
Profile: Carlos Lehder Rivas

Colombian drug king backs Nazis, Greens

by Valerie Rush

On Jan. 28, Colombian cocaine king Carlos Lehder Rivas convoked a press conference "somewhere in the Colombian jungle" to announce plans to form a half-million strong army to overthrow the Colombian government. At the same press conference, aired not only in Colombia but on ABC-TV's Nightline program Feb. 19, Lehder declared that "the Colombian people" had murdered Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla last April 30 to register their opposition to the extradition of Colombian drug traffickers to the United States. He also threatened the life of President Belisario Betancur.

Lehder's threats are not idle. On Jan. 31, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Jon Thomas warned that Colombian terror squads had entered the United States with Drug Enforcement Administration agents and Colombian consulates as targets. On Feb. 7, special DEA agent Enrique Salazar Camarena was kidnapped in Mexico.

According to the Caracas magazine *Auténtico*, Lehder's ex-wife and sister were overheard in New York discussing the assassination of Venezuelan Justice Minister Manzo González. On Feb. 14, *Diario de Caracas* reported that Venezuelan seizure of huge amounts of chemicals for processing cocaine "caused a quasi-panic" in the Colombian-Venezuelan mafia, leading to the decision to "liquidate" Manzo González, who called the raid "the most severe blow to narcotics traffic since this administration began. . . . Our preliminary information is that this entire group followed instructions from the Colombia narcotics traffickers Carlos Lehder Rivas and Pablo Escobar Gaviria."

The *Auténtico* story also names prominent Cuban figures, including Castro's live-in lover Nelida Allare, reportedly charged with coordinating the hit, and Millan Chang and José Aztorga, Cuba's U.N. representatives.

Once a car-stealing punk, Carlos Lehder is now the kingpin of the Ibero-American narcotics trade. In him converge several international criminal currents:

- **Nazi International.** Lehder is an outspoken admirer of Adolf Hitler. In his recent jungle interview, he declared: "Adolf eliminated 21 million communists and 6 million allied enemies. He is the greatest warrior mankind has ever had. . . . History is told the way the Jews want the world to see it. . . ."

- **Organized Crime.** Lehder stepped into the big-time through a 1970s partnership with Robert Vesco in the pur-

chase of a private island in the Bahamas called Normans Cay. The island, seized by the DEA in the late 1970s, was a pit-stop for cocaine pilots. It was described as a fortress guarded by German mercenaries and equipped with modern runways and refrigerated hangars.

- **The Green Movement.** Lehder created the "Movimiento Latino Nacional," which compared itself to the Green Party of West Germany, sympathizing with its hatred for industrial civilization. Lehder's newspaper, *Quindio Libre*, was printed in green ink on green-tinted paper and regularly sported coverage of Green leader Petra Kelly's campaigns.

- **Terrorists and separatists.** Lehder is said to have ties to Peru's savage Shining Path terrorists. In a full-page ad in Mexico's *Excelsior* on Dec. 5, he appealed to "the multitude of indigenous races of our land and our destiny" to follow the example of guerrilla-priest Camilo Torres, killed in Colombia in 1968.

- **Soviet networks.** Lehder's partnership with Vesco continues under the auspices of Castro's Cuba, where Vesco reportedly maintains his residence. According to Ernest Volkman in the April 25, 1984 *Family Weekly*: "The Cubans needed Lehder; they were trying to run guns to leftist M-19 guerrillas in the Colombian countryside. Lehder, with his extensive smuggling operation, was perfect for the job, and a deal was struck: Lehder would aid Cuban arms smuggling into Colombia, while the Cubans would provide protection, anchorages, and other help for his drug-smuggling operations into the United States."

Vesco, writes Volkman, set up "a series of small banks in the Caribbean, where secrecy laws make it easy to protect the identities of depositors. Working in concert with corrupt lawyers and accountants in the southeastern United States, Vesco then devised a complex scheme to launder all that drug money through a series of bank transactions that converted cash into holdings in offshore corporations, based mostly in the Caribbean." By 1981, Volkman asserts, Vesco and Lehder "were the most important suppliers of cocaine" to the United States.

Lehder's diatribes against "communism" apparently don't interfere with this "anti-imperialist" alliance.

In the early 1980s, Lehder sponsored the MAS death squad against leftist student and trade-union activists as well as M-19 members and sympathizers. Today, however, Lehder has forged a mutual admiration society with the M-19, which he describes as "nationalist" and "revolutionary." In his jungle interview, he declared: "The M-19 is . . . the only movement that has declared itself against extradition. The M-19 plays a key role before the masses. . . . The call of Ivan [Marino Ospina] in Mexico is a call for the guerrilla movements to join the [drug] bonanza."

M-19 leader Marino Ospina, had not only urged amnesty for drug traffickers so that drug money could "benefit the people," but also endorsed the mafia's threat to assassinate U.S. diplomats and citizens.