

## Andean Report by Valerie Rush

### Colombia's FARC gets State Dept. boost

*Is Albright's State Department pushing the bloody FARC narco-terrorists as an "anti-drug" final solution?*

When the FARC narco-terrorists in Colombia kidnapped and murdered three Americans last February, the U.S. State Department did a lot of "lamenting" and "deploring." Nevertheless, the State Department not only defended its secret meetings last December with the FARC, but insisted on support for the nonexistent "peace process" that the Pastrana government is pursuing with the FARC.

When the FARC cancelled the start of "peace talks" until the Colombian government was ready to pledge "tougher action" against the country's anti-guerrilla paramilitary forces, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Harold Koh flew to Bogotá to back up the FARC's demands. At a forum on April 9 in the city of Medellín, organized by the U.S. Embassy, Koh took up the FARC's self-serving argument that the Colombian Armed Forces are the behind-the-scenes sponsors of the paramilitaries' dirty war tactics. "The Colombian government must cut each and every one of the ties between the military and paramilitary, bringing to trial even unto the far-reaching consequences, those members of the Armed Forces who take unlawful measures to resolve Colombia's problems," he said.

Koh especially praised President Pastrana's recent decision to fire two prominent generals, Army operations commander Rito Alejo and Superior War College director Fernando Milan, who had been accused by the FARC of working with the paramilitaries. Koh demanded that "even more must be done," including dismantling the military justice system!

Former Armed Forces Com-

mander Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.) slammed the government's decision to fire the generals in an April 10 column in the daily *El Espectador*. "Pastrana has become a puppet of [FARC commander] Tirofijo," wrote Bedoya. "Not only does he hand them half the country, but now, the heads of the best generals. . . . Such a state of demoralization is being created, that the country is not going to have sufficient defenses to resist the onslaught of drug trafficking and terrorism which is destroying the country."

One day after Koh's scandalous statements hit the press, the FARC's narco-terrorist cousins, the ELN, hijacked a commercial airliner with 41 passengers and 5 crewmen aboard. One or more of the passengers are believed to be Americans, and they are being dragged from one jungle camp to another, as the Colombian military pursues the terrorists and their captives. Once again, the State Department "deplored" the incident, but insisted that the peace process must be supported.

Despite Colombian police reports that the FARC supplied the intelligence for the hijacking, the State Department's Peter Romero went out of his way to say that it was the ELN terrorists, and *not* the FARC, behind this latest terrorist act. This is especially interesting in light of reports that the FARC and the Pastrana government are negotiating to extend the Vietnam-sized territory in Colombia's south, currently under FARC control, to facilitate implementation of a UN-sponsored "anti-drug" program of crop substitution. According to reports, under the plan being hammered out, the

UN would give millions of dollars to the FARC, the nominal authority in the experimental region, and the FARC would supposedly distribute the money to the farmers to grow food instead of drugs. No one—not the government, not the UN, and certainly not the FARC—has asked the obvious: Where would the FARC get the billions of dollars it requires to maintain its terrorist army, if it were to hand over the UN money, thereby helping to eliminate its own chief source of revenue, namely, illegal narcotics?

By drawing a distinction between the Cuba-allied ELN and the equally murderous FARC, is the State Department reviving its lunatic policy from the Bush era, when it pursued an alliance with the so-called "non-violent" Cali Cartel against the Medellín Cartel? As any Colombian will testify, that approach resulted in the Presidency of Cali Cartel front-man Ernesto Samper Pizano, for four devastating years. Today, President Pastrana's State Department-blessed appeasement policy toward the drug cartels' junior partners, the FARC-ELN, is a continuation of that insanity.

The tragic irony in all this is that the "peace" President Pastrana is pursuing is a chimera. The proliferation of terrorist armies across Colombia, the FARC-ELN on the one side, and the paramilitaries grouped under the "Self-Defense Union" (AUC) umbrella on the other, is splintering the nation, and driving it rapidly into the same kind of irregular warfare that the British are infamous for instigating. The AUC's latest announcement, that it is sending its forces into the FARC-run "demilitarized zone" in the south, is guaranteed to set the stage for precisely the kind of multinational intervention force that the anti-Clinton Heritage Foundation in Washington has been demanding.