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## Interview: Gen. Harold Bedoya

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# The FARC narco-terrorists are about to be handed half of Colombia

Colombia's new President, Andrés Pastrana, has announced that by Nov. 7, at the latest, his government intends to demilitarize five municipalities in the heart of the country, to place them in the hands of the narco-terrorist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). This demilitarization—or “*despeje*” as it is called in Spanish—is the FARC's central demand for beginning “peace negotiations” with the Pastrana government.

Although various forces in Colombia and in the United States have expressed reservations and concern over this strategy, the official position held by both the Pastrana government and the U.S. State Department, is that the FARC are guerrillas who operate on the basis of ideology, and are not *organically* linked to the drug trade. During a recent visit to Washington, Maximiliano Londoño, president of the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSIA) in Colombia, and a frequent contributor to this magazine, held a number of private meetings with government officials who told him, one after the other, that “the FARC and the drug trade overlap only by 7 to 10%.”

As Londoño has written:

“The common axiomatic flaw of both the U.S. State Department and the current Pastrana government in Colombia, is expressed in their refusal to recognize the existence of *narco-terrorism*. When the governments of Washington and Bogotá insist—in the face of undeniable evidence—that the FARC and National Liberation Army (ELN) terrorists have no organic ties to the drug trade, and that only 7-10% of their activities overlap with the drug trade, they not only deny reality but also commit a major strategic blunder. The solution to the crisis in Colombia must begin by recognizing that the mortal enemy we face is the Third Cartel, or the narco-terrorist cartel, whose armed wing is the FARC-ELN.

“Therefore, the idea that one must ‘negotiate with the guerrillas,’ granting them ‘political status’ while ceding them territory, supposedly in the hope that they will help to reduce the drug trade in their areas of influence, is equivalent to trying to appease Hitler into ‘contributing to lasting peace in Europe,’ as the foolish Neville Chamberlain insisted.”

Upon his return to Bogotá, Londoño interviewed Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.), to get a detailed report on the strategic-military significance of the planned demilitarization. There are few Colombians better equipped to give such an analytical

report. A distinguished soldier, with more than 40 years of service in almost all regions of Colombia, General Bedoya was commander of the country's Armed Forces in 1997, when then-President Ernesto Samper fired him, given Bedoya's vociferous opposition to Samper's open policy of favoring the drug trade.

General Bedoya granted Londoño this interview on Sept. 21.

**EIR:** This week, President Andrés Pastrana is going to travel to Washington to lobby the U.S. Congress over the supposed virtues of the military and police evacuation of the municipalities of La Uribe, Vista Hermosa, Macarena, Mesetas, and San Vicente del Caguán, located in the Departments of Meta and Caquetá. How do you view the demilitarization of these five municipalities?

**Gen. Bedoya:** Today is Sept. 21. The news from [the UN General Assembly in] New York is that President Clinton has declared war against international terrorists, and is calling on the entire world to unite to eliminate these criminal organizations. So the first thing I see is that the FARC is an international terrorist organization, just like the ELN, according to the State Department, the Congress, and the government of the United States. This is very important. How are they going to go about declaring war against international terrorism, of which criminal organizations such as the FARC and ELN are a part? Because, if we are talking about a demilitarization so that an international terrorist organization can take over—not just five municipalities (this is the great lie being sold to the world), but half the country, not 50,000 square kilometers, but 500,000 square kilometers—the situation becomes very delicate. Because the problem is no longer a Colombian problem, but an international one. If we are going to discuss the significance of those municipalities, nationally and internationally, we have to take note of what each one represents for the narco-terrorists' geopolitical interests.



**EIR:** Why do you say that 500,000 square kilometers is go-

ing to be handed over, if the government emphasizes that the evacuated area will not exceed 50,000 square kilometers, with the additional proviso that the demilitarization will only be temporary and will take effect in municipalities where there is supposedly no drug production?

