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TITLE: SUBJECT: FOURTH BRIGADE TAKES ON GANGS OF NARCO  
HIRELINGS IN MEDELLIN; GANGS IN DISARRAY

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TAGS: PTER, PINS, SNAR, PHUM, CO

SUBJECT: FOURTH BRIGADE TAKES ON GANGS OF NARCO  
HIRELINGS IN MEDELLIN; GANGS IN DISARRAY

1. FOURTH BRIGADE COMMANDER (GEN.) HAROLD BEDOYA TOLD THE PRESS FEBRUARY 6 THAT THE ARMY HAS IDENTIFIED 87 GANGS OF HIRED GUNMEN ("SICARIOS") IN MEDELLIN. THE GANGS ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE ABOUT TEN MEMBERS EACH. MOST GANG MEMBERS ARE HIRELING THUGS ON "RETAINER" TO THE NARCO ORGANIZATION OF PABLO ESCOBAR GAVIRIA. IN A CAMPAIGN THAT BEGAN JANUARY 4, BEDOYA SAID, THE FOURTH BRIGADE'S "OPERATION GENESIS" HAS BUSTED 22 OF THESE GANGS, ARRESTING 211 SUSPECTED SICARIOS WHO ARE NOW AWAITING COURT ACTION. BEDOYA VOWED THAT THE OPERATION WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE REMAINING 65 BANDS ARE BUSTED, WHICH IS THE GOAL OF OPERATION GENESIS.

2. GENERAL BEDOYA ADDED THAT IN THE COURSE OF THE OPERATION THE ARMY HAS CAPTURED MEMBERS OF SUCH GANGS AS THE NOTORIOUS "LOS PRISCOS," "LOS TESOS," "LOS CALVOS" AND "LOS NACHOS." BEDOYA PRAISED THE ROLE PLAYED BY CIVILIANS IN THE ARMY'S CAMPAIGN AND MENTIONED THAT THEIR INFORMATION HELPED AUTHORITIES TO IDENTIFY 87 GANGS AND 641 DELINQUENTS, (INCLUDING THE 211 CAPTURED). MOST OF THE GANGS ARE CONCENTRATED IN THE IMPOVERISHED NORTHWEST AND NORTHEAST SECTORS OF MEDELLIN, IN THE BELLO AND LA ESTRELLA MUNICIPALITIES, AS WELL AS IN THE MEDELLIN SUBURBS SPREADING INTO THE ABURRA VALLEY.

3. A LONG ARTICLE APPEARING IN THE JANUARY 6 EDITION OF THE WEEKLY SEMANA NEWS MAGAZINE ANALYZED THE DECLINE OF THE MEDELLIN SICARIO GANGS. IT CONCLUDED THAT THE

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Adolph Eisner, Senior  
Reviewer

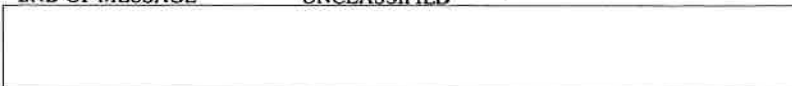
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SICARIO ORGANIZATIONS IN MEDELLIN ARE UNDERGOING A PERIOD OF CRISIS. TRIGGERING THIS CRISIS WAS THE GOC'S ANTI-NARCO CAMPAIGN THAT BEGAN AUGUST 18, WHICH LED TO THE DEATH OF KINGPIN GONZALO RODRIGUEZ GACHA AND DROVE THE ORGANIZATION OF MEDELLIN CAPO PABLO ESCOBAR GAVIRIA FARTHER UNDERGROUND. THE ARTICLE ESTIMATES THE NUMBER OF GANGS IN MEDELLIN AT 300, WITH A POSSIBLE TOTAL OF 3,000 MEMBERS -- A MUCH HIGHER FIGURE THAN THE ONE DISCLOSED BY GENERAL BEDOYA. MOST MEMBERS ARE YOUNG MEN, SOME BARELY INTO THEIR TEENS, WHO GREW UP IN THE MEAN STREETS OF NORTHERN MEDELLIN. ALTHOUGH ESCOBAR CONTINUED AT FIRST TO PAY A "RETAINER" FEE TO SEVERAL GANG MEMBERS, THE ARTICLE NOTES THAT THE SICARIO GANGS ARE NOW LARGELY "UNEMPLOYED." THIS SITUATION HAS LED TO GREATER "GENERALIZED VIOLENCE" IN MEDELLIN AS GANG MEMBERS DEPRIVED OF THEIR USUAL GLOSSY FEES BEGAN SEEKING OTHER SOURCES OF REVENUE. THESE INCLUDE "PROTECTION"-TYPE EXTORTION OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED SHOPOWNERS, BANK HOLDUPS, AND ABDUCTION FOR RANSOM.

4. THE COMMANDER OF THE MEDELLIN METROPOLITAN POLICE WAS THE FIRST TO IDENTIFY THIS TREND THREE MONTHS AGO, ACCORDING TO SEMANA. HE ATTRIBUTED SHARP INCREASES IN AUTO THEFTS AND ABDUCTIONS TO THE "UNEMPLOYED BUMS PRODUCED BY THE CRISIS WITHIN THE NARCOTRAFFICKING EMPIRE." IT WAS THIS PHENOMENON, SEMANA REPORTS, THAT PROMPTED THE LAUNCHING OF OPERATION GENESIS BY THE FOURTH BRIGADE ON JANUARY 4. MEDELLIN CITIZENS, VICTIMIZED BEYOND ENDURANCE BY THE NEW MODES OF SURVIVAL CHOSEN BY THE UNEMPLOYED SICARIOS, BECAME, AS GENERAL BEDOYA ACKNOWLEDGED, GOOD COLLABORATORS WITH THE ARMY'S CLEANUP OPERATION. SEMANA DOUBTS, HOWEVER, THAT THE OPERATION WILL BE ULTIMATELY EFFECTIVE IN KEEPING SICARIOS BEHIND BARS, GIVEN THE VULNERABILITY OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM TO SICARIO THREATS AND BRIBERY.  
MCNAMARA

END OF MESSAGE

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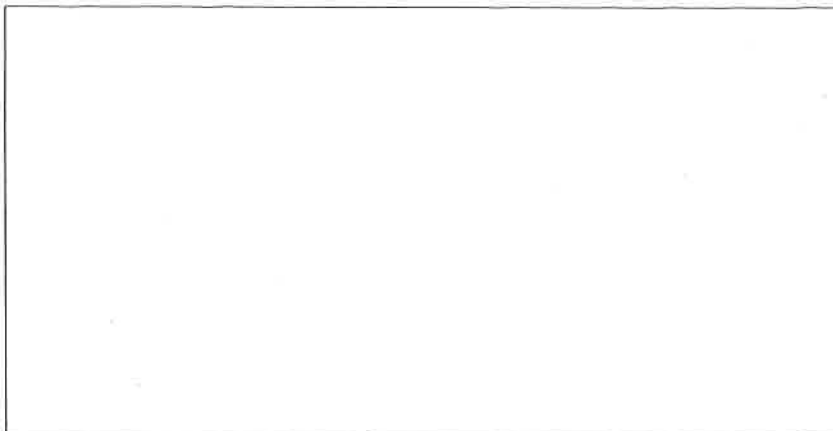


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