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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: APPEALS REVIEW PANEL
APPEAL ACTION: RELEASED IN FULL
DATE/CASE ID: 21 OCT 2004 200400915

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/06/2009
TAGS: PREL7 PTER, SNAR, CASC, CO
SUBJECT: MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN USG
REPRESENTATIVES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE REVOLUTIONARY
ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA (FARC).

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY ARA/AND OFFICE DIRECTOR PHIL
CHICOLA. REASON 1.5(B) AND (D).

2. (S) THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE MEMCON ON THE
DECEMBER 13 - 14 MEETING BETWEEN USG OFFICIALS AND THE

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FARC. DISCUSSED WERE PEACE PROCESS, COUNTERNARCOTICS
ISSUES AND THE FATE OF MISSING AMERICAN CITIZENS KIDNAPPED
BY THE FARC. MEMORANDUM IS WRITTEN IN FIRST PERSON FROM
THE POINT-OF-VIEW OF PARTICIPATING OFFICE DIRECTOR. THE
MEMCON WAS ADDRESSED TO NO PARTICULAR PERSON BUT WAS
DISTRIBUTED TO ARA FRONT OFFICE, SEVERAL INTERESTED BUREAUS
AND AGENCIES AND THE SEVENTH FLOOR.

3. (S) BEGIN TEXT:

PARTICIPANTS AND BACKGROUND: ARA/AND OFFICE DIRECTOR AND
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS
DATE/CASE ID: 04 AUG 2004 200400915

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PPC OFFICER MET DECEMBER 13 AND 14 IN SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FARC. THE MEETING WAS BROKERED BY ALVARO LEYVA, A FORMER CONSERVATIVE PARTY GOC OFFICIAL WHO HAS RESIDED IN SAN JOSE SINCE APRIL 1998, HAVING FLED EMBEZZLEMENT AND CORRUPTION CHARGES IN COLOMBIA PROFFERED

IN THE FINAL DAYS OF THE SAMPER ADMINISTRATION LEYVA CLAIMS HE WAS FRAMED AS A RESULT OF A POLITICAL VENDETTA.

GOC PRESIDENTIAL CHIEF OF STAFF JUAN HERNANDEZ REPRESENTED THE GOC. ALTHOUGH INITIALLY PASSIVE, HERNANDEZ BECAME A MORE ACTIVE PARTICIPANT AS THE MEETINGS WORE ON. ALSO PRESENT WAS AN INCOMING CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONGRESSIONAL DEPUTY FROM CUNDINAMARCA, JAIRO ROJAS, WHO DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS A LONGSTANDING COLLEAGUE OF LEYVA ON PEACE AND INSURGENCY ISSUES. ROJAS DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSIONS.

THE FARC'S SENIOR PARTICIPANT WAS RAUL REYES, A MEMBER OF THE FARC'S GOVERNING SEVEN-MAN SECRETARIAT AND HEAD OF THE

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GROUP'S INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION. HE IS APPROXIMATELY 53-55 YEARS OLD, 5'3", 135-140 LBS. HE HAS A DARK COMPLEXION AND WEARS SQUARE, GOLD FRAME GLASSES. REYES SAYS HE IS A PEASANT WHO HAS RISEN THROUGH THE FARC RANKS AND HIS SPEECH PATTERNS AND DEMEANOR SUGGEST SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT HAVE ADVANCED FORMAL EDUCATION. HE IS, HOWEVER, ARTICULATE AND CLEARLY ADEPT AT DISCUSSING A RANGE OF PEACE PROCESS ISSUES, EVINCING A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF WORLD EVENTS AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PARAMETERS OF THE USG-GOC BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. ACCORDING TO LEYVA, WERE FARC LEADER MANUEL MARULANDA TO DIE TOMORROW, REYES WOULD ASSUME THE ROLE OF FIRST AMONG EQUALS IN THE FARC SECRETARIAT - AT LEAST AS THE SENIOR NON-MILITARY COMMANDER.

