



MILLENNIUM'S
END

THE
MEDELLÍN
AGENT

by
Charles Ryan
and
Angel McCoy





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and Angel McCoy



THE MEDELLÍN AGENT
A Sourcebook for Millennium's End

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Dedicated by Angel to Dave, for his love and support.

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INTRODUCTION ▼ ▼

Bienvenidas—welcome—to Colombia, a country victimized by a brutal civil war perpetrated not by political idealists against an oppressive rulership, but by an unspeakably wealthy criminal syndicate against one of the most successfully-democratic governments in the developing world. The Colombian civil war is a strange and brutal conflict, perfectly emblematic of the world at millennium's end—a world where might makes right; where desperation and insanity seems to stamp out common sense at every turn; where the laws and ethics of the old order have no standing and the end justifies any means.

The Medellín Agent is a *Millennium's End* sourcebook detailing the Colombian civil war. As such, it really covers two topics: the country of Colombia itself—its history, geography, and present political and social situation; and the ongoing war—the factions, their forces, and the events they drive. The information in this book has been selected to provide a rich background for *Millennium's End* gamemasters to use when guiding their players through assignments set in Colombia. But though a lot of information is presented, a lot is also omitted. A country as large and diverse as Colombia—and an event as complex as the war—simply can't be covered in a mere 128 pages. There's enough here, however, to give any creative GM a host of ideas and a solid foundation of source material, and any player a real taste of the unique events and atmosphere of a Colombia at war.

The possibilities for those GMs and players are endless. The Colombian civil war setting could easily be the basis for an entire *Millennium's End* campaign (although the dark and dangerous nature of the adventures it suggests might make it better suited for just the occasional tactical assignment). Colombia's limited resources force the Federales (as the Colombian federal army and government have come to be informally

known) to seek outside agencies, such as BlackEagle, for its more specialized needs. Between the Federales, their opposition (the Medellín Cartel and FARC), and the many other parties embroiled in the conflict (such as the American D.E.A. and any of dozens of multinational corporations with vested interests in the country), there's plenty to occupy a BlackEagle cell. The Federales and FARC have become sophisticated enemies, escalating well beyond the stereotypical bush conflict and rocketing into the high-tech horrors of modern warfare. Both sides have access to sophisticated modern weapons and quality troops. With decades of intense guerilla war under their belts, they are competent strategists bent on total victory. None of the many factions in this war have any qualms about betraying anyone in order to come out on top, making this an especially dangerous—as well as busy—theatre of operations for a BlackEagle cell.

This book was originally conceived as an adventure book, with several high-speed tactical assignments and just a smattering of background material. As it progressed, however, it became clear that the source material made up the most interesting and useful portions of the book. Eventually, *The Medellín Agent* was converted into a sourcebook, but one adventure was retained. A challenge for the most hardened tactical BlackEagle cell, it's also a taste of just one of the many types of assignments this setting can produce. Rescues, assaults, assassinations, investigations, jungle treks, infiltrations, and political games are all part of the complex struggle for control of Colombia. And, as the included assignment suggests, there is no end to the potential doublecrosses and plot twists behind such assignments.

Bienvenidas—and good luck.

CHAPTER ONE

IN-THEATRE ▼ ▼

It has been four years since the struggle in Colombia shifted from a decades-old marxist insurgency into a full-blown ground war. Four years has been enough for "FARC" to become a household term in the United States, for the world to get used to the idea that a criminal syndicate's right to usurp is just as plausible as a nationalist's, and for 50,000 Colombians to die in the most brutal and bizarre confrontation since the Khmer Rouge scouring of Cambodia. But four years has not proved enough for American congressional and military leaders to find a role for U.S. participation that opposes FARC with no risk of American loss—indeed, if the sinking of the Edward MacDonal teaches us anything, it is that even non-participation has its risks. Now, with FARC forces in control of almost half of the critical Atlantic coast-line, and with the hammer of front-line artillery echoing around the Federale HQ at Socorro, comes the revelation that FARC forces are operating modern jet fighter-bombers in the skies over Colombia. Once again, congress and the pentagon must decide whether their fear of American bloodshed is outweighed by a FARC victory that is increasingly inevitable without American military involvement. And while they take their time with that decision, more Colombian civilians will die, more criminal and terrorist groups around the world will watch our hesitation with glee, and the cost in lives and dollars of saving Colombia will soar beyond the lofty heights of the Cordillera Central.

—David Sayers, NPR Senior News Analyst

For Colombia, used to decades of nagging insurgency and the excesses of narco-violence, it took some time for the seriousness and changed nature of *La Violencia Segunda* to sink into the national psyche. When the awareness that this was not simply another episode of violence or upheaval—that the very existence of Colombia as a nation was threat-

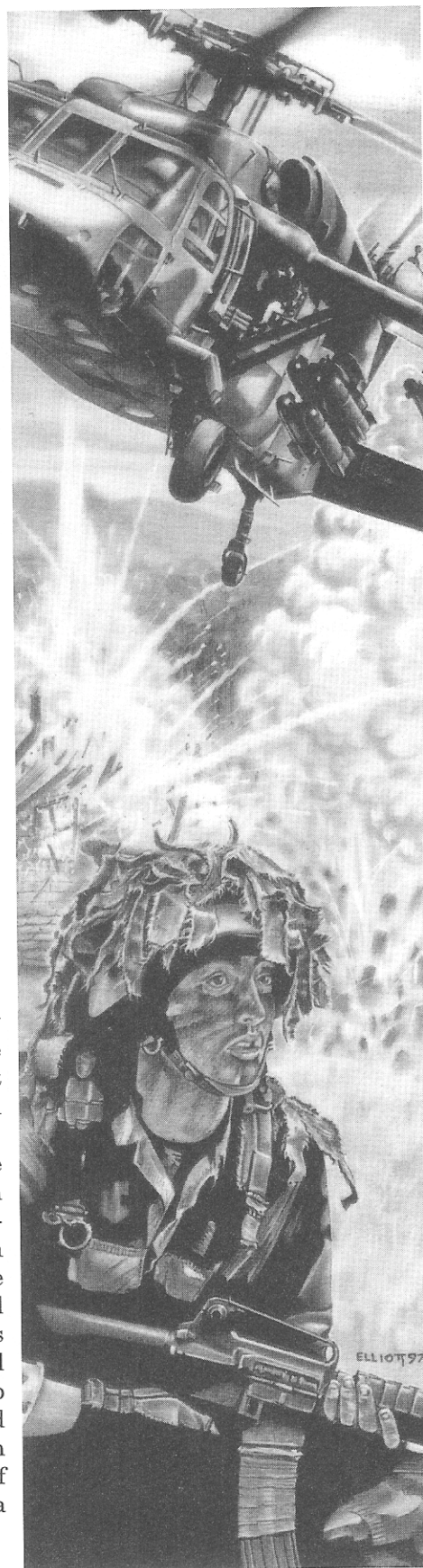
ened as never before—finally took root in the populace, it brought with it not so much determination as a strange atmosphere of depression, paranoia, and defeatism. Colombia has not given up in the face of this terrible incursion, but neither have the Colombians—the populace or their leaders—fully embraced an honest belief that they can defeat FARC, break the Medellín Cartel, and win back their nation.

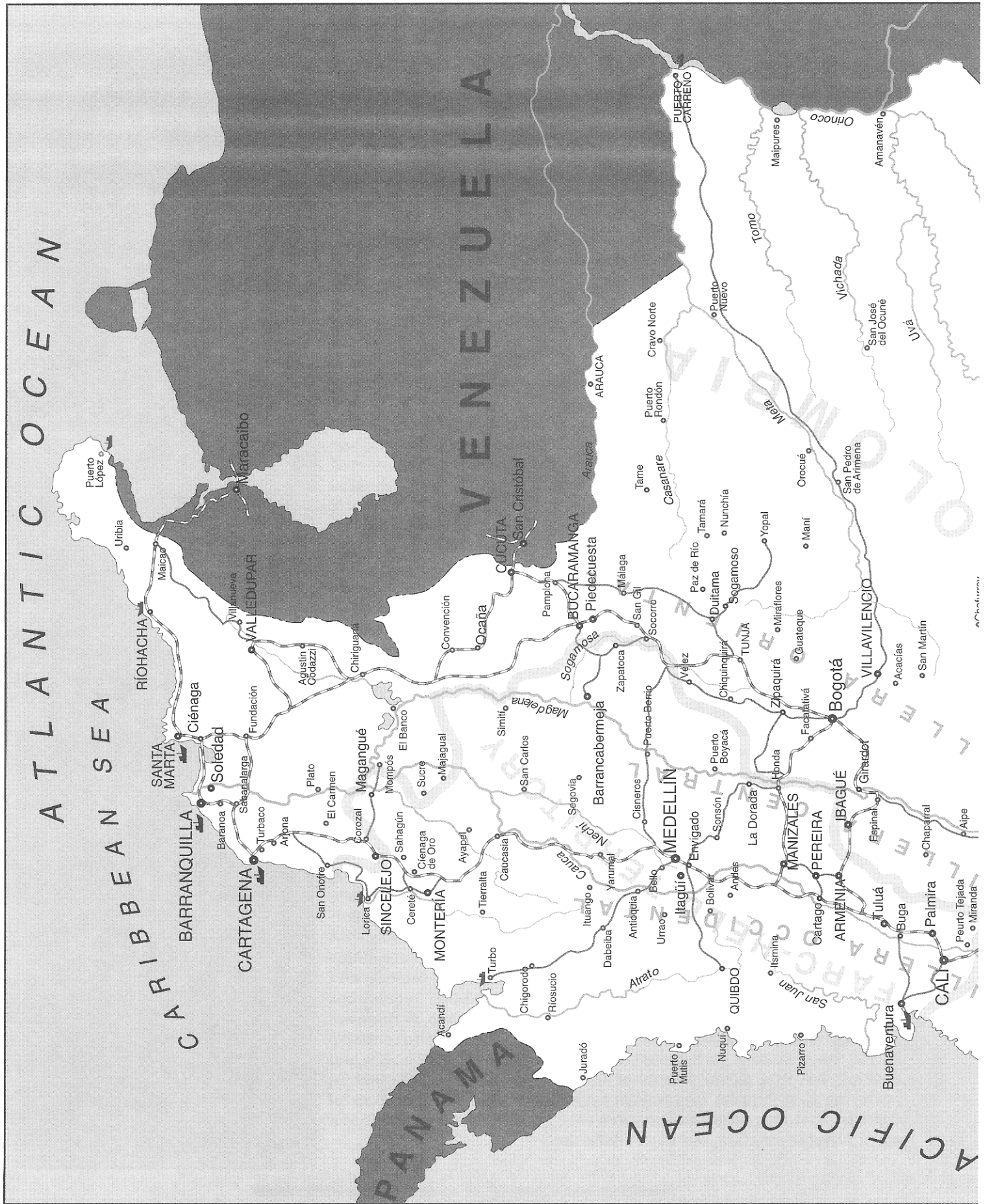
On the surface, at least away from the battle lines, the people of federal Colombia (the areas of Colombia still controlled by the lawful government) carry out their lives more or less as normal. There is no aspect of life untouched by the war, and yet, for many, the war has brought no great changes. Colombian farmers till their fields; Colombian businessmen head for the office every morning; Colombian housewives shop their local supermarkets. The store shelves may be bare, business unpredictable, and fields trampled by the recent crossing of tanks and troops, but those difficulties, though trying, haven't overturned the established pace of life. This suspended state of not-quite-total war lends a bizarre atmosphere to Colombia, a surreal sense of life on the edge of stability rarely seen in the modern world.

