

ACTION ON COLOMBIA

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A LESSER EVIL: ERADICATE THE PRESENT ANTI-DRUG POLICY? by Ricardo Vargas, Accion Andina Colombia



Between 1992 and 1998, around 2.5 million liters of a chemical herbicide called glyphosate* were sprayed in Colombia to eradicate more than 19,000 hectares of poppy and 41,000 hectares of coca. Today, in the year 2000, no anti-narcotic authority knows for certain how much poppy cultivation there is in Colombia. The CIA recently reported that 125,000 hectares of coca are being grown in the country - three times as much coca than before spraying began. This means a production potential of more than 500 tons of cocaine for the world market.

There are two ways of understanding this failure to eradicate illegal crops. The anti-drug authorities in the United States say that it is due to the innocuous nature of glyphosate whose low destructive potential (only 27.50% per area fumigated) they continue to acknowledge. This is why Washington, having decided to use glyphosate at the beginning of the 80's, has maintained pressure on Colombia to continue experimenting with chemicals capable of guaranteeing a higher destructive capacity. Since 1976, the various Colombian administrations have accepted this blackmail and, in fact, have carried out illegal experiments in open country: with Paraquat in 1978,

with Tricopyr in September, 1985, and with Tebuthiurón in April, 1986 and in 1998. Because of opposition from different pressure groups and social sectors to this type of violation of economic and social rights and of environmental standards, the Clinton administration, through the Department of Agriculture, has offered a political space in which the Pastrana administration can reach an agreement with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), which would allow it to begin experimentation with biological eradication. They are aiming to have genetically altered the fungus *Fusarium oxysporum* to act as a predator of coca by the year 2003.

This view of handling the problem is part of a global policy called "Reduction of Offer Strategy." The strategy supposes that by applying forceful intervention in the source countries (eradication, destruction of primitive laboratories, etc.), the production of drugs is prevented and illegal usage is halted. According to the defenders of this policy, the reduction of illegal cultivation has not been achieved because there has not been a significant increase in the above-mentioned methods of intervention, methods which today are centered on the involvement of the armed forces.

There is another way of understanding this failure. In the first place it is impossible to demolish by blood and fire the desire to take drugs. Attempts to physically eradicate these psychoactive substances have led to a permanent transfer of their production on a planetary level. To give just one example: The success in eradicating heroin in Turkey around 1973 fueled the production of opium in the United States, which in turn resulted in the entrance of Mexico into the North American heroin market. This has lasted 25 years, in spite of poppy fumigation beginning with Paraquat in 1976.

On a national level in Colombia, the following perverse phenomenon reoccurs: the success of the coca eradication efforts in the amazon departments, such as Guaviare, result in growth in new areas, in Putumayo and from there to Vichada, Vaupes, and the

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*Glyphosate is made by Monsanto and marketed in the U.S. as "Roundup."

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Catatumbo region, etc. And even if success is achieved in Colombia, there are 650 million hectares in the Amazon with biophysical conditions that would allow the installation of 200,000 hectares, enough to satisfy the world demand for cocaine.

In the history of using forceful intervention against illicit drug cultivation, there has never been a time when the global volume of drugs being produced was diminished to a level where the market demand for drugs could not be met. The increase or decrease of cultivation performs in a way **TOTALLY INDEPENDENT OF FORCEFUL INTERVENTION**. Fluctuations in drug trafficking capital are what most significantly affects the volume of drug cultivation. For example, the cultivation of coca in Peru was affected by the severe fall in prices and consequent periods of extreme scarcity that occurred when the buyer drug lords were murdered, killings that forced drug-traffickers to hide for a while.

