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CO/VE
Border

INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

COLOMBIA TO BUILD HIGHWAY ON GUAJIRA BORDER WITH VENEZUELA

Bogota EL ESPECTADOR in Spanish 13 Dec 84 p 12-A

[Article by Hernan Unas]

[Text] Military engineers will build a highway linking the so-called three Guajiras (upper, middle and lower), the president of that department's assembly, Eduardo Abuchaibe Lopez, told this newspaper.

The lawmaker, an architect and son of Senator Eduardo Abuchaibe Ochoa, said that the highway will stretch from Paraguachon to Castilletes along the border with Venezuela, a region in which the Colombian Government has always been conspicuous by its absence.

The Guajira Assembly president stated that the formal offer was made by the command of the Vergara and Velasco Battalion to the department's governor, Dr Jacobo Marquez Iguaran, through the Cartagena Battalion stationed in Riohacha.

10 Million Peso Contribution

Abuchaibe Lopez reported that since the governor had said that the department could not afford the fuel for this highly important project, an ordinance was enacted authorizing him to secure a 10 million peso domestic or international loan.

The Guajira deputy indicated that the Vergara Velasco battalion pledged to provide the equipment and the manpower to build the highway, the construction of which will be made easier by the flat, even terrain.

"This highway will do more than just link the three Guajiras and thus further progress; it will be a symbol of our country along the border with Venezuela," Abuchaibe Lopez stated.

Misleading Indication

Looking at a 1983 map of Colombia drawn up by the Agustin Codazzi Geographical Institute, we see that it indicates an unfinished highway

visit Cuba for their next meeting. This invitation was immediately accepted. It was agreed that the meeting would take place soon, at an opportune time for both ministers.

[Signed] Isidoro Malmierca for the Cuban Government
Rashleigh Jackson for the Guyanese Government

Georgetown, 10 November 1984

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CSO: 3248/167

between the two towns mentioned at the beginning of the article. We asked the president of the assembly about this. He replied:

"That's just a big sham, because although the highway appears on the map, it really doesn't exist. The rest of the country might think it does, but in Guajira we know that it doesn't. That's why we're so interested in the military engineers' offer to build this extremely important project."

Needless to say, we also asked the defense minister, Gen Miguel Vega Uribe, and the commander of the army, Gen Rafael Obdulio Forero Moreno, about the matter. They said that they did not yet have firm information.

We were told that the highway would hook up with the Main Caribbean Highway, which ends in Barranquilla.

We should note here that Castilletes, where the highway will end, was visited not long ago by the Second Senate Committee, which is chaired by Senator Eduardo Abuchaibe, who made public the committee's protest over the neglect of the country's border zones, particularly the border with Venezuela.

Dam On Rancheria River

Another development proving that not only bad news comes from the Guajira Peninsula was the announcement by Agriculture Minister Gustavo Castro Guerrero to the Second Committee. He said that a dam will definitely be built on the Rancheria River, one of the projects to which the residents of Guajira attach high priority. The minister mentioned that the contract for \$2.4 million would be signed before the end of the year.

Speaking to the members of the Guajira Assembly and the large turnout from the Guajira colony in Bogota, Minister Castro Guerrero read the message that the ministry's general director, Dr Fabio Bermudez Gomez, had sent him. It reads:

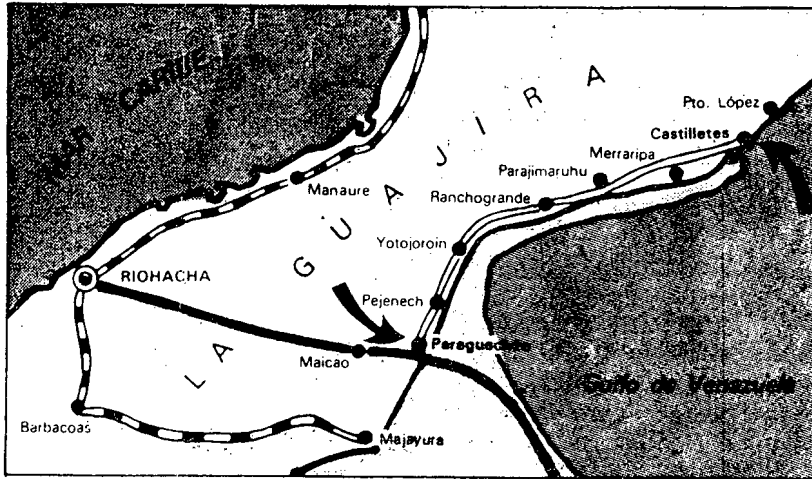
"The Honorable Gustavo Castro Guerrero:

"This morning at noon Mr Vantadori from the Ifagraria Company called from Rome to announce that the Italian Government had approved support for the Rancheria River projects, as the Agriculture Ministry had requested in its most recent communication.

"They, in turn, had informed our ambassadors in Rome to the Italian Government and to the FAO, and the Italian Government had already sent news to its ambassador in Colombia, who should be forwarding it to the National Planning Department and to yourself, Mr Minister.

"We await your instructions to hasten all procedures so that the agreement can be signed this month."

Senator Abuchaibe thanked the minister for the interest that he has shown in the project and stated that "we are on the threshold of a social revolution on the La Guajira Peninsula, and therefore I can go so far as to say that it is more important for us to be able to impound water than to have projects like El Cerrejon."



The highway that military engineers will build from Paraguachon to Castilletes will pass through the towns indicated on the map.

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