**Gen. Bedoya:** Each one of the municipalities has to be studied specifically [Figures 1 and 2]. What does each one represent? What is the municipality of Vista Hermosa, for example?

Vista Hermosa is a zone that has more drug-trafficking laboratories and airstrips than any other part of the country. Vista Hermosa is connected to almost the entire Ariari region through the Güéjar River, and is linked with Guaviare Department by the Guayabero River. Vista Hermosa has the big coca-processing complexes. Less than a month ago, the National Army discovered and destroyed a laboratory there. Furthermore, there is a lot of coca grown in that region. The Guaviare crops are in effect processed in laboratories that are located within Vista Hermosa municipality. The Carpa region, for example, is where coca paste was used as currency. Puerto Colombia is within the area of Vista Hermosa, and has its own airstrips. It is the buying center for coca paste for the entire Guayabero region.

Vista Hermosa involves the Department of Meta, of which it is part. Vista Hermosa has a long “highway,” which extends from La Macarena to the Ariari region, which is called the Güéjar River. This is the “highway” of [FARC chieftain “Sureshot”] “Tirofijo.” Guaviare Department is intimately linked to Vaupés Department. I would remind you that the recent FARC attack in the region of Miraflores was carried out by terrorist organizations the FARC has in Vaupés Department, which travelled down the Vaupés River. We are talking about the fact that all the coca produced in Vaupés is taken to Miraflores, where it is processed. Miraflores is the distribution point for the inputs and supplies of the coca plantations.

So, in reality, Vista Hermosa municipality connects the Departments of Vaupés, Guaviare, and Meta, and is also linked to Vichada Department. The Güéjar River is a tributary of the Ariari River which, together with the Guayabero, is in turn a tributary of the Guaviare, which in turn empties into the Orinoco River [on the northeastern border with Venezuela]. And Vichada is another place where narcotics are produced. The populations of the region are located along the banks of these great rivers.

La Uribe municipality is also linked to this river system through the Duda and Guayabero Rivers. Now, add to this the fact that, from three of the targeted municipalities—La Uribe, San Vicente del Caguán, and Mesetas—the FARC has access to the entire basin of the Caquetá, Putumayo, and Apaporis Rivers, which are the great river routes of the Amazonas region. The Sunciyá River empties into the Caguán River, which empties into the Caquetá River.

Don’t forget that the FARC already controls Cartagena del Chairá, a municipality which was given to Tirofijo by the

previous government, supposedly to guarantee the FARC’s release of the kidnapped soldiers two years ago. Also right nearby is the Yarí River. Remember that the very first, large cocaine laboratories that were destroyed in Colombia were from the Yarí Valley, when Rodrigo Lara Bonilla was Justice Minister. Also near La Macarena and Vista Hermosa is the Apaporis River. This river runs near the Chiribiquete Mountains, one of the zones where many cocaine laboratories have been destroyed. The attacks that the FARC narco-terrorists are carrying out in this region are staged by mobilizing through the river basins that include the Vaupés, the Inirida, and their tributaries.

Operation Conquest which the Army carried out four years ago, was focussed on taking control of these rivers, to block the transportation of coca, cocaine precursor chemicals, and the transport of weapons and terrorists along the country’s waterways. The operation was so successful that the FARC had to invent protest mobilizations of the coca-growers, to politically block the successful Operation Conquest. And the coca-growers’ mobilizations served as a distraction to enable them to attack Las Delicias military base, which in turn was used to achieve the military demilitarization of the Cartagena del Chairá region. If the previous government had not yielded to the FARC’s pressures, we would have completely destabilized them with Operation Conquest.

So, what is being surrendered with these five municipalities is the infrastructure that controls half the country: the river communication channels and the geographic corridors of mobilization, through which they have access to 500,000 square kilometers.

