

Q: Thank you, General, for being with us.

Bedoya: Thank you very much.

Q: We've had with us Gen. Harold Bedoya, former Commander-in-Chief of the Colombian Army.

And that's it for today's show. We especially thank reporters Marcela Sánchez, Marí O'Donnel, and Armando Guzmán for being with us also.

FARC kidnaps children to turn into guerrillas

On Aug. 22, Peru's television Channel 4 broadcast a two-hour special on "Colombia At the Edge of the Abyss," which included an extensive interview with Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.) of Colombia. One of the program's segments included chilling footage of child terrorists in action, forcibly recruited to the FARC. The segment concluded with interviews of two of the child terrorists in a medical ward, after they were captured by the Army. Below is a translation of that segment.

Announcer: The Colombian FARC, thanks to the drug trade, use minors as part of their militias.

Colombian Military Forces Commander General Ta-pías: You have also seen 28 minors among these 70 cadavers, which is another accusation which we made: That [the FARC] were incorporating children in the détente zone.

Announcer: These shots caught by an amateur cameraman in a FARC base, show dozens of children, sons and daughters of Colombian peasants, wearing the uniforms of the guerrillas, lining up with a military discipline worthy of

adults, and learning to throw grenades under the watchful eye of their commanders. They explain to them what position to take to throw them, and how to move through the grass without being detected by the enemy. They also give them wood blocks to simulate the weight of the grenades, and show them how to protect themselves from the explosion.

In the mornings, in this FARC base in the Colombian mountains, the children receive political indoctrination. In the afternoon, they are given military instruction; that is, techniques for patrolling, weapons and explosives handling, and ambushes of army patrols.

For all this, the children can receive up to 40,000 pesos a month [a little over \$20]. However, not all of them are paid for their service with the guerrillas. According to the estimates of military sources, some 4,000 Colombian children have been captured by the subversives: a horrifying figure.

Worst of all, is that in the majority of the cases, the children do not take up arms on their own initiative. Generally, the FARC forces parents who live in the interior of the country to hand their children over to the guerrillas.

Adult voice: What is your name? How old are you?

First child: Fifteen. Things are not as they tell us, but are different. They tell us that this is good. Negative. This is not good. This is bad. . . .

Adult voice: I want you to send a message to the child guerrillas, to the young guerrillas who are there. Tell them something.

Second child: I can't send a message to them to leave. Because, what can they do? If they leave, they'll kill them. They have to put up with it until the day they die. That's the way it is. Anyone who flees, they kill.

Announcer: What future awaits these little ones, who at the time when they should be playing with children their age, are in combat in a war which they did not cause? That is difficult to know. Probably, death awaits them. In the best case, over the years, a cold cell in some jail in Colombia.



Peru's Channel 4 showed chilling footage of children in combat drill as soldiers in the FARC ranks.



"Anyone who flees, gets killed," the FARC warns the children it forces into service. Shown here, the body of one of FARC's child-soldiers.