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TITLE: SUBJECT: MEDELLIN CAR BLAST KILLS FOURTEEN; FIRST

-- SIGN OF RETALIATION FOR "PALOMO'S" DEATH

ORIGDATE: 199212031938

SOURCE: STATE

DOCNO: BOGOTA 18003

TEXT:

TAGS: SNAR, PINS, ASEC, PHUM, CO

SUBJECT: MEDELLIN CAR BLAST KILLS FOURTEEN; FIRST

-- SIGN OF RETALIATION FOR "PALOMO'S" DEATH

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REFS: A) BOGOTA 17925, B) BOGOTA 17763,

-- C) BOGOTA 17635, D) 91 BOGOTA 2661

1. (U) PRELIMINARY REPORTS INDICATE AT LEAST TEN MEDELLIN POLICEMEN AND FOUR CIVILIANS WERE KILLED VERY LATE THE NIGHT OF DECEMBER 2 WHEN A CAR BOMB EXPLODED FIVE BLOCKS FROM A STADIUM WHERE A SOCCER MATCH HAD TAKEN PLACE EARLIER. APPROXIMATELY 120 KILOS OF DYNAMITE WERE REPORTEDLY DETONATED IN WHAT IS THE LARGEST CAR BOMBING SINCE THE FEBRUARY 16, 1991 EXPLOSION OUTSIDE A MEDELLIN BULLRING THAT KILLED NINE POLICEMEN AND 12 OTHERS (REF D).

2. (U) THE POLICEMEN WHO WERE KILLED WERE PART OF A ROVING PATROL RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURITY AROUND THE STADIUM AFTER THE GAME. ACCORDING TO BOGOTA LEADING DAILY EL TIEMPO, A MEDELLIN RADIO STATION REPORTED THE AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 2 RUMORS WERE CIRCULATING THAT A CAR BOMB MIGHT BE PLANTED AT THE STADIUM THAT NIGHT. THE BOMB WAS DETONATED AS THE POLICEMEN PASSED THE EXPLOSIVE-LADEN VEHICLE IN A SQUAD CAR AND ON TWO MOTORCYCLES. IN ADDITION TO THE 14 CASUALTIES, 18 PEOPLE WERE INJURED AND SEVERAL BUILDINGS IN THE AREA WERE HEAVILY DAMAGED. POLICE OFFICIALS ESTIMATE DAMAGES AMOUNTING TO APPROXIMATELY 500 MILLION PESOS (ROUGHLY USD 700,000).

3. (C) COMMENT: THIS LATEST CAR BOMBING IS A MAJOR STEP UP AND MAY HAVE BEEN THE MEDELLIN CARTEL'S

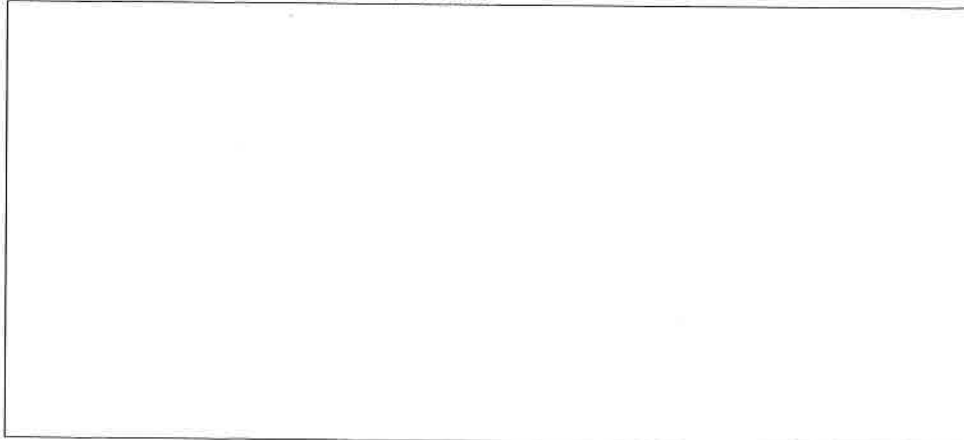
REVIEW AUTHORITY: James Cooper, Senior
Reviewer

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RETALIATORY MEASURE FOR THE NOVEMBER 27 KILLING OF JHONNY RIVERA ACOSTA ("PALOMO"), ONE OF PABLO ESCOBAR'S MAJOR SECARIOS AND ONE OF THREE ENVIGADO ESCAPEES WHO DID NOT SURRENDER (REF C). IT COULD ALSO BE IN RESPONSE TO RECENT SEARCHES OF THE HOMES OF RELATIVES OF PABLO ESCOBAR (MOST NOTABLY HIS MOTHER) AND OTHER MAJOR MEDELLIN DRUG TRAFFICKERS (REFS A AND B). ALTHOUGH ESCOBAR IS GREATLY WEAKENED BY THE FACT THAT THE OTHER ESCAPEES, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF HIMSELF AND ALFONSO LEON PUERTA MUNOZ ("EL ANGELITO"), HAVE EITHER BEEN KILLED OR ARE BEHIND BARS AT ITAGUI PRISON, THIS BOMBING IS EVIDENCE THAT HIS ORGANIZATION IS STILL CAPABLE OF MOUNTING TERRORIST OPERATIONS OF THIS MAGNITUDE. BY TARGETING POLICEMEN AT A PUBLIC SPORTS ARENA WITH AN EXTREMELY POWERFUL CAR BOMB, THE ATTACK SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN STAGED AS A TRIBUTE TO RIVERA. RIVERA WAS REPORTEDLY THE ONE WHO ORGANIZED THE '91 BULLRING CAR BOMBING IN RETALIATION FOR THE KILLING OF THE PRISCO BROTHERS, TWO OF ESCOBAR'S ASSASSINS. THE SIMILARITIES IN THE TWO ATTACKS CANNOT BE IGNORED. END COMMENT. BUSBY

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<FROM>FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA</FROM>

<TO>TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3113</TO>

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RUEHNA/DEA WASHDC

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