**EIR:** Do you know this area personally, or have you been told this?

**Gen. Bedoya:** I know it. I lived there, I have walked the zone, and I have navigated it. I was there for two years. It was during the period in which the coca crops in the entire region were nearly eliminated. In 1988, President [Virgilio] Barco launched a national plan to eradicate coca crops. Throughout Guaviare, throughout Vaupés, and part of Vichada, coca cultivation was nearly eradicated at that time. Unfortunately, the state did not provide the resources nor the funds, and the Gaviria government came into power and that program was moved to a back burner, and the problem returned.

But let’s return to the importance of the municipalities the government plans to hand over to the narco-terrorists. La Macarena extends into the Yarí plains, toward Guaviare. I would remind you that the largest laboratory the Army ever destroyed, Tranquilandia, was discovered in the Chiribiquete Mountains area. La Macarena is where all the coca paste from Bolivia, Peru, and the Colombian Amazonas comes, by means of the rivers and clandestine airstrips. The Rodríguez Orejuela brothers and the FARC have huge cocaine laboratories and landing strips in La Macarena.

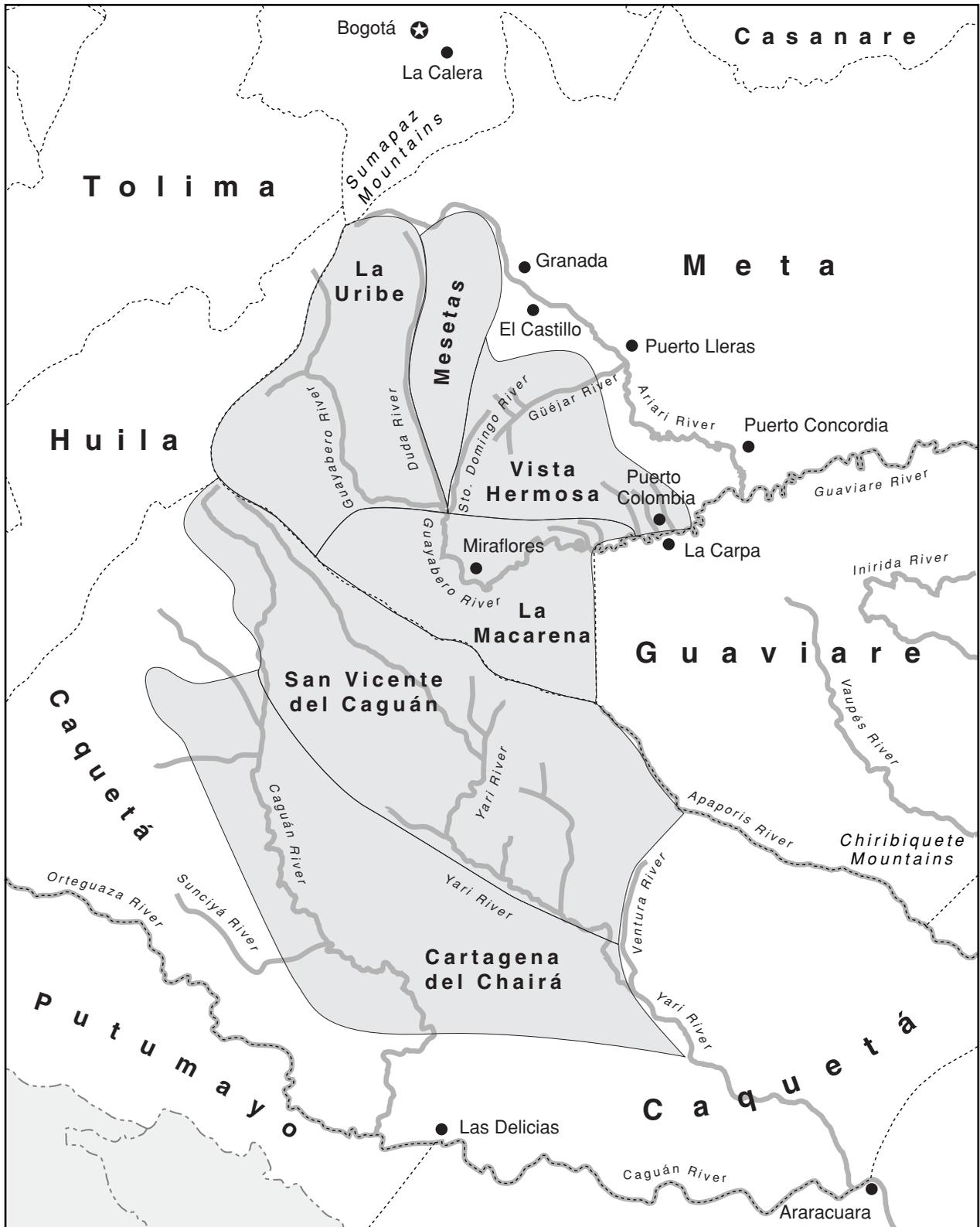
The regions of Putumayo and Caquetá are perfectly linked

