

quetá in the late 1970s. The first coca crops in the Amazon jungle were planted in inaccessible areas. The FARC, familiar with the terrain, lent their men to transport the bundles of coca leaf through the jungle to the traffickers' airstrips. Later, the FARC collaborated in the construction of airstrips closer to the areas of coca cultivation, and later, in the same areas, hired out to build entire "cocaine cities," including cocaine laboratories, dormitories for the "workers" and "guards," and airstrips. Experts in guerrilla warfare, the FARC designed means of camouflaging the installations by using huge movable pots planted with typical jungle trees to hide the sophisticated drug production centers. Despite all of these efforts, the anti-narcotics police, using satellite information and triangulated radio signals, succeeded in locating and raiding the laboratories of Tranquilandia and Villacoca in 1983 and 1984, when Rodrigo Lara Bonilla was justice minister. Those laboratories were under FARC protection. Today, with the Cali and Medellín cartels nearly dismantled, it is feared that the FARC could appropriate the drug-trafficking routes used by the two cartels.

The César Gaviria government, in international coordination with the United Nations and its NGOs, attempted to carry out a "peace process" with the FARC and ELN in 1990, 1991 and 1992. However, these efforts were completely discredited nationally by the FARC's insistence on continuing kidnapping, assassinations, and terrorist attacks against national infrastructure. Current narco-President Ernesto Samper Pizano continues to hope for a negotiated peace agreement, on the El Salvador model—a policy which has the support of members of the Washington-based Inter-American Dialogue.

ELN: Fidel Castro's personal project

Name of group: National Liberation Army (ELN); Revolutionary Camilista Union (UCR), Camilista Commandos, Camilista Brigades, To Fight.

Headquarters and important fronts: Mobile headquarters in Santander department, sometimes meeting in Bucaramanga, sometimes in Barrancabermeja, the latter considered Colombia's "oil capital."

Founded: 1963, in Simacota, Santander.

Locations of operations, areas active: Mainly in Santander department, and following the route of Santandean migration in the rest of the country. Starting with the discovery of oil in Caño Limón (Arauca department), ELN began to grow along the Caño Limón-Coveñas pipeline.

The ELN carries out operations in Arauca, Casanare,

Boyacá, Norte de Santander, Cesar, Bolívar, Sucre, Córdoba, and Antioquia. Recently, it has spread toward Venezuela, taking advantage of the migration of Colombians to that country.

Major terrorist actions:

- In 1991, the ELN attacked the main port of Coveñas with explosives and other weapons. A great quantity of fuel is stored there, and a huge fire was set off; had there been an explosion, it could have caused at least 3,000 deaths.

- Bishop of Arauca was kidnapped and assassinated for "collaborating with the Army." There have been at least ten attempts to abduct and "try" Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo.

- Feb. 26, 1995, assault on the naval post at Cararabo, in the Venezuelan border state of Apure, sadistically executing eight sailors.

Modus operandi: More than 90% of the ELN's operations are attacks on oil installations, primarily the Caño Limón-Coveñas pipeline, which runs 1,500 kilometers and crosses the country from east to west. They always attack Colombian installations (of the State oil company Ecopetrol), and almost never those of Occidental Petroleum or the other multinationals that operate in the country. They also kidnap political leaders, mayors, governors, priests, businessmen, and ranchers. They ambush soldiers and police patrols.

When they set out to control a region, they begin with leaflets that tell property and business owners and industrialists that the ELN plans to collect a monthly protection fee. If they refuse to pay for the "vaccination," as it is called, they are fair game for kidnap or some other violent attack. Under threat of terror, the ELN imposes its candidates and determines what percentage of the municipal budget will be channeled to the ELN forces.

Leaders' names and aliases: The best known is that of the Spanish "priest" Manuel Pérez, a.k.a. "Poliarco." However, different sources suggest that the real leader of the ELN is Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista Pérez, alias "Gabino," who controls the organization's financial structure, handles relations with the press and with political movements and factions, and directly handles contact with Fidel Castro.

Others include Antonio García and Gerardo Bermúdez (a.k.a. Francisco Galán), the latter a prisoner in the maximum-security Itaguí jail, but who maintains contact with the ELN's 33 fronts by means of a high-powered radio and cellular telephone in his cell.

Groups allied nationally or internationally: National Guerrilla Coordinator (CGSP), Center of Popular Education Research (CINEP), São Paulo Forum; Occidental Petroleum Co.

