

General Bedoya calls for U.S.-Colombian alliance vs. drugs

by EIR Staff

Gen. Harold Bedoya Pizarro (ret.), former Commander of the Armed Forces of Colombia, on Sept. 7 gave an extremely successful news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., where he briefed a contingent of 40 reporters from government-linked and private news services internationally, on the nature and scope of the narco-terrorist threat to Colombia and other nations, and what must be done to vanquish it.

The senior military leader said, "It is false," the way this situation in Colombia is portrayed as a 40-year political struggle. What you have is a drug cartel—a known drug cartel, attempting to seize power. He noted that the drug culture could have been defeated, had the will existed to do so. But the previous government was beholden to the Cali Cartel, and this current government was installed by the narco-terrorist FARC cartel.

Using maps to address the group, Bedoya gave a 50-minute briefing, then took questions for another 50 minutes. The General stressed three interrelated points in his remarks.

He called for a Marshall Plan for development of Colombia, specifically *without* any conditionalities or involvement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He attacked Richard Grasso, the president of the New York Stock Exchange, for visiting the FARC drug region recently, and talking of collaboration. General Bedoya pointed out that what's involved are drug money flows; Grasso knows this. These are speculative money flows to Wall Street, which needs this dirty money. Wall Street is facing a crash. But Bedoya pointedly added, even if they were not, they would still need this kind of money to keep their system going.

These attacks on Wall Street and the IMF generated intense interest in General Bedoya's private meetings in Washington, and were made the focus of a report on his press conference that was sent out internationally by the Spanish EFE news service (see *Documentation*).

Secondly, he said, we must change the situation in Colombia. The current government has been in power for one year, but "it feels like a hundred years." They are destroying the country and the territory. He said that Colombians "are mobilized" for a change. We cannot stand the government for the next four years. We must have change. We can't have

the indebtedness we do now. We must have no more IMF.

He also called on Washington to change its current policy of support for the Colombian government's "absurd" negotiations with the FARC cartel, in pursuit of an illusory peace that will not come through this kind of capitulation.

General Bedoya spoke of the need for a "change in the culture." The state has but a single function—to look out for the welfare and progress of its people. But the most basic norms are now being violated. He pointed to the 4,000 Colombian children who have been kidnapped by the narco-terrorists, and made to carry grenades, guard drug labs, and do the narco-terrorists' bidding. We cannot have children treated this way.

A key moment for Colombia

General Bedoya was introduced by Dennis Small, *EIR* Editor for Ibero-America, who said that the General was in Washington for a week for meetings with Congressmen and others on the urgency of the situation. Bedoya stressed, "I am returning to the United States at a key moment for Colombia." The country is being destabilized by war, but most people are unaware of this war. They do not see the war, but the war is felt by all. It is destroying Colombia and our people.

The military man pointed out that the United States and Colombia were allies in the past, in the fight against communism. Hundreds of Colombian soldiers fought side by side with Americans in Korea. Now we have to fight this other war. We have to ally and fight this threat posed by narco-terrorism.

Colombia is the place where this problem originates. The drug crops are there. The labs are there. The air strips are there. But all we are left with is the violence, and the economic destruction. The Colombian population is fleeing, he continued. We are not getting assistance to fight the problem.

However, while Colombia is seen as the party responsible for all of these drugs, the fact of the matter is that Colombia could not be the drug producer it is, were it not for other countries' involvement. The chemicals that are used in drug processing come from Europe and the United States, and the consumption takes place in Europe and the United States. Colombia's entire Gross National Product of \$100 billion



Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.), at his press conference in Washington on Sept. 7, refuted a long list of lies being told about Colombia, starting with the insane notion that the FARC insurgents are anything other than a gang of murderous drug-pushers.

is what the United States spends yearly to deal with health problems related to drugs. That is an irony.

General Bedoya pointed out the international scope of the drug trade. Russian mafias send the weapons—the rockets come in to protect the drug trade. Spain serves as the entry port for drugs that come into Europe, and as a money-launderer.

In South America, drug money is entering many countries, and setting up fake enterprises there—and eventually will destroy the economies of those countries, because it is not contributing anything. Mexico is a transshipment point. Peru and Bolivia produce tons of coca and coca paste, which are then shipped into Colombia.

But, only Colombia is deemed responsible for the drug trade.

Handing over the country

The government is handing over the country to the FARC. More than 42,000 square kilometers have been handed over, an area larger than Switzerland, or a couple of Central American countries combined.

In the area handed over to the FARC, 200,000 Colombians used to live. They are now being held hostage. The state is not there. There are no army forces. No police. There are a few mayors appointed by the FARC, but no one elected. Democracy has disappeared. There are no political parties.

