

# EIR Strategic Studies

## UN-backed narco-terrorist 'Tet offensive' hits Colombia

by Valerie Rush

A narco-terrorist "Tet offensive" is currently under way in Colombia, with the goal of converting that nation into a legalized narcotics plantation under the "protection" of the one-worldist United Nations. Unless the Colombian Armed Forces are given the full political, legal, and budgetary support necessary to wage total war against the narco-terrorists, Colombia will fall to an enemy whose tactics rival those of the butcher of Cambodia, Pol Pot.

Central to this scenario is the narco-terrorist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), otherwise known as "the FARC Cartel" for its confirmed involvement in that country's cocaine and heroin trade. The FARC is a member, along with narco-terrorist "brethren" in Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Guatemala, El Salvador, and elsewhere, of Fidel Castro's São Paulo Forum, which held its annual coordinating meeting in late July in San Salvador, El Salvador. The Forum meeting, followed immediately by an international gathering of terrorist sympathizers in Chiapas, Mexico, set the stage for the full-scale insurgency now wracking Colombia.

The deployment of tens of thousands of coca-growing peasants in the FARC-controlled south of Colombia, allegedly to protest government drug eradication programs, was first launched in July of this year, with armed rampages against airports, oil facilities, and local government offices, that rapidly escalated to occupations of entire towns, highway blockades, and confrontations with military forces. Those orchestrated "protests," which have now spread from the south of the country to other regions as well, are providing the cover for a full-scale military offensive by the FARC narco-terrorists themselves.

In just a few weeks, scores of clashes between the heavily armed narco-terrorists and Army and police detachments have taken place in 16 of the country's 32 departments, claim-

ing the lives of more than 100 soldiers and police, as well as civilians. The most dramatic was an attack by 500 FARC commandos on the Army post at Las Delicias, Putumayo, on Aug. 30. The post was overrun and razed to the ground, dozens of troops killed, and 67 soldiers seized as "prisoners of war." It was later revealed that the FARC had planted mines around the post, to prevent escape by the trapped soldiers. The brutality of the assault is epitomized by the story of one Army sergeant taken prisoner, who was strung up by his testicles, and burned alive in front of his men.

These gruesome tactics, modeled on those of the infamous Shining Path narco-terrorists of Peru, are designed to trigger hysteria among military recruits. At another FARC attack on an Army post the next week, soldiers fled into the jungle to avoid capture at all cost. One of them later told the press that several of his fellows had committed suicide rather than be taken alive by the FARC. He also had tried to kill himself, but his gun had misfired.

"We are at war, no one can be mistaken about that," says Army Commander Gen. Harold Bedoya, who has insisted on defining the enemy as *narco-terrorist*, despite the international pretense at distinguishing between the "criminal" drug cartels and "guerrilla movements," which supposedly represent social forces with whom one can negotiate.

### The green light

With its 10-15,000 terrorists under arms and an estimated yearly income from drugs, kidnappings, and extortion of somewhere between \$500 million and \$1 billion, the FARC were only waiting until conditions were ripe for its "Tet offensive"—i.e., a *military* offensive designed to produce a *political* capitulation by the enemy's forces. That point was reached, in the estimation of the FARC and its international

sponsors, in mid-1996:

- Domestically, the government of Ernesto Samper Pizano is owned by the Cali drug cartel, with whom the FARC maintains a symbiotic relationship. The Samper crew is intent on crippling the Colombian military, lest it decide to put an end to Samper's corrupt narco-regime.

- Internationally, the FARC viewed the Clinton administration as too involved in election-year politics to dare respond meaningfully. The State Department and the Pentagon remained mired in the Bush-era lie that narco-terrorism—that is, the alliance of the drug cartels with terrorist subversion—does not exist.

- Most significantly, U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Myles Frechette had repeated that idiotic myth before a seminar at Colombia's National War College last March, which the FARC took to be a "green light," even concluding that the United States was prepared to mediate peace talks between the FARC "guerrillas" and the Samper government.

- The July meeting of the São Paulo Forum in San Salvador and the subsequent Chiapas gathering provided the necessary international cover, and coordination.

