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FM BOGOTA  
TO TELELETTER FCO  
TELELETTER NFR  
OF 071342Z NOVEMBER 96

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To draft a letter  
from the PUS to  
to Browne BP, please  
A Jackson  
8/11  
Draft sent

FROM LEYCESTER COLTMAN, HM AMBASSADOR,

TO WILLIAM MARSDEN, DIRECTOR AMERICAS

SUBJECT: PERSONAL: MEETING WITH BP


1. Thank you for your teleletter of 6 November.
2. On the first question, we do not (not) have any adverse information. The BP management in Bogota have themselves conducted exhaustive enquiries to see whether any local staff in Casanare took any unauthorized actions which could be legitimately criticized on human rights grounds, eg, in passing sensitive information to Colombian military intelligence. They are satisfied that there are no skeletons in the cupboard. If copies of confidential papers, videos etc got to the army (or to paramilitary groups) they must have been stolen or otherwise obtained without BP's knowledge or consent.
3. On the second question, we already use BPS funds to support human rights causes, and to be seen supporting human rights causes. Small gestures can bring big PR benefits. Last year our public support for a cooperative of rubbish collectors (the bottom of the social pack, often victims of prejudice and violence) got such good TV and press coverage that a few months later the Mobil Oil Company staged a similar event! Earlier this year we donated some prefabricated classrooms for child victims of violence looked after by the NGO Cedavida in Barrancabermeja, where Colombia's biggest oil refinery is located and where guerrilla sympathisers are thick on the ground. The guerrillas could easily have disrupted this event but clearly decided not to do so.
4. Turning to the future, we shall spend pounds 12,000 to provide TV and radio material in support of a quote human rights week unquote (3-10 December) organized by a respectable human rights NGO in

Antioquia. On 13 December I shall donate workshop equipment to displaced people in the violence-torn region of Uraba. For both these events we are confident of securing a lot of favourable publicity.

5. However one has to be careful to choose the right NGOs and causes to support. Some human rights NGOs in Colombia are thinly disguised instruments for guerrilla propaganda. The only way to earn their goodwill would be by publicly condemning or criticising the armed forces, which would be unjustified and unwise, especially for BP who depend for their security on the goodwill of the army and police.

6. 

7. The President of BP Colombia (Doust) has written to the Prosecutor General (Valdivieso) asking him to investigate the allegations against BP. The letter was published in full in EL Tiempo and made a good impression. Doust shares my view that to instigate an outside (ie non Colombian) investigation would do more harm than good in Colombia, and also complicate BP's relations with the authorities. He has advised his head office in this sense.



8. Doust has a meeting scheduled on 8 November with Mines and Energy Minister Villamizar and Foreign Minister Mejia. He will urge the government to do more at the local level to explain and justify BP's positive contribution to Casanare's social and economic development. He will also go over the options for BP, including an outside investigation, and see how the Colombian Ministers react.

SIGNED LEYCESTER COLTMAN

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