Ironically, Washington with its anti-drug policy has attempted to take credit for the temporary disorganization of the illegal economy and proclaims the success of the air-bridge over the Colombian-Peruvian border, the alternative development combined with militarization in Bolivia, etc. General McCaffrey attributes success in Peru to military action and alternative development. The fallacious use of this logic is completely proven with the Colombian situation: having intensively fumigated the coca and poppy crops for 9 years, these same crops have grown from 41,000 hectares in 1992 to 122,500 in 1999. Nonetheless, General McCaffrey reaffirms this failed strategy with more false information: the guerrilla has prevented fumigation and, therefore, the militarization of the south is now more necessary than ever in order to show, in spite of all the mathematical

evidence to the contrary, that the strategy works. It is enough to point out that the zones under strategic control of the insurgency, such as Miraflores in Guaviare, Middle and Low Caguan, have been fumigated intensively, including pastures, legal crops, local alternative experimental crops, such as rubber and cocoa, livestock, sources of water, fish, people, schools, civil society, etc.

The transfer of crops generates more environmental damage, but the drug-trafficking capital continues unharmed and active, like a motor capable of putting areas and the necessary manpower into production. Paradoxically, in the six versions identified up until now of Plan Colombia, there is one common element: **THERE IS NO STRATEGY AGAINST DRUG-TRAFFICKING**. While spatial and temporary actions against the cultivators and against the guerrilla - which control 1% (\$500 million) of the global movement of cocaine - are defined in Plan Colombia, there is no clear strategy against money-laundering, no stand in favor of the confiscation of goods, or against the private armies which they help to finance. Nor is there a plan to control the intermediaries, the buyers of the raw material in the production zones. There is not a word of any of this. While the North American politicians, the arms producers, the herbicide manufacturers, the money launderers, the Colombian government, the armed forces and now, The United Nations International Drug Control Programme amuse themselves and profit from the war against the producers in the south of Colombia, the drug-trafficker continues to buy a kilo of cocaine for \$2,000 in Colombia and to sell it in Frankfurt for \$150,000. Without a doubt, in the years to come, each time organized crime produces a kilo of cocaine there will be a celebration, and with it, a "toast for Plan Colombia!"

Material Aid for San José de Apartadó

The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin (Madison) raised funds for San José in their annual "Freeze for Food" 10K run/ 5K walk on January 22, 2000 with CSN participation on the sidelines. The day was overcast and in the 20's, a good day for runners and walkers and a very good day for San José. Last year \$2,200 were collected and sent to Colombia, but the 2000 event raised \$2,905!

The money is used by the Peace Community of San José to buy food, tools, and seeds for refugee farming families who have begun their return to outlying hamlets and for those waiting until it is safe to do so. The funds are sorely needed, and it is appropriate that they go to people in need in Madison's sister community. The RCPV's promote peace, understanding, and sharing within our global community, and CSN is thankful that they have chosen to share with the people of Colombia.

A Few Words on Plan Colombia

THE RUB: Washington has poured millions of dollars into Colombia over the last 20 years, and the drug trade has only grown. The aid supports an army with extensive paramilitary links and one of the world's worst human rights records. The recently passed aid package will have little effect on drug kingpins -- U.S. officials acknowledge that paramilitary groups control the major processing and trafficking facilities. And only a tiny fraction of the aid will help coca growers switch to legal crops.

COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE OPEN: On July 29, the town of Arboleda, in the heart of the coffee region, was attacked by FARC. The attack killed 8 policemen and 2 women from the town. CSN condemns FARC tactics particularly the killing of innocent civilians, their destruction of small towns, creation of more refugees, and use of child soldiers. But even more disturbing is the fact that U.S. helicopters given to Colombia ostensibly for the anti-narcotics war were, in the words of U.S. State Department spokesman Philip Reeker, "mobilized to come to the aid of the other forces in the town that was being attacked." So, the secret is out in the open. The U.S. aid is being used for counter-insurgency. Mr. Reeker is still checking to see if the pilots were Americans..... Vietnam anyone?

U'wa Leaders, Berito and Buruchuwa Kuwaru'wa, Visit the United States

"Our land is our mother. The earth is a living being, exactly like each one of us... The oil is the blood of Mother Earth. If we extract this oil, we create an imbalance."