ALSO REPRESENTING THE FARC WAS "OLGA" (LAST NAME UNKNOWN). HER FORMAL ROLE IN THE FARC STRUCTURE WAS NEVER DEFINED, BUT SHE IS OBVIOUSLY A SENIOR ADVISOR AND STRATEGIST, IN ADDITION TO APPARENTLY HAVING BEEN A FIELD COMMANDER. APPROXIMATELY 41-43 YEARS OLD, 5'2", 125-130 LBS., WITH WHITE SKIN AND SHORT BLACK HAIR, OLGA WEARS A WEDDING RING. ACCORDING TO LEYVA, SHE IS REYES' PARTNER, ALTHOUGH THE TWO DO NOT LET ON ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP OUTSIDE FARC CIRCLES. OLGA HAS APPARENTLY LIVED IN MEXICO AND COSTA RICA, IN ADDITION TO HAVING TRAVELED THROUGHOUT EUROPE WITH REYES.

INITIAL MEETING - DECEMBER 13

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THE GROUP MET AT LEYVA'S APARTMENT, LOCATED SEVERAL BLOCKS FROM THE HOTEL JADE IN BARRIO SAN PEDRO. THE MEETING WAS

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INFORMAL AND UNSCRIPTED. I BEGAN THE DISCUSSION BY EXPLAINING THAT THE USG DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING HAD BEEN A DIFFICULT ONE AND THE RESULT OF MUCH CONSIDERATION BY SENIOR POLICY MAKERS IN WASHINGTON. I MADE IT CLEAR THAT I WAS PRESENT ONLY AT THE EXPRESS REQUEST OF PRESIDENT PASTRANA AND BECAUSE OF HIS CREDIBILITY WITH SENIOR USG OFFICIALS INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT. STRESSING THE ABSOLUTE REQUIREMENT FOR CONFIDENTIALITY, I UNDERScoreD THE IMPORTANCE OF JUAN HERNANDEZ' PRESENCE AND THE FACT THAT GOC PARTICIPATION IS ESSENTIAL IF WE ARE TO DEVELOP A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE FARC AND THE USG. REYES AND OLGA READILY AGREED TO BOTH THE NEED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY AND GOC INVOLVEMENT.

I TOLD THE FARC REPRESENTATIVES THAT WHILE THE USG HAD NO PRECONCEIVED AGENDA OR STRUCTURE AS TO HOW THE DISCUSSIONS MIGHT PROCEED, WE WANTED TO USE THE MEETING TO DESCRIBE OUR VIEWS ON COUNTERNARCOTICS, THE PEACE PROCESS, THE NEW TRIBES MISSIONARIES (NTM), AND THE PRACTICE OF KIDNAPPING AND ATTACKS ON U.S. INTERESTS IN COLOMBIA. BEYOND THAT, WE WERE OPEN TO DISCUSS, OR AT LEAST LISTEN TO, ANY TOPICS THE FARC WISHED TO RAISE.

REYES RESPONDED BY NOTING THE HISTORIC IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO THE MEETING AND RECOGNIZED THAT CHANGING WORLD AND DOMESTIC CIRCUMSTANCES HAD BROUGHT ALL THREE PARTIES TO THE MEETING. HE PRAISED PRESIDENT PASTRANA AND HIS APPARENT COMMITMENT TO A SUCCESSFUL PEACE PROCESS. HE ALSO REFLECTED ON THE "ILLEGITIMACY" OF THE SAMPER REGIME AND

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ITS RAMPANT CORRUPTION BY NARCOTRAFFICKERS. REYES EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AT THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK DIRECTLY TO THE USG AND CLAIMED THAT INFORMATION THAT REACHED US ABOUT THE FARC VIA THE PRESS AND OTHER SOURCES WAS INVARIABLY UNTRUE AND DISTORTED BY ANTI-FARC INTERESTS.

IN PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS LEYVA WARNED ME THAT THE FARC MIGHT OPEN THE MEETING WITH A DISCUSSION OF THE USG'S "HISTORIC" ROLE IN LATIN AMERICA ETC, ETC. IN ORDER TO AVOID WHAT COULD HAVE BECOME A POINTLESS ARGUMENT, I OFFERED A BRIEF TOUR D'HORIZON OF POST-COLD WAR U.S.

