

Narco-terrorists open 'war of secession' against Colombia

by Gretchen Small

Colombia's new President, Andrés Pastrana, took office on Aug. 7, in the midst of war. Five days before, as the President-elect met with President Bill Clinton and other officials in Washington, D.C., the country's two major narco-terrorist forces launched a coordinated national offensive, unprecedented in its extent and firepower deployed. Over the next four days, the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) carried out 42 strikes in 19 of the country's 32 departments. By Inauguration Day, some 275 people had been killed, and the terrorists had taken more than 100 policemen and soldiers hostage, and overrun a strategic anti-drug base in the Miraflores, Guaviare, in the heart of the southern drug empire.

This was no "farewell to the old regime," but a test by the narco-terrorists of both the new President, and of the much-needed "new beginning" in U.S.-Colombian relations, of which both Pastrana and his Washington hosts had spoken on Aug. 3.

Unfortunately, Pastrana and the U.S. State Department have, thus far, given the narco-terrorists the answer they sought: They can continue to bomb, murder, and kidnap, but the "peace process" will go forward, including its already well-advanced takedown of Colombia's military.

Thus, even after the terrorist offensive, State Department spokesmen have reiterated that State's concern remains focussed on alleged human rights violations by *the Colombian military*, and that it is *the military* which must be reined in, for "peace" to go forward.

For his part, Pastrana announced on Aug. 11 that within 90 days, he will carry out his promise, and order the military to evacuate five specified municipalities in the south. This act will officially hand control to the FARC over an area twice the size of El Salvador, located in the heart of the cocaine and heroin trade. The new President promised that he will apply the full weight of the state against any military officer accused of human rights violations, and only asked in return, that the FARC, the third—and perhaps now largest—drug cartel in Colombia, reciprocate by driving the drug-trade out of the areas over which they are being given control!

It was left to the official who headed the U.S. delegation to Pastrana's inauguration, President Clinton's anti-drug policy director, Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), to spell out the insanity

of asking these drug-runners, that if they get their own country, won't they please stop running drugs? On his way back from Bogotá, General McCaffrey warned that the FARC/ELN pre-inaugural offensive was a move "in the direction of open warfare, to push the apparatus of the state over." The FARC devotes two-thirds of its forces to guarding or transporting drugs, and operating drug laboratories, has perhaps \$1 billion in reserves, and makes hundreds of millions of dollars a year from drug-trafficking, while the ELN kidnaps people, "shakes down" the oil companies, and is also involved in drug-trafficking, he told news agencies.

The FARC and the ELN demand "demilitarization" and "a cessation of aerial eradication," because aerial spraying is the only way to get at coca and opium production, McCaffrey said. When it comes to the peace talks: "The danger is, all they are after is the consolidation of their gains prior to the next phase of their movement. . . . If you look at their actions, particularly this offensive, it's almost as if their dominant focus is to maintain money-making criminal activity."

If these aren't narco-terrorists . . .

The argument of those who promote the so-called peace process, is that the FARC and ELN are essentially legitimate fighters for social justice, who just got involved in the drug trade—no one, not even the guerrillas, denies they are involved—because they needed a bit of cash. Their deal with the traffickers, it is said, is a "marriage of convenience," and if given the right incentives, they would go for divorce.

Pastrana insists that the correctness of this assumption is bolstered by the fact that, when he and his top aide, Víctor Ricardo, met on July 10 with the head of the FARC, Manuel Marulanda, and the FARC's top military commander, José Briceño (alias, Mono Jojoy), they told him that the FARC intended to *consider* helping eradicate coca and opium poppy cultivation in the areas which it dominates, provided the terms were right.

The FARC's word on this score is as good as their interest in "peace." Consider the strategy evidenced in the Aug. 3-6 offensive. The attack was national. Oil installations and a major hydroelectric plant were attacked; highways to northern cities were blocked; towns were overrun and government officials taken hostage. A car bomb was found in time in the

capital city of Bogotá, but four car bombs exploded in two other cities.

These terrorist actions, as serious as they were, functioned, however, as flanking actions, designed to pin down national forces while the narco-terrorists massed more substantive military power against their two primary targets, both key for the FARC's drive to establish an independent Coca Republic in southern Colombia. Hundreds of FARC members attacked the military base in La Uribe, Meta. Thus far, the attack has been repelled (although soldiers were taken hostage), but everyone knows they will strike there again, as that is where the FARC had maintained its headquarters, until the military drove them out in 1991, and they intend to retake it.

