

# Colombia's Bedoya proposes South American alliance vs. narco-terrorism

by Gerardo Terán Canal

The nations of Ibero-America were shaken by the warnings issued by Colombian Gen. Harold Bedoya Pizarro (ret.), during his Aug. 9-14 tour of Argentina and Uruguay. A former commander of the Colombian Armed Forces, 1998 Colombian Presidential candidate, and leader of the "Fuerza Colombia" political movement, Bedoya declared that the tragedy unfolding in Colombia is the result of aggression by "international drug mafias," in complicity with the corrupt political system in his country, and that this tragedy threatens to spread throughout Ibero-America.

Despite the desperate efforts of the U.S. State Department, headed by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, to prevent press coverage of the Bedoya tour, despite the efforts of the Colombian government to block Bedoya's appearance at official functions, and despite the efforts of the Anglophile Inter-American Dialogue to cancel a meeting between Bedoya and Argentine congressmen, concern over the strategic implications of Colombia's crisis outweighed these efforts, and opened doors to General Bedoya, within the media and also among official institutions, both military and civilian.

Bedoya's visit to Argentina was organized by Argentina's Movement of National Unity, in coordination with independent retired military officers, and with the Buenos Aires office of *EIR*. Both in Argentina and in Uruguay, Bedoya received treatment worthy of a high-level official. As he himself declared the day before leaving Buenos Aires, "During this tour, I was able to do much more than during my own Presidential campaign" in Colombia.

In less than three days, Bedoya spoke with nearly 700 important individuals. In ground-breaking conferences, at the naval centers of both Buenos Aires and in La Plata, capital of the province of Buenos Aires, Bedoya was able to speak with retired and active duty military personnel, with federal and national judges, congressmen and advisers, university professors and students. At the Buenos Aires Naval Center, 300 people attended Bedoya's presentation, and the response was such that the general was inundated with more than 100 written questions. In La Plata, where 150 people heard Bedoya speak, the response was similar.

On Aug. 10, Bedoya was invited to speak at the Argentine Council on Foreign Relations, an institute through whose portals every foreign personality who visits Argentina passes. Several former Presidents and ministers of Colombia have

spoken there. Nearly 150 people — among them former ministers of state, career ambassadors, and public officials — heard Bedoya's presentation. The way in which Bedoya was presented (see his speech, below) emphasizes the importance that was attached to his visit.

In the Uruguayan capital of Montevideo, Bedoya was invited by the Military Circle, and spoke before 140 people, nearly half of whom were active-duty military personnel, including 40 cadets of the Military School.

## International aggression

In his presentations as well as in his interviews with the press, Bedoya unveiled what is truly behind the tragedy ongoing in Colombia. The conflict there, he explained, is a result of "international aggression by the drug-trafficking mafias," and Colombia is but one "theater of operations in an international war" declared against the entire world. In this war, the "United States is the great consumer of drugs, along with Europe. . . . Holland and Germany export the chemical precursors through the Netherlands Antilles. . . . Spain is the port of entry to Europe and the major money launderer. . . . Russia, that is the Russian mafia, is who sells the weapons to narco-terrorists and is responsible for selling the drugs in Europe. . . . Mexico is the corridor through which the majority of narcotics enters the United States, and Peru and Bolivia are the major producers of cocaine paste."

Colombia, he insisted, has been assigned the role of processor. It is in this context that the current situation in Colombia must be understood. The Andrés Pastrana government — which, according to Bedoya, has a 20% favorable rating among the Colombian population — has handed over to the drug traffickers of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), 42,000 square kilometers of territory in the southern zone of Caguán (Caquetá department). This area — the size of Switzerland — is comprised of five townships, is home to 200,000 people, and has 500,000 head of cattle, the largest extension of coca plantations in the country, and the greatest capacity for drug processing and air smuggling.

In one of his most shocking statements, Bedoya insisted that, according to Colombian Army intelligence reports, the narco-terrorists already have four war planes, eight modern helicopters, two field hospitals, 5,000 ultra-modern Russian light rifles, and a group of advisers and trainers made up



Gen. Harold Bedoya, during his campaign for the Colombian Presidency in 1998.

of Iranians, Uruguayans, Argentines, Paraguayans, and other nationalities. The existence of this advisory group, Bedoya insisted, proves that these mafias have a continental strategy.

By delivering a portion of the nation's sovereignty over to the narco-terrorists, Bedoya charged, the Pastrana government has in effect protected the FARC's kidnapping and blackmail operations. This has alarmed all of Colombia's neighbors, who see it as a direct threat to their own territories. Both the Peruvian and Brazilian governments have protested over border incidents caused by the Colombian terrorists. Bedoya expressed particular concern over the position taken by the Hugo Chávez government in Venezuela, which seeks to openly intervene—without the authorization of the Colombian government—in the “dialogue” with narco-terrorism, with the assertion that it “should negotiate with whoever has the real power in Colombia,” i.e., the FARC. Given the historic conflicts between Colombia and Venezuela over border issues, it is not at all impossible that Chávez's public stance could provoke yet another regional convulsion.

