

Colombia hands over territory to the FARC, without firing a shot

by Javier Almarío

Ernesto Samper Pizano, the President of Colombia who was elected to office with \$6 million in contributions from the Cali drug cartel, in late May issued decree 16,038, which ordered Colombia's troops to evacuate 13,161 square kilometers of national territory, in the drug-infested eastern plains region—a swath of land which corresponds to more than half the territory of the state of Israel. The purported reason for the demilitarization, is to meet the demands of the FARC narco-terrorists for freeing 72 soldiers they have held hostage since last year. The FARC seized most of the soldiers when they overran the military base of Las Delicias last August, slaughtering dozens and capturing the rest.

Samper is proceeding with this operation under the prompting and watchful eye of the United Nations and its affiliated non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are intent on creating a model for how *they* believe nations should handle narco-terrorist insurgencies—i.e., capitulate. They are orchestrating the Colombian case as an explicit alternative to what Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori did in April of this year, when a highly trained Peruvian commando force succeeded in rescuing 71 of 72 hostages who had been held captive for 126 days, without making a single concession to their MRTA narco-terrorist captors.

Samper, on the other hand, has gradually accepted each and every demand of the FARC narco-terrorists, in many cases over the angry protests of his own military. Where Fujimori expelled representatives of the International Red Cross, who were caught virtually red-handed collaborating with the MRTA, and kept the UN's NGOs in check so that he could carry out the military operation, Samper brought the UN, the Red Cross, and the NGOs in to collaborate in his surrender plan.

The demilitarization procedure hands the territory over to the narco-terrorists without their having to fire a shot. For 32 days, it will be without military or police authorities. After the 32 days, the zone will only be recoverable through military action that will more resemble regular warfare than the guerrilla warfare that has dominated thus far. Two military bases, in Cartagena del Chairá and Remolinos del Caguán, both of which have played a strategic role in fighting the FARC-dominated drug trade in the region, will be abandoned, and

could be seized by the narco-terrorists, or even mined. Some military analysts suggest it might have been better if the Army itself had dynamited the bases. Samper, however, expressed confidence “in the good faith” of the narco-terrorists, which is supposed to be “verified” by representatives of the Red Cross and other international organizations.

Samper has also ordered the suspension of arrest warrants against Milton Doncel (alias Joaquín), José Benito Cabrera (alias Fabian), and Ezequiel Huelguia Cruz (alias Rolando), all commanders of the FARC's so-called “Southern bloc.”

Samper would not have been able to carry out the operation without support from *within* the Armed Forces of treasonous Army Commander Gen. Manuel José Bonett Locarno. Bonett, surely flattered by Samper with the offer of becoming head of the Armed Forces (a post currently occupied by Gen. Harold Bedoya, who remained firmly opposed to the demilitarization plan), stated in a recent interview that all soldiers who do battle and who “smell of powder” needed to be expelled from the Army's ranks (see *Documentation*).

Law of the jungle

Not only soldiers are abandoning the region. Victor Oime Ospina, the mayor of Cartagena del Chairá, announced that he, too, is leaving, because he fears the FARC will order his assassination. The population in general is terrified, given that the Army is practically the only real representation of the Colombian state they have had to rely on in this distant region of the country. The only ones who have expressed satisfaction with the demilitarization are the coca growers sponsored by the FARC. In recent months, the Army and police have dismantled cocaine laboratories and destroyed coca crops in this FARC-infested territory.

Meanwhile, a new kind of inhabitant is appearing on the streets of Cartagena del Chairá—representatives of Amnesty International, Americas Watch, and other NGOs affiliated with the United Nations; representatives of the International Red Cross, who are charged with verifying the absence of the Colombian state in this region; and a legion of foreign journalists, many of whom have just come from witnessing the surgical military strike ordered by the Peruvian government to rescue the hostages held by the MRTA.

Later, Samper's negotiating team will arrive, made up of FARC collaborators and UN agents: Augusto Ramírez Ocampo, former head of the UN mission in El Salvador; Alvaro Leyva Durán, the FARC's unofficial messenger-boy; Father Luis Augusto Castro, bishop of San Vicente del Caguán, a township neighboring the evacuated zone; and priest Jorge Martínez.