~ Buruchuwa
Kuwaru'wa

Photos by Dick Bancroft



"Plan Colombia is increasing the war and the internal displacement of farmers and campesinos... We ask for your solidarity and we ask for you to be conscious that this planet - without water, without plants, and without air, will not be able to survive."

~ Buruchuwa
Kuwaru'wa

by Jackie Downing

Riding a wave of growing international outrage, two Colombian U'wa indigenous leaders traveled to Madison, Wisconsin on July 19th to meet the family of Ingrid Washinawatok, a Menomomie Indian from Keshena, Wisconsin, who was killed while visiting the U'wa in Colombia last year. While in Wisconsin, prestigious indigenous leaders Roberto and Gilberto Cobaria gave a press conference at the State Capitol and a public talk at the University.

At the press conference, CSN President Jack Laun, WI State Representative Mark Pocan and the U'wa delegates discussed the \$1.3 billion U.S. military aid package to Colombia passed by Congress on June 29. They also addressed the U'wa People's threat to commit mass-suicide if U.S.-based multinational Occidental Petroleum Corporation (OXY) begins drilling for oil on their traditional lands in Northeastern Colombia.

The U'wa People are one of the most traditional indigenous groups left in Colombia. The 11,000 U'was that remain today consider themselves to be protectors of the earth. The U'was have been in a battle with OXY since 1992 when the oil company was given a license to explore for oil in U'wa territory – a violation of indigenous rights laws passed in Colombia in 1991. The U'wa have been waging an international campaign against the OXY Corporation ever since. The U'wa have declared that they are "willing to die" to stop Occidental Petroleum from drilling for oil on their homeland.

U'wa spokesperson Berito Kuwaru'wa (Spanish name: Roberto Cobaria) has received international recognition for his efforts to resist oil drilling. In 1995, he successfully appealed to the Colombian courts to stop OXY's oil exploration. On May 15, 2000, the Colombian Government intervened to overturn the decision, granting

the OXY Corporation permission to begin drilling. The OXY Corporation has since begun seismic activities and the Colombian Army has militarized the region, forcefully breaking up peaceful demonstrations and evicting some U'wa protestors. At least three U'wa children have been killed and scores of others have been injured by the Colombian Police's excessive use of force.

Demonstrations throughout the United States have targeted Occidental Petroleum Corporation and presidential candidate V.P. Al Gore, whose family holds more than a quarter of a million dollars in Occidental stock. Roberto Cobaria is 1998 recipient of the Goldman Environmental Prize, the world's largest prize honoring grassroots environmental activists.

The Kuwaru'was met Ingrid Washinawatok's family for the first time. Above: Ingrid's mother, Gwen, next to Berito at the first meeting. Below: Berito and Buruchu'wa at a memorial service for Ingrid later that evening.



BRIEFING

Republic of Colombia

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a publication of the Resource Center of the Americas, Minneapolis, MN

POPULATION: 38 million. OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: Spanish

LARGEST RELIGION: Catholicism. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT RANK: 57th.*

* (of 174 countries that the U.N. Development Program indexes for life expectancy, literacy, per capita income, etc.)

DEMOCRACY: President Andrés Pastrana began a four-year term on August 7, 1998. Either his Conservative Party or the Liberal Party has ruled since 1958, the end of a three-year military dictatorship. In 1985, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Communist Party agreed to participate in legal politics, forming the Patriotic Union. Over the next four years, paramilitary groups murdered a UP member or supporter, on average, every 53 hours. These included 19 of the party's 87 mayoral candidates in 1988. The following July, the U.S. State Department praised Colombia's "democratic form of government". The hits continue today. On February 2, assassins killed Pauselino Camargo, former mayor of Cúcuta, a city of 700,000 near the Venezuelan border. He headed an independent coalition there.

