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SIPDIS

E. O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2019
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PHUM, KJUS, CO
SUBJECT: URIBE PLEDGES TO PROTECT JUSTICES FROM ILLEGAL
SURVEILLANCE

REF: A. 09BOGOTA1412
B. 09BOGOTA569

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

SUMMARY

1. (C) President Uribe met with the heads of Colombia's highest courts following press revelations that Colombia's Department of Administrative Security (DAS) had conducted illegal surveillance and harassment of Supreme Court magistrates. The press reported that the magistrates left the meeting encouraged that Uribe had heard their concerns seriously, but Supreme Court Criminal Chamber President Julio Socha publicly said the magistrates expect "actions, not declarations." DAS director Felipe Munoz claimed that Prosecutor General Mario Iguaran had said there was no evidence linking presidential advisors to the surveillance, but Iguaran later clarified that the Fiscalía investigation continues. GOC officials continue to deny involvement, but we have heard from numerous sources that top Uribe advisors Bernardo Moreno and Jose Obdulio Gaviria pushed the DAS to engage in domestic political spying. End Summary

URIBE, COURTS MEET OVER DAS CHARGES

2. (C) President Uribe and Prosecutor General (Fiscal General) Mario Iguaran held a lengthy meeting on the evening of May 11, with the presidents of Colombia's four highest judicial bodies. The meeting was aimed at addressing the judicial branch's concerns over allegations that the Department of Administrative Security (DAS) maintained an extensive illegal surveillance program against Supreme Court magistrates (ref A). The surveillance allegedly included

improper access to the sensitive financial information of the magistrates as well as members of their families. Ivan Velasquez, the Supreme Court's lead auxiliary magistrate in the parapolitical investigations, told us in February that DAS's surveillance of him was so intense that it impeded his work, asserting it was meant to discourage witnesses from cooperating in the parapolitical investigations. Uribe reportedly promised the magistrates that the surveillance and other harassment would not occur again.

3. (U) Hernando Torres, President of the Superior Judicial Council, told the press after the meeting that Uribe and Iguaran were "worried" over the "serious" charges. He noted that Uribe and Iguaran pledged to protect the personal and institutional security of the magistrates, and to respect magistrates' right to personal privacy. Supreme Court President Augusto Ibanez called the meeting "productive," adding that it had opened the door to interbranch dialogue. Uribe also said he would meet separately with each judicial chamber to discuss the matter as the investigation of the DAS progresses. Still, Supreme Court Criminal Chamber President Julio Socha, who did not attend the session, said the magistrates expect "actions, not declarations."

COURTS CONCERNED AFTER URIBE BRUSHOFF

4. (U) The meeting came shortly after Uribe seemed to brush off a joint public letter from the judicial branch demanding a GOC response to the allegations against the DAS. On May 4, the four judicial presidents--along with Deputy Fiscal General Guillermo Mendoza--issued a communique demanding a statement by Uribe on the matter, since the DAS reports to the President. The letter also demanded that Uribe announce specific measures aimed at preventing a repeat of the illegal monitoring. The GOC drew criticism for its initial response to the letter, which spoke of improving interbranch relations without mentioning the surveillance charges.

NEXT UP: LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS, MORE INVESTIGATIONS

5. (U) The Senate's First Commission began hearings on the DAS scandal on May 12, with DAS director Felipe Munoz and Minister of Interior and Justice Fabio Valencia Cossio scheduled to testify June 2. The media reported that Valencia Cossio met on May 11 with Uribe-allied senators to plot a strategy to counter charges that the administration was involved in the DAS scandal. Also on May 12, former DAS deputy counterintelligence chief Jorge Lagos--who resigned in the wake of the scandal (ref B)--testified at the Fiscalía.

6. (C) Lagos's testimony could be crucial in determining who ordered the surveillance against the magistrates and other Colombian political figures. Mario Aranguren, head of the GOC's Financial Intelligence Unit, said publicly that Lagos was the one who had requested the magistrates' financial information. Still, former DAS director Maria del Pilar Hurtado has denied ordering any surveillance of Court members during her tenure. Uribe and his aides have also said they did not give the DAS such orders, but CNP Chief Oscar Naranjo and former DAS Director Andres Penate have separately told us that former presidential advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria and Presidential Secretary Bernardo Moreno had pushed DAS to spy

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on the GOC\'s domestic opponents.
Nichols