FIGURE 1

Colombia: FARC territorial control



FIGURE 2  
**The FARC's 'Coca Republic'**



through the rivers. The entire area is intimately interconnected through communications channels of sorts, i.e., the river basins: the Caguán, the Yará, the Guayabero, the Ortegua, the Sunciyá, the Putumayo, etc. And logically, all of these lead into the Department of Amazonas. One of the most important sites is Araracuara, which is the gateway to the Department of Amazonas.

What is going to happen if we don't pay attention to these southern regions of the country, which are completely unprotected? At this moment, there are not even troops in Vaupés, for example.

Countries like Brazil, like Peru, like Venezuela, and like Ecuador, are going to be exposed to the actions of these terrorist organizations, as they already have been. Imagine what happens when the five municipalities are evacuated, and the FARC imposes the law of the drug trade, the law of the jungle, throughout this territory. Logically, the entire region is lost.

**EIR:** And why is the FARC asking for La Uribe and Mesetas?

**Gen. Bedoya:** These two municipalities, as we have seen, are linked by river to Vista Hermosa, Macarena, San Vicente del Caguán, and from there, are linked to the whole Departments of Meta, Amazonas, Putumayo, Arauca, Guaviare, Vaupés, Vichada, Casanare, Caquetá. But they are also on the Eastern Mountain Range. La Uribe, like Mesetas, is close to Sumapaz. Keep in mind that Sumapaz is the water supply for the future of the nation's capital, Bogotá, and from it Bogotá can be easily attacked. La Uribe lies practically in a direct line to the capital as well. Remember that in 1992-94, Tirofijo penetrated this area up to La Calera. They were practically the same organizations that had come down from Sumapaz, and they carried out their attacks on La Calera. That is, geographically, the region of Sumapaz is entirely linked with La Uribe and Mesetas, and it is practically on top of Cundinamarca Department [whose capital is Bogotá].

Through these five municipalities, they will also take over the region of Guainía. These are jungle regions which are at the mercy of the drug trade, and, logically, they are very interested in having the Army abandon the five municipalities, so that they can take possession of these territories.

**EIR:** What then is the FARC's intent in controlling this whole region?

**Gen. Bedoya:** Since President Pastrana already granted them political status, by holding talks with the head of the largest narco-terrorist organization in the world, which is what Tirofijo is; now they are going to hand them territory. An organization of this sort, which has only political status but no territory, is only halfway to its goal; so, now, we must give them territory, so they can become an independent republic, which is being handed practically the richest region

of Colombia, where the great wealth of the Orinoco and Amazon River basins are located, and where the majority of Colombia's nature parks, its southern jungles, and all of its oil are located. That is what this region represents, which is up on the Eastern Mountain Range and at the gates of Bogotá.