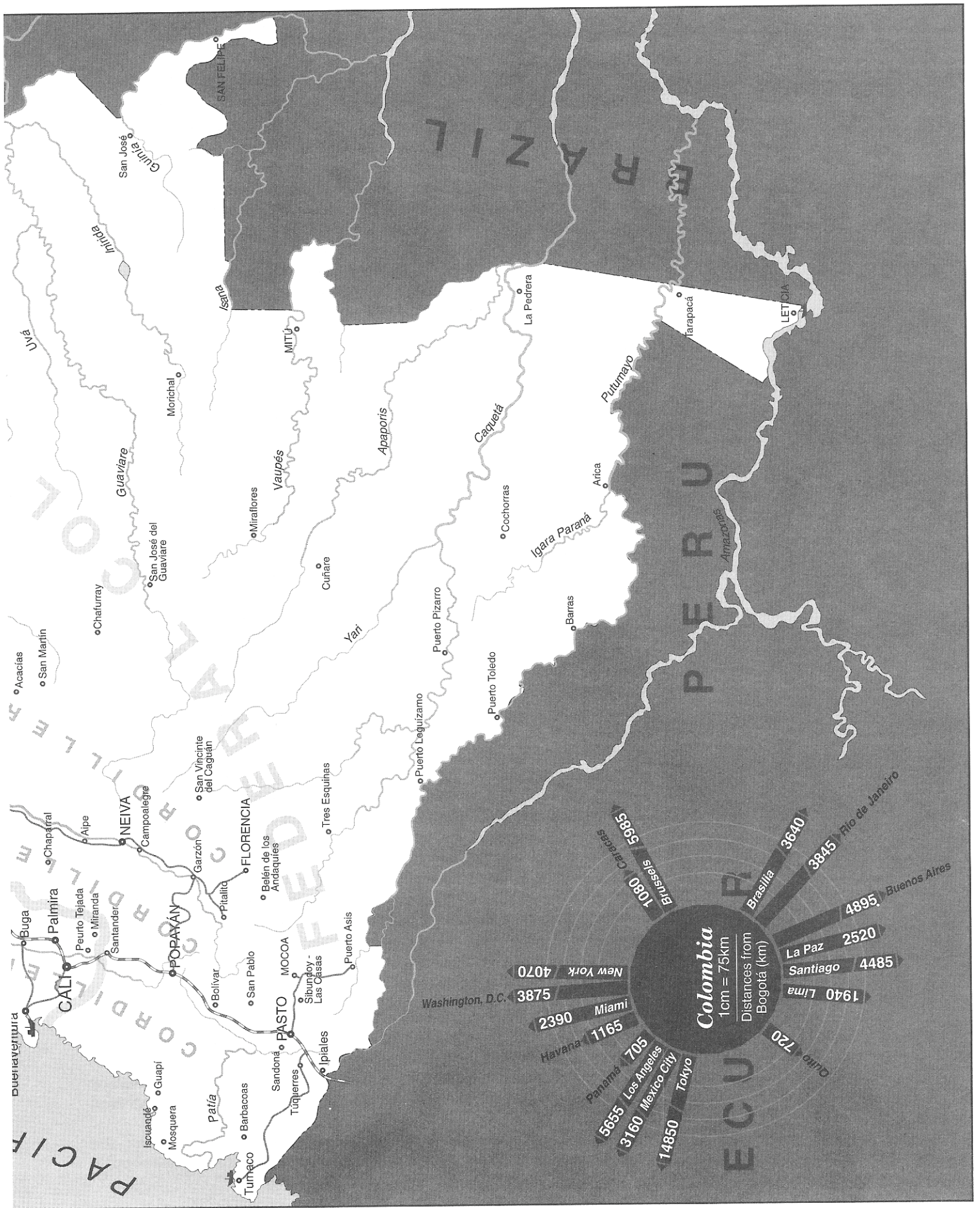
Colombia was once one of the most stable and democratic nations of Latin America. Blessed with abundant natural resources (Colombia is an oil exporter and the source of almost all of the world's emeralds, as well as a major coffee-producing nation) and a democratic tradition almost as old as that of the United States, Colombia by the late twentieth century had a solid industrial base, a large and successful middle class, a literate population, and great prospects for joining, in the truest sense of the term, the ranks of the developed nations of the world.

But there were other legacies of Colombia's history that would prove more influential. Military dictatorships and coups, so common in Latin America, had fortunately spared Colombia (the few historical instances having been peacefully resolved within a few short years of their occurrence). But communist insurgency, that twin plague, had not. In the 1960s and 70s, Colombia struggled with numerous insurgent groups which preyed upon the intense rivalry between the country's democratic parties and the deep divisions between the rural poor and the urban middle class. The late 70s and 80s added a rise in drug-related violence unparalleled in the western hemisphere. In 1995, these seemingly unrelated antagonists joined forces and organized their attacks on the government and lawful society into a unified and effective front. What were once scattered guerrilla and terrorist attacks became an open assault, and then a true—though completely unorthodox—civil war.

In 1995, FARC (or more accurately, the coalition between the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* and the powerful Medellín Cartel drug lords) controls over one-quarter of Colombia. More importantly, in a nation dominated by enormous expanses of wilderness with nearly all of the population, agriculture, and industry located in a single region, FARC controls close to half of the country's industrial capacity and almost two-thirds of its agricultural lands. FARC's military capabilities nearly rival that of the federal government of Colombia, and its financial resources (though hobbled by blockade and international scorn) outstrip it. For its part, the government enjoys international legitimacy and backing, but in a global climate of isolationism has had little luck in parleying that support into military assistance. And the initial air of disbelief that characterized the war's early years has grown not into a spirit of determination, but one of defeatism.







THE ARENA

Colombia as a whole is a fairly large country, a bit under twice the size of Texas in both area and population. Colombia occupies the extreme northwestern corner of the continent of South America. Countries surrounding it include Panama to the northwest, Venezuela to the northeast, Brazil to the southeast and Ecuador and Peru to the south. Colombia is the only country in South America to border on both the Pacific Ocean, with approximately 800 kilometers of coastline, and the Atlantic (actually, the Caribbean Sea), with over 1000 km of coastline. Most of the Pacific coast is undeveloped, spotted here and there with towns and villages, while the Caribbean coast is densely developed along much of its length.

The Lay of the Land

The most common public image of Colombia is one of dense mountain jungle dotted with coffee (and coca) plantations. The truth is that Colombia features a wide variety of terrain and climates, with dramatic contrasts not just between them, but also between densely developed areas and expansive, unpopulated hinterlands.

The Mountains

Like a spinal column, the Cordilleras of the Andes run up from the south to the north. The mountains split into three separate ranges that create vertical strips through the western third of Colombia, separated by two major valleys (of the Cauca and Magdalena Rivers) and dotted with countless smaller valleys, fertile plateaus and hillsides. The three separate ranges of the Andes have rocky snow-covered peaks at their highest elevations. The foothills rise steeply, green, forest-thick and beautiful. Many lakes and rivers hide within the Andes, both high up where glaciers persist among the peaks and lower between the forested slopes of the foothills.

The Cauca and Magdalena Rivers run northward through the deep, wide divisions between the three branches of the Cordilleras. They join to the north of Magangué to eventually drain into the Caribbean Sea. The Magdalena is one of the more navigable rivers of the country, able to carry vessels inland as far as La Dorada, a point about 400 kilometers above its mouth and only 50 km or so from the capital of Bogotá.

Colombia's urban areas, industrial centers, agriculture, and population are split between the temperate highlands of the northern half of the Cordilleras and the Caribbean coast to the north. Not surprisingly, these regions are both among the most contended in the war.

The Coasts

Colombia has almost 2,000 kilometers of coastline, split almost evenly between the Caribbean Sea and Pacific ocean. About half of the Atlantic coastline, and most of the Pacific coast, remain rural and undeveloped—long tropical beaches backed by dense, uninhabited tropical forest or (along the eastern stretch of the Atlantic coast) grass- and brush-covered hills.

Although not as heavily urbanized as the central Cordilleras, the Atlantic coast is well-developed and home to a moderately dense popula-

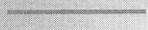
LEGEND FOR MAPS

- San Onofre
- SINCELEJO

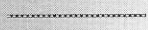
City, town, or village
(CAPS indicate
Department capital)



Major highway



Other improved
highways



Railroad



Rivers



Limit of FARC
control

17th BDE

Major Federal unit

3 Arty 1

Major FARC unit

tion. The cities are not as large, modern, nor cosmopolitan as Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali, but the many rural towns and villages are not as isolated or poor, either.

Coastal climate is hotter and wetter than the mountains, with high temperatures and humidity year-round, and only slightly less rain in the dry season than in the wet. With its industrial and shipping centers, the central Atlantic coast has been the scene of some of the war's most intensive fighting.

