

Andean Report by Valerie Rush

Amnesty Int'l defends mobsters

As the Colombian army steps up its war on the Medellín Cartel, the Terrorist International begins its slanders.

The Colombian armed forces are pummeling the kingpins of the Medellín Cartel, and their narco-terrorist allies, with a series of spectacular raids against their hideouts which could, with proper judicial and legislative support, turn into a full-scale rout of the cocaine mafia and of the terrorists plaguing this violence-ridden nation. It thus comes as no surprise that the worldwide mouthpieces of the Terrorist International have revved up a slander and destabilization campaign against Colombia's military.

That campaign is currently headed by the London-based "human rights" lobby of Amnesty International (AI), a global clearinghouse of terrorist and communist movements whose sponsors, especially the Astors' *London Observer*, are furious that their drug legalization plans may be forever buried by a successful military war on drugs in Colombia. In fact, an April 24 *Observer* article by Hugh O'Shaughnessy, who rants that "savage, lawless" Colombia should be given "the pariah treatment," also bitterly laments that "despite powerful arguments for the legalization of drugs, Colombian governments have never adopted them."

On April 19, AI released to the media worldwide a "briefing" on Colombian violence which placed all responsibility for the terror and bloodshed in that country on the heads of the Armed Forces. Explicitly ignoring the role of Colombia's multiple guerrilla movements and powerful drug mafia in traumatizing Colombians and blackmailing the institutions with

widespread terrorism, the Amnesty International report asserts, "It can only be concluded that human rights violations on a massive scale are not merely tolerated within the Colombian armed forces, but are in fact the result of a deliberate policy of political murder."

Attending the AI briefing given in Washington, D.C. was Colombian Senator Pedro Alcántara Herán, a high-level member of the communist Patriotic Union (UP), the electoral front of the Moscow-controlled FARC guerrillas. Senator Alcántara told the media that the Colombian army and police—as institutions—were tainted by the drug trade. He insisted that the Barco government in Colombia should not be forced into pursuing a war against drugs since the country does not have "armed forces and police who are moral and ethical." At the same time, the mouthpiece of the Colombian Communist Party, *Voz*, devoted its April 7 issue to defending Medellín Cartel boss Pablo Escobar from military persecution, and to denouncing IV Brigade commander General Ruiz Barrera, Colombia's leading anti-drug hero, as a "Rambo" who would impose a brutal military dictatorship.

The highly effective dragnets conducted by General Ruiz's IV Army Brigade against mafia holdings in the city of Medellín last March have since been extended to other regions. Based on evidence found in the Medellín raids, joint army/police forces have begun conducting a series of quiet raids against the properties of the Cali-based mafia. The Cundinamarca estates of

Cartel big shot Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha ("El Mexicano") were raided in late April by the XIII Army Brigade; explosives, weapons, and communications equipment were seized, and only a sophisticated electronic alarm system enabled *El Mexicano* himself to escape. A luxurious mansion in Medellín was raided April 23, and proved to be an assassins' training school belonging to the Medellín Cartel. More than 70 such assaults on mafia strongholds have been conducted since March.

Equally significant is the fact that the army has begun to move against the focal point of the narco-terrorist alliance in Colombia, the cocaine laboratories owned or protected by the FARC guerrillas. The commander of the IV Army Division, Gen. Rafael Padilla Vargas, reported, "The FARC lost their main source of funds when coca-processing labs in the Eastern Plains were destroyed." According to General Padilla, whose troops patrol the territories of Meta, Arauca, Huila, Vaupés, and Caquetá, "The FARC themselves have created gangs of armed criminals to wreak vengeance against the peasantry in the region where the labs have been destroyed."

Colombian Defense Minister Samudio Molina responded furiously to the AI slanders, demanding that the Barco government issue an official protest. He also denounced Senator Alcántara's claims of military complicity in the drug trade as "one more campaign to discredit the armed institutions." Human rights presidential adviser Alvaro Tirado Mejía rejected the AI contention that the purpose of the Armed Forces "is to exterminate the opposition," and described the AI report as "one-sided." Numerous political figures, and even the most corrupted media, charged the AI report with "lack of objectivity." President Barco has yet to respond.