

FARC Narcos Goad Bush To Invade S. America

by Gretchen Small

It was the classic act of a provocateur: On Feb. 13, South America's largest narco-terrorist force, the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), shot down a small U.S. airplane engaged in anti-drug surveillance over the jungles of southern Caquetá province. On board were one Colombian and four American civilians working as defense contractors for the U.S. Southern Command. The FARC executed the Colombian and one of the Americans on the spot, and took the other three Americans hostage.

Lest anyone think this was an initiative by some local FARC commander, the FARC cartel's command issued communiqués taking responsibility for downing the plane, and announcing that they had taken the Americans as "prisoners of war. . . . The lives and physical integrity of the three 'gringo' officers in our power" would only be guaranteed, if the Colombian government re-established "a large demilitarized area" in the region, and released hundreds of FARC jailed terrorists, they demanded.

The execution and kidnapping marked the first strategic hit against U.S. military advisers in Colombia by the FARC command. Former peace adviser to the Colombian government Vicente Torrijos said the obvious: The FARC's use of the Americans to pressure for a prisoner exchange "would indicate that they are doing everything possible to push the United States into an escalating military intervention."

As the FARC escalated, so did its allies in the government of the insane Hugo Chávez in neighboring Venezuela. On Feb. 17, the bodies were found of three dissident soldiers and a girl who were seen being kidnapped on Feb. 15, when they left the Plaza Francia in Altamira, Caracas, where Chávez's military opponents have been camped out since October 2002. The Chávez-controlled police admitted that the four dead had been bound, gagged, and tortured before being executed, but dismissed out of hand that there could be any "political motive" behind the killings.

Three days later, Venezuela's political police, the DISIP, burst into a Caracas restaurant at 1:00 a.m., where Carlos Fernández, head of the national business association Fedecamaras, was dining with other businessmen. Firing their weapons into the air, the DISIP arrested Fernández. Charges brought against him include civilian rebellion, sabotage, treason, and incitement to crime, allegedly because of his role in

the coup attempt against Chávez in April 2002, and the national civic strike this past December-January. An arrest warrant was also issued for the head of the Venezuelan Labor Federation (CTV), Carlos Ortega, who promptly went into hiding. These were followed by arrest warrants issued Feb. 26 against six former managers of the state oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela (PdVSA), who led the continuing strike against that company.

The provocations, calculated to drive the already-hysterical opposition camp into a frenzy, play into the hands of the opposition's radical neo-conservatives. The so-called "Democratic Bloc" of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and leaders of the Merchant Marine's "People of the Sea" used this to step up their nationwide organizing for a Pinochet-style military "solution" to the Chávez problem, in which they would have the United States intervene.

Chávez followed up with a diatribe against foreign protests over the Fernández arrest, using his weekly "Hello, President!" TV marathon Feb. 23, to warn the United States, Colombia, Spain, and Organization of American States Secretary General César Gaviria to stop "meddling" in Venezuelan affairs. Singling out Colombian President Alvaro Uribe Vélez, Chávez suggested he might break relations with his Colombian neighbor. Two days later, bombs exploded at the Colombian and Spanish embassies in Caracas, shattering walls and windows, and injuring four people. Had the explosions not occurred at 2:00 a.m., casualties would have been higher. Leaflets defending Chávez's "Bolivarian Revolution" were found at the scene, signed by the Bolivarian Liberation Front (BLF), a Venezuelan off-shoot of Colombia's FARC, previously known to operate along their border.

'Here We Come!'

Whether the BLF was actually responsible, or this was the action of an unidentified "Third Force" deployed to further chaos in the polarized situation, is not known. However, it should be clear to even the most naïve, that the actions of the FARC-Chávez combo benefit no one but the neo-conservative imperialists running rampant in the Bush Administration. Nor did the Washington nuts pass up the opportunity handed to them. President George Bush informed Congress on Feb. 20 that he was activating his right to waive the Congressionally mandated cap of 400 U.S. troops deployed to Colombia at any one time. Pentagon sources reported a day later, that another 150 U.S. Special Forces were being deployed to "assist" Colombian troops in the search-and-rescue effort.

Three Congressmen—Virginians Tom Davis (R) and Jim Moran (D), and Mark Souder (R-Ind.)—flew to Colombia. After consultations with their Embassy, they called a press conference in Bogotá on Feb. 20, to demand the United States do more than rescue its people. "Retaliation," a "dramatic response," and "major and appropriate action" by the United

States itself, in Colombia, are in order, they insisted. An anonymous Bush Administration official back in Washington told the *Washington Post* that these Congressmen are not the only people thinking that way: "We certainly can expect pressure to respond in a very forceful way."