The Amazon Basin

Although largely ignored by Colombians and unknown by outsiders, Colombia's most prominent terrain is Amazonian rain forest. The area of Colombia occupied by the jungles of the Amazon basin is far larger, but much more sparsely populated, than the Cordilleras. Logging, where it exists, is the only real industry in this region, which makes up almost half of the country by area. Agriculture and other resource exploitation is sporadic at best. Not surprisingly, this area has been largely ignored in the war.

The Llanos

Tropical rain forest covers nearly fifty percent of Colombia's land. In contrast to this, few trees grow in the llanos, grassy savanna and lowland plains in the northern third of eastern Colombia. Drought occurs regularly in the llanos, the dry season lasting half the year. The droughts cause the water level in these rivers to ebb and flow to such an extent that they become barely navigable, even during the rainy season when flooding makes them dangerous. Like the Amazon basin, most of this region has gone unnoticed in the war.

Climate

Colombia is a tropical nation—in fact, the equator slices through its southern-most reaches, putting some ten percent of the country in the southern hemisphere. The climate in Colombia varies greatly, from the intense heat of the coastal regions and flatlands, to the more temperate conditions of the plateaus and the mountains. With the exception of the highest mountains (which may remain snow-covered year-round), all of the country experiences typical tropical weather: heavy rainfall and high temperatures all year long.

There are only two seasons in tropical countries like Colombia: wet and dry. Actually, in most areas, "dry" is a misnomer—the dry season is only slightly less rainy than the wet season. During the rainy season, rain falls on and off, every day; during the dry season, rain might only fall every other day, or two of every three. In both seasons, rainfall occurs in sporadic downpours, sometimes falling for only five minutes before stopping, the sunshine causing magnificent rainbows in the distance as bright, fluffy clouds move on. This condition is ideal for the abundant growth of the rain forests that cover about half of the land.

Most of Colombia experiences two rainy and two dry seasons (the latter running from December to February and June to August). In the coastal and Amazonian regions, daytime temperatures hover around 90°

Arriving in Colombia

Travelers arriving on commercial flights first set foot in Colombia at the end of the jetway at Bogotá International Airport. A large sign in the waiting area welcomes them—*Bienvenidas a Colombia*. Dark-haired, steely-eyed guards in khaki and camouflage uniforms stalk the nearly deserted airport, submachineguns cradled in their arms. Against this surreal background move sparse but varied travellers—harried refugees on their way to a new life in Venezuela, Mexico, or the U.S.; journalists eager, cynical, or rugged; foreign businessmen meeting dark government officials; diplomats; missionaries; and soldiers. From the potted palms, neon signs of the concession stands, and cheerful smiles of the ticket counter personnel, one might never know that the front lines of a brutal war were only 100 kilometers away. And yet the darkened and echoing concourses, blank departure boards, and armored soldiers set a stage that seems a million miles from normality. One's first arrival in Bogotá is an experience not to be forgotten.

Though an American or European passport often softens and shortens the process, no-one entering Colombia by commercial flight avoids the scrutiny of Customs. In the line to the Custom's table, everyone speaks in hushed tones, holding their luggage close and watching with trepidation as those ahead of them get grilled, ruthlessly patted down and sometimes hauled off to *La Sala* ("The Room"). Most exit The Room at a quick pace, often tucking in or rebuttoning shirts. They head straight for the door, grateful to leave the airport for the smog and noise of the city. Those with contraband (which includes many types of consumer goods—the list of offensive items changes daily) leave in handcuffs.

For more information on travel to and within Colombia, see page 35.



Federal Forces and Reserves

The federal army's order of battle in early 1999 lists six regular divisions, along with a division of marines and a few irregular mechanized, ranger and other elite units. Nearly all are deployed on the front lines, in the active areas discussed over the next few pages. With so many pressing areas of conflict, the Federales' reserve of manpower has dwindled in recent months. Only a single brigade (the 3rd Marine, stationed at Cartagena) is still officially held in strategic reserve, though, fortunately, the 9th and 2nd Marine Brigades, deployed to Bogotá and Socorro respectively, are not engaged in combat and could be reassigned should the need arise. Even counting them, however, the federal army holds less than 10% of its forces in reserve—down from nearly 25% only a few months before. New troops are in training all the time, but it remains to be seen if the Colombian army can grow to keep up with the FARC threat—and in the mean time, Federales forces will continue to be stretched to their limits.

Without a doubt, the area of heaviest fighting in Colombia surrounds the city of Sincelejo, where the federal Colombian army holds out against FARC's push along the Atlantic coast. In 1999, combat around Sincelejo rages with daily intensity. The prizes being sought include the Caribbean coastal ports of Cartagena, Barranquilla, and Santa Marta. For the Federales, these three deepwater ports are the only facilities in the country capable of handling major shipping, and provide Colombia's lifeline to the world. FARC sees the Atlantic coast as strategically critical for three reasons: to deny the federal government these key ports; to extend FARC-controlled coastline to decrease the efficiency of the blockade; and to control important agricultural and industrial regions adjacent to the coast.

Sincelejo sits at the heart of an area which has a number of smaller industrial and suburban towns. Prior to the war, the city boasted a population of 150,000, but the battle for the city has reduced the civilian population to 30,000. The only sizeable city in Colombia to see extensive fighting on its streets, along with near-constant artillery and aerial bombardment for weeks on end, Sincelejo has suffered extensive structural damage to its buildings and roadways.

Sitting on a low ridge that runs parallel to the sea, Sincelejo overlooks both the Caribbean some fifty kilometers to the west and the flat Sucre basin, where the Cauca river meets the Magdalena, to the southeast. Its position has aided the Federales' defense and made further northern advancement by FARC impossible. FARC has pushed forward into a horseshoe around Sincelejo, creating some concern that the city might be encircled and cut off. The recent deployment of the 1st Presidential Guard Battalion to San Onofre has halted FARC's push to the north, leaving the Federales' hold on the high ground behind Sincelejo fairly secure—for the moment.

Federal Forces: Sincelejo hosts the single biggest concentration of federal units within Colombia—nearly one-third of the entire ground army is committed to its defense. The 4th, 5th, and 6th Brigades of the army's 2nd Division hold the line against FARC forces pushing along the coast. In San Onofre, just north of FARC's furthest extension, the 2nd Division is backed by the First Presidential Guard Battalion and a Saudi Arabian 203mm self-propelled artillery battery, one of just a few foreign ground units committed openly to the Federales' aid. An armored cavalry battalion from the 4th Division has also been attached to the 2nd Division, deployed near the key western road out of the city, where, with its speed and mobility, it can both threaten FARC's flank and be available to aid units within the city if needed.

In Sincelejo itself, and along the eastern flank to the Magdalena, are deployed the 16th, 17th, and 18th Brigades of the 6th Division, backed by a mechanized infantry battalion from the 4th Division and an artillery battalion from the 5th Division. Outside of Sincelejo itself, these units are spread out over a much broader line than on the opposite side of the city, but FARC units in the Sucre basin are lightly deployed and not nearly as much a threat as those to the west.

FARC Forces: The six heavy brigades of the Third Front are tasked with the taking of Sincelejo and the advance along the Atlantic coast. These units (each boasting nearly 5,000 men) are backed by four oversized artillery battalions—each of which has nearly double the number of guns in a typical federal arty battalion. The First and Third Brigade spearhead the ongoing attack on the San Onofre area, while the Second, Fourth, and Fifth face off against Sincelejo. The Sixth

Brigade is deployed west of Manangué, where it threatens the Federales' eastern flank as well as federal units around Sucre to the south.

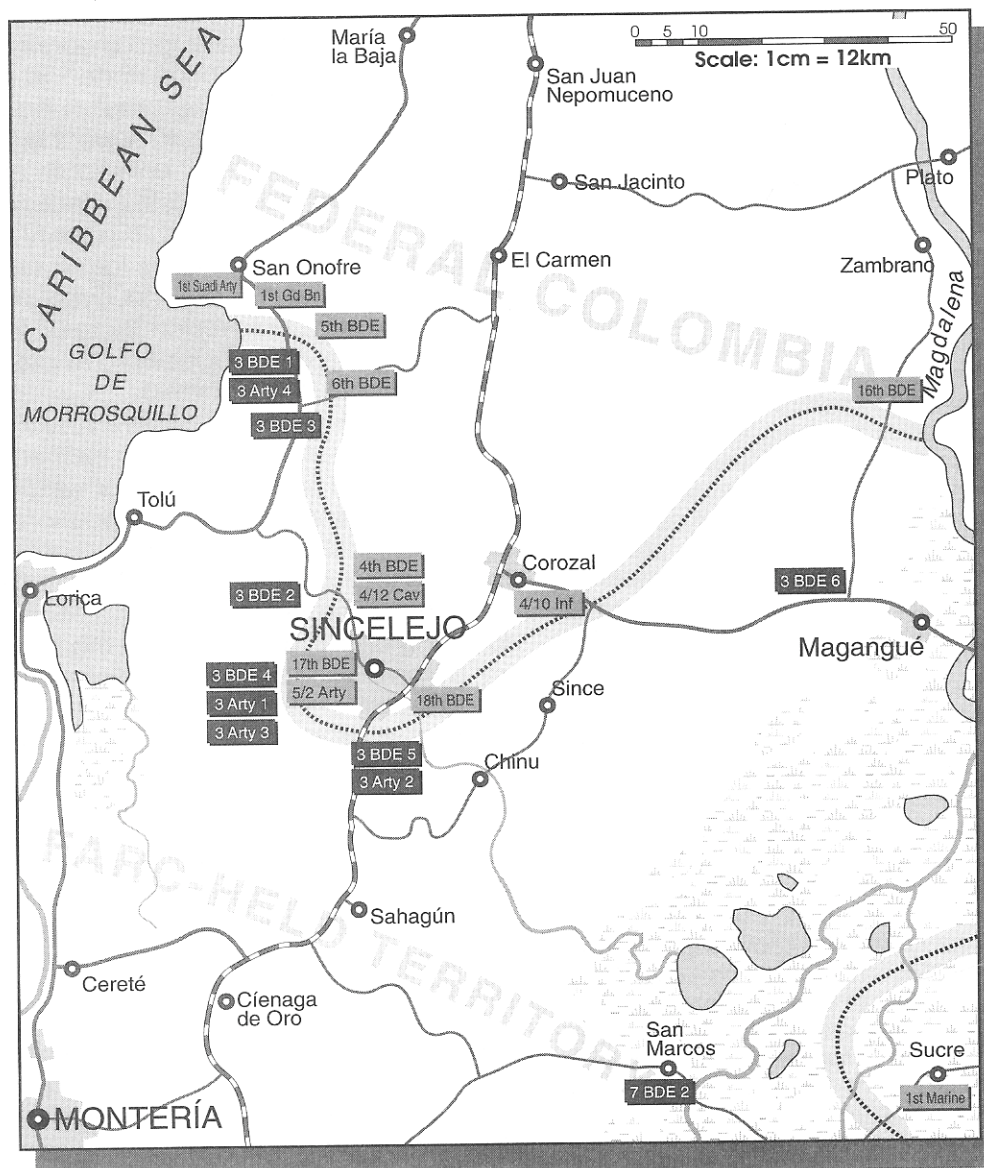
Action: Combat around Sincelejo has been near-constant since late 1998. Artillery duels are a daily occurrence, as are sporadic actions along the edge of the city. FARC continues to pressure Sincelejo, gaining ground incrementally in the suburbs to the south and west. The real battles occur to the north, though, as FARC attempts to extend its flanking maneuver around the city. Recent heavy fighting around San Onofre has ended in stalemate. FARC has begun to probe the high ground to its east, behind Sincelejo, with increasing frequency and force. But federal units have responded quickly to such actions, and FARC has yet to commit to a decisive battle there.

