

U.S. Ambassador Admits Colombia's FARC Is a Drug Cartel

by Valerie Rush

During a late-November tour of a drug eradication program in northern Colombia, newly appointed U.S. Ambassador Anne Patterson publicly admitted what everyone in Colombia has known for years, but which the U.S. State Department has to date assiduously denied: that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, is functioning as a full-fledged drug cartel.

Said Patterson, "The FARC and the paramilitaries are operating in Colombia like big cartels, just as existed previously in this country. They have control over the entire export process, as well as the routes for transporting the drug abroad." Patterson went on, however, to reaffirm Washington's full support for a negotiated "peace" between the Pastrana government in Colombia, and the narco-terrorist FARC!

Patterson's admission followed stunning revelations by the Mexican prosecutor's office, that an extensive drugs-for-guns relationship between the FARC and Mexico's infamous Tijuana Cartel had been uncovered. Asked to comment on those revelations at a briefing on Nov. 29, U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said, "Evidence shows FARC guerrillas supply cocaine to the [Tijuana] Cartel in exchange for cash and possibly weapons. This development is another illustration of the FARC's deep involvement in narcotics trafficking." But Boucher then called on the FARC to "demonstrate its non-involvement in narcotics-trafficking by severing all ties with the narcotics industry" and by undertaking voluntary eradication efforts in the areas under its control — amounting to about half the country.

How is it that the U.S. State Department is finally willing to admit that the FARC are drug-traffickers, yet in the same breath, still endorse "peace talks" which will hand the remaining 50% of the country over to these unrepentant narco-terrorists? Is it possible that it believes its own lies, that the FARC have only been running drugs to finance its insurgency, and that they will somehow turn into anti-drug fighters, once handed power through a negotiated agreement?

In late November, Clinton's drug policy adviser, Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), followed up a two-day visit to Colombia by stating: "I haven't the slightest hesitation in affirming that the main cocaine-producing organization in the

world is the FARC." And on Dec. 5, McCaffrey told the press that FARC guerrillas had been positively identified in drug-trafficking operations on the high seas. Although he stopped short of calling the FARC a drug cartel, McCaffrey said unequivocally: "They are not fighting for an ideology, but for drugs."

If It Quacks Like a Duck . . .

In June 1996, the Colombian Armed Forces published a book entitled *The FARC Cartel*, a well-documented exposé of the FARC's conversion from terrorist brigands into a large-scale drug-trafficking organization. That book carries a brief preface, written by then-Armed Forces Commander Gen. Harold Bedoya, who warns of "the specter of a hallucinatory criminal organization that is murdering our future." Last year, Bedoya visited Washington to warn yet again of the State Department's dangerous folly of dealing with the FARC cartel.

Bedoya is not the only one trying to awaken Washington. In a July 1999 article in *EIR*, Ibero-America editor Dennis Small had challenged official Washington to abandon its support for President Andrés Pastrana's "peace policy," and warned: "As U.S. labor leader Walter Reuther used to say, 'If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it just may be a duck.' So, too, it can be said that the FARC and National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrillas are *drug-runners*. Not 'freedom fighters' with whom to discuss, but *drug-runners*. In fact, they are Colombia's 'Third Cartel.'"

These warnings notwithstanding, Madeleine Albright's State Department seems determined to continue swimming in the same pond with this "duck." Its latest folly has been to encourage the Pastrana government to extend permission for FARC control over the so-called "demilitarized zone" (DMZ) beyond its Dec. 7 expiration date, despite the FARC's abandonment of any pretense at "peace negotiations," which was the government's ostensible reason for creating the zone in the first place. Had the government mandate for the DMZ not been renewed, the nation's Armed Forces would have been obligated by law to reestablish sovereign control over territory which has been turned by the FARC into a combination



A Nov. 15 demonstration in support of Gen. Jaime Humberto Canal, who resigned after President Pastrana stopped a successful anti-terrorist operation led by General Canal. The banner reads, "One President gave up the Panama Canal; this President got rid of Canal 'the General.' "

terrorist-training and -recruitment camp, coca plantation and cocaine trafficking depot, and concentration camp for kidnap victims and political hostages. What happens when the two-month extension ends, is anybody's guess.

No to 'Peace at Any Price'

Inside Colombia, leading circles are growing increasingly agitated over the failure of Pastrana's so-called "peace policy," and the evaporation of what little support that policy once had within the population. On Nov. 30, Colombia's leading newspaper, *El Tiempo*, ran a clearly distressed editorial, warning Pastrana that time may be running out on his "peace at any price" strategy: "The revelations of the Mexican Attorney General have major implications, because they expose — as never before — the double standard or cynicism of the guerrilla, which has always indignantly denied links to the drug trade. The fact is that many people resisted believing that the FARC was so deeply involved in this business, choosing instead to believe that the benefits they derived from the drug trade merely came through a tax they collected on the drug traffickers.

"But the developments in Mexico place the FARC in the middle of a plan of large-scale direct cocaine exporting. That is to say, as drug traffickers. It is difficult not to remember the incredulity [sic] with which then-Armed Forces Commander Gen. Harold Bedoya's accusations, that the FARC was 'the third cocaine cartel,' were met." *El Tiempo* concluded that if the Mexican revelations are "fully proven, then this confirmation of the FARC as 'narco-guerrillas' will enormously

disturb the legal principles behind negotiations between the state and the insurgency."

El Tiempo's editorial is less a response to the Mexican revelations or Ambassador Patterson's comments, than to the Colombian population's increasingly vocal opposition to the government's ill-fated appeasement approach toward the narco-terrorists. And that opposition is finally beginning to turn into an organized resistance.