### Let Wall Street reveal its deals with ‘Tirofijo’

In every forum, Bedoya denounced the recent visit of executives of the New York Stock Exchange to the headquarters of the FARC commanders. “Nobody knows why they came, nor what they agreed to,” Bedoya said. “It would be very good if the government of the United States were to interrogate those gentlemen, who landed on the same airstrips from which the drugs which so concern U.S. authorities, are

exported.” Bedoya noted that the congressmen and other U.S. personalities who have visited FARC chieftain “Tirofijo,” have landed on those same airstrips.

One current of concern that underlay the retired general's entire tour was the possibility of a military intervention into Colombia by the United States or by some inter-American military force, as has already been proposed by Argentine President Carlos Menem. Bedoya made it clear that:

1. The solution to Colombia's problems is in a decisive military response to FARC-ELN narco-terrorism, but that such an effort is the sovereign responsibility of the Colombian Army.

2. Colombia's army needs international aid, both from the United States and from all the countries of the region, including equipment, weapons, money, and training. He referred to the professional assistance rendered the Colombian Armed Forces by the Argentine Army during the 1970s, to help defeat urban guerrillas like the M-19.

3. Regarding a possible U.S. intervention, Bedoya said that he saw this as very difficult to contemplate, given that the terrain of war, which is the Colombian southeast, is five times larger than Vietnam, and with a geography and climate that not even the most modern technology has yet been able to dominate.

Bedoya also called for Ibero-American solidarity with Colombia, insisting that this was not a Colombian problem but a threat to the entire region. “The voice of Argentina is heard in Colombia. And if the Argentine and other governments want to help resolve the Colombia problem, it should abandon support for this ‘peace policy’ of the current government, and instead demand that Pastrana take up the challenge of a military confrontation with narco-terrorism,” he said. He proposed creating an Ibero-American anti-drug commission composed of countries of the region, which would name an “anti-drug czar” and which could certify or decertify countries on whether they collaborate with the growth of the drug trade.

### International news

In all of his interventions, Bedoya presented himself as the ambassador from the 90% of Colombians who want an end to narco-terrorism, and as the only Colombian, given his experience and knowledge of the problem, to deal with the current situation in Colombia. The way in which the international media reported on his interventions (see *Documentation*) reflects the political importance Bedoya is given today.

On Aug. 9, at a reception organized by the Movement of National Unity at Argentina's Aeronautic Center, Bedoya held an interchange for more than two hours with several important press organs from Buenos Aires. One of the Argentine agencies of international scope, *Noticias Argentinas*, issued a wire report whose headline picked up on Bedoya's charge that there are Argentines and other foreigners involved in Colombian narco-terrorism. This news was run on Aug. 11

by Spanish-language CNN, on its nightly news.

Logically, the news also reached Colombia, where Radio Caracol-FM called Buenos Aires to interview Bedoya. The Peruvian daily *La República*, a mouthpiece for leftist forces sympathetic to narco-terrorism, also reported on Bedoya's visit. From Holland, Radio Netherlands interviewed Bedoya. The second most important news show in Argentina, "América Noticias," of channel "América TV," which reaches several countries in the region, also conducted a ten-minute interview with Bedoya.

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## A Speech by General Bedoya

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# Colombia's crisis is the world's crisis

*Former Argentine Ambassador to Colombia Hernán Massini Ezcurra introduced Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.), when he addressed the Argentine Council on Foreign Relations (CARI), on Aug. 10, 1999.*

Gen. Harold Bedoya is a distinguished Colombian personality. As a military officer, during various phases of his military career, he served at the highest levels of the Colombian Army. I could refer to his most important posts: In 1990, he commanded the IV Brigade in Medellín, which fought that most difficult of battles against the best known and most dangerous drug trafficker, Pablo Escobar Gaviria. This fight, carried out jointly by the military and police forces, led to the capture of the drug trafficker, who was jailed for a while.

General Bedoya also commanded the II Division, headquartered in Bucaramanga, and his battles with the various guerrilla movements, the ELN, EPL, FARC, are well known.

Later, in 1994, he was named representative to the Inter-American Defense Board in Washington, and served as Defense Attaché at the embassy of his country in the United States. This opportunity permitted General Bedoya to establish important relations with the high commands of the militaries of the United States and Latin America.

He returned to Colombia in 1995, to be named Commander of the Army, its highest post. He was then promoted to the position of Commander of the Military Forces of Colombia, the post held by the highest-ranking officer, who leads the entire Armed Forces of Colombia.

He also held the post of Acting Defense Minister of Colombia.

