ONE VIDEO-TAPED "STING."

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END OF MESSAGE CONFIDENTIAL

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