

# 'Narco-democrats' let loose in Guatemala

by Gretchen Small

What does the U.S. State Department mean when it insists that "democracy" is the only form of government it accepts for other nations? Judging by the State Department's policy toward Guatemala since May 25, 1993, the only acceptable "democratic" government is one which deploys narco-terrorists to destroy the founding institutions of the nation. On May 23, then-President Jorge Serrano declared that, in order to stop Guatemala from sliding into anarchy, he was dissolving the Congress, suspending functioning of the courts, and announcing elections for a Constituent Assembly to implement constitutional reforms. The military high command supported him. "The country is controlled by drug traffickers and mafias," Serrano warned, and continued that maintaining "a facade while being totally gnawed away by the mafia, by drugs, and by those who want to use it for their own benefit" cannot be called democracy.

Within hours, the White House and State Department launched a campaign to overthrow him. Declaring the emergency measures to be an "illegitimate course of action," the U.S. government ordered all aid to Guatemala cut, called an extraordinary meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS), and threatened to deny Guatemalan goods preferential access to U.S. markets until the measures were rescinded and the military commanders supporting Serrano purged. The OAS foreign ministers backed up the United States, worried that Serrano's actions would have "a harmful effect" on the dialogue under way with the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG), a narco-terrorist band allied with Castro's Cuba.

On June 1, the Guatemalan government press office announced that Serrano had been "separated from his post in an action led by the Army." Secretary of State Warren Christopher credited "pressure from the U.S." with forcing the counter-coup. On June 5, the same Congress which Serrano had attempted to disband for its ties to drug-trafficking, elected as Guatemala's new President, the virulently anti-military human rights prosecutor, Ramiro de León Carpio, notorious for his defense of the URNG political front groups. The State Department gave him its "strong" support.

Three months later, President De León declared that a "crisis of governability" had been created. In a national television address Aug. 26, De León ordered the Congress and Supreme Court to dissolve themselves, and announced he

would bring far-reaching proposals for constitutional reform before a new "clean" Congress.

This is exactly what Serrano had been overthrown for attempting to do back in May—but to very different ends, and by very different means. De León threatened the legislative and judicial branches of government that if they refused to resign, he would "call on the people of Guatemala" to march on the capital and exercise their "constitutional right to legitimate resistance."

## Demilitarization is top demand

"The people" who immediately jumped to answer De León's call, were the URNG. From their headquarters in Mexico City, the URNG command on Aug. 27 called for people to demonstrate for the "cleaning out" of all branches of the government. Top on the list of institutions to be "purified" must be the military, they said, demanding as well that all civil defense patrols be abolished in order to achieve full "demilitarization." Within days, 20 leaders of peasant and union groups allied with the URNG occupied the Supreme Court building, leaving only after the head of the court agreed to order the arrest of several Civil Defense Patrol members.

Inside Congress, De León's resignation "order" was met with a farce of "democratic functioning" indeed. Fist-fights were broadcast on national television; garbage was dumped from the balconies onto the floor of Congress. One group of contending deputies elected a new president of Congress, only to find he could not take office, as their opponent had locked himself in the president's offices, and ordered out for pizza.

On Sept. 7, hundreds of protesters stormed the Congress. Occupying the floor of the Deputies Chamber, they staged a "symbolic session," demanding Congress resign and new elections be held within two months under reformed electoral laws guaranteeing votes for "grassroots" and "popular" organizations. Wire services and the U.S. media reported only that the occupation had been carried out by "trade union and Indian activists," leaving out that the leader of the occupation, Nineth Montenegro, is the coordinator of the Mutual Assistance Group (GAM), a well-known front group for the URNG which provides support for the families of terrorists captured, killed—or still fighting.

The day before the GAM stormed Congress, Nicaraguan officials announced the discovery of another secret arms cache belonging to a foreign terrorist group, this one—the 23rd found since May 23—belonging to the URNG. The URNG's cache was the biggest yet: 600 assault rifles, heavy machine guns, a dozen rocket launchers, a Dragonov cannon, dynamite, grenades, mortars, and more than a half-million rounds of ammunition were stored, along with computers, radio equipment, coded documents, and foreign passports. Officials reported that the cache was in active use; but the De León government which unleashed these narco-terrorist forces still enjoys the full support of the U.S. government.