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REMARKS:

FROM: OGI/ [redacted] (b)(3)

[redacted] BUILDING HQS [redacted] (b)(3)

13 MAR 1989

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

SUBJECT: The Copacabana Incident: The Interdiction of Arms Destined for Colombian Insurgents

[Redacted]

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1. The attached memorandum analyzes the recent seizure in Jamaica of over 10 tons of military ordnance en route to the Revolutionary Arms Forces of Colombia (FARC)--Colombia's largest insurgent group. We expect that, despite this successful interdiction, FARC will in the future acquire the more powerful arsenal it has sought for some time.

[Redacted]

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2. This paper was prepared by [Redacted] Arms Transfers Branch, Office of Global Issues.

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3. Your comments are welcome and may be directed to [Redacted] Chief, International Security Issues Division, OGI, [Redacted]

OGI,

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International Security Issues Division

Attachment:
GI M 89-20020

[Redacted]

DATE 20 Mar 89 *File*
DOC NO GI M 89-20020
OIR 2
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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

13 March 1989

The Copacabana Incident: The Interdiction of Arms
Destined for Colombian Insurgents [redacted]

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Summary

On 5 January 1989, Jamaican authorities seized ten tons of modern infantry weapons and ammunition that had been delivered to Jamaica on the freighter "Copacabana". [redacted]

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[redacted] the shipment was destined for Colombia's largest insurgent group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which had purchased the weapons via private arms dealers. This incident illustrates the ease with which insurgent, terrorist, and criminal groups can purchase large quantities of lethal military ordnance on the international gray arms market and underscores the potential importance of regional efforts to interdict illicit weapons shipments. [redacted]

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The Copacabana incident has strengthened the hand of those Colombian officials who believe that FARC is exploiting the current cease-fire, and Bogota will almost certainly use this incident to renew its call for greater international cooperation in controlling the sale of infantry weapons. Nevertheless, we expect that FARC--which earns millions of dollars annually by taxing or controlling illicit drug production in parts of Colombia--will eventually succeed in acquiring large quantities of powerful military ordnance. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Arms Transfers Branch. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief, International Security Issues Division, Office of Global Issues [redacted]

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The Copacabana Incident: The Interdiction of Arms
Destined for Colombian Insurgents [redacted]

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The seizure by Jamaican authorities of ten tons of ordnance on 5 January 1989 foiled an attempt by the largest insurgent organization in Colombia to acquire thousands of modern infantry weapons ideal for combating military and counternarcotics forces. The methods used by individuals and firms involved with procuring these weapons on behalf of the Colombian insurgents illustrate the ease with which private arms dealers can purchase large quantities of lethal military weapons for resale to insurgent, terrorist, and criminal groups. [redacted]

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The Seizure

On 22 December 1988, the Panamanian-registered freighter "Copacabana" delivered a shipping container with ten tons of modern infantry weapons to Kingston, Jamaica. The arms--ostensibly destined for the Colombian armed forces --had been loaded onto the Copacabana earlier that month in Setubal, Portugal. In accordance with Jamaican regulations, the weapons were temporarily stored in a Jamaican Defense Force warehouse pending the arrival of a privately-owned, [redacted]

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[redacted] aircraft [redacted]

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[redacted] to fly the shipment to Colombia. Eveleigh, a dual UK/Panamanian citizen and director of the Panamanian firms "Bluewater Shipmanagement Company" and "Copacabana Shipping, SA," had arrived in Kingston before the Copacabana in order to facilitate the onward transshipment of the arms. [redacted]

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Jamaican authorities requested Bogota to authenticate the end-user certificate (EUC) presented by Eveleigh and seized the shipment after being informed by Colombian officials that the certificate had been forged. [redacted]

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[redacted] the shipment seized by Jamaican authorities consisted of:

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- o 1,000 G3A2 automatic rifles.
- o 250 HK21 light machineguns.
- o 10 60mm "Commando" mortars.
- o 600 60mm high explosive mortar rounds.

[redacted]

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Only the First Installment

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[redacted] Jamaican authorities learned that the captured weapons represented only about one third of nearly \$2.7 million worth of arms which Eveleigh had purchased on behalf of the FARC.

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[redacted] explained the discrepancy between the amount of weapons ordered and the quantities actually recovered in Jamaica by claiming that the Copacabana shipment was only a "test run" which, if successful, would have led to a "gold mine." This claim is supported by the fact that the types and quantities of arms ordered by Eveleigh [redacted] match those listed in the forged Colombian EUC. State Department reporting also indicates that INDEP recently informed the Colombian government that it had been paid in full for all of the weapons listed on the EUC and that it was holding the remainder of the arms pending Colombian government shipping instructions. [redacted]

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Implications

For the FARC. The discovery of the Copacabana arms shipment underscores earlier reporting from a variety of sources that FARC is seeking modern infantry weapons on the international gray arms market. FARC procurement officers apparently realize that they can acquire larger quantities of well-made military ordnance from private arms dealers than they can from local sources within Colombia. [redacted]

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Had the Copacabana and subsequent shipments planned by [redacted] Eveleigh actually reached the FARC, they would have not only substantially enhanced the group's firepower but also provided it with a homogeneous and easily serviceable arsenal. The rifles and machineguns, for example, are nearly identical to those used by the Colombian armed forces. This would have ensured FARC a ready source of spare parts and ammunition as well as providing them with weapons at least as effective as those used by the best armed government forces opposing them.