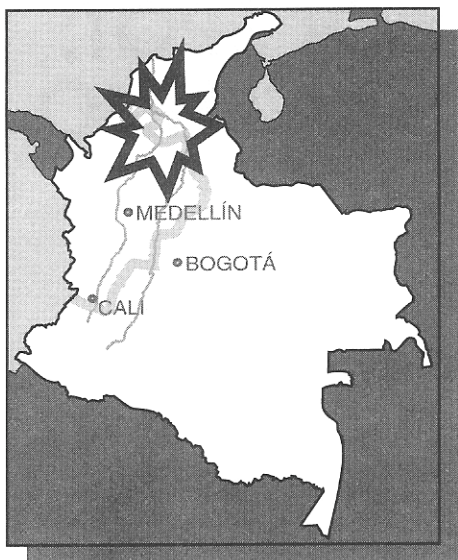
Actions on the east have been limited to harassment attacks—FARC does not wish to decisively engage the Sixth Brigade until it is ready to encircle Sincelejo in concert with attacks from the west. Units from the Seventh Front are only fifty kilometers to the south, and might be called upon to participate in any such attack.

For its part, the federal army will be satisfied—for the moment—with a successful defense of the area. Up till now, the Federales' hold on Sincelejo has been tenuous. But the deployment of Presidential Guard reserves to the San Onofre area seems to have stopped cold FARC advances there, buying the Federales time to consolidate their defense. To date, offensive actions have been merely tactical—the army is not yet ready to attempt to push FARC out of the region.

Despite heavy casualties in assaults on the city, the FARC brigades around Sincelejo have been growing in strength as FARC diverts materiel and new recruits to this offensive. Despite a slowdown in its advance, FARC has not given up on this front. For their part, the Federales are aware of the depth of FARC resources in the area, and are shoring up for the inevitable attempt to encircle Sincelejo. The battle for the city will continue for some time to come.

HOT SPOT: SINCELEJO





General Martínez

Seventh Front is in a good tactical position around Sucre, and could probably move quite successfully against the pocket. But Front Commander General Julio Martínez has refused to commit his First and Third Brigades decisively with their supply situation so tenuous. Unfortunately for him, FARC's high commanders are almost all veterans of the old guerilla war days. Though their grasp of ground tactics is excellent, these leaders have less experience managing large units and logistical concerns. An American-trained defector from the Colombian federal army, Martínez fully understands the requirements of large conventional units, and his hesitation to act is merited. But his complaints have been shrugged off by superiors who, still bearing the guerilla mindset, don't see a lack of supply as sufficient reason to not attack. There is talk in the War Council of replacing Martínez, and federal intelligence, having gotten wind of that, have offered him immunity from prosecution if he re-defects. So far he has refused, but he may reconsider as FARC's questions about his reticence turn into questions about his loyalty.

South and east of Sincelejo, Colombia's two primary rivers—the Magdalena and the Cauca—merge on a broad, flat depression. Large areas of the land are swampy, and both rivers split into several meandering branches which make their way slowly towards a convergence and their last 150 kilometers to the Caribbean Sea. As FARC has pushed its way around Sincelejo to the north, and to the banks of the Magdalena to the south, the Federales have found in Sucre department an easily-defended area from which to split the advance.

Although fighting in this area is not nearly as intense as around Sincelejo, it has been constant and often fierce since late 1998. The marshy, frequently jungle-covered terrain has prevented either side from effectively deploying heavy weaponry or armored vehicles, and most engagements have been of the guerilla variety despite the fact that units on both sides are conventional infantry in structure and training.

There are no targets of strategic value in the Sucre region—just a handful of small, impoverished villages eeking out an agrarian existence. FARC seeks to take the region in order to consolidate its control of the western bank of Magdalena, and mass the forces of Third, Seventh, and Fourth Fronts into a continual line capable of threatening any Federale asset in the northeast of the country, or even make a sweep across to the Venezuelan border. The Federales obviously wish to prevent this, but also have the more immediate concern of keeping pressure on FARC units south of Sincelejo (such as the Sixth Brigade of Third Front, which is deployed west of Managué and shows up on this map). FARC's inability to secure that flank prevents the insurgency from bringing larger forces into its encirclement of Sincelejo. Units at Sucre, and even motorized units as far up as Mompós (which could reach Sucre on two hours' notice), threaten to outflank Third Front brigades which mass too far up the FARC-held gap between Sucre and Sincelejo.

In addition to the defensive advantage of the terrain, the Federales have another thing going for them in this region. Very few roads enter the area from the south or west—in fact, there is not a single paved road approaching the positions of FARC's First and Second Brigades. This, along with sparse settlement and little agriculture in the area, makes it difficult to keep those units supplied.

Federal Forces: Desperate for troops and materiel elsewhere and gambling on the advantage of the terrain in this area, the Federales are defending the Sucre pocket with only two brigades: the 7th Brigade (part of the 3rd Division) and the 1st Marine Brigade. A single cavalry battalion has been detached from the 6th Division (which has forces just to the north and west of this map) and deployed to Mompós, where it secures the road from Managué and can act as a reserve for the other brigades. The 1st Marine Brigade is deployed in the town of Sucre (an isolated rural settlement, despite the fact that the surrounding department is named after it); while the 7th Brigade is headquartered in Majagual, near the southern extent of the pocket. 7th Brigade units heavily patrol the road running east from Achi, where they engage FARC forces regularly.

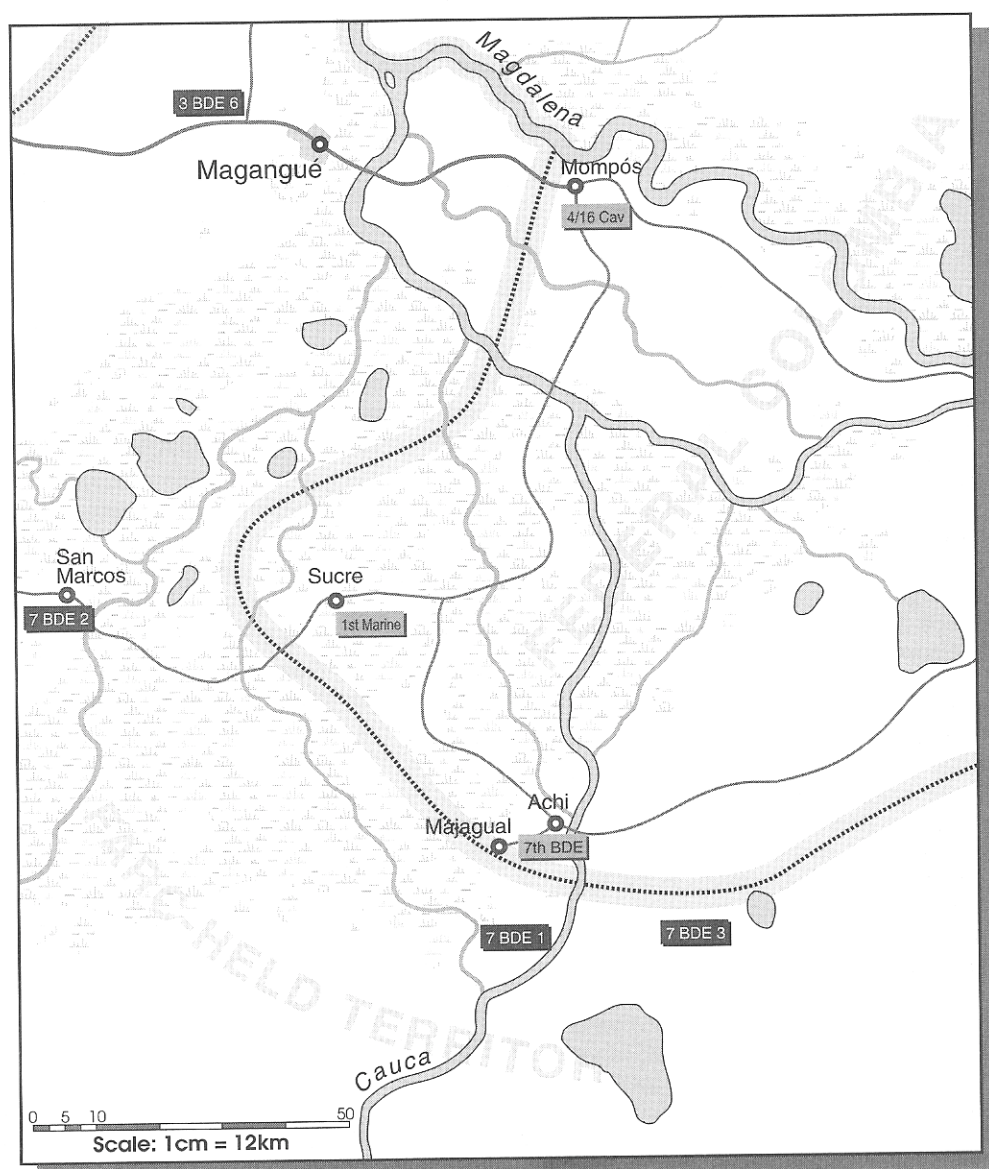
FARC Forces: The Sucre area is threatened by FARC's Seventh Front, made up of three infantry brigades. Although up to strength in terms of manpower, Seventh Front is not motorized or supported by much heavy weaponry or artillery. First and Third Brigades are deployed south of the pocket, where they can effectively threaten its

weakest flank but where they are well beyond reliable lines of supply. Second Brigade is deployed at San Marcos, just a few dozen kilometers up the road from Sucre and in an easy position to aid Third Front in an assault on Sincelejo.

