

Andean Report by Valerie Rush

The war on the oil pipelines

As the Barco government prepares its "democratic" elections, Colombia's narco-terrorists prepare to reap the rewards.

With the March 13 elections in Colombia, Moscow's irregular warfare armies are positioned to capture vast portions of that nation's territory, by the "legal" pathway of first-ever mayoral elections.

Through a combination of economic sabotage of basic infrastructure, and kidnappings and assassinations of local officials and police agents, the Cuban-trained narco-terrorists of the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Moscow-backed Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are determined to move into the power vacuum that now exists.

The ELN has not only directed its terrorism against the country's most vital infrastructure—Pol Pot-style—but has set about to "judge" the performance of elected authorities by kidnapping dozens for interrogation on whether they were fulfilling their popular mandates. Those found "acceptable" are returned to their homes, always aware of surveillance. Those found deficient. . . .

Between 1985 and December 1987, according to the daily *El Espectador*, more than 120 assaults were carried out against the country's oil and gas installations, the majority of them belonging to the state oil company Ecopetrol, with another score of such acts already perpetrated in 1988.

El Espectador editorialized Feb. 15, "It has cost our [state oil] company \$48 million in unconsummated sales. . . . With these simple figures collapses the perfidious and hypocritical claim that the fight is against imperialism, that eternal and already anemic war horse, when Colombia is

facing the most dangerous multinational imperialism of all, that of the drug trade."

A glance at but a few of the terrorist attacks carried out in 1988 gives an idea of the scope of the narco-terrorist offensive:

- Jan. 12: two dynamite assaults on the country's most important oil pipeline in eastern Colombia, the Caño-Limón line from the Venezuelan border to the Caribbean port of Covenas. The gas pipeline in Barrancabermeja was also dynamited.

- Jan. 13: Two more pipeline explosions in the Catatumbo region, with a loss of 20,000 barrels.

- Jan. 14: Another explosion damaged the Caño-Limón line.

- Jan. 15: Thirty meters of pipeline tubing in Arauca destroyed, with a loss of 50,000 barrels.

- Jan. 16: Oil refineries at Barrancabermeja and Cartagena are paralyzed by attacks.

- Jan. 17: The most promising oil exploration project in Casanare was suspended when the ELN destroyed the mining drill in a dynamite attack.

- Jan. 18: In Tamalameque, a piece of oil pipeline was shattered by an unidentified explosion.

- Jan. 25: A new assault on the Caño-Limón pipeline.

- Feb. 5: The ELN exploded a car-bomb in front of the main headquarters of Occidental Petroleum in Bogota, injuring 13.

- Feb. 9: Unidentified guerrillas dynamited 40 meters of pipeline in Oru, setting fires and contaminating the Tarra River.

- Feb. 11: Assault on a multiple-

use pipeline going from Medellín to the airport.

- Feb. 11: Assault on Neiva-Puerto Salgar pipeline.

- Feb. 11: In Arauca, narco-terrorists destroyed heavy machinery, storage tank and crane of the company, Integral de Servicios.

- Feb. 12: The ELN claimed responsibility for the bombing of the Alvarado oil pipeline in northern Tolima department.

The southern jungle department of Caquetá, heavily penetrated by the FARC, is a veritable laboratory for Moscow's irregular warfare experiments; the cultivation and refining of cocaine is the primary economic activity of the population, and the source of funding for the FARC terrorists. Caquetá is also key strategically, connecting the mountainous zone of the Andes with both the eastern plains and the Amazon jungle region of the country.

Caquetá is divided into virtual "independent republics" under the armed occupation of the FARC; only a combined military offensive and economic recovery effort on the part of the national government could turn this around. Even with the government's appointment of an active general as governor, International Monetary Fund-dictated austerity makes it unlikely that a development program capable of winning back the population will be effected.

Under such circumstances, the FARC intends to use the March 13 elections to consolidate its stranglehold. During the course of a single week in mid-January, nearly a half-dozen elected officials and local candidates in the department were murdered by the FARC. The message is being read loud and clear by non-Communist candidates across the country.