

The 1985 'Guatusa' Plan

Proving Narcoterrorism Can Be Defeated

by EIR Staff

In the predawn hours of Oct. 28, 1985, a battalion of Guatemalan Army troops, led by guides from the Guardia de Hacienda (Treasury Police), descended into the dense jungles of the state of El Peten, near the Guatemala-Belize border, in a search-and-destroy mission targeting that nation's growing narcoterrorist menace. By the time the troops of Special Task Force COBRA emerged from the jungle 48 hours later, to assume their positions as part of the security for Guatemala's Nov. 3 Presidential and Congressional elections, over 40 marijuana plantations—an estimated \$50 million in drugs—had been seized and destroyed. Hard evidence had been captured, proving beyond a doubt that the international drug networks operating within Guatemala's borders were indistinguishable from the Soviet- and Cuban-backed terrorist organizations that had been waging a 20-year campaign of violence against the Guatemalan people.

Two days later, on Oct. 30, a select group of international and national journalists were invited by the public-affairs director of the Guatemalan Armed Forces to travel from the capital, Guatemala City, to the area of operations, to witness the destruction of the marijuana plantations, inspect the captured evidence, and interview several of the dozen prisoners caught during the anti-drug effort. Two EIR journalists, Jeffrey Steinberg and Herbert Quinde, were among these journalists, who broadcast to the world that the operation had been a success.

That EIR was on the scene of what was known as Operation Guatusa-1, was no anomaly. For, the backdrop to the Guatemalan government's successful operation was a process of cooperation between the government of Guatemala, the LaRouche movement, and sections of the government of the United States, which aimed to establish a modus operandi for defeating the scourge of narcoterrorism. And while that kind of cooperation was subsequently suppressed, due to a counterattack by the defenders of the drug trade, Operation Guatusa-1 remained a significant proof of principle that the narcoterrorists can be physically defeated, lawfully, and with minimal bloodshed, if sovereign governments, including the United States, agree to cooperate to that end.

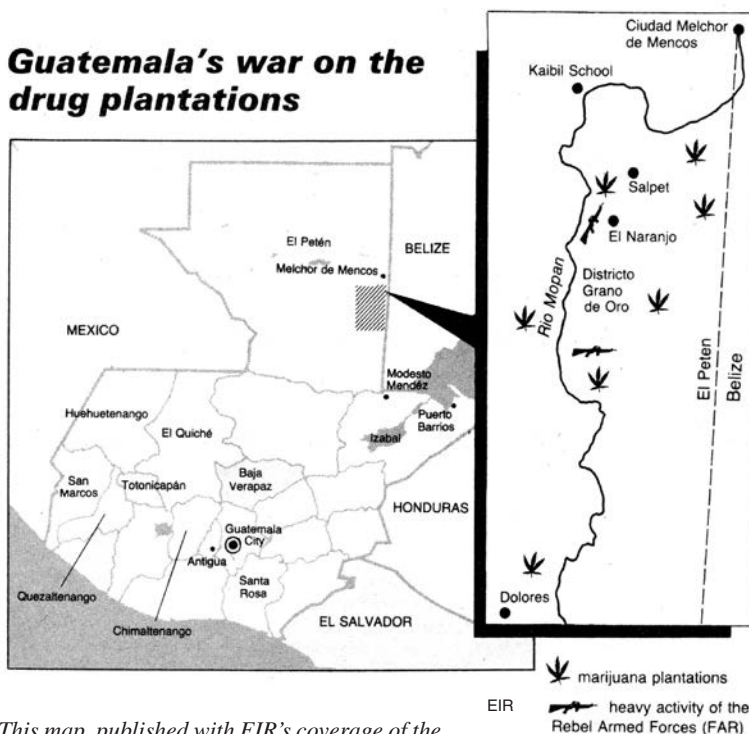
How Guatusa Came About

The explosion of the international drug trade which lawfully followed from the 1971-72 dismantling of the Bretton Woods system by the Nixon-Shultz Administration, became immeasurably worse with the election of the Carter Administration in 1977. Not only did the Carter Administration and its financial backers advocate the legalization of narcotics, but they actively opposed government actions to suppress the drug trade, and the burgeoning narcoterrorist apparatus which it was funding, on the grounds that these operations "violated human rights."

Lyndon LaRouche and his political movement had taken the point on this question in the most dramatic way with the publication, in 1978, of the book *Dope, Inc., Britain's Opium War Against the United States*. LaRouche followed up this powerful expose with political campaigns internationally, including establishing Anti-Drug Coalitions in Europe, South America, and the United States.

