

Soviet-run narco-terrorists launch new military strategy in Colombia

by Valerie Rush

The first week of October marked a dramatic new turn in Moscow's irregular warfare strategy toward Colombia. In a move comparable to that of the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua or the rebel forces in El Salvador, nominally rival guerrilla groups in Colombia joined forces in a formal unified front under the name "Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinating Group." Colombia now lives under the threat of open, declared warfare against the state.

The narco-terrorists of the M-19, the pro-Castro National Liberation Army (ELN), the Maoist Popular Liberation Army (EPL), and the Quintín Lamé Brigade (founded by cocaine kingpin Carlos Lehder), joined their several thousand comandos with the Communist Party-protected Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which itself boasts between 10,000 and 15,000 guerrillas. In its first public statements and actions, the "Guerrilla Coordinating Group" has made clear that it will play the game of "peace," while driving for war.

The new terrorist army issued a joint communiqué to the press, in which it emphasized that it is committed to "dialogue" and insists, "We don't want war." In the same breath, however, it pledges "the construction of a single army, as guarantor and defender of life, national and popular sovereignty," and promises to abide by the Geneva Accords on humane warfare: "We commit ourselves to giving humanitarian and dignified treatment to enemies captured in combat, and to respect the civilian population and its properties during military confrontation."

Unity: a stall for war

The fact that the FARC, the oldest, largest, and most widespread guerrilla force, has agreed to unify with the other groups, is significant for a number of reasons. First, unification provides the smaller bands with a deeply rooted nationwide infrastructure which only the FARC possesses. Second, because the FARC is the only guerrilla organization which currently maintains a signed truce—however tenuous—with the Barco government, its unification with terrorist groups which have either refused or broken such a truce throws the

administration a curve ball, while giving the "Guerrilla Coordinating Group" a unique tactical advantage. Under cover of a paper "truce," Moscow's new army intends to use the March 1988 mayoral elections—the first ever in the history of Colombia—to capture thousands of municipalities across the country.

Many such targeted municipalities are located in the abandoned outlying provinces, where lack of government presence has already paved the way for narco-terrorist domination, awaiting only elections for "legitimacy." Others are located in key agricultural or industrial areas, where millions of drug dollars are being deployed to buy the elections outright. Following the elections, a narco-terrorist apparatus will be politically entrenched, and ready to launch civil war.

As early as December 1985, in an interview with the Mexican Trotskyite magazine *Cuadernos Políticos*, M-19 ideologue Antonio Navarro Wolf defined the objective:

"At first we viewed the Salvadoran [guerrillas'] situation as very complicated, because there is no jungle where they fight. But after looking at the Salvadoran experience, we found that the worst place to fight is in the jungle. Put in other terms: The jungle, with all the isolation it involves, is the best place to survive, but the worst place to triumph.

"Three criteria were key for the 'new military style' we sought: first, concentration of forces; second, making our basic task that of destroying the forces of the enemy; third, deciding to operate in zones of geopolitical and economic importance in which the masses should be the guerrillas' jungle, not the jungles of trees. Otherwise, it was critical to enter into regular, constant combat, in order not to lose the rhythm of military warfare."

The basic conception, said Navarro Wolf, was to "coordinate the war of the army in the countryside, with urban insurrection." With 75% of all Colombians living in cities, any strategy which does not include urban insurrection is doomed to failure. The goal, Navarro Wolf asserted, is to assure that:

"There will be an absolute transformation in the war in Colombia, and a situation like that of El Salvador will shape

up. . . . If we keep up this level of advantage, as up to now, and we generalize the use of this tactic [on the offensive] through the rest of the guerrilla movement in Colombia, we are rapidly going to arrive at a military situation which will permit us to say that we can destroy the army."

The final phase for victory, Navarro Wolf asserted, requires the unification of all the "guerrilla" groups in Colombia, as occurred in El Salvador. In 1985, he noted that every guerrilla group *except* the FARC is already in some form of alliance. He proposed that, following unity with the FARC, the new guerrilla command be named "the Simón Bolívar National Liberation Front."

Moscow's allies: the IMF and drugs

Moscow's strategy, of course, depends upon two factors: 1) continued U.S. sabotage, via the International Monetary Fund, of an adequate defense capability on the part of the Colombian state, and 2) the continued flow of narco-dollars into the war chest of the "Guerrilla Coordinating Group." Both appear to be assured, as of this writing.