The cries of "here we come!" from Washington set off a storm in Colombia. Under its Constitution, President Alvaro Uribe cannot accept the presence of the foreign troops on Colombian soil without the permission of his Congress, or if that entity is out of session, then the State Council. There is a difference, too, if the troops are defined as functioning entirely in an advisory capacity on a humanitarian mission, or if they function in a war-fighting capacity.

President Uribe has been quiet on the question of the U.S. troops, but he has escalated a diplomatic campaign in the area to urge neighboring countries to formally pronounce the FARC to be terrorists—an effort to cut off the crucial logistical and political support the FARC receives among these countries, especially Chávez's Venezuela. Whatever position the new Lula government in Brazil takes, will be decisive. Although it has not yet issued an official response, Lula's top foreign policy adviser, Marco Aurelio Garcia, did issue a statement saying that Brazil would *not* pronounce the "FARC insurgents" to be "terrorists," on the specious grounds that Brazil must maintain its "neutrality," should it be asked to negotiate between the FARC and Bogotá. Lurking behind Garcia's de facto support of the FARC—and of Chávez, in earlier statements—is the drive of Washington's neo-conservative imperialists, to lure Brazil into aligning with the continent's narco-terrorist nations and movements, in order to polarize the continent and plunge it into generalized warfare.

The decision to send additional U.S. troops into Colombia, has handed the opponents of President Uribe's popular hard-line war strategy against the FARC, the political platform from which to attack the government, which they previously lacked. The FARC's mouthpieces among Colombia's political elites are now screaming about "gringo invasions," and insist on returning to the doomed strategy of "negotiating the peace." Said Congressman Antonio Navarro Wolfe, the former head of the narco-terrorist M-19, "This is how Vietnam began." Said the former Presidential candidate of the left, Luis Eduardo Garzón, "The Colombian state is losing the ability to govern, while Washington intensifies its incursions." Said Communist Party head Jaime Caycedo, "No Colombian can accept foreign armies."

LaRouche Warns Against Such Stupidity

Blowhards proposing that even a couple hundred U.S. Special Forces could quickly recapture the kidnapped Americans held in Colombia's southern jungles, know nothing about the terrain. The region is enormous, sparsely populated, and largely undeveloped. The FARC has operated there for years, using the region's integrated river system

to move about. In April 2001, the Colombian Army, with U.S. intelligence support, did capture the "Pablo Escobar of Brazil," Brazilian drug-trafficker Luiz Fernando da Costa (nicknamed Fernandinho Beira Mar), whom the FARC was protecting in an eastern area of this jungle. His capture, however, came at the end of a three-month campaign involving more than 3,000 Colombian troops, whose mission was to retake control over the portion of that jungle region from the FARC's 16th Front.

These stepped-up provocations occur as South America is disintegrating, economically and politically. Four countries—Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, and now Bolivia—are, to varying degrees, ungovernable, as two decades of looting under the International Monetary Fund have gutted their economies and national institutions. Similar chaos could break out in any of the other countries in the region, Chile included, on any given day. The drug cartels and narco-terrorists have moved into this institutional vacuum full force, and are making their grab for control of whole countries, as is seen in Bolivia.

Are Washington's politicians so mad, as to imagine that sending in Special Forces can restore order in *this* situation, or force the FARC to negotiate?

U.S. retaliation is "idiocy," Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche stated emphatically, during a Feb. 27 review of this South American powderkeg. The polarization of the continent between the Jacobins and narco-terrorists, on the one side, and neo-con imperialists and their lackeys, on the other side, is exactly what he warned against, LaRouche noted.

The alternative is not negotiations with the FARC, however, LaRouche said. Those (such as the Inter-American Dialogue, or Brazil's Foreign Ministry, Itamaraty), who argue that negotiations with the FARC are a solution, must recognize that the FARC is not an honest negotiating body, but simply terrorists and drug-runners. Bogotá, if its military receives the logistical and intelligence help it requires from its neighbors, can take care of the problem.

LaRouche reiterated the urgency of removing the Chávez problem from the regional equation, by taking due note of and dealing with his insanity. Chávez is a lunatic, and his lunacy opens the door to operations against him by people in the United States who might want to bump him off, LaRouche emphasized. He appears to be trying to become the Salvador Allende of Venezuela, and worse. (In 1973, Chile's President Allende was killed during Henry Kissinger's coup d'état by Gen. Augusto Pinochet.) LaRouche reiterated what he had stated in December: That the only way to neutralize the Chávez danger, is to treat Chávez as a mentally unbalanced fool, who needs medical help, and thus remove him from the picture, before he provides opportunities for others to make him the excuse for their imperialist games. Those who refuse to recognize and use this flank, are only worsening the problem, LaRouche emphasized.