In 1997, he retired, and within a few months, launched a campaign for the Presidency, through the political movement

"Fuerza Colombia," in the elections which were held in July 1998.

General Bedoya's candidacy was well received by the Colombian public. I was there in those years, and I remember the polls which gave General Bedoya a leading place in the interests of the Colombian population.

Within the military forces of Colombia, General Bedoya is known as an exemplary man of arms, a man of few words, with much support within the Army, clear and categorical in his views. I have had the opportunity to know him, to be with him on different occasions, and I have the best of memories of all those times that we were together in Bogotá.

I wish to mention especially how, in 1997, when the head of our Army, Gen. Martín Balza, made a second visit to Colombia, General Bedoya was extremely warm and attentive toward the Chief of Staff of our army.

I remember, that when President Samper Pizano, in one of his efforts at making peace with the Colombian insurgents, sought to demilitarize an area in the south of Colombia (similar to what President Pastrana did last year), General Bedoya categorically opposed this at the time.

Lastly, General, you have seen the interest with which the Argentine press has been following the Colombian situation in recent days: the opinions expressed by different persons, particularly from the United States, the declarations of support from our President for the position of President Pastrana on the pacification of Colombia, and the interest of the countries of Latin America, particularly Colombia's neighbors, in the problems which are being posed by the fight against drug trafficking and against the guerrillas.

Lastly, I wish to remind the audience of some of your theses about the guerrillas, the FARC, which you consider to be the third drug cartel, in order to point out the coexistence in Colombia among the groups of drug traffickers and the guerrilla groups, which has created the violence which lamentably exists in this country.

As you can appreciate, there is much interest at the CARI in hearing what you have to say, and we are sure you will give us an exact and profound evaluation of the Colombian situation.

Thank you.

*Excerpts from General Bedoya's speech:*

Thank you very much, Ambassador.

Ambassador Carlos Muniz, president of the CARI.

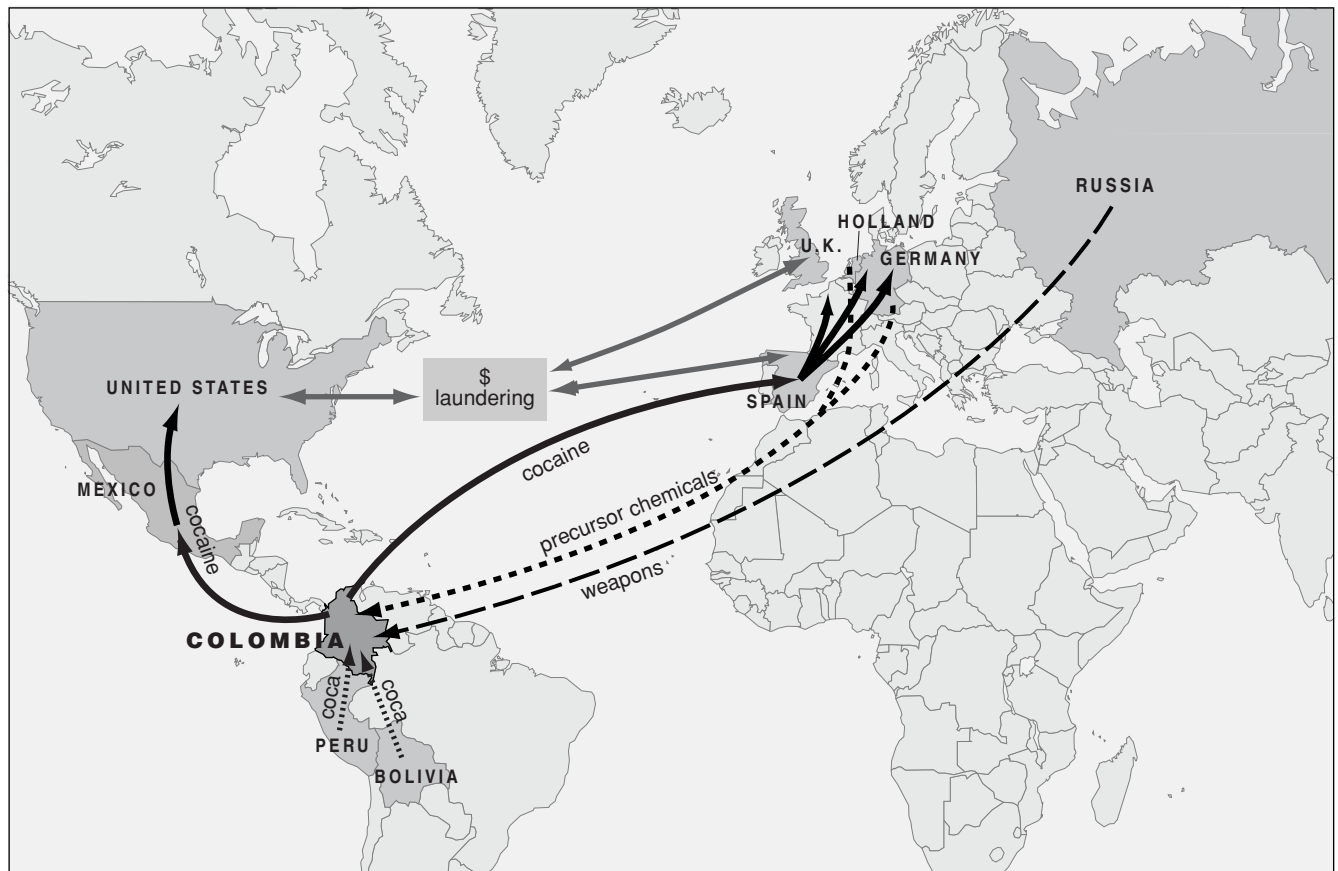
Ambassadors, friends.