The FARC's first major moves were on the international propaganda front. Its representatives began freely touring the continent, showing up in Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, and elsewhere to give press conferences proclaiming their antipathy to "neo-liberalism," and declaring war on the "narco-corrupt" Samper regime. An open appeal was made to Venezuelan collaborators—including, reportedly, the armed networks of former Army Col. Hugo Chávez—to join the "front-lines of the battle, in solidarity with Colombia's rebel forces."

On Aug. 15, a letter written by FARC chieftain Manuel Marulanda Vélez (a.k.a. "Tirofijo") was released to the public, which urged international mediation of "peace talks" with that same Samper government. His demands? Demilitarization of the country and power-sharing with the FARC. The letter was addressed to former Colombian Foreign Minister Augusto Ramírez Ocampo, who had been head of the UN's mission to El Salvador and advocates a similar mission for Colombia (see interview). Ramírez Ocampo has now been named to head a committee to negotiate the release of the soldiers taken at Las Delicias.

Aiding the committee are representatives of the International Red Cross, which has served the FARC as collectors of its kidnap ransoms abroad. The FARC is presently demanding that the mediating committee be of international scope, including such pro-terrorist luminaries as Nobel Prize laureates Rigoberta Menchú and Oscar Arias, as well as representatives of the Salvadoran FMLN and Guatemalan URNG, both members of the São Paulo Forum. This committee would serve as a foot-in-the-door to a UN mission which the terrorists' networks have been urging all along. It is no coincidence that the first international office of the UN High Commission on Human Rights is about to open in Colombia.

## Yes, narco-terrorism does exist

The FARC and its sponsors were not counting on a change in attitude inside Washington, however. On Sept. 6, State Department spokesman Glyn Davies responded to a request by *EIR* Washington correspondent William Jones for an official U.S. position on whether Colombia's guerrillas were involved in the drug trade. Said Davies, "The U.S. government does understand that some of these FARC guerrillas are involved with narcotics trafficking. Of course, the involvement of the guerrillas in drug cultivation and trafficking varies by region. It depends on the particular guerrilla front that you're talking about. But there's no doubt that guerrilla fronts are directly engaged in this coca cultivation and processing, and in protecting the fields, the laboratories, and the markets."

And then, in hearings Sept. 11 on Capitol Hill over U.S. counter-narcotics aid to Colombia, the FARC was referred to for the first time as "The Third Cartel," prompting coverage in Colombia's major media. In answer to warnings by some congressmen that providing Blackhawk transport helicopters—the subject of the hearings—to the Colombian Army could be interpreted as support for "abusive counterinsurgency methods," State Department spokesman Peter Romero answered definitely: "The [Colombian] Army would not be obliged to use the helicopters solely and exclusively for the eradication of [drug] crops."

The FARC and its apologists still hope to use the human rights bogeyman to try to shackle the military. For example, in the name of protecting human rights, a local judge in the FARC-dominated department of Caquetá ordered the arrests of Army Commander Gen. Harold Bedoya, and of XII Brigade Commander Gen. Néstor Ramírez, for refusing to heed his order to withdraw military barricades that were keeping 20,000 coca-farmers from storming Florencia, Caquetá's capital. The judge claimed that the coca-farmers' "citizens' rights" to free transit, food, and health facilities were being violated.

However, the FARC-inspired arrest warrants served the unintended purpose of waking the ruling elites of the country to the fact that the Army is the only thing standing between them and a Pol Pot-style holocaust. Wrote leading *El Tiempo* journalist Enrique Santos Calderón: "The state cannot commit hara-kiri by jailing Generals Bedoya and Ramírez." The Army appealed, and the judge's arrest orders were overturned by the Colombian Supreme Court.

The Army has also counterattacked on the propaganda front, with the release of *The FARC Cartel*, in both English and Spanish (see review). Written by an aide to General Bedoya, the book documents the FARC's metamorphosis into the country's leading drug-trafficking cartel. As General Bedoya declared at the Aug. 21 press conference releasing the book, the FARC "is the worst threat to our democracy and our institutions. We want our friends to recognize and understand this, and collaborate in this vast fight in which we are engaged."