

Military war on drugs to counter Soviets

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Sources close to Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger have told *EIR* that the Reagan administration will respond to the Soviet Union's global low-intensity warfare by launching a long overdue military assault against narco-terrorism, in coordination with a number of Ibero-American nations. This was made public in mid-July with widespread press coverage of a 160-person U.S. Southern Command military support mission to Bolivia, providing training, transport, communications, and light air cover to the Bolivian government's campaign to shut down the cocaine growing and processing empire of Nazi-Communist dope kingpin Roberto Suárez.

The teams, deployed out of the Southern Command headquarters in Panama, will pilot six U.S. Army Blackhawk troop transport helicopters and maintain mobile communications equipment for what are expected to be minimally two-month police actions against coca processing laboratories in the Beni region in northeastern Bolivia. The U.S. troops are joined by 15 agents from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

The U.S. military support mission represents the first public implementation of a National Security Decision Directive on Narco-Terrorism, signed by President Reagan in April, ordering the Pentagon to take a more active role in the war on drugs. At a speech in Houston, Texas in June, Vice-President George Bush issued a declassified version of the decision directive, which cited narco-terrorism as a security threat to the United States and Ibero-American nations.

According to published reports, Bolivian President Victor Paz Estenssoro approached U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration director John Lawn at a law-enforcement conference in Buenos Aires early this year, requesting U.S. assistance against Bolivia's narco-terrorist insurgency. That message was delivered to Attorney-General Edwin Meese, who briefed the President and vice-president. The April decision directive was crafted to define a broad policy context for bringing the United States into a military war on drugs.

In addition to the Bolivian support effort, code-named "Operation Blast Furnace," U.S. military logistical aid has been requested by Costa Rica, which has emerged as a significant processing and transshipment point for South American cocaine. Additionally, a civil aid program has been announced with Mexico, involving an ambitious crop-dust-

ing program against opium poppy fields.

Despite published reports to the contrary, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger told a Washington, D.C. press conference on July 17 that he was an enthusiastic supporter of the idea of U.S. military forces becoming directly involved in the war against narco-terrorists.

According to sources, another motivating factor was the mounting recognition that, since the Soviet 27th Party Congress in February, the Soviet Union has accelerated its global low-intensity warfare against the Western alliance. Soviet spetsnaz-backed terrorists have assassinated Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, launched a virtual insurrection in Germany through violent actions at nuclear power construction sites at Wackersdorf, Brokdorf, etc., assassinated top West German industrialists involved in the Strategic Defense Initiative, and declared a narco-terrorist war against Peruvian President García and Colombian President Betancur.

But until now, the United States has failed to take any effective counteraction—or even develop an effective doctrine for dealing with Russian low-intensity warfare. The Pentagon sources say that the war on narco-terrorism is to be an integral element of America's response.

On June 16, House Armed Services Committee hearings heard both Joint Chiefs chairman Adm. William J. Crowe, Jr. and Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard L. Armitage testify on behalf of a Pentagon-authored proposal for the creation of a Special Operations Force Command under the direction of the JCS. That proposal was drafted in response to legislation submitted by Rep. Dan Daniels (R-Va.) mandating the creation of a National Special Operations Agency under civilian defense department control. Despite the differences, both drafts underscored the necessity for American forces to take an active role in the war on drugs.

Last November, Secretary Weinberger and Southern Command chief Gen. James Galvin, both speaking at Washington, D.C.'s Fort McNair at a Pentagon-sponsored conference on low-intensity conflict, emphasized the link between the narco-terrorist insurgency against Ibero-America and the issue of economic development. Without a systematic program for economic growth, they both stated, no effective program can be launched against the insurgencies. The failure of the Reagan administration—still dominated by Wall Streeter Donald T. Regan—to break from its unqualified support for IMF conditionalities still represents the greatest choke point against an effective war on narco-terrorism.

This obstacle to the administration's anti-drug effort was arrogantly broadcast across the editorial pages of the July 18 *New York Times*. The *Times*' editors linked Bolivia's dope production to its ability to pay its debt to Wall Street: "The venture into Bolivia raises considerable economic, as well as military questions that merit full discussion. If the campaign has any success, what of Bolivia's solvency? Its only other export income is from tin, a commodity long depressed in world markets."