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- o The G3A2 rifles can deliver accurate fire against man-sized targets out to at least 400 meters when fired in the semi-automatic mode and are capable of fully automatic fire for use against multiple adversaries at closer ranges.
- o The belt or magazine-fed HK21 light machineguns can deliver sustained, suppressive automatic fire out to 1000 meters and, in addition to firing the same ammunition as the G3 rifles, also share many interchangeable components. [redacted]

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The successful delivery of the mortars and other explosive ordnance would have provided the FARC with its first indirect fire capability. The mortars would have allowed FARC units to attack Colombian military patrols without exposing themselves to direct rifle fire or to shell airports and landing zones used in the transport of counternarcotics forces.

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- o The INDEP "Commando" mortar can be carried and operated by a single man and fires a 60mm antipersonnel round to a maximum range of 1000 meters.
- o The crew-served INDEP 81mm HP mortars listed on the forged EUC have even greater ranges and fire explosive rounds with a lethal radius of over 13 meters.

Similarly, although FARC has manufactured its own improvised shape charges in the past, the acquisition of the antitank mines listed on the EUC would have allowed the group to mine roads in order to attack tanks and armored personnel carriers or interrupt the flow of military and civilian traffic. [redacted]

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We cannot corroborate statements made by Jamaican and Colombian officials that the FARC paid for the Copacabana arms with cocaine shipments to Europe. It seems likely, however, that the FARC--which earns millions of dollars annually by taxing or controlling illicit drug production in parts of Colombia--earned a large part of the \$2.7 million it paid for the arms from its direct or indirect involvement with narcotics trafficking. Given the large sums of money at its disposal, we expect FARC, at some future time, will again seek large quantities of highly sophisticated weapons from other gray market dealers. Barring the fortuitous circumstances surrounding the Copacabana seizure, it is highly probable that such efforts will eventually succeed. [redacted]

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For Bogota. The Copacabana arms seizure strengthened the hand of the Colombian military in several ways. The transfer by Jamaica of all of the captured ordnance to Colombia not only denied ten tons of weapons to the FARC but provided the Colombian military with sorely needed arms for use against the group. More importantly, the incident provided Colombian military officers and other opponents of Bogota's current, oft-violated, cease-fire agreement with FARC an opportunity to expose FARC duplicity in talking peace but preparing for war. At a press conference on 10 January, the Colombian defense minister displayed the entire arms cache and noted that FARC had attempted to use the period of its so-called unilateral Christmas cease-fire to smuggle new arms into Colombia. Although the question of FARC culpability continues to be debated in the Colombian press, it appears that FARC credibility has suffered a major setback. [redacted]

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Bogota will almost certainly use the Copacabana incident to renew its call for greater international cooperation in controlling the sale of conventional military

weapons. Similar efforts by Colombia last year in both the United Nations and the Organization of American States met with little success. In a recent conversation with the US ambassador, the Colombian foreign minister indicated that, in addition to recalling its ambassador to Portugal and issuing a formal protest to Lisbon, Bogota may also convene a meeting of the EC ambassadors in Colombia in an effort to get their countries to review their policies on arms sales.

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For the Gray Arms Market. The Copacabana seizure illustrates the dangers inherent in an international arms market in which violent subnational groups can obtain large quantities of modern infantry weapons by exploiting lax arms export laws and the willingness of arms manufacturers and dealers to turn a blind eye towards lucrative transactions. Although the Portuguese government and INDEP are portraying the issue as a purely Colombian internal problem by claiming that the sale was approved on the basis of a Colombian EUC, this incident has clearly embarrassed Lisbon by focusing renewed attention on Portuguese arms export procedures. This is not the first time that the Portuguese armaments industry --an ailing, low-tech operation in need of export markets-- has been embroiled in controversy. During the Iran-Iraq war, INDEP and other Portuguese arms companies sold to both sides, claiming economic necessity and arguing that the sale of "defensive" weapons would have little impact on the outcome of the war. We believe that the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the resulting soft market for infantry weapons and ammunition, and the growing number of developing nations acquiring their own small arms manufacturing capabilities will further contribute to the ready availability of automatic rifles, machineguns, and other light infantry weapons ideal for terrorist, criminal, and insurgent use.

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