U.S. ECONOMIC ROLE: U.S.-based companies are responsible for the lion's share of Colombia's foreign investment and trade. For years the foreign firm with the biggest investment in Colombia was British Petroleum, condemned by Amnesty International for sponsoring paramilitary groups there. In 1998, the firm merged with a Chicago-based giant, forming BP Amoco. Others with a major stake include Los Angeles-based Occidental Petroleum, California-based Dole, Houston-based Reliant Energy and Texaco, headquartered in White Plains, New York. The top legal exports to the United States are (in dollar order) oil, coffee and cut flowers. The top illegal exports are cocaine and heroin. U.S. officials say Colombia supplies 80 percent of U.S. cocaine.

WAR AND PEACE: The Colombian civil war is almost four decades old. The largest guerrilla group, the 17,000 strong FARC, operates across the country and controls a southern zone the size of Switzerland. Government troops withdrew from the zone in 1998 to spur peace talks. On February 2, negotiators from both sides headed to Norway and Sweden for a firsthand look at possible economic models. The 5,000-strong National Liberation Army (ELN) demands a demilitarized zone in the Middle Magdalena as a condition for talks. To press that demand, 150 ELN members blocked the highway between Bogotá and Medellín on February 6, stranding 500 trucks and 1,000 people until soldiers and helicopter gunships arrived three days later and a televised firefight ensued. A smaller rebel group consists of dissidents of the demobilized People's Liberation Army (EPL).

PRIVATIZED VIOLENCE: Since the 1980s, rightist paramilitary groups have mushroomed to include roughly 5,000 combatants coordinated by the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). These private armies work closely with government armed forces on behalf of cattle ranchers, drug traffickers, transnational oil firms, mining companies and others interested in removing peasants from land. Paramilitaries committed 63% of last year's 219 massacres (attacks that killed at least for people each), according to the Permanent Committee for Defense of Human Rights in Colombia. A December report by U.S.-based Human Rights Watch blames three-quarters of abuses on the paramilitaries.

1.9 DISPLACED: The fighting has displaced almost 5 percent of Colombia's population since ...continued from page 3. 1985, according to the Consultancy on Human Rights and Displacement in Colombia. Of the 1.9 million displaced, 1.1 million are children. "We don't know of any actions by the military to stop the assassinations and massacres behind the displacements," says Jorge Rojas, the consultancy's executive director.

U.S. MILITARY AID: White House drug czar Gen. Barry McCaffrey says Colombia is vital to U.S. interests because of its coasts on two oceans, its proximity to the Panama Canal, its oil and its proximity to Venezuela's oil. The United States sends Colombia annual military aid totaling nearly \$300 million, more than to any other country except Israel and Egypt. The Clinton administration is pushing Congress to increase this sum to \$1.6 billion over the next two years. Nearly 85 percent is slated for the nation's armed forces. Three army battalions would get U.S. Special Forces training, radar bases, intelligence assistance, 33 Huey helicopters and 30 sophisticated Blackhawk choppers. The aid would target FARC-controlled areas of the south. Some of the Blackhawks, produced by Hartford-based United Technologies, would accompany planes spraying Roundup, an herbicide from St. Louis-based Monsanto. The crop dusters would daim for coca leaves and opium poppies, the raw materials for cocaine and heroin.

CSN Sister Communities Page

A new permanent feature of Action on Colombia.

FEATURING...

Rio Viejo ~ Sister City to St. Louis

by WOODY POWELL

Rio Viejo is a community of about 28,000 people living in an expanded municipality along the Magdalena River 100 miles North of Barrancabermeja, Colombia. Its population is 73% rural and 27% urban. They are currently besieged by paramilitaries under the protection of the military who constantly threaten them with accusations that they are sympathetic to the FARC guerillas.

Johnson Lancaster, Cecilia Zarate Laun and myself, Wilson (Woody) Powell, visited Rio Viejo in January of this year. We met with Mayor/Ombudsman Marly Zuniga, a very attractive, young woman with a calm, open, face that smiles easily. Her office is just one block from the river where we docked our "chalupa", testimony to the importance of river commerce to the community.

After preliminary greetings, we attended a general meeting of the City Council and various other agency representatives in the City Hall. There, we presented drawings of the St. Louis Old Cathedral and the St. Louis skyline to the town priest and mayor respectively.