In early November, the Pastrana government negotiated a rotten deal with the ELN narco-terrorists who had kidnapped scores of innocent civilians several months earlier in the area of Cali, Colombia's third-largest city. The region's Third Army Brigade, under the command of Gen. Jaime Ernesto Canal, had spent the intervening months developing the intelligence, discovering, and encircling the terrorists and their hostages.

For 46 days, the Pastrana government denied General Canal permission to close in. After several of the ELN's hostages died, and a popular uproar ensued, the government demobilized the Third Brigade long enough to allow the ELN to walk free in exchange for handing over the surviving hostages. General Canal immediately resigned, charging that the government's weakness had "turned military victory into a political defeat," and that the ELN had been outrageously portrayed as humanitarian, rather than as the narco-terrorists they are.

The response to Canal's irrevocable resignation was unprecedented, with 10,000 citizens of Cali spontaneously pouring into the city's streets to chant, "Don't Go!," "Canal Has Awakened a Kidnapped Cali," and "Thank You, Soldiers of

Colombia.” Petitions have been circulated throughout the city and beyond, demanding that the Army be given free rein to rescue victims of future kidnappings.

A Nov. 8 editorial in *El Tiempo* observed that, given the government’s proven inability to protect Colombians, “the citizenry is looking to the Army to give it leadership and give it back some hope.” The editorial concluded with a warning to the country’s elites: “It is time to call a halt [to the peace process], and to pay attention to the expression of a people who feel abandoned.”

The most recent “expression of a people who feel abandoned,” occurred at the national meeting of Fedegan, the country’s influential Cattle Ranchers’ Federation, in November. Fedegan President Jorge Visbal insisted that thousands of ranchers have been extorted, kidnapped, and assassinated by the FARC-ELN in the past year and a half, and demanded that a “state of internal commotion” be declared, which would allow Army-supervised civilian militias to be trained and armed for self-defense. A similar call for emergency legislation to give the nation better self-defense weapons against kidnapping and terrorism, was recently issued by Armed Forces Commander Gen. Fernando Tapias.

Also addressing the Fedegan meeting was former Antioquia Governor Alvaro Uribe Vélez, who denounced the government’s appeasement policy toward the FARC. With two years of Pastrana’s government still to go, Uribe Vélez has launched his Presidential bid in hopes of pulling all those discontented with the current government, into his camp. However, Uribe Vélez’s advocacy of bringing United Nations “peacekeeping forces” into Colombia, is certain to trigger resistance among the country’s nationalist forces, both inside and outside the military. Specifically, Uribe Vélez will be contending with General Bedoya (ret.), whose political movement, Fuerza Colombia, is already gearing up for Bedoya’s second Presidential bid.

Pastrana’s decision to capitulate once again to both FARC blackmail and U.S. and UN pressure, is not likely to improve his popularity rating, already at an all-time low. In fact, recent polls indicate that a whopping 88% of the Colombian population view the DMZ/negotiation policy as a dismal failure.

There is also widespread resistance to government efforts to create a second “demilitarized zone” in northern Colombia, this time to be granted to the ELN narco-terrorists as a supposed inducement for them to sit down at the negotiating table. Castro’s Cuba has played a major role in mediating talks between the government and the ELN, a role inexplicably endorsed by such Washington policymakers as Bernard Aronson, who is New York Council on Foreign Affairs co-chair and former Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs under George Bush. In a presentation to the National Press Club in Washington on Nov. 29, Aronson praised Cuban involvement with the drug-running ELN, and added, “You know, if you are too discriminating about whom you deal with, then you will never get anywhere.”

Establishment Pans ‘Insane’ Blair Policies

by Mark Burdman

Throughout the year, we have been documenting how the physical-economic infrastructure of Great Britain, and the political fortunes of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, have been crumbling in tandem. As year-end nears, both the economic-breakdown and political crises have been accelerating. In these circumstances, serious fissures are erupting in the British policy establishment. Individuals who formerly have expressed “Blairite/Third Way” and “Thatcherite” views favoring an unfettered “free market,” are now having second thoughts, as the very basis for their survival is threatened. Exemplary of this, are three recent signal pieces, over Nov. 29-Dec. 2.

‘Nobody Is Talking about the Third Way’

The first, was an interview in the Nov. 29 edition of the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* with Lord Ralf Dahrendorf. Of German origin, Dahrendorf is now a member of the House of Lords. He was formerly director of the London School of Economics, and has been a senior academic at Oxford University. Presently, he is one of the most listened-to “social thinkers” in Great Britain, with considerable influence in his native Germany.

Over the past three decades, Dahrendorf has gained notoriety, for promoting any number of schemes with a corporatist/“fascism with a human face” tinge. But in his *Süddeutsche Zeitung* interview, he denounced Blair’s much-touted, proto-fascist “Third Way” as a disaster, and pleaded with Germany’s Schröder government, which has in the past stressed its affinity with “Third Way” policies, to take no further steps in a “Blairite” direction.

Dahrendorf told the newspaper, that things have become so calamitous under Blair, that “in Great Britain today, nobody is talking about the Third Way any more, not even the government.” He revealed that, even in Britain, a shift in emphasis is occurring. Public sector budget cuts, the trademarks of the former Third Way policy, are no longer publicly defended. Because every flu epidemic is overburdening the hospitals, because somewhat extended rain periods are putting the roads under water, and because the state of the rail tracks has become dangerous, “the Britons are beginning to realize again, that public tasks cannot be allowed to be left by themselves.”

The fact that the state of the public British infrastructure has become even worse in the first three and a half years of