So, with this recognition which is being bestowed upon them as a belligerent force, they are going to begin to take over everything. They are going to start with five municipalities, but they will project themselves over half of Colombia, just as we can now say that they are already projected over Caquetá, over Putumayo, over Vaupés, over Guaviare and Amazonas. These areas are tied to the drug trade.

Now, we cannot forget that this has been Tirofijo's lifelong dream; Tirofijo has long dreamed of heading an independent republic. In 1988 and 1989, he was the master of five or six municipalities which they had seized by force, and in which the Communist Party, narco-terrorist organizations, and the Patriotic Union itself, which they sponsored, had moved in. They had moved into Vista Hermosa, La Macarena, La Uribe, and Mesetas, and they were practically in Caguán. That is, they had taken these territories by force.

In 1989, they lost the elections, and then these municipalities were once again back in the hands of the political parties. The Conservative Party won in La Macarena, and the Liberal Party won in the rest of the municipalities mentioned. There, the Communists and related terrorist organizations lost politically. That was a whole battle which this region waged, so that this would be a democratic territory.

The great capital of Tirofijo's territories was Granada. Now we see that he wants to establish the Caguán region as his great capital. It is easier for him to be in the Caguán region, because from there he is grabbing Caquetá, he is taking over Meta, he is taking control of Huila, and thus he is pretty much swallowing up the whole of the country. They are going to give him a political gift, by handing him this region, because he is going to seed it with terrorists.

The honest people who live in the region will have to leave. Already Villavicencio, Florencia, Neiva, Cali, Medellín, and Bogotá are the recipients of the exodus of this whole population, which is not the 100,000 Colombians they say it is. No! There are going to be millions of displaced Colombians who are going to move to the capitals, because the state abandoned them. From one day to the next, the state appears to be handing territories over to organizations which have committed every kind of crime against the population.

In Vista Hermosa, all the liberals and the conservatives who waged the battle against Tirofijo in 1989 are going to leave, because they know what kind of person he is. The same thing is going to happen in Mesetas, in La Uribe, and in San Vicente del Caguán itself, where the national Army is located, having consolidated its positions there to bring

peace to the region. So, if the plan is to pull the Army out, we are simply going to leave the region unprotected, and hand it over to the narco-terrorists without a fight.

**EIR:** The government insists that this is only a temporary pull-out, which is being done to bring about national brotherhood. And those who argue as you do, are labelled radicals.

**Gen. Bedoya:** What I am warning about, is reality. This region is perhaps the richest which Colombia has, and it's most important geographically and strategically.

**EIR:** In fact, we are talking about half the country, right?

**Gen. Bedoya:** Not only that, but we are surrendering all the areas around our borders: the border with Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru. These border areas are going to be a flank which we are going to leave completely abandoned, weakened, at the mercy of the narco-terrorist organizations, which we already know operate in the region.

Now, they tell us that coca and the opium poppy is not grown in these five municipalities. That's a solemn lie. Go to Vista Hermosa, cross the Güéjar River, and you will see the amount of coca planted. The same thing is taking place throughout La Macarena region, where there are airstrips, there are processing laboratories. This is the key point, not the destruction of the crops per se. Fumigation, of course, is important, but what is fundamental, is to destroy the cocaine-processing laboratories which are there in the jungle. They just destroyed a laboratory in the Caguán; whose was it? It was Tirofijo's, as was the one which was in Vista Hermosa.

**EIR:** Why does the government keep saying that the demilitarization of the five municipalities will not affect the crop eradication programs?

**Gen. Bedoya:** It will affect them. Although there are areas where coca is grown, but where, currently, there are no eradication programs—obviously it will not affect the eradication programs there, because there aren't any. With this half-truth, they are passing disinformation to U.S. Congressmen. Besides, the problem is not only one of eradicating the crops; the problem is the laboratories, the cocaine complexes, the landing strips, the inputs entering the region, the transportation of the drugs by river. The problem is the terrorism which exists in the region. Crop cultivation does not produce cocaine without laboratories. Tirofijo has his airstrips in the Uribe and Duda River region.