We asked what we could do for them, explaining that it would be unrealistic to think we had any sort of power to stop the violence. We told them we could, however, let them know they are not alone in the world, that we can use firsthand information they give us to try to change U.S. policies fueling the fires of violence with arms and military training, and set up supply lines for simple things,



Woody Powell (left) with the President of the City Council of Rio Viejo (middle), and Johnson Lancaster of St. Louis, MO (right).

such as medicines and teaching materials.

Then, we listened to their stories:

Pedro Arrieta of the village of Buenos Anos -- "Since November of 1998 they (the armed groups) have burned 235 houses in my village. There were only eight left until some international help came and cooperated with the City of Rio Viejo. Now seventy families have been able to return, even though we have to build with wood and the conditions are poor."

Marta (from the Programma) says, "It is dangerous to carry health programs to the rural areas. We need basic health supplies and a car." What she meant, we later discovered, was a car capable of carrying refrigerated vaccines. Expensive.

A student told us they needed computers for the schools. "For 350 students, there are 3 ancient computers. If they are to improve themselves, they need good educations that are up to date with the world."

One of the last to speak, the President of the Council, made a scathing point: "The U. S. Embassy is only interested in sending military aid. How can a democracy (like the U. S.) - a Christian country - show so many failures?"

Outside, we conferenced with Martha Poveda, MD, and came away with a list of supplies she needs for her work. She is a cheerful, no-nonsense woman of great strength, who has chosen a life of relative poverty in this community in order to serve.

We came back carrying the faces of the people of Rio Viejo in our minds and hearts, as well as on rolls of film. They are real to us, now; no longer sterile stories in obscure publications about conditions and injustices we couldn't imagine. We urge whoever reads this to consider contacting the Colombia Support Network. Travel with CSN to meet the people of Colombia, and let them welcome you, too, into the larger community of man.

ST. LOUIS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

May 12 - 14, 2000

by Jack Laun, CSN President

Representatives of CSN chapters in Boston, Chicago, Colorado, Madison, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Montana, and Philadelphia joined the St. Louis Chapter, which graciously welcomed us for the national meeting. German Plata from PDPMM (Program for Development and Peace in Magdalena Medio) and Diego Perez from CINEP (Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular) came from Colombia to discuss with us CSN's plans and programs.

We discussed plans for a delegation of members of Congress or their staff for this fall, and continuous delegations thereafter. Other types of delegations, such as environmental, religious, and for journalists, as well as CSN chapters' delegations to sister communities, are viewed as fundamentally important for CSN's programs.

A working group on press issues was established with seven members to be advised by Professor Robert McChesney. We also discussed creating a special award for journalists who report honestly on Colombia, setting up a legislative working group, and doing a national press conference organized with the help of media consultants. We approved bringing people from Colombia to Madison for an environmental conference to be held later this year. Collaboration with environmental groups will be a priority. Diego Perez also emphasized the importance of solidarity work on environmental issues with CSN's sister cities.

CSN examined a document establishing involvement of military and police officers in violations of human rights in Colombia. We agreed to try to establish which of the abusing units have received or are to receive money and/or training from the United States. This information could be placed on our webpage and linked to the School of the Americas Watch (www.soaw.org). German Plata suggested that chapters follow up on the activities of the brigades that have jurisdiction over their sister communities.

The position of CSN toward Plan Colombia was debated, and the following principles were approved:

1. Opposition to all military aid to Colombia, with specific attention directed to those units and officers whose abuses are indicated in the documents from the Data Bank of CINEP and Justicia y Paz.
2. Support for the Colombian civilian population, which opposes Plan Colombia, and for development of alternative plans through an internal dialogue that includes civilians.
3. Drawing connections between Plan Colombia and globalization, free trade and environmental degradation.
4. While we could conceive of some potential positive developments resulting from Plan Colombia, such as con-

struction of farm to market roads, development of alternative crops and improvement of the justice system, Plan Colombia as it is presently constituted places too much power in the hands of a dangerously corrupt military, and therefore must be rejected.

