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ZNR UUUUU  
R 101924Z DEC 99  
FM USMILGP BOGOTA CO  
TO RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL//SCCC-P/J32/J5/J20//  
BT  
UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA CO 011048

SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE APPROVAL

REF: 021557Z AUG 99

1. POST GRANTS COUNTRY CLEARANCE AND WELCOMES PERSONNEL TO ASSIST WITH CD-016 REDEPLOYMENT.

(b)(6),(b)(7)(C)

2. CONTROL OFFICER FOR THIS VISIT IS

(b)(6)

AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES: VISITING PERSONNEL WILL BE MET BY A MILGP. VEHICLE, AND DRIVER AT THE AIRPORT. IF NO ONE IS AT THE AIRPORT TO MEET YOU, CONTACT RATELO IMMEDIATELY. YOU ARE STONGLY ADVISED NOT/REPEAT NOT TO USE LOCAL TAXIS AND BUSES TO AND FROM THE AIRPORT.

3. HOTEL: HOTEL RESERVATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE AT THE FOLLOWING REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICE (RSO) APPROVED HOTEL: N/A.

4. PASSPORTS AND VISAS: OFFICIAL VISITORS MUST HAVE A DIPLOMATIC OR OFFICIAL PASSPORT, AND A VISA CONTRACT EMPLOYEES MUST HAVE A TOURIST PASSPORT AND A VISA. DEPARTURE TAX IS USD 24.00 FOR HOLDERS OF TOURISTS PASSPORTS WHO STAY LESS THAN 60 DAYS AND USD 24.00 FOR HOLDERS OF DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL PASSPORTS REGARDLESS OF LENGTH OF STAY.

CURRENT SECURITY ASSESSMENT:

5. TERRORISM: ALL VISITORS TO COLOMBIA MUST EXERCISE CAUTION AND FOLLOW EFFECTIVE SECURITY MEASURES TO MINIMIZE RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES. NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS, PARAMILITARIES AND GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS HAVE CONDUCTED TERRORIST OPERATIONS INCLUDING BOMBINGS, ASSASSINATIONS, KIDNAPPINGS AND ROADBLOCKS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. GUERRILLA-INSPIRED ATTACKS OCCUR

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FREQUENTLY, ESPECIALLY OUTSIDE MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS, INCLUDING THE CAPITAL CITY. IN MARCH 1998, GUERRILLAS MOUNTED AN 8-HOUR ROADBLOCK EAST OF BOGOTA, WHICH RESULTED IN THE KIDNAPPING OF, AMONG OTHERS, 4 PRIVATE AMERICAN CITIZENS. IN RECENT AND REPEATED PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS, THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA (FARC), ONE OF TWO MAIN GUERRILLA GROUPS, DECLARED OFFICIAL AMERICANS LEGITIMATE MILITARY TARGETS. THREE PRIVATE U.S. CITIZENS WERE KIDNAPPED AND MURDERED BY THE FARC NEAR THE VENEZUELAN BORDER IN MARCH 1999. ALTHOUGH THE SECURITY SITUATION IS MONITORED CLOSELY AND EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO KEEP AMERICANS INFORMED AND SAFE, VISITORS MUST BE CAUTIOUS AND PRUDENT AT ALL TIMES.

6. CRIME: CRIME REMAINS A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR MISSION PERSONNEL. EMPLOYEES AND VISITORS HAVE EXPERIENCED RESIDENTIAL BREAK-INS AND THEFTS OF VALUABLES FROM HOTEL ROOMS AND IN RESTAURANTS AND OTHER PUBLIC AREAS. UNWARY AND CARELESS VISITORS ARE EASY TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY. POST RECOMMENDS THAT VISITORS LEAVE HIGH VALUE ITEMS (JEWELRY, CAMERA EQUIPMENT, ETC.) AND UNNECESSARY CREDIT CARDS AT HOME. CARRY MINIMUM CASH ON YOUR PERSON AND NEVER LEAVE LUGGAGE, ATTACHE CASES, ETC., UNATTENDED IN ANY PUBLIC PLACE, ESPECIALLY THE AIRPORT. WHEN TRAVELLING IN VEHICLES, ALL DOORS SHOULD BE LOCKED AND WINDOWS ROLLED UP. THE THREAT OF CAR-JACKING OR ROBBERY WHEN TRAVELING IN VEHICLES IS A SERIOUS CONCERN.

POST POLICY PROHIBITS USE OF COMMERCIAL BUSES. IF TAXIS MUST BE USED, EXTREME CAUTION SHOULD BE EXERCISED. NEVER SHARE A CAB WITH AN UNKNOWN PERSON (INCLUDING THE TAXI DRIVER'S BROTHER/FRIEND/CHILD/WHO MAY ROB YOU). MAKE SURE THAT THE TAXIS METER IS WORKING OR THAT THE FARE IS AGREED UPON PRIOR TO ENTERING THE VEHICLE.