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FOREIGN POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA AS A MEANS OF ORIENTING REYES AND OLGA TO THE BROAD PARAMETERS OF U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS. WE ALSO SPENT A GOOD DEAL OF TIME EXPLAINING THE U.S. BUDGET PROCESS, WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON HOW U.S.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE IS DETERMINED VIA EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE BRANCH DELIBERATIONS. REYES AND OLGA FOLLOWED THIS WITH KEEN INTEREST AND ASKED MANY DETAILED QUESTIONS CONCERNING U.S. COUNTERNARCOTICS ASSISTANCE TO COLOMBIA. THEY WERE INCREDULOUS WHEN INFORMED THAT ONLY 1.20% OF THE U.S. BUDGET IS SPENT ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS ACCOUNTS, AND EVEN FURTHER SURPRISED TO FIND OUT THAT 98% OF COUNTERNARCOTICS FUNDS ARE SPENT ON DOMESTIC PROGRAMS. THEY ADMITTED TO BELIEVING THAT THE LION'S SHARE OF THE U.S. COUNTERNARCOTICS AID WENT TO THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE (CNP) AND THE ARMED FORCES. THEY ALSO SAID THIS MONEY WOULD BE MUCH BETTER SPENT ON ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT.

COUNTERNARCOTICS

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I USED THIS POINT TO SET FORTH U.S. COUNTER-NARCOTICS POLICY AND PRACTICES IN COLOMBIA. REGARDLESS OF THIS MEETING OR ANY OTHER POSITIVE PEACE PROCESS DEVELOPMENTS, I TOLD THEM, THE USG FULLY INTENDS TO CONTINUE ITS ERADICATION AND OTHER COUNTERNARCOTICS PROGRAMS WITH THE GOC. EXPLAINING THAT WE SEE A CLEAR COMMITMENT THROUGHOUT THE PASTRANA GOVERNMENT TO COMBAT ILLEGAL DRUGS, I STRESSED THAT WE HAVE AN UNWAVERING NATIONAL INTEREST IN REDOUBLING OUR COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORTS AT THIS TIME. THE U.S. CONGRESS AND THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION WILL NOT WALK AWAY FROM THIS TASK.

IN A REFRAIN THAT REYES AND OLGA WOULD RETURN TO REPEATEDLY WHENEVER THE SUBJECT OF NARCOTICS WAS RAISED, THE TWO PROCLAIMED THE FARC'S ABHORRENCE OF THE DRUG TRADE AND CLAIMED NO INVOLVEMENT WITH IT. WHEN PUSHED, THEY ADMITTED TO LEVYING TAXES - NOT ON THE SMALL PRODUCERS, BUT ON THE MIDDLEMEN THE DRUG BARONS SENT OUT TO THE JUNGLE TOWNS TO BUY COCA. DESPITE SPENDING ALMOST AN HOUR DISCUSSING THE SOC 10-ECONOMIC FORCES THAT HAVE DRIVEN PEASANT FARMERS TO TAKE UP ILLICIT CROP CULTIVATION AND THE LACK OF GOVERNMENT PRESENCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN THESE ZONES THAT PRECLUDES LEGITIMATE AGRICULTURE, NEITHER REYES NOR OLGA EVER ALLOWED THAT THE FARC'S ROLE IN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING AMOUNTED TO MORE THAN A ROBIN HOOD-LIKE TAX ADMINISTRATOR. ULTIMATELY THESE PROTESTATIONS RANG HOLLOW.

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CHALKING UP THE GUERRILLA'S RELUCTANT TAX COLLECTOR ROLE TO
A "SAD COINCIDENCE OF GEOGRAPHY" (I.E., "WE WERE ALREADY IN

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THE JUNGLE WHEN THE CAMPESINOS MOVED THERE TO BEGIN COCA
CULTIVATION"), OLGA REPEATEDLY STRESSED THAT THE NARCO
PARAMILITARY-ARMED FORCES NEXUS IS THE TRUE FORCE BEHIND
COLOMBIA'S DRUG PRODUCTION. THEY DETAILED NUMEROUS
INCIDENTS OF POLICE AND MILITARY CORRUPTION IN WHICH THE
DRUG LORDS WOULD ABANDON A JUNGLE LAB, LEAVING BEHIND A
TOKEN AMOUNT OF PASTE "TO HELP THE AUTHORITIES MAKE THEIR
NUMBERS" AND CONTINUE THE STATUS QUO.

