

Now there are going to be two drug DMZs in Colombia

by Valerie Rush

FIGURE 1
Colombia's two narco-DMZs



The Colombian government is about to hand over to National Liberation Army (ELN) narco-terrorists, a substantial chunk of territory in Bolívar province, in the country's convulsed north-central region known as the Magdalena Medio. In exchange for being granted absolute control over four demilitarized townships in the area, the ELN promises to sit down to "peace" talks with the government. What the ELN has not promised, is to stop bombing oil pipelines and electricity transmission towers, blockading highways, ambushing police and military patrols, kidnapping civilians for ransom, or running drugs.

If President Andrés Pastrana agrees to the arrangement, he will be creating a second *officially protected* refuge for narcotics production and smuggling in the country. The first such "demilitarized zone" (DMZ) has already existed for more than a year in Colombia's south, under the rule of the ELN's cousins, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) narco-terrorists. In the course of that year, cocaine and heroin production under the FARC has skyrocketed. U.S. government estimates are that cocaine production in Colombia went from 250 tons in 1988 to more than 500 tons last year, the majority of that under FARC protection.

Terrorism, kidnappings, and assassinations by the FARC have also continued unabated, but the Pastrana government remains firmly wedded to its farcical "peace process" — with full backing from the U.S. State Department — so much so that it is currently treating a combined delegation of government representatives and FARC chieftains to a "public relations" tour of western Europe. The delegation is holding joint meetings with diplomats, industrialists, labor leaders, non-governmental organizations, and even an official Vatican envoy. It is



Colombian Finance Minister Juan Camilo Restrepo (right) embraces FARC chieftain Manuel Marulanda Velez, Jan. 20, 2000.

holding joint press conferences and issuing joint statements, about developing a “mutual understanding.” After that, they intend to continue their travelling road show in Ibero-America, possibly including Argentina, Mexico, Chile, and other countries. At the conclusion of the tour, the intention is for both parties to return to Colombia, and draft a joint agenda of economic “reform” for immediate implementation.

Once, such a scenario could only have occurred in the fantasy land of Macondo, described in Gabriel García Márquez’s famous existential novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Today, it is the reality facing 40 million horrified Colombians. Without even demanding a FARC cease-fire, the Pastrana government has in one stroke granted co-government status to drug-trafficking terrorists. Pastrana is handing over national territory, piece by piece; he is inviting international financiers and businessmen to “invest” in FARC territory; he is co-authoring “development plans” with the narco-terrorists. All this, despite a recent poll showing that 72% of the population is strongly opposed to Pastrana’s “peace plan.”

A strategic give-away

Putting the ELN in control of southern Bolívar, would not only give them control over crucial river transport on the Cauca and Magdalena rivers, but also over rail and land transport to and from the Atlantic Coast. It would give the ELN sure access to oil pipelines which terrorists have already bombed over 600 times, while also putting the country’s leading oil refinery in Barrancabermeja within easy reach. The region’s gold and cattle production, not to mention marijuana and cocaine production and smuggling, would come under

direct ELN “protection,” as well. Importantly, Bolívar is contiguous to Antioquia, the country’s industrial heartland, which has already felt the brunt of the ELN’s sabotage campaign against the area’s energy grid.

Taking a leaf from the FARC’s strategy manual, the ELN is using the carrot-and-stick approach to push the Pastrana government into granting it its own DMZ. Sow terror, then talk peace. In recent weeks, ELN terrorists have systematically bombed scores of electricity transmission towers in the region. Telephone service, water treatment plants, the metro in the Antioquian capital of Medellín, were all shut down. Factories and schools were closed, production was interrupted, and daily life was disrupted across the board. Severe energy rationing has been instituted in some areas, and it is estimated that there will be huge repair costs to reinstate the grid.

Stage two was blocking the main highway from the capital city of Bogotá, to Medellín. For an entire week in mid-February, some 1,500 ELN terrorists cut off all transportation between Colombia’s two largest cities, burning tractor-trailers, seizing cargo, and holding thousands of hostage. Army spokesmen denounced the ELN tactic of using those hostages as “human shields,” to prevent a military counteroffensive.

President Pastrana’s public response was to warn the ELN that peace negotiations could not be forced by acts of terrorism. The warning rang rather hollow, given that the FARC received its own Switzerland-sized fiefdom, and every other government concession to their demands, through precisely such escalations in terrorism. When the governor of Bolívar province protested against carving yet another narco-terrorist niche out of sovereign Colombian territory, Pastrana publicly accused him of being an “enemy of peace.” And when 14,000 Bolívar peasants, who opposed the proposed DMZ, blocked a branch of the highway from Bolívar to the Atlantic Coast, they were denounced by President Pastrana. It took a full week before the government agreed to send Interior Minister Nestor Martínez to hear their concerns.

