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TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PTER, PHUM, KJUS, CO
SUBJECT: DAS DIRECTOR RESIGNS OVER OPPOSITION SPYING SCANDAL

REF: BOGOTA 002387

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer
Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) Maria del Pilar Hurtado, director of Colombia's Administrative Department of Security (DAS), resigned on October 22 after opposition Senator Gustavo Petro publicly revealed internal DAS documents that tasked officials to gather intelligence on Petro and on his party, the Polo Democrático (PDA). Hurtado's initially blamed a subordinate for issuing the order and announced his dismissal. She also denied that she or President Uribe had prior knowledge of the order. Still, Hurtado later resigned as an "act of public service." Casa de Nariño insiders believe Hurtado was already on her way out; the spy scandal merely accelerated her departure. Colombian National Police (CNP) Commander Naranjo told us presidential advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria pushed the DAS to collect political intelligence, and he predicted the political fallout from the scandal will continue. End Summary.

SENATOR PETRO CLAIMS A COLOMBIAN "WATERGATE"

2. (U) Polo Senator Gustavo Petro publicly revealed on October 21 two classified DAS documents that he claimed showed a GOC conspiracy against him and the Polo. The first, dated August 29, 2008, tasked DAS departmental directors to collect intelligence on Petro's alleged ties to illegal groups as well as contacts with people who have testified against the GOC (presumably referring to parapolitical cases). The second, dated September 16, asked for information on the Polo's internal divisions ahead of its October 26 internal party elections, including leaders' links

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to political movements, social organizations, and clandestine groups. Petro, who is a major Polo leader, claimed that Uribe or somebody close to him must have ordered the spying, comparing it to the Watergate scandal. He said he would take the case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the OAS. It is unclear how Petro obtained the documents.

HURTADO FALLS ON SWORD AFTER DENIALS FAIL TO QUELL STORM

3. (C) Hurtado publicly replied the same day that neither she nor President Uribe had ordered the investigations and denied that either had any knowledge of prior to Petro's announcement. She fired the official who issued the order, Political and Social Intelligence Coordinator Jaime Ovalle, claiming he had acted on his own initiative. She also said the DAS would launch an internal investigation. When these actions failed to quell the rising political storm, Hurtado tendered her resignation, which Uribe immediately accepted. U Party Senator Carlos Ferro told us that Hurtado's resignation had been widely expected to come by December. The spy scandal merely accelerated her departure. The interim DAS director will be Joaquin Polo Montalvo, Hurtado's deputy since she took office 14 months ago.

POLICE COMMANDER PREDICTS SCANDAL WILL WIDEN

4. (C) Colombian National Police Commander General Oscar Naranjo told us the political fallout from the spy scandal will widen. He said presidential advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria was the Casa de Narino figure who pushed the DAS to collect intelligence on the political opposition. Hurtado originally cooperated with Gaviria, but subsequently distanced herself. Gaviria then turned to Ovalle. Naranjo said the media is looking into Gaviria's role, and he does not expect Hurtado and Ovalle to keep quiet. He predicted that within two months, Gaviria would be forced to resign his position. This would be a blow to Uribe, since Gaviria has been close to the President since 1986.

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