Guerrillas are being trained there from several countries. Furthermore, the FARC has drug labs in Peru. A new group showed up in Venezuela recently called the Tupamaros. Those new terrorists attacked Colombian consulates in Venezuela and also the Colombian Embassy there.

Recognize war refugees

Thousands of Colombians are becoming refugees in Venezuela and Ecuador, and, of course, many of them are coming to the United States. General Bedoya called on the United States to recognize that these people are war refugees, and to treat them as such.

The General also met with Dr. César Gaviria, head of the Organization of American States and former Colombian President, after which Bedoya released a statement saying that he had conveyed his concerns about war refugees, the treatment of children, and the IMF/Wall Street attitude toward the drug trade, and had received a cordial response (see *Documentation*).

Documentation

EFE covers Bedoya's attack on Grasso, IMF

The Spanish news service EFE put out a news report on General Bedoya's National Press Club briefing, that went out internationally on Sept. 7. It included a key section on Bedoya's denunciation of the international financial community in facilitating the drug trade. EFE reports:

“Bedoya criticized the president of the New York Stock Exchange Richard Gross [sic], who, according to Bedoya,

'recently visited the drug laboratories in those territories, surely to negotiate where to invest the dirty capital that is destroying the whole world economy.' Bedoya also criticized the International Monetary Fund, and demanded that the multilateral institution with headquarters in Washington 'not impose on Colombia that it incorporate in its economy the drug money, as was done in the latest negotiation (which demanded) that the Colombian state include \$700 million in drug dollars in its accounting, assuredly to pay interest owed to the Fund.' "

The EFE wire also cites Bedoya's warning that "'the financial systems of Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and Peru serve to launder money, in a business that will lead to the economic destruction of Latin America.' "

At the Foreign Press Center briefing given on Aug. 8, by White House special envoy Buddy MacKay, who had just returned from a trip to South America, the second question asked of MacKay referenced the Bedoya briefing: "Regarding Colombia, are you ready to advise the President on a possible increase of military aid to Colombia? We had here yesterday in the Press Club the former Defense Minister of Colombia, who is advocating an increase in military aid so the Colombian army can really defeat the narco-terrorists in the country?" MacKay gave a non-answer.

OAS Secretary General César Gaviria meets with Bedoya

César Gaviria, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), on Sept. 8 met with Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.), former Colombian Defense Minister and current president of the Fuerza Colombia movement. In the meeting, which lasted more than an hour and was held at the OAS headquarters in Washington, D.C., General Bedoya conveyed to Dr. Gaviria, former President of Colombia, that it is urgent that the United States government grant war refugee status to Colombians fleeing to the United States, until peace can be restored in Colombia, and the nation can recover from the devastation caused by narco-terrorism.

General Bedoya also gave the OAS Secretary General a copy of the legal document that he has presented to Colombian President Andrés Pastrana, urging him to comply with Laws 397 and 418 of 1997, with regard to the protection of children, since those laws prohibit the government from negotiating with the FARC narco-terrorists and handing over territory to them, if it is shown that minors are involved. The FARC kidnaps minors and exploits them, using them to protect their cocaine laboratories and "as cannon fodder against the Army," said Bedoya, who also denounced the concentration camps that the narco-terrorists have established in the demilitarized zone which the Pastrana government has

granted the FARC, where more than 1,500 Colombians who have been kidnapped are being held hostage.

General Bedoya further expressed to Dr. Gaviria his concern over the way in which Wall Street and the International Monetary Fund are pressuring Colombia to incorporate dirty drug money into its financial system. "I specifically referred to the recent visit of New York Stock Exchange president Richard Grasso to the Colombian jungle, to meet with Raúl Reyes, who is the head of finances and drug production for the FARC," said General Bedoya. This, said Bedoya, encourages the production of the very drugs which are poisoning populations around the world and destroying the environment, since trees are being felled in the jungles of Colombia in order to plant coca, and chemical waste from the processing of cocaine is being dumped into the rivers of the Amazon basin.

"It was a cordial and very fruitful meeting," said General Bedoya of his meeting with the OAS Secretary General. "Dr. Gaviria listened with great attention to the concerns we had," added Bedoya, who is currently in Washington to meet with members of the U.S. Congress and others, to warn them of the disintegration that Colombia is facing due to the threat of the FARC, a situation which is worsened by political corruption and the decision of the Pastrana government to protect and cede territory to the narco-terrorists.

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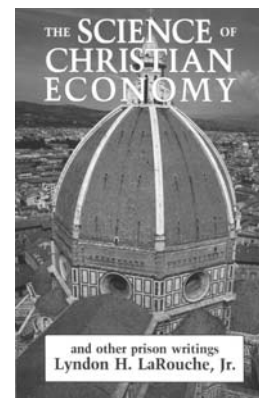
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