Out of Macondo

Following decades of battle with the FARC and ELN narco-terrorists, the Colombian Armed Forces are now being treated to the spectacle of a government which has gone from appeasement of narco-terrorism, to outright power-sharing. Although officialdom remains silent, former Armed Forces Commander Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.) has been outspoken in his denunciations of government betrayal, and has repeatedly

warned of the drive by Wall Street and the international financial oligarchy to turn Colombia into a drug plantation. Pastrana forced General Bedoya out of the military when he made his opposition to the FARC demilitarized zone a public issue.

In a recent public statement of support for U.S. Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche, Bedoya identified the international forces behind the drive to convert Colombia into a narco-dictatorship: "It's no accident that Richard Grasso, president of the New York Stock Exchange, is leading the absurd process of legitimizing the narco-terrorist gangs which assail Colombia. What do these bankrupt international financiers seek? Leveraging the speculative bubble with funds from the cocaine and poppy trade? Installing as Colombia's official government a merciless gang of terrorist psychopaths, dedicated to drug-trafficking and kidnapping?"

On Feb. 23, Bedoya will be holding a joint seminar/press conference with LaRouche in Washington, on the subject of "The War on Drugs and the Defense of the Sovereign Nation-State." General Bedoya's visit to Washington occurs in the midst of a heated debate on what U.S. policy toward Colombia should be. In Feb. 15 hearings on Capitol Hill, the U.S. Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.) argued in defense of the \$1.6 billion aid package the Clinton administration has offered the Colombian government, a large portion of which is slated to boost the Colombian military's war-fighting capability.

McCaffrey's testimony repeatedly stressed the urgency of giving the Colombian Army the wherewithal to take back the drug-producing south of the country, largely under FARC domination. Reflecting what is clearly his own view, he said: "The Colombian Army has got to get back into these places . . . and regain control, so that the police can enter in a law enforcement way, provide alternative development as well as crop eradication." Elsewhere, he stated that "cocaine, we would argue, is the heart and soul of the incredible impact that 26,000 armed people are having on Colombian democratic institutions. . . . As long as the FARC, the ELN, and the paramilitaries have this tremendous wealth, if there's no *quid pro quo*, if there's no reward and punishment, why would they talk instead of fight?"

But even as McCaffrey was arguing for stripping the narco-terrorists of their financial and political sustenance, the State Department's Madeleine Albright was enthusiastically endorsing the FARC tour of Europe as "remarkable" and "very encouraging." In testimony before the House Foreign Relations Committee, both she and her underling Peter Romero suggested that the \$1.6 billion U.S. aid package was little more than a scare tactic, the "stick" in a carrot-and-stick policy designed to prod the FARC to the negotiating table.

However, the FARC has not been prodded to the negotiating table. Instead, it is striding down a blood-red carpet, right into the halls of power.

Iran-Contra secrets strangle German CDU

by Rainer Apel

The leadership of the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) had a turbulent session in Berlin on Feb. 15, and although it was not the first of its kind, it will be the last for numerous party leaders, including party chairman Wolfgang Schäuble, who on Feb. 16 announced his resignation as party chairman and chairman of the CDU parliamentary group. Others will follow.

The end of the Schäuble era, following close upon the political demise of former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, signifies that, beginning with the CDU, the entire political system of Germany is being destabilized.

Schäuble had maneuvered himself into more and more trouble over recent weeks, with his apparent difficulty remembering when and under what circumstances he had been in personal contact with Karlheinz Schreiber, the German-Canadian "businessman" whose charges against CDU politicians are fueling the party-financing scandal that is rocking Germany. Schreiber has prominent connections to figures in the British-American-Commonwealth oligarchy (BAC), dating back to the Iran-Contra period of the early 1980s (see especially, "BAC Cabal Exposed Behind German Scandals," *EIR*, Jan. 21, 2000; "LaRouche Defends Nation-State vs. 'Clean Hands' Subversion," *EIR*, Feb. 4, 2000). He is a fugitive from German prosecutors on a tax evasion case, and whatever he says in the numerous interviews he has granted from his present exile in Toronto, should not, under normal circumstances, be enough to cause serious trouble for a leading politician in Germany. But, Schäuble is not a politician who stands above suspicion. It is not personal, financial corruption that he can be charged with; it is political corruption.

The 'ghost' of Uwe Barschel

Having been in direct contact with Iran-Contra and BAC circles, Schäuble is vulnerable to anything that Schreiber may know or have heard about these affairs. And, advised by his prominent Canadian friends, Schreiber has chosen a strategy of making select hints that are vague enough not to tell the broader public what all of this is about, but are at the same time precise enough to send a message to people like Schäuble. For example, in an interview with the German weekly *Stern* on Feb. 10, Schreiber said that he is fed up with being "used" by German politicians, that "the whole affair for me already has a Barschel quality."

Uwe Barschel was a leading German Christian Democrat