**EIR:** Do you think that, in the United States, they believe these stories told by the Pastrana government?

**Gen. Bedoya:** I do not know if they believe them or not, but we Colombians cannot swallow them. Reality has shown that the drug-traffickers have taken over the area, and they want to consolidate themselves there. And the government

fell into the trap, because when the soldiers were kidnapped [at Las Delicias], they cleared pretty much the whole Caguán region. A whole leading political class in Caquetá was assassinated, starting with the leader of the House of Representatives, in his day, Dr. Rodrigo Turbay; and they assassinated the region's major politicians.

The same thing has happened in the Department of Meta. In the last elections, the people in the Department of Meta could not vote, because they began to assassinate them, in order to force them to vote for the FARC's candidates, and they enforced, through violence and intimidation, that no one could vote for candidates who were against this narco-corruption.

We are repeating the history of 1903, nearly 100 years ago, when we lost Panama, or rather, we handed Panama over, simply because we left this department unprotected; because sovereignty was not exercised with authority; because the state, instead of making its presence felt, weakened its military forces. It must be remembered that the Colombian Army in Panama was not even being sent enough to buy its food. The little army that was there was dying of hunger. That is why Teddy Roosevelt's imperialist blow succeeded, and that is why we lost Panama. And despite the fact that the President at that time, Marroquín, wished to correct the errors of misrule and abandonment, Panama was lost; and, saddest of all, that surrender was legalized. We gave it legitimacy, by receiving the miserable sum of \$25 million.

This time we are not talking about Panama, but about eight Panamas. Panama, in fact, is smaller than any one of these departments. May God grant that the state not end up repeating the dark and irreparable history of 100 years ago, on account of an irresponsible government, and not end up handing over to the narco-terrorists what does not belong to the government, but to all Colombians.

**EIR:** What can be done to avoid that?

**Gen. Bedoya:** We Colombians have to wake up to the gravity of what could happen. The danger is to remain indifferent to the dismembering of national territory; the danger is to believe in the fraud and lies of Tirofijo, an individual who is now treated as if he were the Patriarch Jonah, who embraces all the personalities and journalists who wish to greet him. What is at stake is the Fatherland. The Fatherland does not belong to any government, which is why the national Constitution clearly establishes that the defense of sovereignty, the protection of territorial integrity, is the responsibility of the Armed Forces. Even if they have invented a law which permits dialogues to be carried out concerning national territory, that law is unconstitutional from the standpoint of the integrity of the national territory. If we Colombians don't watch out, in less than four years we will no longer have a complete nation, but two countries, or perhaps four countries.

Thus, the reality is that the Fatherland is in danger, and this cannot be looked at as if from Olympus, believing the siren songs of Tirofijo and “Gabino” [another terrorist leader], who are presented today as if they were Bolívar and Santander, the new “heroes” who will bring peace to Colombia. Of course, it will be a final peace: the peace of the grave.

**EIR:** What measures would you take to resolve this problem, were you President of Colombia?

**Gen. Bedoya:** The first thing which has to be done is to strengthen the state, strengthen the Armed Forces, enforce the Constitution and the laws of the Republic, control these territories, and if a dialogue is desired, let a specific point be determined, as has always been done ever since these dialogues with other groups began; but at no time weaken national territorial integrity and sovereignty, nor abandon the community of all these regions to their own misfortune. Because the defense of the lives, the honor, and the possessions of Colombians is not discretionary. It is not optional for the incumbent government; it is an obligation, a constitutional mandate which must be fulfilled by the Armed Forces of Colombia, which have this great responsibility, a responsibility which they cannot delegate. No government can abandon its citizens who live in this half of Colombia to their fate.