Action: FARC realized early on that a standard assault on the villages of Sucre and Majagual would be easily repulsed unless Seventh Front was reinforced. With no such reinforcements available, Seventh Front's commander (General Julio Martínez) has chosen to press the pocket on either side, hoping to either encircle federal forces there or force them to withdraw. Unfortunately, difficulties in getting supplies to First and Third Brigades have prevented any sustained offensives on the eastern side of the pocket. Engagements with federal forces there are near-constant, but never decisive as the Federales seem reluctant to press any advantage (perhaps not realizing FARC's logistical vulnerability) and FARC has been simply unable.

Along the western flank of the pocket, FARC and federal units patrol the marshy jungle regularly, engaging in constant low-intensity fighting. The Federales have effectively blocked the road to Sucre—the only approach into the area for a large conventional force. Again, engagements have not been decisive, but federal forces, with superior training, replenishment, and equipment, have been gaining an incremental advantage over FARC's units. Whether this advantage ever amounts to anything remains to be seen, as a decisive stroke in the gap between Sucre and Sincelejo—either by FARC moving against the latter city, or the Federales seeking to close the gap between them—will probably occur before local fighting tips the balance one way or the other.

HOT SPOT: SUCRE





The U.S. at Socorro

There is a sizeable contingent of American soldiers assigned to Socorro—around 150 trainers, maintenance personnel, and advisors. These Americans aid the Colombians in training, intelligence analysis, and tactics, but are not, technically, combat personnel. The American Congress has strictly forbidden the administration from sending ground combat troops into Colombia, and for all it knows that order has been followed.

But there are in fact American special operations units on the ground in Colombia almost all of the time. In early 1999, special operations units have been operating almost continuously from Socorro, on missions throughout the Magdalena and Cauca valleys. Destruction of key FARC facilities, deep ground recons, forward observation for airstrikes, and the rescue of Americans (especially American pilots downed while flying covert missions) are among the many assignments U.S. personnel have been called in for. The need for such skills is neverending in Colombia, and the Federales have limited assets.

Although the area around Sincelejo is the most hotly contested at the moment, it is FARC's push across the middle Magdalena that has the Federales the most concerned. FARC conventional forces crossed the Magdalena early in 1998, taking the city of Barrancabermeja and quickly gaining ground on the western-most slopes of the Cordillera Oriental. FARC's potential for such an audacious move was totally unforeseen—or possibly just ignored—by federal strategists, but its success put FARC units within artillery range of Socorro, the Federales' main military base; within striking distance of Colombia's principal north-south highway; and within 125 kilometers of the Venezuelan border. With the taking of Barbosa and Contratación a few months later, FARC succeeding in severing the main highway—the first step, after closing the Magdalena, in separating Bogotá from the critical ports and industrial areas of the north. Even more frightening, FARC forces now hold ground adjacent to the Socorro Military Reservation, separated only by the Sogamosa River.

Socorro sits at the bottom of a broad valley, with a gentle slope towards the spine of the Cordillera Oriental to the east, and a sharp north-south ridgeline to the west, across the Sogamosa. Although FARC forces do control the entire slope opposite Socorro, the Federales have been aggressive in attacking, by air or guerilla action (the 19th Lanceros Brigade is very active in the area), any FARC units within twenty-five kilometers of the base. As a result, FARC has not been able to bring its heavy artillery into range, and with the exception of scattered guerilla attacks and the odd mortar shelling, has not made any serious attack on the base. Fortunately for the Federales, the airfield is near the eastern edge of the reservation, five or so kilometers from the Sogamosa and the nearest possible FARC artillery threat.

For its part, FARC has not pressed Socorro, but has instead consolidated its forces near Bucaramanga to the north and its block on the highway to the south. A successful assault on Bucaramanga would further cripple federal transportation, sealing Socorro (and Bogotá) off not just from the Atlantic coast, but also all major highways into Venezuela. It would also leave no barrier—natural or urban—between FARC and the Venezuelan border. The federal army clearly realizes the importance of this city, however, and has moved an entire division into the area. Although the terrain is not as advantageous to the defending Federales as it is in Sincelejo, any fight for Bucaramanga is likely to be just as intense.

Federal Forces: The Federales have two divisions and a mish-mash of other units spread along FARC's eastern line of advance. Tasked to the defense of Bucaramanga are the 10th, 11th, and 12th Brigades of the 4th Division, along with the 23rd Mechanized Brigade (which includes an armor battalion along with two battalions of mechanized infantry). These units are deployed in strong defensive positions on the outskirts of Bucaramanga and Piedecuesta, with a picket of lighter units along the FARC line to keep the insurgents' heavy artillery out of range of the city.

The line in front of Socorro and to south is held by two brigades the 1st Division (1st and 2nd—3rd Brigade is deployed to Bogotá). The 22nd Mechanized Brigade shores up the defense of the highway, ensuring that FARC does not advance along it to threaten the road through Charalá, the detour around the captured stretch of highway. Based at Socorro itself are several units held in reserve, including the 2nd Marine Brigade and 24th Paratroop Battalion, backed by one of

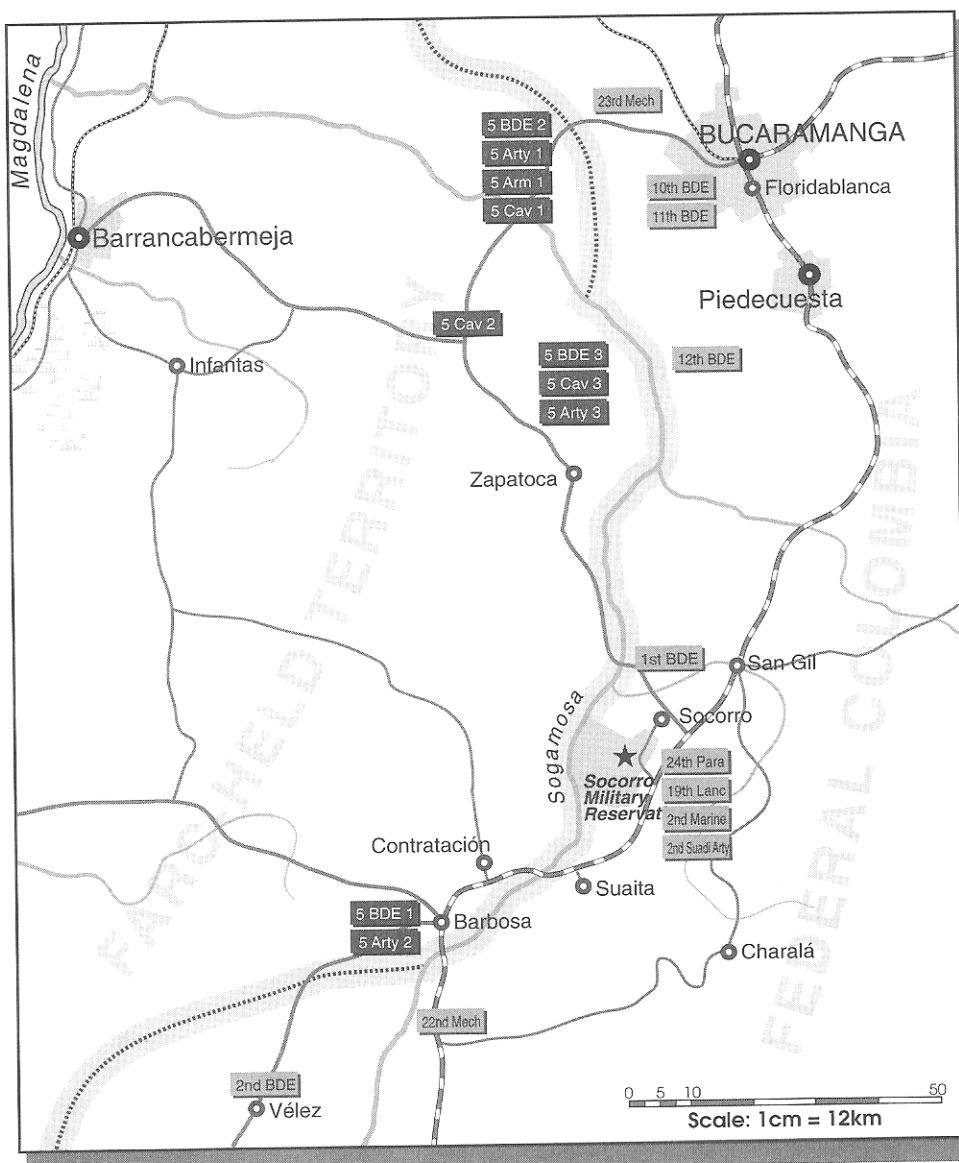
two Saudi heavy artillery units lent to the Colombian government. The First Lanceros Group is also headquartered at Socorro, and the 19th Lanceros Brigade operates in the immediate area.