BOTH THE FARC AND ALVARO LEYVA CONSTANTLY REFERRED TO A
PILOT PLAN FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT THEY CLAIM TO BE
ELABORATING WITH THE IMPRIMATUR OF FARC LEADER MANUEL
MARULANDA. THEY STRESSED THAT ANY GOVERNMENT EFFORT TO
MOVE THE SMALL PRODUCER TOWARD ALTERNATIVE CROPS THAT DID
NOT CONTEMPLATE FARC INVOLVEMENT WAS DOOMED TO FAILURE; NOT
BECAUSE THE FARC WOULD OPPOSE OR SABOTAGE IT, BUT BECAUSE
ONLY THE FARC HAS THE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE
OF THE PEOPLE AND REGIONS ("CONOCIMIENTO DEL PUEBLO") TO
MAKE SUCH EFFORTS SUCCESSFUL. THEY ALSO STRESSED TIME AND
AGAIN THAT SOLUTIONS AND FORMULAS IN THE PEACE PROCESS -
AND, BY EXTENSION PLANS FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT - MUST
BE DEVELOPED BY COLOMBIANS FOR COLOMBIANS. THEY REACTED
NEURALGICALLY TO ANY SUGGESTIONS THAT MODELS FROM CENTRAL
AMERICA OR OTHER REGIONS MIGHT BE ADAPTED TO THE COLOMBIAN
EXPERIENCE.

NEW TRIBES MISSIONS (NTM)

FOLLOWING THAT DISCUSSION, I BROACHED THE SUBJECT OF THE

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NTM MISSIONARIES, STATING THAT WE BELIEVE THE FARC KNOWS
MORE THAN IT HAS SAID TO DATE CONCERNING THE CIRCUMSTANCES
OF THE MISSIONARIES' CAPTURE AND FATE. I ADDED THAT WE
FELT IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE FARC PROVIDE A FULL
ACCOUNTING OF WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MISSIONARIES. SUCH A
STEP BY THE FARC, I ADDED, WOULD GREATLY FACILITATE ANY
FUTURE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE SIDES. I ALSO SAID, QUITE
CATEGORICALLY, THAT SHOULD ANY OTHER AMERICANS BE KIDNAPPED
OR THEIR INTERESTS IN COLOMBIA BE ATTACKED BY THE FARC,
SUCH ACTION WOULD DEFINITELY PRECLUDE ANY FURTHER INFORMAL
USG-FARC CONTACT.

REYES DENIED FARC INVOLVEMENT IN THE NTM KIDNAPPINGS. HE

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REFERRED TO PRIOR COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE SECRETARIAT THAT DEPLORED THIS SPECIFIC CASE AND KIDNAPPING IN GENERAL. HE SAID THE FARC HAD ALREADY COMMUNICATED TO THE NTM WIVES ALL THE INFORMATION THE GROUP HAD, ALLEGING THAT AS FAR AS THEY KNEW, THE PERPETRATORS WERE FARC DESERTERS IN CHOCO DEPARTMENT WHO HAD ENTERED INTO AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE WITH LOCAL PARAMILITARIES TO ENGAGE IN KIDNAPPING AND EXTORTION FOR PROFIT.

I ANSWERED THAT THE USG HAD FIRM INFORMATION WHICH INDICATED THAT ACTIVE FARC FRONTS WERE INVOLVED AND SAID THAT REGARDLESS OF CULPABILITY, THE FARC SHOULD PROVIDE A FULL ACCOUNTING BOTH AS A HUMANITARIAN GESTURE AND AS A DEMONSTRATION OF COMMITMENT TO THE PEACE PROCESS. REYES OFFERED A LONG AND TORTUOUS ANALYSIS OF THE KIDNAPPING PHENOMENON IN COLOMBIA, ALLEGING THAT THE MILITARY AND PARAMILITARIES PERPETRATED MOST CASES, OFTEN WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE NARCOS. THE FARC, HE INSISTED, DOES NOT

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KIDNAP PEOPLE, AND DEPLORES THIS BARBARIC ACTION BUT IS UNFAIRLY TARRED BY THE PRESS AND GOC AS THE COUNTRY'S MOST PROLIFIC KIDNAPPING PRACTITIONERS. (NOTE: WE RETURNED TO THE NTM ISSUE WITH BETTER RESULTS DURING THE SECOND MEETING. SEE BELOW).

