

# 'Operation Black Cat' Busts The FARC's South American Cartel

by Gretchen Small

Are you one of those who swallowed the myth that the drug trade is so lucrative, so powerful, that civilized society must bow to it, and legalize the dope trade? Did you buy into the proposition that the leading narcoterrorist force in South America, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are ideologically-motivated, if nasty, "rebels"? That "peace" will only be restored to Colombia, if the FARC are brought into the government, through negotiations?

If so, consider what has just been accomplished in South America. In an operation dubbed 'Black Cat,' in a brief three months, the Colombian military — vilified internationally and persecuted domestically, underequipped and with scandalously limited transport capabilities—aided by U.S. intelligence support, succeeded in blowing a gigantic hole in the largest cocaine trafficking ring in South America.

On February 11, some 3,000 Colombian troops, transported by 13 helicopters, descended on Barranco Minas, a small town in the eastern department of Guainía. The military set out to retake control of the region around the Guaviare River which divides the departments (states) of Vichada and Guainía, which border on Venezuela and Brazil (see map). Covered by jungle and sparsely populated, the region is only accessible by air or river; there are no roads in. It had been taken over by the FARC's 16th Front, whose head, Tomás Medina Caracas, nicknamed *El Negro Acacio*, or *Black Acacio*, was identified by multiple national intelligence services in the Americas as a major trafficker.

Within days, the military had found 10,000 hectares planted with coca, and 12 cocaine laboratories capable of producing two tons of cocaine weekly. After U.S. Southern Command chief Gen. Pace and U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration head Donnie Marshall got a first-hand look at Operation Black Cat's operations on Feb. 19, Pace told journalists: "The FARC and narco-trafficking were one and the same in this region."

On April 21, as the Summit of the Americas was taking place in Canada, Black Cat led to the capture of the man who controls 60% of Brazil's enormous drug trade, the "Pablo Escobar of Brazil," Luiz Fernando da Costa, known by his mafia nickname, Fernandinho Beira Mar. Beira Mar is said to

be one of the largest suppliers of cocaine to the U.S. market; he has been identified at the center of dope-for-weapons trafficking running through Venezuela, Paraguay, and Surinam; his organization ships cocaine to Holland, to the Republic of Ghana, and was looking to Asia.

Supplying him with cocaine, and providing him protection, not only in Colombia, but when he traveled in South America, Beira Mar had lived with the FARC's 16th Front for the past year; his networks supplied the FARC with weapons and medicines. An estimated 80% of the FARC's income is said to have come from the Beira Mar operation. And it was no small thing, either: 200 tons of cocaine a year, 38% of Colombia's estimated annual output of 520 tons, went out through the FARC-Beira Mar cartel. Colombia supplies some 80% of the cocaine produced globally—and nearly 40% of that supply has just been knocked out.

Do the arithmetic: an underequipped and politically vilified effort has just knocked out 32%, *one third*, of the world's cocaine supply. And you say the war on drugs cannot be won?

## The Policy's the Problem

As important as the numbers are, Operation Black Cat dealt an even harsher blow to the global drug trade, by blowing apart the lie that drugs are undefeatable. Such lies include the line that the break-up of the Medellín and Cali cartels merely forced the drug trade in Colombia to regroup into a bunch of decentralized, disperse, smaller groups, and thus made it only harder to defeat.

As Lyndon LaRouche has insisted for more than two decades, the only reason the drug trade has not been wiped out yet, is because it is *the policy of the international financiers profiting off the trade, to legalize dope*. As the City of London's *Economist* magazine regularly repeats, they intend to extend free trade to dope, and return the world to the good old days when the British Crown and its Boston spinoffs ran the opium trade, in their own name and on their own ships.

Key to the operation is the media. Newspapers such as Katherine Graham's *Washington Post*, of the Lazard finan-

cial interests, and the *New York Times*, voicepiece for the alliance of Southern slave interests and Wall Street's House of Morgan, organize the witchhunts against those fighting drugs, and run cover for drug legalization.

Another Big Lie they are fond of promoting is that the FARC is supposedly not a drug cartel, but "only" finances its "ideological" war by "taxing" the traffickers, and that the world must support "peace" negotiations with the FARC, because that's what Colombians want. The "peace" process is no more desired by Colombians, than the FARC are idealistic "rebels." This is a policy imposed on Colombia by foreign financial forces, who selected Colombia to be shattered, as a necessary step towards imposing global drug legalization.