FARC Forces: The units of Fourth Front that occupy the region east of the Magdalena are the heaviest in FARC's arsenal—three large infantry brigades backed by one armor, three cavalry, and three artillery battalions. The bulk of these units are deployed near Bucaramanga, where they are positioned to make a rapid strike to encircle the city once FARC has brought enough vehicles into the region to motorize the majority of its infantry companies. Even most of the artillery among these units is mechanized, including FARC's only battery of self-propelled 155mm howitzers. FARC is prepared to take advantage of the relatively easy terrain around Bucaramanga to move quickly and decisively.

South of Socorro, around the village of Barbosa, FARC holds the north-south highway where it crosses the Sogamosa. The Fourth Front's First Brigade, backed by the Second Artillery Battalion (made up primarily of 155mm and 105mm guns), is deployed in a position to defend the highway and threaten Socorro as well. The bridge at Barbosa was destroyed by FARC when they took the highway; the bridge just to the north, near Suaita, has since been destroyed by the Federales.

Action: The last concerted FARC offensive in this area was late in 1998—since then, FARC has been consolidating its position as the focus of its attention (and that of the Federales) has turned towards Sincelejo to the north. Sporadic Federele counter-offensives have had little result, changing the line only incrementally in the area near and to the north of Bucaramanga and south, near Vélez, but Lancero actions behind enemy lines have been effective in stalling FARC buildups and keeping heavy units away from Socorro. There is a fair amount of activity in the air, too, as federal attack planes duel with FARC air defenses in an attempt to maintain supremacy of the skies near this principal airfield.

HOT SPOT: THE EASTERN PUSH





FARC has remained active in the upper Magdalena region for three decades—since its very inception. Now, for a 130 kilometer stretch south of La Dorada, FARC holds the western bank of the Magdalena against Federale forces on the opposite shore. At their closest point, FARC forces are a mere eighty kilometers from the outskirts of Bogotá, and FARC's heaviest guerrilla activity occurs in the Tolima and Cundinamarca Departments, often just outside the city.

This mountainous region holds some of Colombia's most important natural resources (including emeralds and salt) as well as a great deal of agricultural development. In addition, gaps in the mountains south of this region in Tolima Department have made that area the country's central communications hub. For the moment, FARC seems content to sabotage communications nodes and ambush and sometimes steal shipments of valuable commodities, limiting offensive military actions to guerilla attacks. The mere presence of heavier forces beyond the river, within striking distance of Bogotá, is enough to tie up critical Federale units in defense of the capital. For the Federales, beyond the defense of Bogotá and mineral resources in the area, there is little immediate strategic gain in offensives in the region, and federal forces are deployed in entirely defensive and counter-insurgent roles.

Terrain in this area is fairly rugged, with the steep slopes of the Cordilleras Central and Oriental tumbling over ridgelines and valleys towards the Magdalena below. Most of the area is heavily forested, broken with coffee plantations and other agricultural development, but outside of Bogotá is not highly developed. The capital itself sits on a plateau high up the western slope of the Cordillera Oriental. The surrounding terrain should make any conventional FARC offensive towards the city a very hard-fought battle. The Magdalena at this point remains broad and deep. Though no longer navigable for sizeable commercial traffic south of Puerto Boyocá (just off the map to the north), smaller vessels can ply its waters along most of the length between FARC and Federale forces.

Federal Forces: The upper Magdalena area is defended by the Federales' 5th Division, made up of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Brigades. In addition, the 3rd Brigade (detached from the 1st Division, which operates out of Socorro) shores up the defense of the southern valley, and the Federales rely on two battalions of combat engineers (also detached from 1st Division) and a small flotilla of Coast Guard vessels, to prevent FARC incursions along the river. Finally, the 21st Lanceros Brigade operates out of Bogotá, deployed mostly in anti-guerilla sweeps in the surrounding countryside, and the 9th Brigade and 2nd Presidential Guard Battalion are stationed in the capital, where they serve as a strategic reserve and psychological boost to the city's populace.

With the exception of the Lanceros, most of these units are deployed in a strong defense, dug in to best exploit the rugged terrain and the limitations any invading force would face. The strongest defense is on the western side of the valley, at the southern extent of FARC holdings, and north of La Palma, where units of the 14th Brigade form a ragged line that eventually links up with units of the 2nd Brigade near Socorro. Defensive positions along the river, which forms a significant barrier, are lighter. Should the Coast Guard report a buildup of FARC activity along the far side of the Magdalena, additional federal forces can be redeployed to its defense.

The Coast Guard at Girardot

Coast Guard vessels, based at Girardot, patrol the Magdalena regularly. A half-dozen eight- and ten-meter riverine patrol boats are backed by two heavily-armed and -armored river tugs. Due to their draft, the tugs are more limited in where they can travel, and their slow speed makes them poorly suited to patrol duties. They do have the firepower, however, to take on fortified FARC positions along the shore.

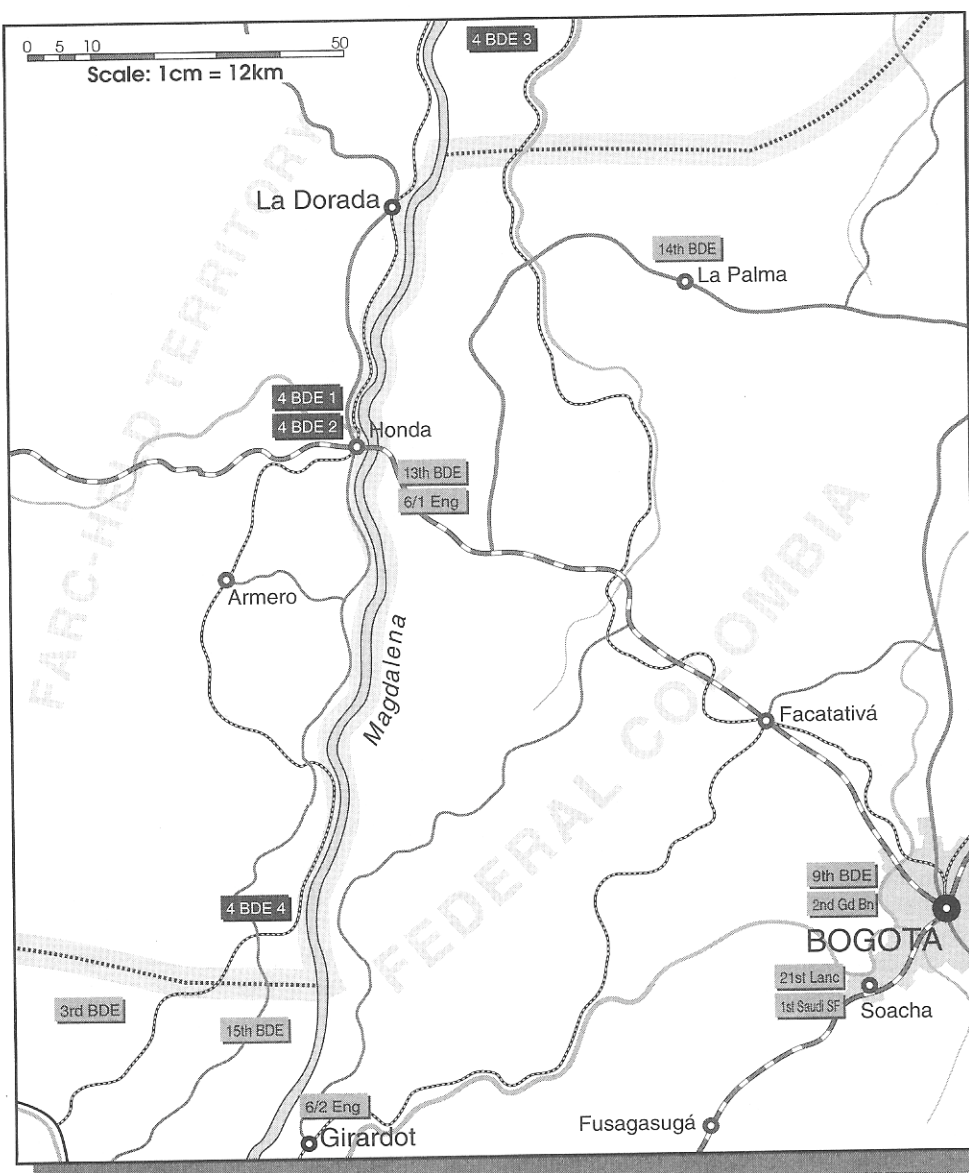
The Federales have no secure facilities north of Girardot, and vessels on the river are susceptible to FARC artillery and even small arms fire along its entire length. As a result, patrols rarely make it as far north as La Dorada, though the river south of the bridge at Honda is patrolled frequently. In addition to patrolling, the Coast Guard vessels often ferry lancero or combat engineers across the river to stage raids on FARC positions on the far shore.

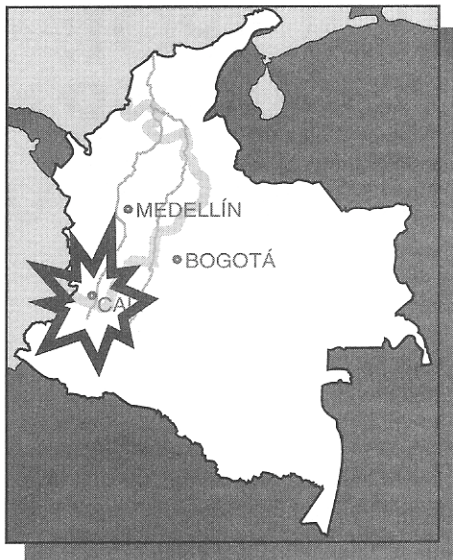
HOT SPOT: THE UPPER MAGDALENA

FARC Forces: The four conventional infantry brigades of Fifth Front, along with the guerilla companies of First Front, make up FARC's forces in the region. First Front is the legacy unit of FARC's original guerilla movement, and is heavily supported by the insurgency and even by civilian allies in the area. Nearly 1,000 guerillas operate in the mountains north and west of Bogotá, harassing enemy forces, raiding mining operations, and generally keeping the pressure up on the Federales and their capital.