I first wish to thank you for giving me this opportunity to be with you this afternoon, and to report to you about what is really happening in my country. . . .

The reality is that Colombia is under attack, suffering from international aggression by the drug mafias and an aggression by terrorism, also international. These attacks are taking the country to the point of a structural crisis, in my

FIGURE 1

## Schematic of the global drug-trafficking apparatus



view, because these organizations have been given so many guarantees by the Colombian state, ever since the current President committed himself during his campaign to making peace with these organizations, without realizing that these organizations were not interested in anything other than improving their income through the drug trade.

It has been a year now since the President handed over a part of the territory, which for me is vital for the country, but which is also fundamental for these organizations, because that is the region where the drug cultivation is located, where the laboratories are, where the clandestine airstrips are, and where the most important cocaine processing centers in the country are. This is also the area where these organizations have traditionally been building up their strength over the years. Because, in fact, what is being permitted there, is their subsistence, their enrichment, and all the equipment and armaments which they have at their disposal today. . . .

So, these territories were put, in effect, at the disposal of these organizations, because the public forces were pulled out, the Army was withdrawn, the police were withdrawn, the legitimate judicial authorities left, and the only ones remain-

ing were the mayors. The mayors are people who are manipulated. These organizations have forced some to resign, and have put in mayors whom they favor, and this territory has become a sanctuary for criminals. It is known that, at this moment, there are veterans there—and this is very important to Argentina—there are seasoned Argentines, Uruguayans, Paraguayans, Vietnamese, and Iranians, who are giving instruction in terrorism to this organization, the FARC.

Armaments shipments have entered the area: 5,500 Russian rifles of the latest technology. The presence of eight airplanes, three helicopters, Russian missiles, American missiles have been detected, and there are two field hospitals which have been brought into this region of the Macarena.

In addition, it is known that the soldiers who have been kidnapped—the 500 soldiers and policemen who are now kidnapped—have been brought there.

In Colombia, there are 1,350 people kidnapped and being held captive. These are horrifying statistics, but we are told that they are there, also in that region.

From the day that these territories were handed over until today, coca production has increased 30%. . . .

The last meeting which the government had with this organization was on July 20. The previous week, an attack was carried out on the majority of the towns which are near this area, among them, the towns of Puerto Rico, Puerto de Piedra . . . and Gutiérrez, which is 50 kilometers outside of the nation's capital. This caused, as far as is known at this time, 1,000 casualties among soldiers, policemen, civilians: that is, a terrifying massacre. Once these attacks were carried out, they would return [to their area], and take refuge. The Army cannot enter this territory, cannot pursue those who carried out the aggression. And, logically, these organizations return, they organize, they carry off their dead, treat their wounded, and they prepare for the next attack, against the nation's capital.

The reality is, that faced with the gravity of the situation, the United States has thought that it is time to review its policy of support for the peace process. To see what is happening, because this simply ended up being an independent "republic," if you can call it that. . . .

### **International ramifications**

We have already faced situations with the international community which have been delicate. [Peruvian] President [Alberto] Fujimori a few months ago protested this situation, and mobilized his military forces, the Army, to the border, because they felt threatened by these organizations. And we know that they have entered into Peruvian territory; they have set up coca laboratories.

Similarly, there was a problem with the Republic of Brazil last November. These organizations mobilized in that area [near the Brazilian border], and practically destroyed Mitú, the capital of the department of Vaupéz. They later crossed the border [into Brazil], and the Colombian Army had to seek authorization from the Brazilian government in order to mobilize the Colombian Army and enter to pursue these organizations.

Venezuelan President [Hugo] Chávez has declared that he is "neutral" on the Colombian problem, because he believes that the [Colombian] government has given these organizations belligerency status, and, he believes, that the best thing to do at this time, is to stay neutral in the face of this problem. . . .

