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OF 311733Z OCTOBER 96

SUBJECT: BRITISH PETROLEUM: COLOMBIA

SUMMARY

1. Colombian Foreign Ministry press communique refutes allegations of human rights violations by BP.

DETAIL

2. As foreshadowed in my telno 308 the Foreign Ministry have issued a press communique (original faxed to [REDACTED]). Our translation of the text is as follows:-

The Colombian government, taking into account various pieces of information which have appeared in some British newspapers, regarding the activities of the British Petroleum company in Colombia, considers it necessary and appropriate to make the following observations.

The operations of BP in Colombia have been carried out in conformity with the constitution and with Colombian laws and in permanent coordination with the national, regional and local authorities.

The activities undertaken by British Petroleum represent a significant contribution to the economic and social development of the country and have undoubtedly helped to strengthen the close economic and commercial links between Colombia and the UK.

The allegations reported in the media and taken up by some Colombian and foreign groups merit close attention on the part of the national government. However, since up to the present time there are no judicial investigations into these allegations, it is irresponsible and lacking in seriousness to accept as fact statements which may be based on speculation or tendentious information.

With regard to the request of the European Parliament that the President of the Republic of Colombia should quote publish in full

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the report of his Human Rights Commission on the activities of BP in Casanare unquote the national government states that there does not exist any official report about the activities of BP in the department of Casanare. It is necessary to make clear that the report produced in the middle of 1995 by an Inter-Institutional Committee, of which one government office formed a part, recorded statements by the authorities and by the local community, but never at any time accused BP of organising or financing quote paramilitary groups unquote or of encouraging actions incompatible with the state of law. The recommendations of the report focus on the need to continue investigating through the judicial authorities the violations of human rights reported by the communities and by the regional authorities.

The report in question is not confidential. The government has given copies and remains willing to continue giving copies to individuals and organisations who request it.

The government of Colombia trusts that the European oil companies which have been operating in the country will continue to pursue their work in a climate of confidence, so as to promote the common objective of strengthening our economic development and preserving our democratic institutions.

Comment

3. [REDACTED]

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