And that's the function of Fifth Front, as well. FARC sees the capture of Bogotá as well beyond its means at this time; but with its reputation for daring and successful offensives, the Federales can't count on that. The four brigades of Fifth front, lightly equipped and undermanned, are outnumbered more than two-to-one by the six federal brigades in the area, and the terrain works decisively in favor of the defenders. Nevertheless, even when taking little offensive action, Fifth Front ties down critical federal forces that might otherwise be deployed to Sincelejo or Bucaramanga.

Action: Like the Federales, most of Fifth Front's units are dug into a secure defense, from which they venture forth only to recon and harass federal positions. There has been little offensive action or movement of the lines since the weak Federele counteroffensives against FARC's initial invasion of the area in 1997. In terms of guerilla actions, however, this is one of the hottest areas of the country, with both First Front and the lanceros highly active behind Federele lines.





The Pacific Coast Highway

In Chocó Department, along the northern half of the Pacific coast, the Cartel has undertaken an ambitious engineering project: the construction of a road along the coast that will stretch 400 kilometers from Pizarro to Juradó. The highway—actually a network of narrow semi-improved roads—will skirt the coast, providing overland access to every village, inlet and cove. Shallow-draft smuggling vessels will be able to come ashore at any point, forcing the multinational blockade to cover ten times the currently-patrolled coastline. As of early 1999, only the feeder road from Quibdó has been completed, along with perhaps thirty kilometers north and south of Nuquí. Construction on the remainder of the road is vigorously underway, however, extending a good thirty kilometers north and south. The Federales have been aware of the road since it first began to appear on satellite imagery, and key bridges and construction sites have been favorite targets for air strikes—especially for American planes, which can conveniently reach the highway from bases in Panama with a minimal risk of hostile fire. These attacks, however, have had little effect on construction or the operation of the road, which should be completed by the end of the year.

FARC's control along the Pacific coast and Cauca valley ends south of Cali and Buenaventura. Although originally the center of FARC's uprising and its heaviest concentration of unit strength, this region has cooled as strategic targets in the north and east of Colombia have become more important to both FARC and the Federales. Nevertheless, the upper Cauca is the back door to the Cartel's agricultural heartland and the highly developed regions between Cali and Medellín—a fact not lost on either FARC or the federal government.

The Cauca valley is relatively narrow in the region of Cali—less than one hundred kilometers from the crest of the Cordillera Central to that of the Cordillera Occidental, on whose gentle eastern slopes Colombia's third largest city sits. Across the Cordillera Occidental, set in the sultry lowland jungles of the Pacific coast, is Buenaventura. Though not a major shipping center, Buenaventura is the only deepwater port held by FARC and, like Cali, would be a major prize for the Federales. Unfortunately, with the desperate requirement for forces around Sincelejo, Socorro, and Bogotá, the army has only been able to spare a small holding force to secure the line of FARC advancement. For its part, FARC has a substantially larger force, but it is underequipped for any sustained offensive action, and serves mostly to protect FARC's southern flank from any unforeseen Federele incursion. Both sides have substantial guerilla forces operating on either side of the lines, working to undermine the enemy's conventional units, protect their own units from such attacks, and coordinate with civilian supporters in enemy territory.

Federal Forces: Unable to marshal the resources for a concerted assault on this region, the Federales have only deployed a single infantry brigade: the 8th Brigade, detached from the 3rd Division. Stationed at Santander, the unit serves to contain FARC expansion in the region and secure a jumping-off point for a future potential invasion of the Cauca valley and Buenaventura. Unable to mount any serious offensive, the 8th Brigade regularly shells FARC positions across the lines (having a major artillery advantage) and stages harassing attacks that keep FARC forces engaged and prevents FARC from diverting the manpower towards assaults on Sincelejo or Bucaramanga.

Backing the 8th Brigade is the 20th Lanceros Brigade, which includes a ranger battalion and a special forces battalion. Though special forces detachments are often broken away from the brigade to be tasked to missions elsewhere in the country, lanceros units operate extensively behind enemy lines, often conducting ground recon missions as far down the Cauca as Pereira and Armenia. They also stage attacks on FARC forces, and operate in federally-held areas in counter-guerilla sweeps.

FARC Forces: The conventional Sixth Front and the guerrilla Eighth Front engage federal troops in this area. The Sixth Front is made up of three infantry brigades, each substantially smaller than those deployed in busier combat zones. Although air defense units attached to these brigades are substantial (as they are throughout FARC territory), organic artillery support is spread thin and almost none of this force is motorized. The First and Second Brigades are deployed at the southern extent of FARC's holdings in the Cauca valley—the First Brigade on the western side of the Cauca and the Second on the east, headquartered in the village of Miranda. Their eastern flank is protected by the spine of the Cordillera Central, which is only lightly

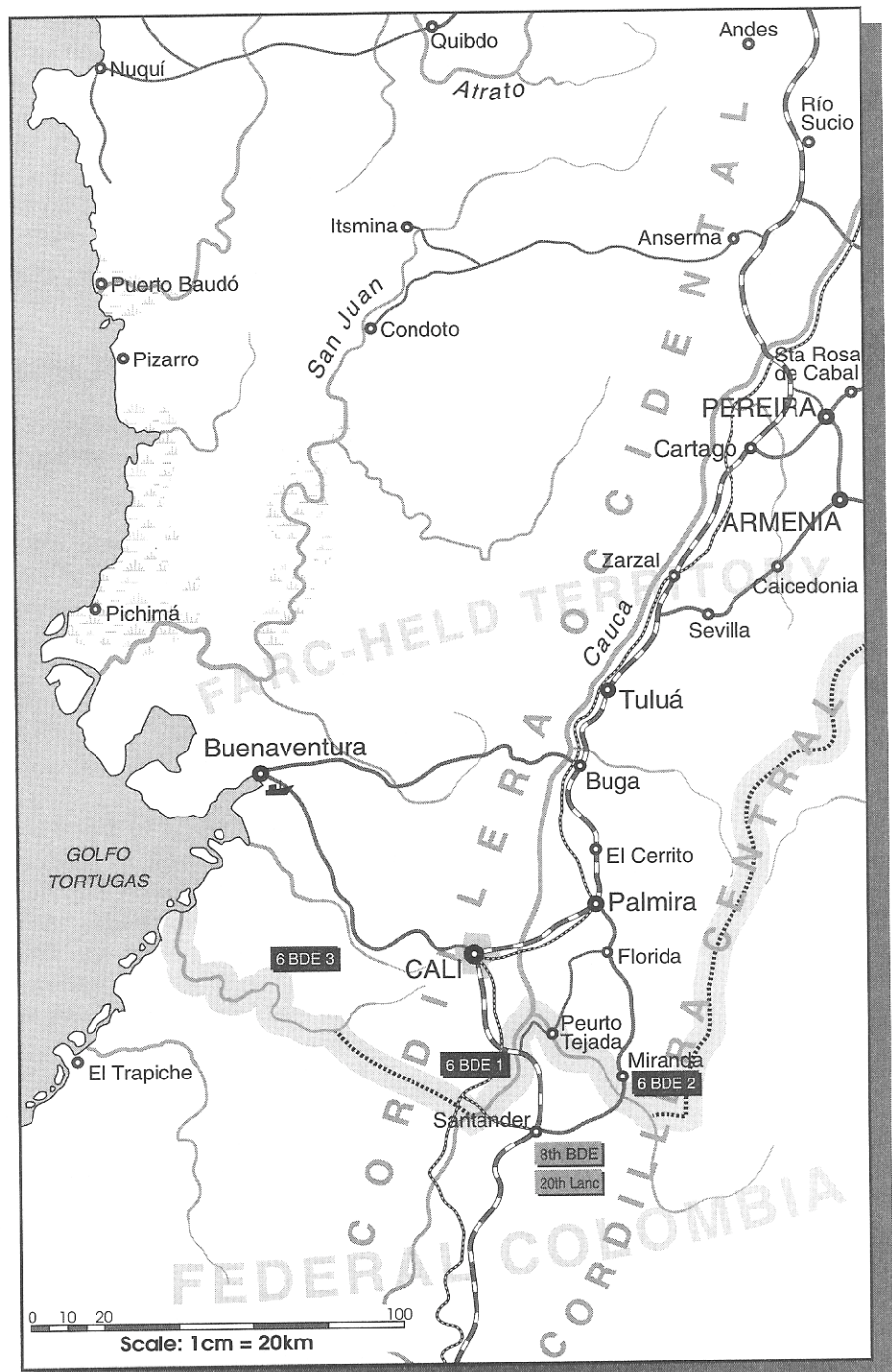
patrolled as it presents a formidable barricade to any serious assault (the battle line indicated on the map, heading north from Miranda, represents the Cordillera Central's highest ridgeline; in truth there is no hard line between the two warring sides, as the Cordillera's higher elevations form a sort of no-man's land not controlled by either).

To the west of the Cordellera Occidental, where the terrain levels out to a hot, flat, and often swampy rain forest, the Third Brigade is deployed to protect the southern extent of FARC coastal holdings. FARC forces regularly patrol an area some thirty kilometers south of the Cali-Buenaventura road, but this region has not been seriously contested by the Federales since their attempts to retake Buenaventura at the beginning of the war.

FARC's Eighth Front consists of two battalions of guerilla fighters, organized and operating very much like FARC's pre-war insurgents. These forces, generally broken down into companies and platoons that operate independently for months at a time, conduct recons deep into Federales territory, stage guerilla attacks on federal forces near the line, and sweep for federal lanceros in FARC's territory north along the Cauca valley. A great deal of coca is still cultivated in the upper Cauca valley, and FARC has many allies among the peasantry even in areas held by the Federales. Eighth Front guerillas continue contact with them and even maintain a trickle of coca commerce into FARC-held territory and south towards Ecuador.

Action: Most combat in this area is limited to guerilla attacks and minor skirmishes—the battle lines have not substantially changed since 1997. The Federales would like to exploit this back door into FARC's agricultural and industrial heartland once the situation in the north and west is stabilized, and to that end have been aggressively tasking lancero units to detailed recon of major tactical objectives and troop dispositions. To date FARC has not recognized this initiative as anything more than the ongoing harassing attacks that it carries out with its own guerillas.

