

# Washington Policy Is Throwing Andean Nations to the Narco-Terrorists

by Valerie Rush

The most dangerous narco-terrorist force in the Western Hemisphere, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, has opened a qualitatively new phase of warfare against Colombia. No longer content with ambushing military and police patrols, and terrorizing scores of small towns into coming under their “umbrella of protection”—under which functions the world’s largest cocaine cartel—the FARC is now dynamiting bridges, highways, reservoirs, electricity transformers, pipelines, and airports, and is doing so with the deliberate intent of encircling and isolating Colombia’s major cities.

For the first time, targets around the capital city of Bogotá have been hit, including the Chingaza Dam, which supplies 60% of Bogotá’s water. Whole areas of Meta, the department just south of Cundinamarca, where Bogotá is located, have been left in darkness, its electricity cut.

The Armed Forces have been re-deployed, in a vain attempt to protect 2,000 of what the government has defined as “strategic targets” of national infrastructure. As a consequence, the military *cordon sanitaire* that had been established around the giant FARC-run “demilitarized zone” in the south has been lifted, and the terrorizing of Colombia’s cities has begun.

## Playing Wall Street’s Games

In testimony before the Senate Select Intelligence Committee hearing on “National Security Threats to the United States” on Feb. 6, CIA chief George Tenet acknowledged that the peace process in Colombia with the FARC “is not going forward.” The United States is concerned that the FARC “may up the ante” in the run-up to the May Presidential elections, he warned, and may not only threaten Colombians, “but us,” although he made the ridiculous assertion that the reason the FARC “poses a serious threat to U.S. interests in Latin America, [is] because it associates us with the government it is fighting against.”

What Tenet, and the State Department officials who accompanied him at the hearings, failed to mention, is that the new phase of FARC warfare against Colombia, of which they rightfully warn, is a direct consequence of the mid-January decision by the Bush Administration itself, to continue the Wall Street-dictated policy of negotiating with these killers.

Since Colombian President Andrés Pastrana took office

in August 1998, the U.S. State Department has been the enforcer of that Wall Street policy upon Colombia, not only encouraging, but often initiating the Pastrana regime’s continual concessions to the FARC, under the cover of negotiating a peace accord—including the shocking decision to split Colombia into pieces, by granting the FARC sole control of a territory the size of Switzerland in the south of the country.

In the wake of Sept. 11, however, that pro-terrorist policy came under fire in Washington, freeing Colombia to consider another course. In mid-January, Pastrana challenged the FARC to a showdown. The narco-terrorists were told to end their attacks on the civilian population and their destruction of infrastructure, and agree to a cease-fire, or face a military reoccupation of their southern refuge.

But by the time the Jan. 20 deadline Pastrana set had arrived, the winds in Washington had shifted back toward Wall Street’s policy of negotiations with narco-terrorism. Pastrana backed down, withdrew the military’s *cordon sanitaire* around the FARC’s demilitarized zone, and committed his government to another round of negotiations—with the added disaster of placing them under the supervision of the “international community.” The narco-terrorists celebrated their victory by turning against the cities.

It was bad enough that the Bush Administration’s much-touted commitment to a “war on terrorism” was nowhere in evidence on the day that Pastrana capitulated. Even worse was the three-day deployment of a high-level State Department delegation to Bogotá in early February, to further the project to restructure the Colombian Armed Forces along utopian, “rapid deployment force” (RDF) lines, which will even further cripple the nation’s ability to defend itself. The centerpiece of the Bush team’s visit, was the plan to provide \$98 million in funding for a specially trained RDF: not to protect Colombia’s cities, but its *oil pipelines* and the millions of dollars in foreign investment they represent. One senior Defense Department official said that the brigade’s protection might “eventually” be extended to other national infrastructure.

## The FARC ‘Contagion’

The FARC contagion is advancing across South America, in the wake of that Bush Administratioan decision. Bolivia, whose government under President Jorge Quiroga is engaged

in the final stage of eradicating *all* illegal coca cultivation within its territory, despite an empty treasury, is facing a FARC-style insurgency which is threatening to overrun the country.

In mid-January, thousands of coca-growers, instigated by drug legalization mouthpiece and São Paulo Forum terrorist Evo Morales, clashed with government forces sent to shut down the coca markets which feed into the world's cocaine pipeline. The casualties of that clash included a number of policemen and soldiers who had been executed, some even decapitated, by Morales' crazed supporters.