Religious/ideological/ethnic motivating ideology: Fidelista-Guevarista; theology of liberation. They cite Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who said that one cannot be "dogmatic" against the Catholic faith that prevails in the region. A

large number of ELN leaders are Catholic priests of the theology of liberation faction, educated in Europe, such as Camilo Torres, Domingo Laín, and Manuel Pérez, and they have emphasized the ideology of a “people’s church.” In economics, they have an anti-imperialist, physiocratic line—that oil and natural resources are the wealth of the land, and that one must prevent “the multinationals from stealing them”—but in practice they work with the multinationals such as Occidental Petroleum.

Known controllers/mentors/theoreticians: Since its founding, the ELN has been a personal project of Fidel Castro, such that the ELN is now exporting coal to Cuba to help solve its fuel shortage. Ernesto “Che” Guevara; France’s Régis Debray (promoter of the “Christian-Marxist” dialogue); novelist Gabriel García Márquez, promoter of “magical realism” and theoretician of “revolution with *pachanga*,” (in Colombia, *pachanga* means “partying”), who donated one of his first literary prizes to the Movement to Socialism (MAS) of Venezuela, which shared it with the ELN.

Number of cadres: Some 3,000 men under arms.

Training: Cuba; the Basque ETA (Euskadi and Freedom).

Known drug connections/involvement: They protect marijuana and coca crops, especially in the Sierra de Perijá along the Colombian-Venezuelan border, and in Antioquia. They collect a “tax” from drug traffickers for drug production and for protecting their laboratories. Since 1984, the ELN has joined forces with the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), in the CGSP, and the central ELN command spent a long time in La Uribe, discussing joint strategy and finances, in which the drug trade played a key role.

Known arms suppliers/routes: Cuba; Venezuelan weapons that disappeared after Lt. Col. Hugo Chávez’s attempted coup d’état; rifles donated by former Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez to the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, which mysteriously came into the hands of the ELN; El Salvador’s Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) (weapons which were supposedly destroyed as part of the peace agreement imposed by the United Nations); weapons sold by former Sandinista soldiers.

Known political supporters/advocates: Alfonso López Michelsen (former President); Horacio Serpa Uribe (government minister); Alfonso Gómez Méndez (former attorney general); Bernardo Hoyos (former priest and former mayor of Barranquilla); the Justice and Peace Commission of the Colombian Bishops Conference; Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch; the human rights commissions of the United Nations and Organization of American States (OAS).

Financing: Drug trade, kidnap ransoms, protection money collected from businessmen and ranchers. It is estimated that the ELN controls 20% of the gold and coal production in the country, because the companies that mine these minerals pay their “vaccination” fees to the ELN with mines that the

ELN itself works. They hold investments in numerous Colombian companies and in the stock exchange.

By no later than 1984, Armand Hammer’s Occidental Petroleum Co. had negotiated a deal with the ELN, in which three multinational companies operating in Colombia paid the ELN \$200,000 a month, not to attack their oil installations. Hammer told the *Wall Street Journal* in July 1985: “We are giving jobs to the ELN. We give them work as suppliers.” Occidental reportedly paid \$6 million in “ransom” to the ELN in 1988, for the release of one of their engineers, but they say they no longer pay “protection” money.

Thumbnail historical profile: The ELN was founded in 1963 to defend the “Cuban Revolution,” primarily by a group of students at the Industrial University of Santander and by a group of Santander peasants. ELN leaders since its founding were the brothers Manuel, Fabio, and Antonio Vásquez Castaño, who were earlier trained in Cuba under the personal direction of Fidel Castro.

Meanwhile, a group of priests known as the Golconda Group, headed by Buenaventura Bishop Germán Valencia, began to introduce the ideas of Régis Debray to the church. “Father” Camilo Torres created, in parallel to the ELN, a national student movement in defense of the Cuban Revolution. Torres, a sociologist from the University of Louvain in Belgium, officially entered the ELN in 1966, bringing with him a large group of students. Torres died “in combat” in 1967, when he tried to steal weapons from some soldiers who had fallen into his ambush; one of the soldiers had played dead, and shot him.

At the same time, another group of left Jesuit priests created the Center for Research and Social Affairs— (CIAS) in 1963, a center of economic and social affairs “experts” whose intention was to document the theses of the Golconda Group and the ELN. Later, the CIAS changed its name to the Center of Popular Education Research (CINEP), which, until recently, was run by Jesuit priest Francisco de Roux.

With Torres’s death, a group of priests from the Golconda Group, including Domingo Laín and Manuel Pérez, both Spaniards, entered the ELN so that “the flame of Camilo’s ideas would not die out.” Father Bernardo Hoyos was assigned the job of creating a popular base for the ELN within the parishes. In 1992, Hoyos managed to get himself elected mayor of Barranquilla, thanks to the political movement of the now-legalized M-19 narco-guerrillas. Today, he is a Presidential candidate for the 1998 elections.