5. We invite others to join us in our principled opposition to and protest of Plan Colombia.

We discussed developing a model Colombia Law for U.S. corporations doing business in Colombia, similar to the one proposed for Burma and South Africa, and we committed to look into this further. Carol Sundberg brought up actions against Occidental Petroleum taken by shareholders in response to the corporation's encroachment on U'wa land. German gave an update on each Magdalena Medio sister community. We then discussed the possibility of having a rotating civilian international mission for peace with a presence in the Magdalena Medio region.

Daniel De La Pava explained the details of the national People's Tribunal, which is focused on the massacre in Santo Domingo (Arauca Province) and will be held in Chicago from September through December this year. CSN is committed to seeking out grassroots organizations around the country to cosponsor this Tribunal, which is part of an ongoing campaign launched by several Colombian NGOs against impunity.

German suggested CSN consider having membership in Colombia. This might give protection to Colombians there and would foster international solidarity. No decision was made as to whether or not to open membership to people in Colombia. Rolando de Aguiar gave details on his work to build webpages for every CSN chapter.

A Busy Summer for the Colombia Support Network

Cecilia Zarate-Laun, Program Director, has been traveling around the country, making speeches and helping groups start CSN chapters. Her stops have included: Helena, MT; Chicago, Washington D.C., Minneapolis and Boulder. She was also present in front of the White House on July 19 for the People's Campaign for Nonviolence day on Colombia.

Beatriz Vejarano, a graduate student at George Mason Univ. in Fairfax, VA moved to Madison for a month-long internship with CSN. While here, she laid the groundwork for an environmental conference on illegal crop eradication that will take place in Madison this spring.

Amparo Cadavid, of the PDPMM, traveled from Colombia to Madison for a conference on community radio this July. She presented plans to start sister-city-like relationships between U.S. and Colombian community radio stations.

Massacre at the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, Colombia

A Letter from Justicia y Paz, condemning the attack.

To President Pastrana, Vice President Bell,
Public Defender Caicedo, Peace Commissioner Gomez:

Today at the hands of paramilitary gunmen and members of the Army's 17th Brigade, another atrocity has been committed against the lives and liberty of the members of Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, who 40 months ago decided to be neutral among warring parties. Again we enter into the historical record our moral outrage at the intimidation, terror and murders in the Peace Community San José de Apartadó.

Today, Saturday, July 8, several soldiers of the Colombian Armed Forces 17th Brigade were loitering near the hamlet La Union, Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. At 3:00 pm, with a 17th Brigade helicopter flying overhead, about 20 hooded men came into the small town. First, they went into the Mission House and destroyed the community telephone. Then they entered each house and took everyone to the center of the settlement.

The thugs repeatedly demanded the names of "the leaders." The prisoners insisted they were all leaders, that the Peace Community's foundation is unarmed neutrality and that neutrality is their defense. The hooded men argued that it was a "community of guerrillas, not a peace community." Then one of the Catholic nuns spoke up, testifying to the neutrality of the community. The hooded men grabbed her and threw her down to one side. The gunmen then ordered the women and children to the side "or we'll kill you," and proceeded to shoot the men with their AK rifles. Before leaving, they set fire to the Mission House and threatened, "You've got 20 days to get the hell out of here or we'll finish you off!"

This preliminary report shows that six residents of La Union, members of the Peace Community, were murdered. They are Diofanor Correa, Jaime Guzman, Rigoberto Guzman, Elodino Rivera, Humberto Sepulveda, Pedro Zapata. Other farmers are still missing. There were several other documented incidents of vicious threats, accusations by soldiers and paramilitaries operating together in San José de Apartadó.

In the face of this new agony besetting the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, the 63 families of La Union must begin another forced exodus to central San José de Apartadó, which has served as a refugee center these 3 years. At this writing there is a terrible fear for the other two Peace Community settlements, which have no phones.

