

Drug mob plans 'independent republics,' warns defense minister of Colombia

by Valerie Rush

Colombian Defense Minister Rafael Samudio Molina submitted a memorandum on the state of public order in the nation to the inaugural session of Congress, charging that the guerrillas and the drug mafia have forged a strategic alliance with the intention of carving "independent republics" out of the national territory, so-called liberated zones where the law is inapplicable and where authority is wielded by outlaws.

He denounced the narco-terrorists' efforts to engage the government of President Virgilio Barco in a "timeless dialogue, studying unacceptable proposals," a reference to the "peace summit" demanded (and won) by the drug-running guerrillas as their condition for the July 20 release of kidnaped former presidential candidate Alvaro Gómez Hurtado. Most political forces in the country have declared their readiness to hold dialogue with the enemy; so far, the Barco government has neither accepted nor rejected the demand.

Colombia's situation is but the most advanced phase of a Soviet-backed strategy to use irregular warfare and psychological warfare to undermine national institutions in Ibero-America, and replace them with narco-terrorist regimes. The Armed Forces remain one of the few institutions standing in the way of this scenario. While Colombian politicians have been toying with the pacifist option, the military has scored some of its most dramatic strikes against the narco-guerrilla alliance.

The 'Narc-FARC'

Defense Minister Samudio's memo named the Communist-run Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—the nation's largest guerrilla force and head of the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinating Front—as the main threat to Colombia's democratic institutions. He defined the Simón Bolívar Front as "a single unified bloc of action against the established order, which seeks to facilitate an increase of its violent acts, and to increase pressure on the government, toward achieving its final strategic objective: seizure of power."

The narco-terror alliance was hit hard in early July, when a marijuana plantation run jointly by the FARC and M-19 guerrilla movements was discovered by III Army Brigade troops in the area of Corinto, Cauca. A military source said the process of destroying the marijuana "could take months,"

and newspapers estimated the weekly profits from that plantation at \$4 million! On July 15, the military found 15 cocaine-processing laboratories in the jungle zones of Caquetá, again dominated jointly by the FARC and the M-19.

But the most spectacular bust took place July 17, when the VII Army Brigade under General Bedoya Pizarro discovered a multinational drug depot in the jungles of Vichada, 80 kilometers inside Colombia from the Venezuelan border. In addition to hefty quantities of cocaine, several airplanes, described by General Bedoya as more sophisticated than those possessed by the Colombian Air Force, were seized. An airstrip capable of servicing DC-4s was dismantled by the occupying troops, and evidence was found indicating that the complex—which stored refined cocaine brought in from all over the Andean region—regularly shipped 1.5 tons of pure cocaine to Cuba, Nicaragua, Europe, and the United States. Both the storage facilities and piloting were managed by members of the XVI front of the FARC. In his communiqué describing "Operation Hawk," General Bedoya dubbed the enemy "narc-FARC."

Losing the institutions

The military's offensive has toughened up some Colombian political figures who understand what capitulation in the name of "peace" will mean. The anti-drug daily *El Espectador* editorialized July 22 that "it is not serious to offer peace with one hand and violence with the other. The government . . . has shown that when the will exists, an effective defense of the institutions can be made. The dismantling of the cocaine-processing laboratories owned by the FARC, and the success of many counterinsurgency operations attest to this assertion."

Juan Diego Jaramillo, a close associate of former kidnap victim Gómez Hurtado, described the growing willingness of Colombia's political leadership to grant concessions to the narco-terrorists as leading to a loss of institutional legitimacy in his July 23 *El Tiempo* column. "The first institutional fissure was born with the incautious statement of the new justice minister on the day he took office: 'No law is worth more than a human life.' I have always believed that, on the contrary . . . one must sacrifice even one's life to save the dignity and importance of law."

Samudio's 'Report to the National Congress'

A memorandum on the state of public order in Colombia, submitted by Defense Minister Rafael Samudio Molina to the opening sessions of Congress July 20, 1988.

Internal situation

Criminal methods. The country, today as never before, is facing a generalized state of disturbance of internal order, which is significantly affecting all layers of Colombian society. This phenomenon stems from three well-defined sources:

a) Armed subversion, which undoubtedly poses the principal threat not only to public security but to the very existence of the State, since its single and unchangeable objective is seizure of power by force of arms and terrorism, in order to install a Marxist-Leninist regime.

b) The drug trade, which by its very nature, goes against the juridical, social, and economic—not to mention moral—order of the country, with its initial alliances and later conflicts with armed subversion, has caused the most terrifying violence in extensive, populated, and rich zones of the country, and international discredit never before experienced.

c) Common crime attacks the principal cities of the country, as a logical socio-economic consequence of the great belts of misery that surround them, and because of the constant emigration from country to city, due in part to the violence and social insecurity that scourges the country.

Armed subversion. . . . This criminal activity has shown a special capacity to expand in the shadow of the most varied democratic measures intended to achieve peace and tranquility throughout the national territory. Subversion acts in the political, economic, education, labor, and armed arenas, with goals that are both well-defined and broadly known to national opinion. . . .

Evolution. During the period covered by this report, and despite the government's efforts, armed subversion has continued to evolve and grow; in some cases, it has substantially modified its strategies, as in the case of the ELN [National Liberation Army], a group which has taken a terrorist ap-

proach to the oil exploitation and exploration activities in the country, at the same time assimilating the proven techniques of the FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia], organizing and executing peasant marches that affect the public order, especially in the northeastern region of the country.

On the other hand, the FARC continues to constitute the principal threat; despite its apparent compliance with the cease-fire, and in addition to having persistence in keeping constant pressure on centers of civilian population by means of blackmail, kidnaping, and extortion, it has strengthened its military apparatus, having 39 "fronts" today, when in 1984 it did not have even 30. . . .

Drug trafficking

Drug-trafficking situation. The operations carried out in recent months, as well as intelligence efforts in rural areas, have exposed the close links between the drug-trafficking mafias and armed subversion, with the intention of creating "independent" regions, where the law is inapplicable and where they [mafiosi and subversives] are the only authority, turning these zones into bases of their illicit operations.

The actions of different [trafficking] bands, their competition to stay on top in specific areas of the international drug market, and the terrorism that they permanently exercise against authorities and citizenry alike, create special conditions of violence where selective assassinations and massacres are a daily occurrence. . . .

Balance of operations. Despite the power of the so-called "cartels," the fight against the drug trade has shown a positive balance during this period; important cocaine-producing complexes in the departments of Antioquia, Boyacá, Cauca, and Valle have been deactivated; a significant number of processors and traffickers have been captured and delivered to the proper authorities; the systems of security and infrastructure used by the mafia in their criminal activities and in reprisals against rivals and public officials have been uncovered, and it has become clear to all of society the ominous influence these merchants of death have exercised and want to strengthen in all areas of economic and merely social action. [The traffickers] have found their principal collaborator and accomplice in the unprotected mass of the population, desirous of improving its economic situation and of satisfying its minimal needs in the shortest time and with the greatest ease.

Their force lies in their capacity to employ unlimited terror, through the recruitment of young assassins capable of taking the life of any citizen, no matter that other innocents may get in their way, for a sum of money. In view of these facts, authorities at every level are combining efforts in search of genuine integration both among themselves and with the community, to achieve greater efficiency in the fight against this plague. . . .