PEACE PROCESS AND THE DESPEJE

AT THIS POINT, I TURNED TO THE "DESPEJE" AND TOLD THE FARC THAT WE KNEW THE LEVEL OF NARCOTICS TRAFFIC AND CULTIVATION IN THE ZONE PREVIOUS TO THE "DESPEJE." SHOULD COCA PRODUCTION AND SHIPMENTS INCREASE IN THE ZONE, THE ENTIRE EXPERIMENT WILL BE DOOMED SINCE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WILL SEE IT AS LITTLE MORE THAN A FARC/NARCO RUSE FOR MAKING MONEY UNDER THE PRETEXT OF SEEKING SPACE FOR A PEACE NEGOTIATION. REYES ASSURED THAT THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN AND THAT ALREADY THE FARC WAS WORKING WITH THE DESPEJE ZONE SMALL PRODUCERS TO EXPLAIN WHY THEY MUST ABANDON COCA PRODUCTION. OLGA FOCUSED ON THE THORNY ISSUE OF VERIFICATION AND ASSERTED THAT THE REMAINING SOLDIERS AT THE SAN VICENTE BATTALION HEADQUARTERS TYPIFIED THE MILITARY'S BAD FAITH APPROACH TO THE PEACE PROCESS. BOTH OPENLY COMPLAINED TO HERNANDEZ AND IMploRED HIM TO ASK PASTRANA TO INTERVENE WITH THE MILITARY AND NOT RENEGE ON

HIS WORD. (NOTE: ON DECEMBER 15, PASTRANA APPARENTLY DID GIVE THE ORDER TO RETIRE THE REMAINING SOLDIERS FROM THE BASE.)

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"COME SEE FOR YOURSELF"

REYES AND OLGA ASKED US TO VISIT THE DESPEJE ZONE AND SEE FOR OURSELVES WHAT CONDITIONS PREVAILED, TALK WITH THE CAMPESINO PRODUCERS AND GET TO KNOW THE SMALL MERCHANTS AND TOWNSPEOPLE WHOSE ENTIRE ECONOMIC EXISTENCE IS BASED ON THE COCA TRADE. I TOLD THEM THAT AT THIS TIME SUCH A VISIT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE OR PRODUCTIVE. THE GOC AND THE FARC HAD IMPORTANT MATTERS TO RESOLVE WITH REGARD TO SETTING AN AGENDA FOR NEGOTIATIONS. HOWEVER, WE WOULD SEE IF AT SOME FUTURE POINT SUCH A VISIT MIGHT BE USEFUL.

PRESSED TO OFFER IDEAS ON WHAT RÔLE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY COULD AND SHOULD PLAY IN THE COLOMBIAN PEACE PROCESS, THE FARC REPRESENTATIVES HAD NO COMMENTS TO OFFER. THEY STRESSED THAT THE SOLUTIONS HAD TO COME FROM THE GOC AND THE FARC WORKING COOPERATIVELY AND NOT FROM EXOGENOUS MODELS GRAFTED ONTO THE COLOMBIAN CONTEXT.

THE DISCUSSION ENDED WITH AN AGREEMENT TO MEET THE FOLLOWING MORNING AND FLESH OUT IDEAS FOR AN INTERNATIONAL ROLE AND A FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE FARC'S PILOT PLAN FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT.

SECOND MEETING - DECEMBER 14

THIS MEETING TOOK PLACE IN THE RESTAURANT OF THE HOTEL JADE

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AND INCLUDED THE SAME PARTICIPANTS AS THE PREVIOUS DAY'S DISCUSSIONS.

PEACE PROCESS

REYES SAID THE FARC DESIRED TO PROCEED WITH SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT ONCE THE CONDITIONS FOR THE "DESPEJE" WERE ACHIEVED. HE REITERATED HIS REQUEST FOR

US TO VISIT THE "DESPEJE" ZONE, CLAIMING THE GUERRILLAS HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE AND EVERYTHING TO GAIN BY LETTING USG OFFICIALS WITNESS THE SITUATION FIRSTHAND. I AGAIN DEMURRED, SAYING THAT WE MIGHT CONSIDER IT IN DUE TIME, BUT THAT THE PROCESS HAD TO MATURE FIRST. I SUGGESTED AND ALL PARTICIPANTS READILY AGREED THAT THE IMMEDIATE TASK FOR BOTH THE GOC AND THE FARC WAS TO GET TO A NEGOTIATING TABLE

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AND EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES FOR INTERIM AGREEMENTS AND ARRANGEMENTS AS BUILDING BLOCKS TO ANY EVENTUAL GLOBAL PEACE SOLUTION. I SUGGESTED ONE SUCH INTERIM AGREEMENT SHOULD CONCERN HUMAN RIGHTS AND ASKED IF THE FARC WOULD BE WILLING TO RENOUNCE KIDNAPPING AS A TACTIC OF WAR.

