

Is Colombian Army on López's trail?

by José Restrepo

Former Colombian President Alfonso López Michelsen, who has twice shown his treasonous colors in public efforts to force the Colombian government to negotiate a "peace" with the country's cocaine cartels, may be next in line to be charged with "aiding and abetting narco-terrorist activities," according to state of siege decrees issued in order to combat narco-terrorism.

On May 10, the Fourth Army Brigade headquartered in Medellín raided the residence and law office of attorney Guido Parra, who has legally represented drug trafficker Pablo Escobar on various occasions. Together with the former President, Parra helped draft the letter that López's group of so-called "Notables" sent to the cartel on Jan. 15, promising the traffickers a "benign" deal with the government in exchange for the release of several kidnap victims. López and Parra also reportedly drafted the traffickers' response to the Notables' ostensibly generous offer, which was framed as an alleged "surrender" to the government's war on drugs.

The Colombian Army also captured one Inés Mejía de Serna, a Liberal city councilwoman in Pablo Escobar's town of Envigado; and Diego Londoño White, the prominent Antioquian businessmen whose construction company has built bomb-proof bunkers and estates for Pablo Escobar. Fourth Brigade Commander Gen. Harold Bedoya Pizarro asserted in a communiqué that the captures had occurred "in fulfillment of the anti-terrorist statute, for presumed aiding and abetting of narcoterrorist activities, and harboring of same." The detained individuals "were implicated in illicit behavior, as defined by the cited public order decree," the communiqué concluded.

Diego Londoño White is the business partner of his brother Santiago Londoño White, who participated in López Michelsen's efforts earlier this year to mediate a deal between the government and the traffickers. Santiago Londoño White was also the treasurer of López Michelsen's 1982 presidential bid, and in that position he accepted a nearly \$500,000 contribution from the hands of drug trafficker Carlos Lehder, to finance López's fruitless effort. It was the same Santiago Londoño who organized the infamous 1984 Panama meeting between López Michelsen and Medellín Cartel chieftains Pablo Escobar and Jorge Luis Ochoa.

According to a report in the May 11 Bogotá daily *El*

Espectador, mouthpiece of the country's anti-drug forces, state security spokesmen have said that Guido Parra and ex-President López spoke various times on the drug traffickers' proposals, "and in one such conversation, the former President told Parra to be careful, and to tell Pablo Escobar the same."

'Give him enough rope . . .'

Just days before the Parra and Londoño arrests, López had complained to Caracol radio that one couldn't understand how it is that the Army "can locate the communications of enemies of the state, but cannot capture them." At the time, López clearly was not expecting his voice to be identified on one of those "communications of enemies of the state."

After the *El Espectador* report appeared, a furious López dashed off a letter to Attorney General Alfonso Gómez Méndez, demanding that *El Espectador's* information be investigated. The newspaper *El Tiempo* of May 12 reported López's insistence that the investigation look into whether, in the previous 15 years, he had had "any kind of contact with Antioquian lawyer Guido Parra, arrested by the Fourth Brigade of Medellín, as some media citing official sources have reported." López demanded that "once the investigation is carried out, that sanctions be applied to those who have lied." The Attorney General, a "former" legal retainer of the Michelsen family, replied by urging the ex-President to sue.

López's rage and his not-so-veiled threat against *El Espectador* and its sources, reveals a fear that Colombia's security agencies are finally going after the "untouchables," the "citizens above suspicion" who, like López, have long striven to turn the drug lords, or "Extraditables," into "respectables" with whom one is then permitted to negotiate.

The Fourth Brigade arrests took place just after Liberal Party presidential candidate and front-runner César Gaviria Trujillo stated in a nationally televised address May 6 that Colombia would have no success "in the fight against the drug trade as long as certain sectors and leaders think that the way to confront those organizations crimes with every kind of concession by society and the government."

At the same time, Gaviria promised that, as Colombia's future President, he would correct one of the most serious errors of the current Barco government in its war on drugs, namely, its belief that one can have dialogue with so-called "guerrilla groups" as if they were distinguishable from "narco-terrorism." He added, "We are not going to do away with the guerrilla as long as they maintain their sources of financing," said Gaviria, or "as long as we permit them to resort to political dialogue." Gaviria was putting on notice not only the recently legalized M-19 narco-terrorists and other suddenly "pro-dialogue" guerrilla gangs, but also those sponsors of such dialogue who had hoped to use President Barco's guerrilla appeasement policy as a model for the continent.