By the Spring of 1985, the narcoterrorist insurgencies in South and Central America were so strong that they threatened the ability of many governments, including those of Colombia and Guatemala, to protect their populations. Although the U.S. government was not prepared to give these governments any backup, leading forces in some of the countries looked to the U.S.A. for help, and specifically to LaRouche. Indeed, a delegation from Guatemala visited LaRouche that Spring, to consult on how to deal with their

Guatemala's war on the drug plantations



This map, published with EIR's coverage of the Guatusa-1 operation on Nov. 15, 1985, shows the location of the plantations which were raided by the Guatemalan military, who deployed out of the Kaibil School for Special Forces.

narcoterrorism crisis.

On March 13, 1985 LaRouche addressed the question of a continental strategy for a war on drugs in Mexico City, at a conference attended by numerous representatives of Ibero-American governments and the press. His action plan (see p. 12) outlined means of collaboration between governments for effective action against the drug trade through establishing a treaty organization that would wage the war, inclusively against those financial organizations behind the drug trade.

This initiative was followed up in July, when *EIR* released a 33-minute film documentary on Guatemala's battle against the narcoterrorists, and a 109-page Special Report entitled "Soviet Unconventional Warfare in Ibero-America: The Case of Guatemala." This had been produced through collaboration between LaRouche's *EIR* and Guatemalan sources, and presented the state of the war which the narcoterrorists, supported from outside Guatemala, were waging against that country. In the film, LaRouche urged the U.S. government to assist other governments who had the will to fight, like Guatemala, in wiping out both the drug-trafficking apparatus, and their logistical base of support. The film, produced in Spanish and English, was played simultaneously on all Guatemalan government-run television stations on Sept. 8 and 15.

In the course of this collaboration, the Guatemalan government adopted LaRouche's approach, and agreed to the idea of carrying out a pilot project (Guatusa-1) against the narcoterrorists. Specifically, the idea was to launch a military operation on the eve of upcoming the Presidential elections, elections in which the pro-drug, "human rights" apparatus left over from the Carter Administration was interfering, in opposition to the government, by maintaining an arms embargo and applying other pressures.

Operation Guatusa-1 was scheduled for Oct. 28. The Presidential and Congressional elections occurred Nov. 3.

Guatusa-1

Technically, the special operation run against the narcoterrorists in Peten province went off perfectly. A 450-man battalion of special forces gathered at the Kabil School, in a manner designed to avoid detection. Overnight, on Oct. 28, they broke up into patrol units and moved by truck into the target area, where they located and secured over 40 plantations where marijuana was being grown. Also secured was hard evidence of the fact that foreign terrorist fighters had been present in the area, which clearly, as reported by Guatemalan Colonel Castellanos, had been linked with the "logis-



EIRNS/Jeffrey Steinberg

Guatemalan soldiers are shown here overseeing the burning of tons of marijuana, confiscated in Operation Guatusa.

tic command" for the guns-for-pot operations centered in British Honduras, also known as Belize.

Because of the sensitivity of the Guatemalan government to charges of human rights violations, it had decided to bring in eyewitnesses. Thus, Guatusa was carried out with a team of observers, including the two *EIR* journalists mentioned above, as well as active duty and retired officers from the U.S. Army. The latter included one official who worked in the office of the Secretary of Defense.

The observer team served two purposes: first, to ensure the results were fairly reported, and two, to further cooperation between the parties involved.

It is a matter of abiding shame for the United States that the U.S. cooperation in this kind of war against narcoterrorism was not continued. Forces within the Reagan Administration, epitomized by Col. Oliver North, and his protector, Vice President George H.W. Bush, worked tirelessly to prevent the war on drugs. In fact, as *EIR* also documented extensively, North was running a U.S. network that was *collaborating* with the narcoterrorists—including by running drugs-for-guns operations into the United States. While North was never prosecuted, as he should have been, the exposure of his crimes did help keep him from being elected to the U.S. Senate.

But, despite official sabotage, it is clear that the lessons of Guatusa were not forgotten with the institutions of the U.S. military establishment. If the U.S.A. provides logistical support to allied governments, and permits them to carry out their sovereign obligation to protect their territory and people, drugs and drug-based insurgencies can be defeated. Hopefully, the recent Colombia success marks the revival of such an approach.