Until recently, the United States considered these organizations to be guerrillas, until the anti-drug czar, Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), who was just in Colombia, stated clearly that these organizations are *drug traffickers*, and that they have to be treated as drug traffickers. This has a special connotation for the United States, and that is, that if they are narcos, they can help fight them with U.S. economic resources. The Colombian government requested aid, military assistance, from the United States. A billion dollars for the purchase of equipment and arms has been talked about, in order to confront these organizations, a proposal which has found some support within the U.S. government. We do not know when

these resources are going to be authorized, so that the Colombian Army can confront this situation. . . .

Between 93 and 97% of the Colombian public is calling for military action against these organizations: that they be pursued, that they not be pardoned, that those who have kidnapped foreigners and are being sought by the United States and other countries, be extradited. And, in general, that the current policy of handing over territory be ended, and that once again these organizations, which are interested in everything *but* peace for the Colombian people, be taken on. . . .

All of this has produced an exodus of people from the rural areas, who are moving to the cities in search of refuge, in search of work, in search of employment. The exodus is already estimated at 1.5 million Colombians crammed into the provincial capitals, into all the important cities — dying of hunger, of disease, without work, because there is nothing for a peasant to do in a city.

If things continue this way, where, at present, every four days a town is destroyed, within two to three years they will have destroyed 500 towns, that is, half of the rural areas which exist in Colombia. It is important to remember that in Colombia, 25% of the population at this time are peasants. A country of 40 million people would thus have 10 million peasants. And with this exodus and with all the violence, there are not going to be a million and a half Colombians coming to the cities, but 4 or 5, 6, or 10 million Colombians coming into the provincial capitals, creating belts of misery and of poverty. . . .

It is very important that the world understand what is going on inside Colombia. We have a problem of international mafias who are assaulting Colombia, and who are leaving behind violence, death, drug trafficking, economic bankruptcy. . . .

### **Let us ally against the drug trade**

Where is the money from the drug trade? Somewhere in the world, because there is nothing left in Colombia. A few days ago — and the world should know this — the International Monetary Fund demanded that Colombia investigate and count the drug money inside the Colombian economy, and finish the Central Bank reports which say that, in fact, \$700 million enters the Colombian economy from the drug trade.

It is absurd that people speak of money which nobody knows the origin of, nor to whom it belongs. The president of the New York Stock Exchange [Richard Grasso], once this report came out, showed up at Colombia's (cocaine) laboratories and plantations, to talk with these terrorist organizations, these drug-trafficking organizations, and remained there for 24 hours. We don't know what he talked about with them, but we can guess that they were talking about dollars (I doubt they were talking about drugs), and he returned to New York.

A few years ago, this would have seemed impossible, but this is happening in Colombia. Every two years, the United States has designated the FARC and ELN as international terrorist organizations, placing them on the terrorist

lists just as if they were the ETA or the IRA. And recently, they have dubbed them drug-trafficking organizations, drug-trafficking mafias.

The mafias are not actually in Colombia, but are outside of Colombia. The major consumption of drugs is in the United States. . . . The chemical precursors come from Europe, especially from Holland, Germany. . . . The weapons that are entering Colombia through the black market, come from Russia, the Russian mafias: the most modern AK weapons, the rocket-launchers, and so on. Spain is the port of entry for all these drugs into Europe. . . .

What I have always thought, is that the problem of drugs is not solely Colombia's problem. We Colombians find ourselves within the theater of the drug war, the cocaine war. We find ourselves in the theater of operations, of production, that is, laboratories, cultivation, and export of the drug. But not the precursors, the contraband, the money laundering, the money that is being handled from abroad, which is causing damage to economies abroad, the famous flight capital which flits from here to there, causing damage in every country. . . .

Ever since I got here, I have said—and I reaffirm it to you now—that we Latin Americans must unite against this problem, we must not think that it is merely a Colombian problem: It is the world's problem, it is a problem of all of the Americas. Let us forge an alliance to do battle against the drug trade.

Let us not leave only the United States to confront this problem. The United States has an anti-drug czar, and they are interested in waging this battle. But we have the problem here, in South America.

### **Each country has a responsibility**

If we ally, we unite, organizing to deal with this problem. Each country has a responsibility. It is not a question of sending troops, soldiers, to Colombia, to confront these terrorist organizations. Because that is a problem that Colombia has to resolve. The country has armed forces and a professional army capable of dealing with this, but under current circumstances, no army in the world can win a war in which the enemy is given every advantage, to attack, to destroy, to kidnap, to run drugs.

I accept everyone who wants to help us. Argentina, for example. I was reminding our Argentine friends that in the era of the 1970s, when we faced the aggression of the international terrorists, of those terrorist groups from the Southern Cone, Argentina gave us great help, including military help. We received a lot of intelligence, technology, communications, reports, instructors, which enabled us to take on the organizations of the time, such as . . . the M-19. They are organizations born of that era, and we finally succeeded in putting an end to that problem.

