

McCaffrey takes on Albright and narcos in policy fight

by Michele Steinberg

In one of the most honest assessments of the last decade of the failures and shortcomings of the U.S. war against drugs, Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), head of President Clinton's Office of National Anti-Drug Policy, told a news conference at the National Press Club on Aug. 30, "Although I am a non-political officer of government, I have to underscore that, in my view, President Clinton . . . started a changed dialogue [with Ibero-America], one in which one could characterize, perhaps uncharitably, U.S. policy toward Latin America in many of the previous decades as one based on ignorance and arrogance—a little healthy dose of both of them."

McCaffrey, who had just returned from a tour of Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela, said that his plan is for the United States to back up anti-drug strategies being developed by each individual nation in Ibero-America; to support them based solely on respect for national sovereignty; and to *absolutely* refrain from a military "invasion" or "intervention" into Colombia, either by the U.S. military, or by a military force made up of armies from other countries covertly backed by the United States.

McCaffrey discussed Colombia at great length, a situation seen by anti-drug fighters as at a "point of no return" around the question of whether terrorist narco-traffickers, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), will be allowed to supplant sovereign governments.

Within Ibero-America, opponents of the appeasement policy toward the FARC have courageously stepped forward. One of the most notable among these, Colombian Gen. Harold Bedoya Pizarro (ret.), recently travelled to Argentina and Peru to organize an international anti-drug effort. In a television interview in Peru (see accompanying article), Bedoya makes clear that the issue of the FARC *is* the issue of drugs.

There is a similar battle raging within the United States, where McCaffrey has been at loggerheads with Secretary of

State Madeleine Albright. Albright, in a lying Aug. 6 guest commentary, propounded the disastrous policy line that "after 38 years of struggle, it should be clear that a decisive military outcome is unlikely" in Colombia, where the FARC has been allowed to govern an area under the cover of a "peace process" that is supposed to negotiate their giving up their arms. The area under FARC control, referred to in Spanish as the *despeje*, is a demilitarized zone (DMZ).

McCaffrey did not go so far as to explicitly refer to his fight against Albright, nor did he name the names of prominent Americans behind drug legalization, and covering up money laundering. But, he identified the consequences of these failures. "I have underscored . . . bluntly," said McCaffrey, "that the United States now is a major drug-producing nation, that we cannot say that our drug problem is Burma and Peru, Bolivia and Colombia." The United States has become a leading *producer* of drugs, from methamphetamines to marijuana with enhanced THC (the active ingredient in marijuana; and, the United States is still the leading consumer of illicit drugs, with about 4 million citizens with chronic addictions.

At his press conference, McCaffrey said that he had made his views—that Albright and the naysayers are wrong, that a victory *can* be won against the FARC and the drug traffickers—known to President Clinton directly.

FARC drug activity in the DMZ

In November 1998, just a few months after Andrés Pastrana became President of Colombia, he made a deal with the FARC guerrillas to conduct "peace negotiations," a move which rested on the lie that the FARC is not a drug cartel. Nothing was further from the truth, but Pastrana, with support from Albright and the U.S. State Department, established a DMZ under FARC control. Instead of peace, the FARC became bolder, receiving the president of the New York Stock

Exchange, Richard Grasso, to discuss “investments,” and all the while escalating a murderous offensive.

In response to the first question, from *EIR*'s Jeffrey Steinberg, McCaffrey openly said that the FARC forces are involved in drugs in the “demilitarized zone.” He said, “I went to Colombia under instructions of President Clinton, and also to Venezuela and Ecuador, both of whom have been substantially affected by this problem in terms of . . . armed insurgents crossing the frontier, establishing base areas, kidnapping citizens, kidnapping aircraft. And I was able to present my own viewpoints to Secretary Albright and to [National Security Adviser] Mr. Berger and to the President.”

Contradicting the “no-win war” stupidity about which Albright had written, McCaffrey said, “This is not 1948, violence as usual. . . . The baseline of the problem is money . . . coming out of doubling of coca production in three years. It's the money out of these massive amounts of heroin. . . . That money flows into 25,000 armed people, who are confronting, terrorizing Colombian democracy. And you know, they've ended up with shiny new uniforms, planes, helicopters, automatic weapons. And the ability of that amount of money to corrupt democratic institutions is significant.”