Second, and most important, was the seizure of the anti-drug base in Miraflores, Guaviare. The base is one of the two key centers from which anti-drug operations, with U.S. support, are deployed throughout the southern drug kingdom maintained by the FARC. Some 60% of the cocaine produced in Colombia comes out of the Guaviare alone, with the 20,000 kilos of coca paste *each month* produced in the area providing the FARC one of its principal sources of funds. Against this base, manned by 190 policemen and soldiers, the FARC deployed a force of some 1,000 men, armed with rockets and 20-pound grenade-bombs. With the Army unable to send in reinforcements in time, at the end of 25 hours of battle, the base was overrun. Thirty of the men at the base were killed, 50 wounded, and the rest taken hostage.

The first phase of the terrorist offensive concluded, Pastrana's would-be peace partner, Mono Jojoy, issued the communiqué summarizing the FARC's evaluation of the battle's outcome. With the FARC now holding more than 200 police and military men as their hostages (some were seized in previous attacks), Mono Jojoy demanded that the government negotiate an exchange of "prisoners of war," and release FARC terrorists. His communiqué ended defiantly, "We continue fighting."

And they do. Even as Pastrana announced, at the Aug. 11 ceremonies where he swore in Víctor Ricardo as Presidential Peace Adviser (a post elevated to a cabinet position), that the southern military withdrawal will proceed, the ELN opened a multipronged offensive against the port city of Barrancabermeja. A FARC force estimated at 500 men is likewise reported to be on the march toward another anti-drug base in the south, this one located in Putumayo, near the border with Peru and Ecuador.

A Coca Republic

Over the course of 1998, *EIR* has published five feature packages on this escalating Colombian crisis, and outlined the needed elements of a strategy of victory. We have documented how London's "Dope, Inc." has targetted Colombia for disintegration, the first target of a new Opium War directed against the Americas as a whole. (See *EIR*, Jan. 23, May 8, June 12, July 3, and Aug. 7). We have documented how the

drug legalization lobby bankrolled by London's favorite speculator, George Soros, deploys the "human rights" campaigns against the Colombian military, *in conjunction with the dope cartels*.

In these recent events in Colombia, our warnings have been proven right, and our critics dead wrong.

The FARC/ELN offensive has been accompanied by a propaganda barrage spelling out what the narco-terrorists demand as preconditions for *promising* to sit down to talk. As the FARC's Mexico City-based spokesman, Commander Calarcá, bragged in a telephone press conference (given jointly with the ELN's chief, Francisco Galán, from his jail cell in Colombia): "We have nothing to negotiate. . . . There are not going to be negotiations; there are going to be conversations."

Articles run in major national dailies by a network of FARC front-men since Aug. 7, lay out their demands:

- U.S. military and anti-drug assistance to Colombia must stop. An article in *El Espectador* proclaimed on Aug. 10 that the FARC's top military targets today, are U.S. Vietnam veterans deployed in Colombia as anti-drug advisers.
- All "repressive" anti-drug operations must cease, including aerial eradication.
- All Colombians who seek to defend themselves against the guerrillas are to be treated as "paramilitaries"—here, the military is emphatically included—and the Colombian state must take responsibility for dismantling this opposition, with force if required.

In addition, precisely as *EIR* warned they would in its Aug. 7 issue, the narco-terrorists demand their own Coca Republic. On Aug. 9, William Jaramillo, a former cabinet minister turned columnist for *El Espectador*, raised the question, what is it that the guerrillas want? They were de facto recognized as a legitimate belligerent force when Pastrana met with their leadership, he argued, notifying "the international community . . . as to the political legitimacy of the insurrection in Colombia. . . . They seek political autonomy and independent territory? That's where things should head." Comparing "our insurrection" with that of the ETA Basque separatists in Spain, Jaramillo concluded:

"Many are surprised that our war would end with territorial concessions, the which is not so absurd. . . . The guerrillas know that our weak and inefficient Armed Forces, which they defeat every day where they want, and how they want, are incapable of defending the territorial integrity of the state. Therefore, this war has become a war of secession. And, it has to be faced as such."

El Espectador's prominence in providing FARC propaganda space is telling. In 1996, the Pastrana family newspaper, *La Prensa*, and Pastrana personally, denounced the paper's owner, Julio Mario Santodomingo (a friend of Henry Kissinger), for his "economic partnership" with the Cali Cartel's Rodríguez Orejuela brothers, and the two partners, Santodomingo and the Orejuelas, together kept then-President Ernesto Samper Pizano in power.