That knowledge, that experience, we can use. Argentina could help us, as it has helped other countries, like Brazil, while preparing itself for a battle that is also going to reach

you here. This problem is going to reach every country in the world.

I guarantee you, that those narco-terrorist trainers there—Argentines, or Uruguayans, or Paraguayans, or Iranians—are not there solely to hurt Colombia. They are carrying out an international assignment. . . . This problem has already become internationalized. There are people who are interested in what is going on in Colombia because of the drug trade, and they are going there to see how they can hurt the Colombian people. . . .

If we help Colombia in this battle, I am certain that we will very quickly be able to resolve the problem. Today, the Colombian Army is an army which has seen its budget cut, which lacks the indispensable legal instruments to take on these organizations. It is an army with inadequate transportation, which lacks helicopters, other means. If it is given help, it will be able to deal with this problem, because they are the only ones who can confront the problem of terrorism and drug trafficking. The armies are united. The police do not have the ability to confront these organizations. Only the armies can do so.

Where there is security, there is development. In a state submerged in bloodshed, violence, and collective kidnapping, one cannot think about having the capacity to develop economically.

Thank you very much.

## **Argentine press features Bedoya**

*The major Argentine dailies covered the visit by General Bedoya to that country. Here are excerpts of their coverage.*

### **From *Clarín* of Buenos Aires, by Alejandra Pataro, Aug. 11, "Conflict Will Affect the Entire Region":**

Colombian Gen. Harold Bedoya Pizarro arrived in Buenos Aires with a warning: If there is no solidarity with his country's army, the conflict in Colombia "will affect the entire region, including Argentina." He told *Clarín* this during an interview in Buenos Aires, at the same time that a U.S. government delegation was arriving in Bogotá to check out the crisis.

This former defense minister and former Army chief, who left the uniformed ranks to conduct politics from his movement, Fuerza Colombia, explained that the statements given by Colombian President Andrés Pastrana to *Clarín* [on July 29], to the effect that the guerrillas are not drug traffickers, triggered a commotion in Washington. And he said with assurance that "the U.S. will tell my government that it must take an offensive approach" in the conflict with the guerrillas.

According to Bedoya, Colombia “is under assault by international mafias, by drugs and terrorism.” He considers it “an act of treason” by President Pastrana, to have demilitarized 42,000 square kilometers, as demanded by the guerrillas to initiate a peace dialogue.

**Bedoya:** These territories that the government has ceded to the mafias could affect the security and economy of the whole region.

**Clarín:** Could this justify a Latin American military intervention in Colombia?

**Bedoya:** There is talk of intervention without understanding the problem. Colombia is not an Asian country like Vietnam, nor an island like Haiti. This is a problem which the Colombian Army must handle, very professionally, to resolve this problem, to confront and destroy these mafias.

**Clarín:** But it could not in 40 years . . .

**Bedoya:** That is not true. . . . The Army could do so, if the state gave it backing, and made the decision to confront these criminal and drug-trafficking forces.

**Clarín:** So, your proposal is: No to the peace dialogue, and yes to support for the Army?

**Bedoya:** What they are proposing is a lying, false peace. What is being done in Colombia, is handing over sovereignty.

**Clarín:** Should there be negotiations, yes or no?

**Bedoya:** No, no. There is nothing to negotiate.

**Clarín:** Then?

**Bedoya:** We must recover the country. That is what armies are for, to defend unity, the territory, combat terrorism, combat the mafias.

**Clarín:** What are the perspectives for the conflict?

**Bedoya:** The problem is that every minute, every day that passes, the situation is getting worse, and logically, the effort that will have to be made tomorrow, will be much greater than that which should have been done today. All of us are going to be affected. I guarantee to you, that from the Argentines to the Asians, everyone is going to be affected, because Colombia is under assault by an international mafia.

**Clarín:** To what do you attribute Washington’s renewed interest in the Colombian situation?

**Bedoya:** It is the same interest that you have, that every country in the world has, in seeing that something is going on in Colombia: a war which affects everyone.

**Clarín:** But Washington has just sent a high-level delegation to Bogotá.

**Bedoya:** Everything started recently, with *Clarín’s* interview with President Pastrana (published on July 29), which coincided with the visit of anti-drug czar Barry McCaffrey to Colombia. The President told the newspaper that the FARC were not drug traffickers. McCaffrey said they were. And the U.S. government backed him. General McCaffrey said that concessions and territories cannot be given to these mafias.