The Colombian military, through Defense Minister Rafael Samudio Molina, has been begging for an increased budget from the Barco administration since its first days in office. The armed forces are short on everything from uniforms to weaponry, and admit that the narco-terrorists are better equipped. When this summer's border conflict with Venezuela threatened to break out into armed confrontation, Minister Samudio went before the national congress to plead for more funds. He stressed that the threat from abroad, combined with the narco-terrorist escalation at home, made it impossible to adequately defend national sovereignty with the current military budget.

The daily *El Espectador* gave the appeal an even broader context, in an Oct. 3 editorial which called for rearming the military and police, "because it is not just a question of protecting the borders but also of assuring internal peace." The newspaper editors added, "To make this re-arming work as a joint national effort, it has to be done . . . as part of an industrial and economic development process."

Minister Samudio received his answer from Finance Minister Luis Fernández Alarcón, who declared, upon departing for the International Monetary Fund conference in Washington, D.C. Sept. 27, that financing the armed forces was not his priority. "Colombia is a nation with many needs on many fronts. . . . Reinforcing the military forces' budget is not the most urgent." Alarcón made it clear that his "priorities" were defined by the same international financial interests which dictate the rest of the Barco government's economic policies: "While it is true that there is a need to grant more resources to the military forces, any effort in this regard must be located within the fiscal and economic program."

In exchange for such "prudent financial policies," Colombia has received the praises of U.S. Treasury Secretary James Baker, who describes the Colombian economy as "dy-

namic and competitive." What, in fact, is making the Colombian economy so "dynamic" right now, is a huge flood of drug money inundating Colombia's cities. The daily *El Espectador* of Sept. 19 writes:

"As a result of the critical political situation affecting Panama City, one of the world's leading financial centers, a stampede of capital from the banks located on the isthmus has been triggered. According to sources, in recent days, various cities [in Colombia] have registered vast bank deposits in cash and checks, presumably from activities related to the drug trade."

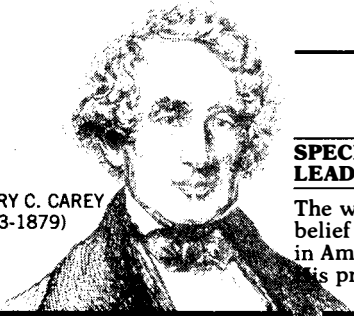
El Espectador notes that in the case of the mafia headquarters of Medellín alone, in a single day, "unexpected stock transactions were registered, with more than a million shares of Fabricato [a major textile firm] selling at 132 pesos, while the price per share last December was 54 pesos." Today, that same share is at 160 pesos, and rising. Construction, real estate, and automobile sales are soaring in every major city in the country.

Columnist Antonio Caballero suggests in a Sept. 30 column that the much-touted "recovery" in Colombia is solely due to the return of the drug mafia's billions. After buying up town council seats, weapons, zoo animals, and beauty queens, writes Caballero, "something must be left over for real estate and agro-industry, for the cattle ranches and the automobile industry."

Indeed, it would appear that the Barco regime, in the past year, has gone out of its way to bring back the mob which fled under his predecessor, Belisario Betancur. First, there was the release of Medellín cartel cocaine boss Jorge Luis Ochoa, following his arrest and extradition from Spain. Then, there was the overturning of the U.S.-Colombia extradition treaty, and the revoking of all outstanding arrest warrants against Medellín Cartel chief Pablo Escobar Gaviria. Then there was the acquittal of Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, a leading Cartel banker. Most recently, the mafia assassins of former Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla were acquitted as well.

Pablo Escobar, now walking the streets of Medellín, has already made *Forbes* and *Fortune* magazines' lists as one of the world's 20 top billionaires. His satisfied mug adorns the front page of the leading Colombian weekly magazine *Semana*, while the unadorned figure of his latest girlfriend captured both the front page and centerfold of another leading Colombian weekly, *Cromos*.

The narcos, in an attempt to project "good will" toward its host government, have financed the creation of an anti-guerrilla death squad in the city of Santa Marta. The guerrillas, in a less than believable attempt to project "revolutionary purity," have sent a three-page protest to the United Nations denying any links to the drug trade. The fact, however, remains that when Moscow orders the final drive for power, the Medellín Cartel *and* its "Guerrilla Coordinating Group" army will be on the same side of the barricades.



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