Albright's stance is not the first time that corrupt U.S. elements have backed a “peace deal” with one of Colombia's “cocaine cartels.” That precedent was set by President Sir George Bush, who jailed the leading architect of a successful war against drugs, *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche, Jr., in 1989. The imprisoning of LaRouche was part of a shameful chapter in American policy, where Bush opened the floodgates for crack cocaine trafficking as part of his deal with the “Cali Cartel”—one of the assets in Bush's Oliver North-National Security Council-Executive Order 12333 secret government apparatus.

The bitter fruits of Bush's policies are seen in the harrowing descriptions of the DMZ given by McCaffrey. “Colombia is a gigantic nation,” he said, “and the *despeje*, as we say, is about the size of Switzerland. And it's huge jungle areas. And there's 41 airfields out there. There's 90,000 Colombian citizens living there. There is a very significant river system.

“The evidence seems to indicate that the FARC has turned it into a training base area. There's thousands of them in there. They are building roads; they are building fortifications. During the July offensive, they came out of the *despeje* and attacked the police and the army as far as 75 kilometers away. They executed soldiers who had been wounded, by shooting them in the head. They had mock trials of policemen in villages, in front of their families and then shot them dead. They have executed Colombian citizens. . . . They have actually begun growing coca in the *despeje*. . . . I don't even think from a drug perspective it's that important, because the coca production in the southern provinces, Putumayo and Caquetá, is so enormous—30% of the land area of those two provinces now is in coca. But I mention it simply as an indication of the incredible impunity with which they are acting.”

“I would argue this is not a Colombian problem. The money laundering, the precursor chemicals, the smuggling of drugs, the smuggling of guns, the movement of people working in the coca cultivations involves Ecuadoran citizens . . . Venezuela . . . the Panamanian frontier and . . . United States,” McCaffrey said. “I would say the peace process can't fail. We have to stand behind the Colombian leadership until they stop—are able to achieve some political outcome backed up by the police and the army that stops the incredible suffering. A million internal refugees living in abject misery, an economy that's in the dumps, a peace process that has not moved forward, and I would argue the central problem is drugs and the money they generate.”

Praise for Peru

At home and abroad, McCaffrey, who is considered “public enemy number one” by the forces that want to legalize drugs “for recreation,” such as the Drug Policy Foundation, which is financed by derivatives speculator George Soros, is the target of attacks and disinformation.

The most frequent disinformation is that McCaffrey went to Ibero-America to plot an invasion of Colombia, and that he supports dictators and death squads that are out to abolish “human rights.” These issues came to the fore in the Aug. 30 press conference, but in truth, reflect the decade-long stigma of the George Bush corruption, that included the illegal invasion of Panama in 1989 to carry out the unjustified arrest of Gen. Manuel Noriega.

One obnoxious reporter insisted on pressing the question, already answered by McCaffrey, about whether the United States was planning to invade Colombia, and if not, had McCaffrey planned a surrogate invasion. McCaffrey replied, “It's important for you to listen, now, carefully. What I said was there's no discussion of military intervention inside our government. There was no discussion of military intervention with other governments. It's an astonishingly bad idea, which none of us will entertain. It doesn't make any sense.”

“Colombian judicial police and military authorities will have to confront this internal problem themselves, I hope with the political support and the resources of regional partners. . . . *But again, there is no discussion, not any discussion, of what you are talking about. And I don't know how to say it any more clearly.*”

Another lie was put forward by some reporters, who tried to get McCaffrey to denounce Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori for corruption. Instead, McCaffrey said that he had seen “no evidence” linking Peru's anti-drug and political leadership to corruption. To the contrary, McCaffrey stated, “we have to address the question of eradication and is it possible to do something about drug production, or is this hopeless? And I would underscore, again, the almost incredible work done in Peru, in which, in the short space of about three years, there's been a 56% reduction in coca production. . . . It's unarguable that that's actually occurred.”