REYES AND OLGA BOTH RE-STATEd THEIR POSITION FROM A DAY EARLIER THAT THE FARC HAS ALREADY CONDEMNED KIDNAPPING IN ITS 1984 URIBE DOCUMENTS AND IN NUMEROUS OTHER DECLARATIONS AND STATEMENTS. THEY CHARACTERIZED THE MAIN HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES AS INDISCRIMINATE MILITARY BOMBINGS, CNP TORTURE AND PARAMILITARY HOSTAGE. THEY SAID THEY WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE INTERMEDIATE PROGRESS MADE ON "HUMANIZING THE CONFLICT."

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THERE FOLLOWED A LONG DISCUSSION ON THE HISTORY OF COLOMBIAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE CIVIL CONFLICT. LEYVA, HERNANDEZ AND THE FARC JOINTLY PRESENTED A PICTURE OF A POPULATION THAT, DESPITE THE ONGOING CONFLICT, HAD CLEARLY REJECTED TIME AND AGAIN A "MILITARY" OR AUTHORITARIAN SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AGAIN. . AND DRUGS

PARTICIPANTS ALSO REVISITED THE ISSUE OF AGRARIAN REFORM AND ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT. REINFORCING THE FARC'S BASIC POSITION, HERNANDEZ EXPLAINED THAT IN THE PAST, GOC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT HAD FOLLOWED THE CASH CROPS OF COFFEE, COTTON, AND SOYBEANS. IN REGIONS WHERE THESE CROPS WERE GROWN, ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE EXISTED. IN THE VAST JUNGLE TERRITORIES AND ON THE PACIFIC COAST, THE STATE HAD SIMPLY NEVER INVESTED, SINCE LITTLE VIABLE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY EMANATED FROM THEM. WHEN WORLD COFFEE PRICES DECLINED AND AS AGRICULTURAL IMPORT RESTRICTIONS WERE REMOVED, THE COLOMBIAN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR PROVED TO BE WOEFULLY UNCOMPETITIVE. THIS, IN TURN, FORCED LANDLESS CAMPESINOS INTO THE REMOTE REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY WITH A

READY MADE OCCUPATION AS SMALL COCA PRODUCERS - UNFORTUNATELY, HE SAID, THIS WAS THE ONLY AGRICULTURAL EXPORT IN WHICH COLOMBIA HAS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE ON THE WORLD MARKET.

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GIVEN THIS SITUATION, ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND GOC INVESTMENT IN THE COCA ZONES MUST BE A CENTERPIECE AROUND

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WHICH ANY PEACE PROCESS REVOLVES, ACCORDING TO THE FARC. REYES REITERATED HIS ORGANIZATION'S STRONG OPPOSITION TO DRUG TRAFFICKING AND SAID THAT NO COLOMBIAN COULD BE OPPOSED TO EFFORTS TO END IT. HOWEVER, HE MAINTAINED, U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE CNP AND THE MILITARY DOES NOT NECESSARILY GO TO COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORTS; HE ALLEGED THAT THIS WOULD BECOME CLEAR IF WE VISITED THE "DESPEJE" ZONE AND TALKED TO THE PEOPLE.

I ASKED IF THE FARC COULD SURVIVE IF ITS REVENUES FROM NARCO-TAXES SUDDENLY DRIED UP. BOTH OLGA AND REYES SAID NOT ONLY COULD THE GROUP SURVIVE, BUT THIS WOULD BE THE BEST SCENARIO FOR THE CAMPESINOS. DRUG PRODUCTION CONTRIBUTES TO THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE RURAL FAMILY AS MUCH AS DRUG CONSUMPTION DOES IN THE CITIES OF THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE.

A FINAL NOTE ON THE NTM

RETURNING TO THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND KIDNAPPING, I ASKED IF THE FARC HAD CONSIDERED OUR REQUESTS OF A DAY EARLIER TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON THE FATE OF THE NTM. WITHOUT CHANGING THEIR CONTENTION THAT THE FARC WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE CASE, REYES AND OLGA SAID THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO GO BACK TO THEIR "BOSSSES" (VIZ., MARULANDA) AND SEE IF THE FARC WOULD BE WILLING TO WORK WITH SOME SORT OF JOINT GOC-USG GROUP TO RE-INVIGORATE AN INVESTIGATION INTO

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THE GROUP'S FATE. I REITERATED THAT THIS WAS AN ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL PRECONDITION FOR ANY FURTHER EXCHANGES WITH THE FARC.

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