In 1973, the ELN suffered a major blow in Anorí, Antioquia, when an effective Army encirclement led to the death of nearly all of their cadres. Only 17 men survived, among them Manuel Vásquez Castaño, Manuel Pérez, and Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista. The survivors submitted Vásquez Castaño to a “verbal war trial” for his evident military failure, and decided to shoot him. However, thanks to Rodríguez

Bautista's intervention, Fidel Castro decide to give Vásquez Castaño refuge. Today, he lives in a psychiatric hospital in Cuba.

In late 1974 and early 1975, the Army once again surrounded the ELN in the department of César. The remaining forces of the ELN would probably have been captured or killed, had it not been for the order of then-President Alfonso López Michelsen to suspend the military siege because, supposedly, the ELN was going to surrender.

The ELN's influence was relatively insignificant from that moment until 1982, when President Belisario Betancur began his policy of "negotiating the peace" with the different terrorist groups. Also in this period, the enormous donations from Occidental Petroleum enabled the ELN to rearm, buy new uniforms, and subject the peasants in the oil regions to their control.

In 1984, the ELN joined up with the FARC, the M-19, and the Hope, Peace, and Freedom movement (EPL), in the so-called Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinator. This immediately meant that the ELN would participate in the drug trade that the FARC dominated.

Despite its economic power, the ELN suffered another severe hit in 1993, when the Army captured its number-three man in Bucaramanga, Gerardo Bermúdez, alias Francisco Galán, who was drunk, high on drugs, and in the midst of a homosexual orgy at the time of his arrest. Galán is charged with innumerable kidnappings and assassinations. This did not stop the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions, an NGO, from issuing a statement in July 1995 demanding his release from prison, arguing that he had been arrested illegally.

In Colombia, life under narco-terrorist dictatorship

Vicente is a 50-year-old Colombian farmer who lives in a town of about 5,000 people, about 150 miles from Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. It is a town where nothing is said or done without the authorization of the commander of a "guerrilla" squad of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Vicente owns 10 hectares of land on the outskirts of town. We are withholding Vicente's real name, and the name of the town and department where he lives, to prevent reprisals being taken against him and his family. For the same reason, we omit the details of how Vicente came to

tell us his life story. This is what he told us:

I am the father of eight children, of whom four have already died, and two more, I don't know where they are, nor even if they are alive or dead. I will speak first of those two. Once, several persons who called themselves guerrillas came to my home and said that I had to give them 4 million pesos to help finance "the cause." I told them I had no money, that I am a poor farmer. Then they threatened they would burn down my house and my farm if I didn't give them 4 million pesos, which is what happened to a neighbor of mine who had to flee here, and now lives in Bogotá begging on the streets.

The next day they came back to demand the 4 million pesos. This time, they were armed with rifles and revolvers. There were 15 of them. They said they were hungry and that I had to feed them. I had to kill five chickens to carry out their orders. Then they said they had another proposal for me, that they had already verified that I didn't have 4 million pesos, but that I could contribute to the cause by handing over my eldest son to do "military service" with the FARC. He was barely 13 years old, but he helped me a lot in my work. I told him he was my best helper and that I didn't want him to leave me. Then they put us all against the wall of my house. The leader shouted: "Ready, aim, fire!" We heard them lift their weapons and we expected to fall down dead, but they shot into the air. Then we heard the leader: "Tomorrow we will come for your decision." Then my eldest son said, in front of them, that he was going to become a guerrilla so that they wouldn't kill me. We said good-bye, and I have never seen him again.

This was done throughout the town. They also took the son of my neighbor, but he decided to run away. He told us he had been forced to kill some people because they were supposedly "Army informants," and that when they forced him to attack the police station in a town, he fled in the confusion of the gunfire. A few days later, the head of the guerrillas came to our town and went to my neighbor's home. They didn't find the "deserter," because he had already left, so they took the whole family to the main park in town. The guerrillas went door to door to force people to go to the park. Then they took one of the sons of my neighbor and shot him. The guerrilla leader said this was in reprisal for the desertion of his brother, and that if the "deserter" didn't return, they would kill each and every member of the family. And that's what they did. After they had killed them all, they brought a family who had been promised land, to occupy my neighbor's property. From then on, the boys they take never run away, out of fear that they will assassinate all of their loved ones.

One day, they again appeared and told me that comrade "Juancho" needed a sex partner, because he couldn't take the loneliness. So they took my oldest daughter. She was 12 years old, and hadn't even had her first period. We never saw