

and exploitation contracts, and the Samper government mandated the signing of several agreements for collaboration with the British in training Colombia's security personnel. Among these was the stipulation that Scotland Yard train agents of Colombia's Administrative Security Department (DAS), and that MI-5, Britain's secret intelligence agency, train the elite units of both the Colombian National Police and Army. Special British interest in DAS's rural section is said to be related to British oil investments — curious, given that the rural DAS is known to be composed largely of amnestied narco-terrorists.

Through another public scandal which erupted recently, over the presence in Colombia of Defence Systems mercenaries, the police revealed that a cooperation agreement exists, by which SAS trains a group of police agents. Although Defence

Systems and BP say that DSL employees have nothing to do with training police, the truth is that it is very difficult to distinguish between an SAS agent and an ex-SAS agent.

The drug connection

The presence of ex-SAS mercenaries is not new, however. According to the Aug. 13, 1989 issue of the London *Times*, that year the Cali Cartel hired a group of retired SAS agents, led by Peter McAleese, David Tomkins, Alex Lennon, and Geoffrey Adams to train the private army of kingpin-brothers Miguel and Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, and to carry out an operation to kidnap rival Medellín cartel chieftain Pablo Escobar Gaviria. The British mercenaries were all veterans of the independence war in Zimbabwe. Curiously, the operation to kill Escobar failed. But on Aug. 18, five days after the

London, the new lord of Mexico's skies?

Britain is out to seize control of Mexico's national airport grid, when the planned privatization of 35 of Mexico's 57 state-run airports (including two of the most important, the international airports of Mexico City and Guadalajara) finally goes ahead. A delegation of *six hundred* British officials and businessmen visiting on July 21-25, announced during a seminar on "U.K.-Mexico Airport Links" in Guadalajara, that they plan to invest \$2 billion in Mexican airports.

The security implications of who controls Mexico's airports, and their related electronic communications grid, are staggering: 70% of the cocaine entering the United States comes through Mexico, some by land, some by sea, but much by air. Air transport routes were so upgraded under the reign of Juárez cartel kingpin, Amado Carrillo Fuentes, that he was given the nickname "Lord of the Skies." (Lord Carrillo arranged flights from Colombia of entire Boeing 727s packed with cocaine, until he died from complications during a liposuction surgery gone awry in early July.)

Mexican security officials are on alert, as to just what agency will provide security for the soon-to-be privatized airports. The officials report that the issue of privatized security is now on the table in a big way in Mexico, because of the ongoing privatization of the infrastructure previously owned, run, and *protected* by the state. When Mexico's highways were privatized a few years back, for example, the hottest issue was: Who would patrol them and provide security? When the highways were run by the

federal government, security was provided by either the military or the federal highway patrol. For the moment, the military is still assigned to the job.

The delegation of the British Airport Group was led by its president, Sir Gil Thompson. He brought along with him the commercial director for Capital Projects of DERA, the scientific and research agency of the British Defense Ministry, as well as officials from Britain's Department of Trade and Industry, and Trevor Hines, the Second Trade Secretary at the British Embassy, with responsibility for "aerospace, airports, ships and ports, urban transportation, security equipment and tourism." (Hines's previous assignment, during 1990-95, was consul in Belize.)

Among the representatives of leading British imperial corporations were:

- David Thornton, director for global business of Midland Bank PLC, in Mexico City. Midland Bank is part of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp.
- Roger T. Nunn, president of BP-Mexico.
- Carl R. Griffiths, manager for business development, Mexico and Central America, AIR BP, a "worldwide commercial network within the BP group, related to the marketing of fuel and technical services for aviation."
- Roberto Latapi, Mexican representative of Barclays Bank PLC, one of the member banks of the Crown Agents Foundation.
- Phil Baker, general manager for commercial development, Manchester Airport, PLC, another Crown Agents corporation. Among their specialties is the provision of security systems for airports.
- Nigel Smith, sales manager for Simoco International, Ltd., "one of the leading firms in the world in radio-communications and related services . . . [including] in the area of public transportation and local government security."