Black Cat did not "discover" that the FARC is a cartel. Under the leadership of then-Army Commander Gen. Harold Bedoya, in 1996 the Army published a book titled *The FARC Cartel*, in both Spanish and English, documenting the FARC's role as the third, and greatest, cocaine cartel. Gen. Bedoya came to Washington, D.C. in 1999, and in meetings set up by Lyndon LaRouche's people with a score of Congressional offices, private briefings and a packed press conference, he laid out the facts, and what should be done about it.

Nor is Beira Mar the FARC's sole trafficking partner. In August 2000, the Mexican government arrested a Colombian medical doctor, and established the FARC's ties to one of Mexico's greatest cartels, the Tijuana Cartel. Even as the material seized in Black Cat was being sifted through, Mexican prosecutors arrested a second member of the Tijuana-FARC cartel.

The documents seized by the Colombian military in Operation Black Cat, however, provide, court-quality evidence "demonstrating the participation of the FARC in the cultivation, production, and marketing of cocaine with the international cartels," Colombian Army Commander Gen. Jorge Mora reported April 4. The FARC is involved in every aspect of the drug trade "except perhaps selling dope on the streets of New York. . . and the drug business is led and managed by that guerrilla group under the leadership of its secretariat."

Look again at the photograph of New York Stock Exchange president Richard Grasso smiling as he embraces the chief of FARC finances, "Raúl Reyes," following their jungle tete-a-tete in June 1999. Grasso called a press conference upon his return to New York, to announce that he had invited Reyes and the FARC's "Supreme Commander," Manuel Marulanda, to come walk the halls of the New York Stock Exchange with him. He praised Reyes's sophisticated understanding of international capital markets, and welcomed their business. Indeed! According to press reports, Reyes's name is duly recorded in the FARC-Beira Mar financial computer diskettes seized in the raids.

## Andean Hell

It is popular today to repeat the lie, as a justification for surrender, that if the dope trade is hit in one place, it merely moves onto another: the so-called "balloon effect." How silly. As any child knows, balloons are eminently "poppable."

Three years ago, the cocaine "balloon" in the Andes could have been "popped" for good. Governments in two of the three big coca producing nations, Peru and Bolivia, had set out to drive the drug trade out of their countries, and, with help from U.S. military and intelligence networks committed to the same goal, they were racking up successes. Watching the dramatic disintegration of their nation under President Andrés Pastrana's contrary policy of negotiating with the FARC cartel, political and military layers in Colombia discussed the possibility of saving Colombian democracy, as President Alberto Fujimori had saved Peru's democracy and State: by mobilizing the Nation to defeat the narcoterrorists in an all-out but efficient war.

Had the bankers and their agents in the U.S. State Department not intervened, *the war could have been won by now*. The drug trade was saved, not by its military might, but by *political* intervention. The British-tied financial interests gathered in the Inter-American Dialogue and Rockefeller's Americas Society, mobilized Wall Street's permanent bureaucracy within the U.S. government to overthrow the Fujimori government in Peru. The transitional government they then installed to run the country until a new government be elected, is led by well-known dope legalizers. One of those, Justice Minister Diego Garcí Sayán, is systematically jailing anyone who fought narcoterrorism and the dope trade.

Less well-known, Bolivia's success was recognized by U.S. Southern Command chief Gen. Peter Pace during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing March 27. "Bolivia, with perhaps fewer resources than any other country in the region," he said, "has achieved unprecedented success in eradicating illegal coca cultivation and aggressively interdicting Drug Trafficking Organizations' movement of precursor chemicals." The Bánzer government has not wavered in its drive to eliminate *all* illegal coca cultivation in the country by when it leaves office in 2002. The government, however, does not have the resources to provide significant alternative development opportunities for those dependent on the drug trade income, nor has it received economic assistance of any significance from abroad. The result is that thousands of coca growers have been left economically at the mercy of the traffickers, and a narcoterrorist insurgency—trained and advised, according to several accounts, by the FARC—is being created. Like the FARC, the Bolivian insurgency is promoted by the *New York Times*, et al, as a justified "rebellion" by poor peasants against the "militarist" Bánzer government.

