
COLOMBIA

Turbay caves in to Haig's gameplans

by Valerie Rush and Dennis Small

The Turbay government of Colombia has struck a deal with the Haig State Department to play the role of Washington's anticommunist gendarme in the Central American and Caribbean region. Colombia's new role began to emerge last March, when the Turbay government broke relations with the Castro regime following a major "M-19" guerrilla assault on Colombia, an attack President Turbay blamed on the Cubans. Since then, stepped up M-19 activity inside Colombia has strengthened Turbay's commitment, and has led to a strategic alliance with the southern cone dictatorships, led by Chile, who are also "combatting communism" at Haig's behest.

President Turbay summarized his country's current stance in a mid-July statement, in which he characterized Caribbean Basin security as "our number-one priority."

All indications are that the deal with Haig was struck earlier this spring, when Colombia's Defense Minister Luis Carlos Camacho Leyva, flew to Washington to confer with Secretaries Haig and Weinberger, among others, regarding "hemispheric security." Rumors of a joint U.S.-Colombian "white paper" on the threat of Cuban subversion in Central America and the Caribbean began to circulate.

Following Camacho Leyva's trip, the U.S. State Department announced that it had finally resolved to ask congressional approval for a decades-old treaty granting Colombia sovereignty over three disputed keys in the Caribbean. Nicaragua also claims these tiny islands, and Colombian-Nicaraguan relations have reached the breaking point over the issue. In return, Colombia has adopted an increasingly active anti-Cuban posture in the region.

A visit to Colombia on June 18 by State Department Latin American chief Thomas Enders coincided with an official three-day visit to Colombia by Chilean Foreign Minister René Rojas, himself just returning from consultations in Washington. Both Enders and Rojas held meetings with President Turbay and his foreign relations minister, Lemos Simmonds. The subject of conversations with both men, according to official government releases, was "Cuban subversion." According to the *New York Times* of Aug. 13, Colombia "signed an agreement 'to



combat Cuban subversion' with Chile, a military dictatorship." Colombia, which prides itself on its constitutional government, has always kept the Pinochet dictatorship at a diplomatic arm's length.

A summit meeting of Colombia's Central American and Caribbean ambassadors last month in Bogotá was ostensibly held to elaborate an extensive commercial and cultural intervention into the poverty-ridden region, but the Colombian government's concern for "hemispheric security" reportedly dominated the proceedings. A tour of the region by Lemos Simmonds was subsequently launched.

Turbay's pact with Haig has even led Colombia to issue a \$10 million loan to Jamaica, the U.S.'s chosen model of anticommunist "free enterprise" in the region—despite that country's open embrace of drug trafficking. The Turbay administration has in the past been resolute in its opposition to legalized drug running, a problem which greatly afflicts Colombia as well.

Although Colombia has not yet committed troops to battle Castro frontally, an important precedent in this direction was set last week when Colombia announced that it had agreed to supply troops for a U.S.-sponsored "multinational peacekeeping force" in the Sinai.

Colombia's M-19 terrorists, run by the Socialist International, have been Haig's best ally in inducing Turbay's cooperation. This is not surprising, given Haig's own close connection to the social democracy. On July 20, the day the Colombian Congress convened in Bogotá, the M-19 bombed the National Palace with mortars to register their contempt for the government's offers of political amnesty.

Several bloody M-19 assaults on police stations and even a truck convoy, and the kidnapping of two popular media personalities, subsequently prompted Army Commander Landazábal Reyes, a notorious Chile-admirer, to warn that Colombia was rapidly approaching "the point of no return." The M-19 responded by promising to sabotage next year's presidential elections, and even assassinate the president and his ministers, if the terrorists are not welcomed into the electoral race.

Defense Minister Camacho Leyva (l) with President Turbay.