**Clarín:** What do you think will be Washington’s mes-

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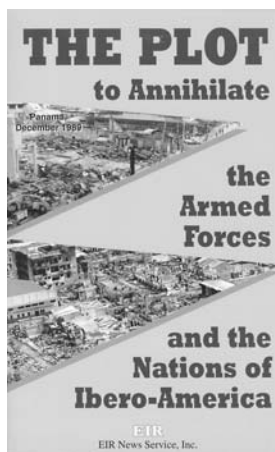
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sage to Pastrana?

**Bedoya:** Surely—and it is going to do so—to say that the government is mistaken, and has to take an offensive approach.

***Clarín* published the following small note accompanying its interview with Gen. Bedoya on Aug. 11, titled “War Legislation”:**

The Colombian Armed Forces have called on the government of President Andrés Pastrana to create special war legislation that will enable them to battle the leftist guerrillas with greater effectiveness.

The commanders of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force demanded special norms that would give them advantages against the rebel groups. One official who attended the private meeting, who was consulted by *Clarín*, said: “We are simply asking that the Congress legislate in our favor, to defend the Constitution and the law, as occurred in countries such as Peru, to finish off the subversive concentrations. Emergency legislation for an emergency situation.”

They asked that crimes such as rebellion, kidnapping, terrorism, and drug trafficking be investigated and tried in military, not civilian, courts, as currently occurs. That is, that military judges try the guerrillas.

They further ask that civilian controls [over the military] be limited, such as investigations by the Prosecutor General and Attorney General, entities under which the military feels “persecuted and hamstrung at the moment of battle with the guerrillas.”

***La Nación* of Buenos Aires, by Enrique Comellas, Aug. 10, titled “The Army Is Not Capable of Defeating the Guerrillas”:**

Former Colombian Defense Minister, former military leader, and former Presidential candidate of the Fuerza Colombia party in last year’s election, Gen. Harold Bedoya, stated that his country “runs the risk of dissolution in the face of the combined forces of the guerrillas and of the drug trafficking mafias,” and that the armed conflict “could lead to civil war or to a foreign military intervention.”

Bedoya indicated that the infiltration of drug money is so extensive in Colombia, “that it has corrupted 80% of the political class,” and that his country’s Armed Forces “do not have the operational capability to propose” an open war against the insurgent organizations. He also maintained that the government of President Andrés Pastrana “handed the entire south of the country over to the rebels.”

The former military leader is currently in Argentina, where he will stay through Aug. 13, to give a series of presentations on the situation in Colombia, invited by the Movement of National Unity (MUN), an organization without political goals, made up of retired military and civilian personnel. In an interview with *La Nación* at the Association of Air Force Officers, he indicated that “the Pastrana government’s worst error was to give the FARC 49,000 square

kilometers in the south of the country, which, under current circumstances, are unrecoverable.” . . .

Drawing a profile of Colombia’s south, where the FARC is in control, Bedoya said, “This is not a question of populations and towns lost in the jungle, which don’t merit the protection of the state. This entire region is one of geopolitical, strategic, and economic importance, united through a network of rivers, and interconnected by the connecting links of the drug trade, which extend from the eastern mountains to the borders with Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and Venezuela.”

Bedoya is in favor of forming a “patriotic front” in the countryside and in the cities, “to prevent this tragedy from being indefinitely prolonged, with us ending up a kidnapped, destroyed, and displaced people.” He also demanded that the Pastrana government call up the reservists, to increase the combat power of the Armed Forces.

The former military chief, speaking slowly and apparently without getting emotional, did not spare any criticism of the peace policy initiated by Pastrana. He also said that “Panama could become the next military target of the FARC. Without an army, it is highly vulnerable; it would only take one attack to interrupt inter-oceanic traffic. Those who say that under current conditions, Colombian narco-terrorism constitutes a regional threat, are correct.”

***La Crónica* of Buenos Aires, Aug. 12, 1999, titled “Argentines Training Colombian Guerrillas”:**

In Buenos Aires, the former commander of the Colombian Armed Forces, Gen. Harold Bedoya Pizarro (ret.), issued stunning statements that there are “Argentines” who are training guerrilla groups in his country, and that there are intelligence reports which prove their participation. . . .

Bedoya Pizarro, 1998 Presidential candidate and founder of the political movement Fuerza Colombia, said that “there are terrorist trainers and advisers from Iran, Vietnam, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay” in that region.

He also explained that “there is an advisory and training process” ongoing, and he feels that this situation “gives an international dimension” to the Colombian conflict, in which the FARC possess a liberated area of 42,000 square kilometers.

The Colombian military officer denied any knowledge of whether the Argentine terrorist advisers are military, but confirmed knowing that “they are Argentine.”

“There was a case a few months ago of one who was from the ELN, who was discovered in Cali, in the mountains; this is absolutely proven,” he explained.

Bedoya Pizarro further stated that “intelligence reports” exist, and said that “it is absolutely proven, that there are people from Argentina who are involved in the terrorist mafia, and which at any time could become terrorist organizations and could affect any country in South America.”