**EIR:** But the government insists that the demilitarization is a temporary measure.

**Gen. Bedoya:** Well, we also withdrew from Panama temporarily. That’s how we gave up Panama, and with it, not only did we give up territory, we gave up the Panama Canal as well.

**EIR:** What other measures should be applied?

**Gen. Bedoya:** Enforce the law.

**EIR:** And how would the military aspect operate?

**Gen. Bedoya:** This is not simply a military matter. It’s a matter of state; it’s a policy, a political decision that must be made to reestablish the rule of law — law and order — throughout our national territory. There are many very clear examples of Presidents who made decisions: President Guillermo León Valencia, Dr. Julio César Turbay; and then there are terrible examples, such as Marroquín, who lost Panama. I hope Dr. Pastrana doesn’t follow Marroquín’s example.

**EIR:** We’ve been told that we Colombians have been killing each other in fratricidal warfare for 50 years, and that’s why we find ourselves in these circumstances today. Is this true?

**Gen. Bedoya:** That is a solemn lie. The point is that there have been governments which governed, and those that have misgoverned. We’ve had Presidents who have made the political decision to confront violence when it became necessary to do so. In the 1960s, we had Guillermo León Valencia; in

the 1980s, Julio César Turbay. But, we’ve also had those who misgoverned, who destroyed authority. From 1982 to the present, we’ve had total misgovernment, during which there were events such as the [November 1985] taking of the Justice Palace, and the rampant growth of drug trafficking, which is also the consequence of an absence of authority. We saw this in the previous government, which granted impunity to virtually all the drug traffickers.

In this country, we neither punish nor extradite those who should be extradited; and now we are preparing to grant impunity once again. I’m referring to absolving Tirofijo and all his followers, and then finishing off what remains of the Armed Forces, in a Congress which doesn’t pass laws coherent with our national reality. This is a Congress which has been kidnapped. Every day senators and congressmen are kidnapped, and then they return with messages, and with the desire to legislate on behalf of the terrorists and drug traffickers.

**EIR:** What is your view of the current situation of the Armed Forces?

**Gen. Bedoya:** The Armed Forces have a very important responsibility conferred on them, not by the government, but by the Constitution. This is what they must obey, what the Constitution of the Republic mandates, which is very clear. Equally clear is the criminal code which states that carving up our territory constitutes a crime of treason against the Fatherland. I hope that no one in this country will have to be tried for treason — with the exception of the previous government, which will have to answer for committing treason when it handed over the Caguán region two years ago. The Samper government will have to answer to the people, to society, and to the courts, which hopefully will try these types of Presidents.

**EIR:** What kind of aid or cooperation do you think the United States could offer us?

**Gen. Bedoya:** President Clinton has already announced that he will declare war on international terrorism. Well, here we have the FARC and the ELN, who are international terrorists, as the United States itself has stated. So, while carefully respecting Colombian sovereignty, the United States should begin by doing what it promised it would do.

Otherwise, Colombia needs help in a number of ways. First, by creating an alliance, an association for development; offering capital, technology, marketing, and infrastructure in all those areas affected by the drug trade. There must be a consolidation of the alliance with us in the war on the drug trade, by training personnel, providing equipment to destroy the laboratories in the cocaine complexes; also providing the aerial equipment to allow us to stop the planes that transport coca or coca paste; and supporting our Army. Unfortunately, the previous government didn’t buy all of the 12 Blackhawk helicopters which the U.S. Congress authorized. The govern-

ment only bought seven. The helicopters which the previous government purchased for \$3 to \$4 million apiece, aren't worth more than \$1 million apiece internationally. If the Army doesn't have resources, it will be very difficult for it to do much.

Look at the problem we have, when the Army only has seven Blackhawk helicopters. The first thing that should be done, is to buy the other five, so we have air support. We need a communications satellite. In general, the Armed Forces have to be strengthened. Forget about those congressmen who want to do away with the universal military draft, when we all know that what has to be done as a priority, is to revive the statutes regarding professional soldiers. This has lain dormant in the Congress for more than two years, sleeping the sleep of the dead, and leaving our soldiers, especially our professional soldiers, completely unprotected. Soldiers in Colombia, and particularly professional soldiers, do not receive adequate resources.