It would be very foolish to believe, once the soldiers are released by the FARC — if they in fact comply with that promise — that the narco-terrorists will withdraw and permit Colombian soldiers to return to their bases and to control of the territory.

In fact, the narc-FARC has every intention of winning UN recognition of their dominion over this portion of Colombian territory, as a first step in the fracturing of the nation-state. On several occasions, the narc-FARC has declared its ownership of the provinces of Caquetá, Huila, Putumayo, and Meta, in Colombia's south, and of the Atlantic Coast in the north. Meanwhile, the so-called ELN, another narco-terrorist organization allied to the FARC, claims dominion over Santander, Santander del Norte, and Arauca, in the region bordering Venezuela.

The election farce

The FARC and ELN have threatened to assassinate all the mayoral, gubernatorial, congressional, and senatorial candidates from these provinces, and warn that they will not allow the holding of elections, which at present are set to occur in late 1997 and in the first half of 1998. Two municipal mayors in those regions have been assassinated in just the last two weeks in May, while several politicians and/or members of their families have been kidnapped.

At the same time, the FARC and ELN have succeeded in striking lucrative deals with the multinational oil companies, and with other foreign and Colombian companies, through which 10% of their revenues end up in the coffers of the narco-terrorists. The image of Kabila's Congo unavoidably springs to mind.

A petition for postponing the elections due to lack of guarantees, has begun to circulate among Colombia's political class. The only candidate who has taken on the drug cartels is former Prosecutor General Alfonso Valdivieso, famous for having dared to criminally charge narco-President Samper himself. However, there is no guarantee that Valdivieso will make it to the Presidential elections alive; his cousin, front-running Presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, was murdered in 1989 by cartel assassins.

Indeed, the only candidate with "life insurance" provided by the Samper narco-government, the narco-terrorists, and the Cali Cartel chieftains, is Horacio Serpa Uribe, Samper's former interior minister and the undisputed *éminence grise* of the Samper regime, whose Presidential campaign is dedicated to preserving the narco-dictatorship that reigns in Colombia today.

Documentation

The following excerpts are from a May 18 interview with the Colombian daily El Tiempo by Colombian Army Commander Gen. Manuel José Bonett Locarno.

El Tiempo: Last year, there was some reluctance to withdraw [as per the FARC's demands], given the constitutional mission of the Army in those areas.

Bonett: What happened is that Puerres and Las Delicias [massacres committed by narco-terrorists against troops] were still fresh, and you must understand that we are human beings, not toy soldiers, and all of that was still very real. Those were very explainable psychological attitudes, but time puts one in one's place, and we all have a very clear idea of what must be done.

El Tiempo: So if the President gave the vacate order this moment, you would heed it?

Bonett: The most famous and celebrated soldier of this century is Gen. Douglas MacArthur. MacArthur won the war in the Pacific and achieved Japan's surrender. A weak and vulnerable President like Truman, who didn't have a single medal and who had never fired a shot, said one day during the Korean War: "Stop the operations, I don't want to go further." Then MacArthur, an imposing man over six feet tall, famous and with 400 awards, the absolute boss of the Pacific, rebelled against him, and President Truman fired him. . . .

El Tiempo: Is it the case that the military forces are more civilian-like and less war-like?

Bonett: I am not a warmonger, because Colombian society doesn't like warmongers. Colombian society is bored with war, and when a warmonger shows up sweating and smelling of powder, that is not what this population wants. I speak for that population.

El Tiempo: One gets the impression from your words that the time has come to retire the warmongers.

Bonett: Yes. There are no more warmongers in the Army. . . . I am an anti-hero. . . . The truly dangerous warmongers, who not only need to be retired but guarded against, are the civilian warmongers. One can't even go out, or attend a reception, without these types showing up to incite. . . .

El Tiempo: Isn't your honor stained by this negotiation [with the FARC]?

Bonett: No, no. I don't believe in principles. I don't speak for principles. Never believe in men who act on principles. Those of us who lead some sector of society must act on the interests of society, and I cannot sacrifice the interests of society for my principles. . . .