We lay this report before humanity's conscience and we declare our moral condemnation of the partnership of the Colombian Armed Forces with the mercenaries in martyring this small flame of life floating in a sea of war.

This massacre happened after 40 months of accusations and threats from military personnel, typically, "You're a bunch of guerrillas and we're going to bring in the paramilitaries to take care of you." More than 70 people have been tortured, murdered, disappeared, each case reported to the authorities fruitlessly. Rarely have the military or paramilitary criminals been

charged, while many times the witness has become the next victim. The acquiescence and complicity of the 17th Brigade in these crimes show, without doubt, that it is a rogue authority in which *not one person* did their job to prevent these new attacks. Wishing to forget the last 12 years in which many witnesses to human rights violations have been assassinated or exiled, the 17th Brigade will complain that the Peace Community does not collaborate in their "thorough investigations."

We assure you, filed in their offices are many depositions and warnings reported before the February 19 massacre. In those records (like the ones we've written since February 19) are written the actual experiences of the residents of San José de Apartadó. They clearly warn that further atrocities will be committed by the paramilitaries of the Autodefensas Campesinas (AUC) with the help of the 17th Brigade. These testimonies detail many cases of military personnel saying that they consider San José de Apartadó's neutrality to be an armed insurgency, that they are recruiting civilians to destroy the community after its third anniversary and that the 17th Brigade of the Colombian Army will give logistic support to the operations.

We must call attention to the Colombian government's failure to protect its citizens starting with the official "investigations" of these crimes. Investigators automatically believe the witnesses who favor the men with guns and shun the testimony of the unarmed population. They do not consider parallel events, do not question suspects, do not examine physical evidence. The head of the paramilitary AUC has been interviewed on television, yet the 17th Brigade can't find him for questioning. On March 23, the Peace Community asked for an appointment with the Vice President of the Republic to beg for security provisions based on the International Declaration of Human Rights. This request has been ignored together with the Interamerican Commission of Human Rights' request for protective measures.

To all Colombians, to the people of the world, we can only say that what is written here is the truth of what we have seen and what we have lived through as religious men and women of the Colombian church and the churches of the world. We hope these realities that we have personally experienced and swear to, will open the way to justice. In spite of the evidence of these deeds, the truths of their victims and our truths as witnesses, we must also warn that the lie will try to impose itself as fact. As always, the "legitimate institutions" will claim that they are not the murderers, that we religious and farmers are the armed enemy, and that this, our testimony, is slanderous.

Because of today's events and all that came before, we express our profound moral censure.

Deeply pained at this new sign of decay in our legal system,
INTERCONGREGATIONAL COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE
AND PEACE (JUSTICIA Y PAZ)

Express your outrage! Email the general who attacked San José: br17@edatel.net.co. Call President Pastrana: +57 (1) 284 33 00. Contact your senators and representatives in DC: 202-224-3121.

Our Voices

Dear Senator Kohl:

May 2000

I write in opposition to the bill which has already passed the House of Representatives which would provide approximately \$1.7 billion in military aid to purportedly fight drugs in Colombia. Sadly, history suggests almost unquestionably that a portion of these funds will be used by the military and paramilitary personnel in Colombia to kill innocent men, women, and children.

As is well known, Colombia is in a state of civil war. The civil war has persisted for decades and involves military, paramilitary, and guerrilla groups.

The sum of \$522 million appropriated in the bill will be for the creation and support of three elite infantry batalions in the Colombian army, supposedly to suppress the growing of coca and poppy plants and the drug trafficking related to them. Once the weapons are in the hands of the Colombian military, an institution already known for its florid abuses of human rights, those weapons will inevitably be used as the military and those in power deem most useful for their own interests. To believe that in fact the weapons will be restricted to the suppression of drug trafficking, particularly in view of the historical misuse of such weaponry, borders on the naïve.