As for Colombia: the "peace process" championed by

the same U.S. State Department crew which overthrew the Fujimori government, has driven the country into hell. The three years of negotiations with the FARC cartel have served primarily to destroy the Colombian State. Colombia's military, not the narcoterrorists, has been made into the "enemy image" around the world. Look at **map 1**. Where once there was only one DMZ area, the size of Switzerland, handed over to the narcoterrorists, now there is a second zone being created, over the opposition of those living in the area, for the FARC's ELN allies, and the AUC paramilitaries and other armed criminals are demanding their "own" concentration camp to run. Colombia's 40 million citizens are, de facto, hostages of the terrorists. 800,000 people have fled Colombia, while well over one million live in refugee camps inside their own country.

### **Hitting on the Flank**

Black Cat is a demonstration of efficiency in warfare. Their hands tied politically and economically, the Army marshalled its limited resources for a strike which would deliver the maximum damage to the greatest strength of the narcoterrorists: not its finances, but its *political* international support apparatus.

In late March, a special U.S. Justice Department prosecutor flew to Colombia, to review the documents seized under Black Cat. Gen. Mora pointed out in an explosive April 5 press conference, that the information in hand is sufficient to merit the U.S. requesting the extradition of various FARC leaders: as drug-traffickers.

Will not at least some of the 25 governments, the United Nations, the European Union and the Vatican, which, with the encouragement of the Bush administration, sent representatives to hold talks with the FARC in the "FARC zone" on March 8, reconsider their participation with the FARC, in light of the court-quality evidence documenting its role as a major drug cartel? After Black Cat, no person or government can claim "they didn't know."

Which makes the April 30 interview of the U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, Anne Patterson, with *El Espectador*, very revealing indeed. Patterson admitted: (1) that coca cultivation in the FARC-controlled zone had risen from 6,000 to 9,000 hectares, or more; (2) that anti-drug operations in the southern department of Putumayo had uncovered proof that the FARC was involved in every aspect of the drug trade in that department; and (3) that Colombia had shared the information gathered in Black Cat with the U.S., and it is sufficient to prepare U.S. trials against some of the FARC. Yet, asked if the U.S. will be participating directly in "peace" talks with the FARC, she replied: "Yes, I do think we will participate in this process also some day."

### **Will the Drug Airbridge Now Be Restored?**

The London/Wall Street dope lobby is on the counterattack, demanding all U.S. anti-drug cooperation programs with

its Ibero-American neighbors be shut down. The immediate target is one of the most successful international anti-drug operations ever run: U.S. cooperation in the aerial interdiction programs of Peru and Colombia. After the Peruvian Air Force mistakenly shot down a U.S. missionary plane flying near or over the Peru-Brazil border in the prime drug corridor near Iquitos on April 20, leading to the tragic death of two aboard, the drug lobby launched a gigantic mobilization for the interdiction program to be ended, permanently. Leading the pack are the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

The airbridge denial program, as it is known, is exemplary of the kind of measures which LaRouche laid out in 1985 as necessary to run the drug trade out of the Americas: providing the benefits of U.S. technological capabilities to national military forces in the region, which act, sovereignly, in response to the intelligence provided. In the air interdiction program, the U.S. provides real-time intelligence on suspicious aircraft entering and leaving Peru and Colombia, to those countries' national Air Force planes, which take care of enforcement, forcing the planes to identify themselves, land, or be shot down.

When the U.S.-Peruvian program restarted in 1995, after a one year hiatus, over 60% of the world's coca was grown in Peru. The coca leaves were converted into coca paste, and then flown out by light aircraft from Peru to Colombia, where it was processed into refined cocaine. An average of 600 drug trafficking flights were flying each year between Peru and Colombia at the time.

When the Peruvian Air Force, using U.S.-provided surveillance intelligence, began forcing the planes to land, and had shot down but a few, the illegal air traffic from Peru to Colombia dropped precipitously. Its efficiency drove the drug legalization crowd wild: because traffickers couldn't get the coca paste out, the price paid for coca in Peru fell dramatically, and it became possible to free peasants enslaved to coca production, without major military battles. By 1996, coca farmers began flocking to government programs to help them find alternative crops. By the end of 2000, coca cultivation in Peru had been reduced by 70% over its 1995 levels.