The country doesn't have enough soldiers. In a country which should have at least 1% of its population under arms, as any country in peacetime does, Colombia has no more than 120,000 soldiers. It should have 360,000 soldiers. Now they say they want all soldiers to be professionals; yet we know that, because of the violence, and in an economic system which cannot finance professional soldiers, no regulation for the training of the professional soldier has even been defined. There is no way for military service to be exclusively voluntary.

I am sounding the alarm for Colombians, so that we don't lose our Fatherland. The country doesn't belong to the government which happens to be in office. The previous President dedicated himself to destroying the country, and like the Congress, cozied up to the drug traffickers. And, if the current President doesn't wake up, he'll go down the same road, or a worse one.

**EIR:** Some have proposed bringing in foreign troops or UN Blue Helmets.

**Gen. Bedoya:** No, no, no, no. What we need is for the country to make the political decision, that will let our soldiers carry out their duty. Our soldiers are attacked, and stigmatized by the people who think that they alone speak on behalf of human rights—by the non-governmental organizations [NGOs], both foreign and domestic. Here, soldiers who do their duty are persecuted by the offices of the Attorney General and the Prosecutor General. The same is true for officers and non-commissioned officers. The Armed Forces need to have their own system of military justice, so they can do their duty. Everything else is a total lie, and is treason to the Fatherland.

**EIR:** On another occasion, I heard you say that the Department of Vichada is more or less the size of Vietnam. Can you

develop that comparison for us, as it might be useful for the United States?

**Gen. Bedoya:** Vichada is a Department, one of the 30-odd we have now, located in the east. I have an interesting anecdote about this: Once, Gen. Wesley Clarke, when he was head of the U.S. Southern Command, visited Vichada. He was here in January and February of 1997. I was head of the Army, and we went to Vichada, where there is a U.S. radar station. We toured the area, and then he asked me, "General, how large is Vichada?" I answered that it was 100,000 square kilometers. He asked, "How many soldiers are here in Vichada?" I told him that at the base, we had one 1H helicopter and an infantry battalion. He told me, "Look, General, Vichada is more or less the same size as Vietnam. There we had 2,000 helicopters and five divisions. You are heroes for trying to control this territory with the few troops you have here. You need help."

After that conversation, the U.S. Congress authorized the sale of the Blackhawk helicopters; but in the end, because of the previous government's politicking and deal-making, only seven were purchased. We are just now beginning to recover somewhat, to wage the war that has to be waged against the terrorist and drug-trafficking organizations. Vietnam, with 113,000 square kilometers, had a population fighting for its territory, but here, we're dealing with bandits who want to conquer territory for the drug trade.

**EIR:** In other words, the territory that would be under narco-terrorist control, would be the equivalent of five Vietnams.

**Gen. Bedoya:** Yes, five Vietnams and eight Panamas.

**EIR:** What message do you have for the American people and government?

**Gen. Bedoya:** The American people have to understand that Colombia is being threatened by international terrorism and the drug trade. It is well known that there are two terrorist organizations, the FARC and the ELN, here in Colombia. The State Department has them on its list of terrorist organizations. The drug trade has taken Colombia as its theater of operations. The laboratories are here, but there are other countries involved as well.

If we're going to take on this international mafia, the whole world will have to commit itself, and support us with economic and technical resources, to defeat these terrorist mafias, to whom no concessions can be made.

If all these countries unite to build an alliance, which would simultaneously fight against the drug trade and pool resources to develop the whole region, in two years Colombia can solve its problem. We only need two years—but it requires a firm political decision and international support, without making any kind of concessions to these criminal organizations, such as offering them our national territory on a silver platter.