I deeply respect General Barry McCaffrey, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. His leadership in the fight against drugs in this country has been exemplary in every respect. I am deeply troubled, however, by a report in the New York Times of January 11, 2000, stating that "General McCaffrey argued that the distinction between rebels and drug traffickers had grown irrelevant and that the poorly equipped and inadequately trained armed forces needed immediate help." Such distinctions are not "irrelevant" and indeed highlight the grave problems related to this proposal. Even when it is suspected or indeed becomes known to those on the inside that the Colombian military or paramilitary are misusing the weapons, the temptation to continue the flow will be powerful. One shudders to think of General McCaffrey ever in a position similar to that of Colonel North, dissembling how funds limited by Congress to suppress drug trafficking are used instead on civilians as part of a civil war. Can anyone doubt that United States tax monies in part funded the death squads of El Salvador who slayed countless noncombatant citizens as well as Archbishop Oscar Romero and the Jesuits of the University of Central America?

In great part, the demand for cocaine and heroin in this country underlies the drug trafficking problem in Colombia. Ought not we spend the \$1.7 billion on addressing demand in this country through provision of meaningful substance abuse treatment for our distressed, addicted citizens rather than for military firepower that will be spent in a variety of ways in Colombia including the execution of innocent citizens?

I strongly urge you to vote against this appropriation. In the very least, demand full hearings in the appropriate Senate committees or subcommittees. If this country is to enter into the civil war by supporting one side or the other, we ought to do so with our eyes open, treading into what all must know is a minefield. Let Secretary of Defense Cohen, who wrote so forcefully with Senator Mitchell in their book on the Iran-Contra scandal, Men of Zeal, not himself become a dissembler. We ought not provide funds covertly for a civil war claiming the funds will be limited to the fighting of narcotic trafficking. Commit the funds instead with clear conscience to addressing the underlying problem appropriate for consideration by the United States -- the demand in the U.S. Commit the funds openly to substance abuse addiction treatment in this country, not covertly to murder in another country. I strongly urge your opposition to this \$1.7 billion appropriation.

Sincerely yours,
E. Michael McCann, District Attorney, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

INTERESTED IN BECOMING AN ACTIVE CSN MEMBER? CONTACT A CSN REPRESENTATIVE IN YOUR AREA!

Rolando and Molly de Aguiar
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New Items Available

T-SHIRTS with CSN's new logo, pictured above. XL \$15.

The Palace of Justice, by Ana Carrigan. A beautifully crafted book which unveils the truth about who makes decisions in Colombia and in whose interests. \$25 each.

Genocidal Democracy, by Father Javier Giraldo, S.J. A very comprehensive analysis of the paramilitary phenomenon in rural Colombia. \$12 each.

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environmental conference

Despite years of fumigation programs in Colombia, drug production keeps increasing. However, fumigation will continue to be the main weapon of the United States' war on drugs, with the gravest environmental and social consequences for the affected areas and a fueling of the armed conflict.

Most disturbing is the possibility that, as the US State Dept. has reported, the Colombian government might undertake experiments with the fungus *Fusarium oxysporum* as part of the US anti-drug military aid package.

In the spring of 2001 an environmental conference on Colombia will be held in Madison, organized by CSN and co-sponsored by the University of WI & Edgewood College.

The purpose of the conference is twofold: to inform and create awareness about the social and environmental effects of the US sponsored anti-drug war in Colombia, and to develop a strategy and plan of action against the destruction of the rainforests and headwaters of the Colombian Amazon caused by drug eradication.

See us on the Web at
www.colombiasupport.net
or email csn@igc.org

The Colombia Support Network "Action on Colombia"

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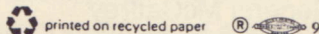
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The Colombia Support Network is a national network of groups and individuals working to promote respect for human rights in Colombia and a just relationship between the United States and Colombia through grassroots activism. CSN supports a nonviolent resolution to the conflict in Colombia.

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I am interested in volunteering:

- ___ starting a CSN chapter in my city
- ___ going on a delegation to Colombia
- ___ assisting in fundraising (e.g. phon-a-thon)
- ___ translating / interpreting
- ___ setting up a talk at my school, group, or church
- ___ participating in CSN working groups

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