The military man, who was head of the Army, and later of the Colombian Armed Forces, founded Fuerza Colombia, and ran a political campaign. His vote was decisive for the



victory of the current President Andrés Pastrana, who was seen as “the road to peace in Colombia.” Now, Bedoya Pizarro is calling on Pastrana to “abandon” power, and accuses him of having favored the guerrilla factions.

“The state is practically protecting the terrorists, so they are not pursued by Colombian security,” he insisted.

***La Nueva Provincia of Bahí Blanca, Aug. 10, titled “Interview with a Colombian Officer: ‘Pastrana Should Resign.’ Ninety Percent of the Politicians Are Paid by the Drug Trade”:***

**Q:** What is the reality in Colombia?

**Bedoya:** There are 1,350 people kidnapped by the guerrillas; it is estimated that 1.5 million Colombians have already emigrated, and the reality is that not what the government says, because this situation has been caused and mismanaged by Pastrana himself, who should resign.

**Q:** You blame Colombian politicians. . . .

**Bedoya:** The fact is that 90% of the politicians in my country are paid by the drug trade. We come out of a previous government which was practically elected by the drug traffickers.

**Q:** And the current one?

**Bedoya:** If it was not elected by the drug traffickers, at least it is manipulated by them.

**Q:** Your party is a third option between the Liberals and the Conservatives. . . .

**Bedoya:** I lead a political movement which calls itself Fuerza Colombia, which was founded against all the political machines—Liberal and Conservative—which have practically usurped power for many years, without providing any solutions.

**Q:** Why do you believe that President Pastrana is being manipulated by drug traffickers?

**Bedoya:** Because he had scarcely taken office when he surrendered to the drug traffickers and to the terrorists, and committed acts more outrageous than anything known in Colombian history.

**Q:** What acts?

**Bedoya:** Violating the National Constitution, which gives the President the responsibility of guaranteeing national unity, the integrity of its territory, and existence of a rule of law. He abandoned governing over five townships in the south of the country, which theoretically represent 45,000 square kilometers, the entire border area with Brazil, Peru, and Ecuador, and the territories of the east, which border Venezuela. The government eliminated the rule of law, withdrew legitimate authorities, and allowed a terrorist state to be born, led by drug trafficking and terrorist organizations.

**Q:** Pastrana bases this policy on a goal of peace with the guerrillas.

**Bedoya:** During the electoral campaign, Pastrana met with the drug traffickers and terrorists, who asked him to hand over those territories, but those agreements have in practice

led to the disintegration of the national territory and unity. He has turned those areas into centers of terrorism and the drug trade, and into holding pens for kidnap victims. Approximately half a million peasants live in that area, where their properties and goods have in effect been confiscated by an organization which runs drugs worldwide, which is the FARC cartel.

**Q:** How much power do the guerrillas have in the region?

**Bedoya:** There’s information that international terrorist instructors, from Vietnam, Iran, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay have recently entered there.

**Q:** How many Argentines are there?

**Bedoya:** The information I have is that there are Argentines providing instruction, and that the Russian mafia is also involved, handling the whole drug issue, and surely supplying Europe and perhaps part of the U.S. as well. It has also been proven that there are eight airplanes, four helicopters, and that they have bought two field hospitals, for the sum of \$4 million. Some 5,350 Russian rifles have gone in there, and they also have Russian and U.S. missiles, satellite communications—that is, everything the Colombian Army lacks.

**Q:** How do you evaluate the meeting of the head of the New York Stock Exchange with the FARC guerrilla chief?

**Bedoya:** It demonstrated the lack of consistency of U.S. policy toward drugs. It is a very dangerous message, because the gentleman from the New York Stock Exchange entered the laboratory where drugs are processed, to speak with the owner of the laboratory, undoubtedly to ask him what is his annual production, how much money the drugs yield, and where he is going to place it. It is not only an affront to dignity, but to the world economy, because drug money does not produce growth or economic development, neither for industry nor for employment, but precisely the reverse. It would be good for these people from the Stock Exchange to explain to the world just what secret agreements they made, and how many millions of dollars Wall Street will give to [FARC chieftain] Tirofijo.

**Q:** How would you view a foreign military intervention in Colombia?

**Bedoya:** The Colombian situation is very serious, because the country is a prisoner of the international drug mafias and of terrorism. What must be done, is to support Colombia, just as Argentina was supported in the seventies.

**Q:** In what way?

**Bedoya:** In that period, there were Montonero and Tupamaro terrorists, who organized groups to kidnap, build “people’s jails,” make car bombs; and then Argentine help came, with military men who came to teach us the techniques for combatting them. That facilitated the capture and disintegration of those organizations. The United States can help us with resources and with technology, but under no circumstances with armed military personnel, because this is a national problem, and the sovereignty of states is to be defended by its own citizens.