Blame for the deaths was laid squarely on the shoulders of Morales, whose status as a legislator could no longer hide his narco-terrorist actions. The Quiroga government moved quickly to win Congressional approval for lifting Morales' parliamentary immunity, and then arrested scores of provocateur collaborators of the terrorist leader. They also shut down the *cocaleros'* clandestine radio station, which had been agitating for expanding the violence.

Morales responded by warning that his forces would come up with "new forms of arguments to defend what has always been theirs: land, coca, and their dignity." Those "new forms of arguments" are already being implemented by Morales ally Felipe Quispe. "El Mallku," as Quispe calls himself, is head of the Bolivian CSUTCB peasant union and a prominent agitator for forging an "Indian Brotherhood" across the Americas. Following Morales' ouster from Congress, Quispe called for an unlimited general strike throughout Bolivia, to begin on Feb. 1 and to last "for one to two years," or until the government ends its coca eradication program and reopens the coca markets. Quispe demands that foreign agricultural products be seized and burned, food transport into the cities blocked, and *cocalero* patrols deployed to beat and whip strike "violators."

The critical Cochabamba-Santa Cruz highway has been targeted. These same forces are also calling for the shutdown of the Bolivian Congress, and convocation of a Constituent Assembly to rewrite the national Constitution, precisely the demands of their narco-terrorist brethren to the north, the FARC.

There are other similarities, as well. While the FARC narco-terrorists were literally embraced by Wall Street (New York Stock Exchange President Richard Grasso hugged FARC financial manager Raúl Reyes after their meeting in 1999), Quispe has similarly found favor with the international banking elites, who see South America's drug crops as a vital revenue source for their dying financial system. The City of London's *Financial Times* carried an article in its Feb. 2-3 issue, in which author Paul Keller describes Quispe glowingly: "The media-savvy Quispe cannot be brushed aside as an extremist. He speaks for Andean highlanders who feel cheated by 15 years of harsh economic adjustment. He has numbers on his side, too. Quechua and Aymara Indians outnumber those of mixed or European blood by three to one.

... If any South American country is ripe for revolution, it has to be impoverished Bolivia."

Incredibly, this description was written *after* Quispe stunned the world with his chilling comment on the Sept. 11 attacks, that his peasant federation "sends a fraternal and revolutionary salute to those who carried out the attack. Imperialism is killing the world. . . . I believe we need these kinds of actions to destroy the enemy."

## **FARC Spreads Into Peru and Venezuela**

Neighboring Peru, which under former President Alberto Fujimori had succeeded in turning the tide against the narco-terrorist onslaught, is facing a renewed insurgency. Latest reports are that a FARC column has crossed the border from Colombia, to hold negotiations on common strategy with the remnants of the Shining Path narco-terrorists.

But the country where the narco-terrorists are closest to wielding real power is Venezuela, where the Hugo Chávez government has moved more and more openly to acknowledging its alliance with the FARC. In recent weeks, Chávez dismissed his former mentor, Luis Miquilena, from the cabinet, and nominated in his place as Interior and Justice Minister, the special operations and intelligence operative, retired Navy Capt. Ramón Rodríguez Chacín, despite the fact that Chacín has been repeatedly identified as Chávez's liaison to the terrorists.

In the aftermath of that nomination, public accusations that the Chávez government is complicit in working with the FARC flooded the Venezuelan and Colombian media. During that time, a group of Venezuelan journalists led by newspaper editor Ibeyise Pacheco released a video showing high-level representatives of the Venezuelan Armed Forces secretly entering Colombian territory, to facilitate the release of a Venezuelan captive of the 33rd Front of the FARC. The close relations between the Venezuelan officers and the terrorist leader Rubén Zamora were unmistakable on the tape.

Chávez admitted that the mission had taken place, but baldly insisted it was an "humanitarian gesture," and that no proof of his alliance with the FARC exists.

That same week, Congressman Gerardo Blyde charged that Rodríguez Chacín's appointment as Interior Minister was intended to put Chávez's "Bolivarian Militias" into training under FARC commandos, with all that implies.

Further evidence of FARC/Chávez collaboration surfaced the same week, during a televised interview with former Venezuelan intelligence director Jesús Urdaneta Hernández, who claimed that through Rodríguez Chacín, the Chávez government had offered the FARC medicine, oil, bank credit, and refuge in Venezuela, in exchange for their commitment to keep the border area between Colombia and Venezuela free of banditry and violence. Urdaneta said that he had left the government before the program was implemented, but that he assumes, given Chávez's ideological closeness to the FARC, that the program is fully operational today.