7. APPROVAL FOR COUNTRY CLEARANCE REQUESTS IS LIMITED TO THOSE WHO ARE CONSIDERED MISSION ESSENTIAL. THOSE GRANTED CLEARANCES ARE REQUIRED TO ABIDE BY THE SAME RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON ALL U.S. PERSONNEL AT THE EMBASSY. THIS INCLUDES PRIOR CLEARANCE BY THE RSO FOR ANY TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF BOGOTA AND OBSERVANCE OF RESTRICTIONS ON LOCATIONS TO BE AVOIDED. A MILGP SECURITY BRIEFING IS A REQUIREMENT FOR ALL TDY PERSONNEL COMING TO COLOMBIA. ALSO, FOR TDY PERSONNEL  
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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 BOGOTA CO 011048

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VISITING FOR MORE THAN 14 WORKING DAYS RSO SECURITY BRIEFINGS ARE REQUIRED AND ARE GIVEN AT 9:30 A.M. ON MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, AND FRIDAYS. TDY EMPLOYEES VISITING BOGOTA FOR LESS THAN 14 WORK DAYS NEED ONLY ATTEND THE MILGP BRIEFING.

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THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO ALL OFFICIAL VISITORS:

8. PERSONAL COMPUTERS: ALL VISITORS MUST REQUEST, IN ADVANCE, CUSTOMS CLEARANCE FOR ANY PERSONAL COMPUTER, INCLUDING LAPTOP AND PALM. FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN SEIZURE OF EQUIPMENT BY LOCAL CUSTOMS WITH A MINIMUM OF A TWO TO THREE WEEK DELAY FOR RETURN. PLEASE IDENTIFY MAKE, MODEL AND SERIAL NUMBER.

9. HEALTH AND MEDICAL: NO SPECIAL INOCULATIONS OR MEDICAL PRECAUTIONS ARE NECESSARY FOR TEMPORARY TRAVEL TO BOGOTA. BOGOTA'S HIGH ELEVATION (8,600 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL) MAY CAUSE SHORT-TERM BREATHING DIFFICULTIES AND INSOMNIA FOR SOME INDIVIDUALS. WATER, AND FOOD, ARE CONSIDERED SAFE IN THE CITY, BUT AVOID EATING AT SMALL, UNKNOWN ROADSIDE/STREET STANDS AS HEALTH STANDARDS THERE ARE NOT THE SAME AS AT ESTABLISHED RESTAURANTS, AND THE FOOD MAY BE CONTAMINATED. THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS DRINKING BOTTLED WATER AND AVOIDING RAW SEAFOOD.

10. CLIMATE: DUE TO THE ALTITUDE, BOGOTA'S WEATHER IS GENERALLY COOL WITH TEMPERATURE FROM 50 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT AT NIGHT TO 70 DEGREES DURING THE DAY AND RAIN SHOWERS NEARLY EVERY DAY. SWEATERS AND LIGHT JACKETS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR WEAR AT NIGHT. ATTIRE FOR EMBASSY AS WELL AS MINISTRY OF DEFENSE IS CONSERVATIVE: DARK SUIT AND TIE FOR MEN, COMPARABLE DRESS FOR WOMEN. MILITARY MEMBERS MUST USE THE CLASS A UNIFORM FOR MEETINGS IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND CLASS B'S FOR THE EMBASSY. BARRANQUILLA AND CARTAGENA'S WEATHER IS HOT AND HUMID; LIGHTWEIGHT CLOTHING IS RECOMMENDED.

11. EXCHANGE FACILITIES: BANKING AND ATM SERVICES ARE LOCATED IN THE EMBASSY WHICH WILL EXCHANGE DOLLARS FOR PESOS. PERSONAL CHECKS ARE ACCEPTED AND RECEIVE A 5 PERCENT HIGHER EXCHANGE RATE THAN CURRENCY. THE CURRENCY EXCHANGE RATE FOR CHECKS IS 1,500 TO 1. VISA AND MASTERCARDS ARE ACCEPTED AT MOST RESTAURANTS AND STORES; HOWEVER, CREDIT CARD FRAUD IS COMMON AND EMBASSY RECOMMENDS NOT USING CREDIT CARDS UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

BT

SECDEF V2

ACTION

INFO CHAIRS(1) CHAIRS2 TEST(\*) SECDEF-C(\*)  
SECDEF-C(\*) SECDEF-C(\*) USDAT:STS(\*)  
+USDP:ESC

(U)

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DIA V3

ACTION

INFO +JWAC DAHLGREN VA  
+USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
+SAFE

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