

region of the country, who was highly successful in ridding that region of a murderous narco-subversive infestation. Today, Yanine is under arrest on human rights abuse charges. Bedoya himself was threatened with jail by a judge in Caqueta province, when he and Gen. Nestor Ramírez, commander of the 12th Army Brigade headquartered in Caqueta's capital of Florencia, refused to heed the judge's order that military barricades around that city be lifted and 25,000 rampaging coca-farmers under the direct leadership of the FARC Cartel be allowed to enter Florencia. Had Bedoya heeded the order, according to Florencia mayor Hector Orozco, "they would have completely destroyed the city," and held hostage an entire region of the country (see interview).

General Bedoya also attacked human rights lobby groups such as Amnesty International, noting that these groups "do not base themselves on the reality of the conflict Colombia is facing. Under the pretext of defending human rights, the human rights NGOs cannot eliminate the right to legitimate self-defense."

The extradition weapon

The corruption of the Colombian justice system is also at the heart of the Clinton administration's battle with Samper over extradition of drug traffickers, which the drug cartels succeeded in banning in 1991. Because of the judiciary's inability to mete out justice to the cartel kingpins running the country, Washington has demanded the restoration of the U.S.-Colombian extradition treaty as a precondition for Colombia's recertification by Washington next year. The result is that a piece of legislation purporting to reinstate extradition is now before the Colombian Congress, facing months of procedural formalities before it can be voted into law.

In reality, the legislation is little more than a stall tactic on Samper's part, in view of the many conditions attached: 1) it cannot be applied retroactively, that is, the drug traffickers already in jail, such as Cali Cartel kingpins Miguel and Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, are safe from extradition; 2) it cannot be applied to "political crimes," such as those carried out by the FARC Cartel; 3) the sentences received by those extradited must be equal or shorter than the sentences defined for those same crimes by the Colombian penal code, which has been significantly modified by drug cartel lawyers; 4) it cannot be applied to anyone who voluntarily surrenders to Colombian justice; and so on.

Prosecutor General Alfonso Valdivieso described the proposed legislation as worse than useless because of all the conditions attached, and warned that it was sending "a wrong message to the International Community." "We could end up paying dearly" for such a trick, he said.

Also rejecting Samper's extradition legislation, was U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Myles Frechette, who said, "What has so far been approved in Congress doesn't really meet international requirements, nor does it allow Colombia to face its responsibilities on organized crime."

Interview: Harold Bedoya Pizarro

In defense of justice

Gen. Harold Bedoya Pizarro is Colombian Armed Forces Commander. The following are excerpts of an interview conducted by EIR correspondent in Bogotá Javier Almarío on Oct. 31.

EIR: What do you think of this homage that civil society is rendering to the military forces?

Bedoya: This homage is being rendered to the military forces, and in particular to the national Army, for its fight against terrorism and the drug trade. Above all, this homage is a rejection of the juridical warfare that the terrorists are waging against the [military] institution, and against the generals and officers who have attempted to take on the criminals. It is important that society take a stand, so that justice can return to Colombia. I believe that those responsible for administering justice in Colombia had better think good and hard about this, because society is protesting the unjust treatment of the military, of the generals of the Republic, whose only actions have been to serve all Colombians and who, in particular, have participated in the pacification of vast areas that were in the hands of the criminals. . . .

EIR: Why do you propose that civilians be tried by military courts?

Bedoya: What I am referring to are these drug-trafficking groups, those who go around armed, with rifles on their shoulders, in uniforms, and who say they belong to armies. . . . These are not civilians. Anyone who carries a rifle, a machine gun, and bombs to kill Colombians is no civilian, and must be tried by military justice. . . .

Interview: Héctor Orozco Orozco

Héctor Orozco Orozco is mayor of Florencia, Caquetá, Colombia. The following are excerpts of an Oct. 31 interview conducted by Javier Almarío.

EIR: You have stated that the media did not report the truth of what was going on in Caquetá, with the coca-farmer marches.

Orozco: We paid a great deal of attention to what the media were saying, and they were not telling the country the truth. For example, they never said that during the marches, where