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TEXT:  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - FOREIGN PRESS COVERAGE OF COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY: LEADING DAILY EL TIEMPO CARRIED 4/25 A COMMENTARY BY COLUMNIST AND ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR FRANCISCO SANTOS CALDERON ON THE LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY THAT HE PERCEIVES IN SOME OF THE MANY JOURNALISTS WHO VISIT COLOMBIA TO REPORT ON THE LOCAL SITUATION. SANTOS SAYS THAT THESE JOURNALISTS GIVE COLOMBIA A STEREOTYPED IMAGE THAT IS UNTRUE. THE PIECE WAS ENTITLED "THE NEW CONQUISTADORS." TRANSLATED EXCERPTS FOLLOW.

2. (BEGIN) "THEY COME TO COLOMBIA LIKE HORDES OF BARBARIANS. BUT THEY ARE NOT LOOKING FOR ELDORADO NOR ARE THEY CONQUISTADORS. THEY ARE JOURNALISTS HUNTING DOWN A 'JUICY' STORY: DRUG TRAFFICKING.

3. "...MOST OF THE TIME THEY COME SEEKING HELP FROM THEIR COLLEAGUES, FOR THEY ARRIVE IN A COUNTRY WHERE IT IS DANGEROUS TO ASK THE WRONG QUESTIONS IN THE WRONG PLACE AND WHERE IT IS HARD TO MOVE AROUND, ESPECIALLY IF THEY DON'T SPEAK THE LANGUAGE AND DON'T KNOW THE PLACE.

4. "AT THE BEGINNING THE QUESTIONS ARE THE SAME: WHERE ARE THE DRUG TRAFFICKERS? IS THE WHOLE GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE OWNED BY THE MAFIOSI? WHY AREN'T THEY PUT IN JAIL? IS EVERY POLICEMAN ON THE TAKE? WHERE CAN I FIND PABLO ESCOBAR? IN OTHER WORDS, THE OBVIOUS GENERALIZATIONS AND STEREOTYPES.

5. "SOMETIMES WE GET RESPONSIBLE JOURNALISTS WHO FIRST LOOK FOR INFORMATION IN THE ARCHIVES AND THE LIBRARIES AND THEN THEY START ASKING QUESTIONS...WE ALSO GET JOURNALISTS WITH PRECONCEPTIONS THAT ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO

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CHANGE AND WHOSE ONLY REASON TO DO THE TRIP IS TO FULFILL AN ETHICAL OBLIGATION THAT WILL ALLOW THEM TO FILL IN THEIR PREJUDICES WITH THE APPROPRIATE QUOTES.

6. "BUT THE MOST DANGEROUS ONES ARE THE FREELANCERS AND THOSE WORKING FOR SENSATIONALIST MAGAZINES WHO ARE LOOKING FOR A PROMOTION OR A 'SHOT AT THE STARS' THROUGH A STORY ON DRUGS.

7. "THEY ARE THE ONES, LIKE MR. HOWARD KOHN FROM ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE, WHO CAUSE THE COUNTRY AND THE PROFESSION THE MOST HARM. BECAUSE THE LIGHTWEIGHT REPORTING AND THE DESIRE TO BE NOTICED LEADS SUCH MEN TO COMMIT INDISCRETIONS THAT CAN COST THE LIVES OF LOCAL JOURNALISTS -- AFTER ALL, WHAT DOES HE CARE IF AFTER WRITING (HIS PIECE) HE GOES BACK TO THE COMFORT OF HIS OWN COUNTRY.

8. "THE CASE OF MR. KOHN IS SIMPLE: HE INVENTED A FANTASTIC WORLD, HE FELT PERSECUTED, AND WHAT THE MAGAZINE PUBLISHED IS A VIEW THAT IS DISTORTED AND FULL OF FACTUAL ERRORS ABOUT THE COLOMBIAN REALITY.

9. "I HOPE THAT FROM NOW ON WE ARE MORE CAREFUL IN SPEAKING WITH OUR FOREIGN COLLEAGUES. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE INVESTIGATE, BEFORE HELPING, THE ORGANIZATION A REPORTER WORKS FOR AND THE BACKGROUND OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS WHO DAILY PASS THROUGH OUR NEWSROOMS. BECAUSE, AS IT WAS DEMONSTRATED BY THE ROLLING STONE ARTICLE, WE CAN BE USED." (END EXCERPTS).

10. COMMENT: SANTOS HAS TOLD USIS HE FEELS THE ROLLING STONE WRITER VIOLATED THE BACKGROUND GROUND RULES THAT WERE AGREED UPON FOR THE INFORMATION SANTOS GAVE TO THE MAGAZINE.

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END OF MESSAGE

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