The "single [largest] contributing factor to the dramatic drop" in Peru's cultivation, was the U.S.-Peruvian air interdiction program, John Crow, who heads the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs's Latin American program, told a May 1 U.S. Congressional hearing. No U.S. government official would contest his assessment.

These dramatic results were achieved with minimal military action: over the course of six years, the Peruvian Air Force shot down a total of 30 traffickers' planes. The April 20 tragedy, was the first loss of innocent life.

The program, also existing with Colombia, became the model for similar U.S.-regional cooperation to shut down river and sea routes in the Andean region. The Joint Peruvian Riverine Training Center established in Iquitos, Peru, where

FIGURE 10

# Colombia: The Narco-Terrorist War Theater



the U.S. helps train Colombian and Peruvian Navy forces for counter-drug operations, is “the finest facility of its kind” in the Ibero-American area, Gen. Pace told the Senate March 27.

### Fujimori’s Peru, Revisited

All such anti-drug efforts, and the individuals who carry them out, are targeted for elimination by the legalization crowd. The Peruvian patriots who defeated the narcoterrorist mob are today sitting in jail; and their U.S. counterparts are slated for the same treatment.

This intent was spelled out by Katie Graham’s *Washington Post*, in a lead front page article May 9, filed under the byline of *Post* scribbler Anthony Faiola. The *Post* painted the Fujimori-military team which defeated narcoterrorism and gutted the drug trade in Peru, as “a network of corruption,” a bunch of drug-traffickers themselves “involved in massive criminal activity.” It celebrated how 18 Peruvian generals, including former Armed Forces Commander Gen. Nicolás Hermoza, who led the anti-terror war, are locked up in prisons with common criminals, with more than 50 other high ranking military and intelligence officials slated to join them there.

Through the ruse of quoting anti-Fujimori Peruvians, the *Post* calls for investigations to be opened into those U.S. members of the CIA, DEA, and U.S. Armed Forces, who worked with these Peruvians against the drug trade—and then threatens that U.S. officials working on U.S.-Colombian anti-drug efforts, may, likewise, find themselves charged with “cooperating with a corrupt military establishment.”

Across the Americas, the witchhunt being carried out against Fujimori, Hermoza, the former head of Peru’s National Intelligence Service, Vladimiro Montesinos, and the rest, is understood for what it is: the drug mob’s revenge. Fujimori’s Peru is paying for only one crime: that of demonstrating that even poor nations, if sufficient will is mobilized, can defend themselves.

This is even admitted in a remark from an unnamed U.S. official, which the *Post* buries at the end of its May 9 piece: “The problem with the so-called proof about Montesinos and the generals is that they always seem to come from drug traffickers.” The charge, for example, that Hermoza was on the drug mob’s payroll all the while, is based on the testimony of *El Vaticano*, one of the biggest drug traffickers he sent to jail.

The enormously successful Operation Black Cat, clearly involving regional intelligence capabilities and meticulously prepared in advance, raises questions, also, about the centerpiece of the drug lobby’s campaign against Montesinos: the charge that Montesinos arranged for 10,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles, bought from Jordanian military networks, to be air-dropped to the FARC’s 16th Front: precisely the FARC operation which Black Cat just mopped up. **Map 2** Montesinos and Fujimori revealed the air-drop operation in August 2000, and took credit for breaking it up. Within

FIGURE 2□  
The FARC Weapons Air-Drop Route□



weeks, it was asserted, however, that Montesinos—who, with Hermoza and Fujimori, fought the narcoterrorists for 10 years—was also on the take from the drug mob, and trafficked with the FARC.

In a Feb. 23, 2000 videoconference with Lima’s Society of Public Accountants, LaRouche raised questions about this charge against Montesinos. “This area is a very dark area,” LaRouche said. “I’ve been dealing with spooks for a long period of time, and had them coming at me. . . Anti-drug operations, in every part of the world, are very dirty. . . In drug intelligence operations, what the anti-drug operative tries to do, is to penetrate the drug networks. Now, how do you penetrate the drug networks? . . . Usually they penetrate the inside of the networks they are investigating. They use dirty money. They sometimes—in drug traffic, often—they will process drugs, as a way of getting to the top level. . .

“Therefore, the mere fact of a U.S. intelligence anti-drug operation, being involved in passing drugs and money, in Peru, as part of the anti-drug operation, does not really surprise me. . . I, therefore, don’t pass judgment on the issue: to me, it’s still an open question.”