HOT SPOT: PACIFIC COAST



Colombia: Vital Statistics

Area: 1,141,748 sq. km

Capital: Bogotá (FARC: (unrecognized) Medellín)

Flag: Federal: three horizontal bars, top (double wide, gold), middle (blue), bottom (red) (FARC: gold phoenix, wings spread, hammer in one claw, sickle in other, on red field)

Population: 30,463,700 (mestizo 60%, caucasian 20%, mulatto 14%, black 4%, Indian 2%) (FARC: 14,230,000 (mestizo 50%, caucasian 20%, mulatto 14%, black 4%, Indian 2%))

Growth Rate: 1.8%

Language: Spanish

Religion: Roman Catholic (95%); Other (5%)

Literacy: 79% (men 89%, women 70%, blacks 82%, Indians 34%)

Currency: Peso (450 pesos = U.S. \$1)

with very high humidity during the rainy season, dropping just a little in both categories in the dry season. Nighttime offers little relief, with a drop of perhaps only five or so degrees in temperature.

The highlands are not so severe. Rainfall is frequent but light, and the differences between the seasons even less pronounced than in the lowland jungles. Wet season temperatures rise only into the low 80s, with moderate humidity and nighttime drops into the 60s. Again, both temperature and humidity are somewhat lower in the dry seasons. Not surprisingly, most of Colombia's cities have sprung up on these plateaus, escaping the unbearably high temperatures of the valleys and llanos. Vegetation grows well, lush and green.

The llanos are a different story. They alternate between a single rainy and a dry season, each extreme in its severity. During the rainy season, floods often occur as the water pools and rushes into tributaries of the Orinoco and Amazon Rivers. Unlike in the forested regions, rainfall in the llanos tends to be steady and constant, often raining without stop for days or even weeks on end. The dry season regularly produces drought conditions. Overall, rainfall on the llanos remains deficient enough to stunt the growth of trees, resulting in the savanna-like terrain. Low grasses and hardwood bushes cover much of the llanos. Temperatures can soar over 100°.

URBAN AND RURAL COLOMBIA

In addition to its environmental contrasts, Colombia is a land with stark differences between developed urban regions and the primitive countryside.

Rural Colombia

In the valleys between the three ranges of the northern Andes, large areas of forested hillsides surround the coffee, sugar, banana, cereals, poppy (opium) and coca farms where a good section of the population finds employment. Colombia's chief industry is agriculture—it provides (or did before the war, at least) most of the world's supply of mild coffee and coca. The country's gold, platinum and emerald mines also hide among the Cordilleras.

The land directly east and southeast of the Andes contains tropical rain forest, jungle, and, at the northern end of the extreme east, grassy plains. Most of the sparse population hovers around farming communities. Private, family-owned farms are scattered along the periphery of the Amazonian jungle. Most are subsistence farms, with the minority of commercial farms and plantations struggling to compete with the output of corporate agricultural complexes and the Medellín Cartel in the Cordilleras.

In contrast to the relatively prosperous urban landscape, rural poverty is endemic and Colombian villages resemble the poorest of Latin America's Third World nations. Most rural Colombians live a subsistence existence, whether they scrape a living off of the land or labor in mines, plantations, or other rural industries. The country people of Colombia react with suspicion to strangers. Many cannot read or write, especially the older generations (although Colombia's literacy rate, even among peasants, is higher than most Third World societies). Weekly mass at the church brings them together as do the elections every four years, when even the most isolated come out to vote.

Urban Colombia

The majority of Colombia's cities and population huddle upon the Andean plateaus and along the Caribbean coastline in the west and north of the country. As a whole, Colombia's population is around 31 million, with almost half living in or around urban areas which total only about 10% of the land. Colombian cities tend to be low and sprawling, with wide, often tree-lined avenues. An explosion of urban growth in the 50s and 60s saw the introduction of high rises and prefabricated residential complexes to Colombia. In the years following, this growth gradually dissipated, coming to a near standstill in the early 90s. As a result many of Colombia's cities have begun to decay, their forty- and fifty-year-old buildings showing signs of wear and tear. Many of the buildings have a distinctly Spanish flavor, their exteriors painted in dirty shades of beige, pink and brown—but otherwise, the city centers of Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali look much like those in the rest of the developed world, and might easily pass for European cities.

But for the war. Although most have not been the scene of heavy fighting, none of Colombia's cities are free of scars and wounds. In the last five years, neither FARC nor the government has bothered to invest much time or money in the cleaning up, renovating or rebuilding urban areas affected by the war. Graffiti's reds, oranges, greens, blacks and blues splash the city with cries of despair, loyalty and outrage. Tank treads have left indelible tears in roadtop asphalt, the fractures going unrepaired. Even trash pickup falters in areas, leaving dumpsters to overflow with paper and organic waste. And in some places, bombed-out buildings (their skeletal girders rising into the sky, their piles of concrete charred) darken the streets.

A slow leak of foreign investment from Colombia has caused the country to take measures to encourage companies to build factories and franchises there. Despite the war, many major companies have chosen to remain, drawing their workforce from the local population. The factories and manufacturing plants, in particular, become fortresses with government-loaned patrols and guards. Familiar American fast-food chains still nestle between “el banco” and “la taverna,” although they are generally owned by Colombians and often have some menu variations specific to Colombia or Latin America.

As with the landscape, the people of urban Colombia could (under better circumstances) often pass for those of the developed world. Although the poorer and working-class *barrios* (neighborhoods) on the outskirts of the cities often feature graffiti, barefoot and ragged children, and other signs of Third World neglect, education levels are relatively high and the middle class—but for the war—enjoy standards of living comparable to the U.S. and Europe.

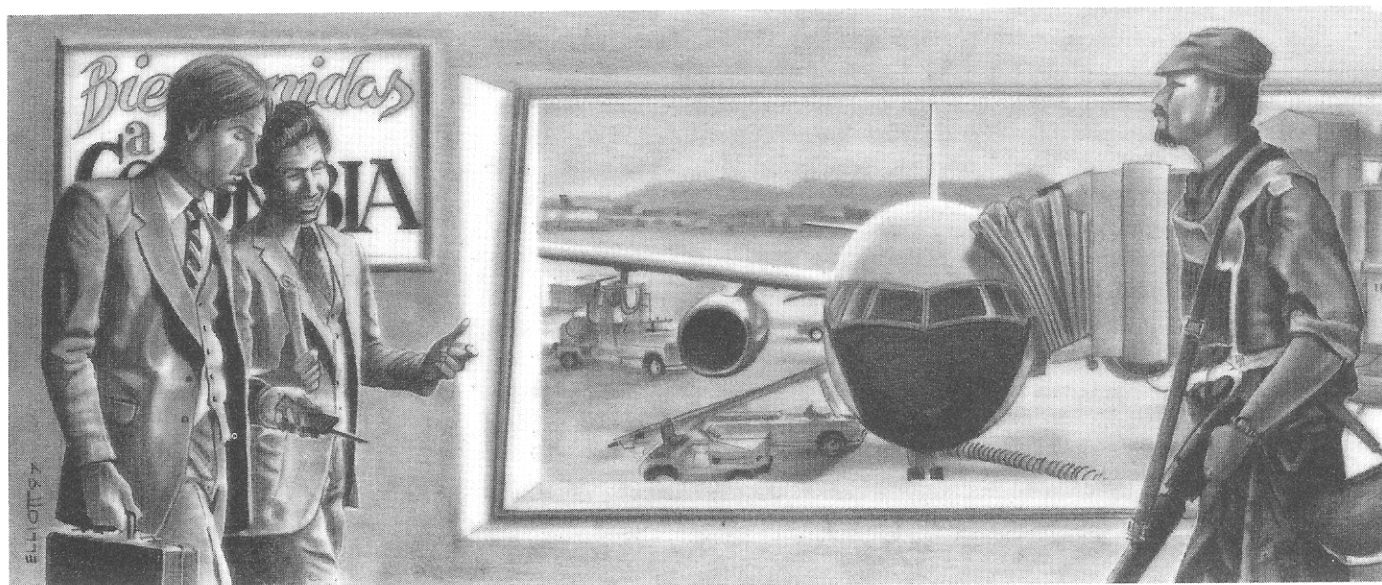
Now, however, the homeless abound in the cities of Colombia, huddling in the streets and in abandoned buildings. They gather in shanty-towns, called *favelas* (a Portuguese word borrowed from Brazilians), for protection and shared misery. Many beg for money on the sidewalks; others, especially in FARC-controlled areas, have slipped into the low end of the drug trade, making deliveries and working the fields. Open-bedded trucks stop at the favelas every morning to pick up those willing and able to work. Many of these people come to the cities from their rural homes in the hope of finding a job and safety. Most find only disappointment.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE WAR

FARC's historical insurgency, which dates back almost three decades, was always rooted in the rural mountain regions of the eastern and central cordillera. There FARC drew its support from poor and landless peasants working the fields of coffee and other agricultural farms and plantations. Given that the terrain that best suits the cultivation of coffee is also ideal for coca, it's not surprising that the Cauca valley between Medellín and Cali was also the stronghold of the criminal drug cartels that sprang up in the 1970s. And it's also not surprising that this region remains the heart of FARC's and the Medellín Cartel's holdings even after so much war. Since the outbreak of open ground combat in 1995, however, FARC's holdings have grown quite a bit, to include virtually all of Colombia's northwest corner. This includes the cities of Cali and Medellín, as well as all of the Cauca valley and significant chunks of the Magdalena valley. Much of this region is rural or moderately developed, though FARC has made more recent inroads into developed areas of the cordillera central and the Atlantic coast.

By contrast, the federal government controls the rest of the country. The industrialized north is still firmly in the grip of the Federales, though the connection between that region and southern half of the country (including the capital, Bogotá), thins as FARC forces push towards the Venezuelan border. The southern and eastern two-thirds of the country—remote regions dominated by the heights of the Andes in the southwest and amazonian jungle towards the east—are largely untouched by the war.

Politically, Colombia as a whole is divided into thirty-one *departamentos* ("departments"—similar to states or provinces) and one *distrito especial* ("special district"—a capital district similar to the United States' District of Columbia). Each departamento has its own capital, and, under normal circumstances, a *gobierno* (governor) who controls it. Although the battle lines do not fall evenly along the borders of the departamentos, it can be said that FARC and the Cartel generally hold Antioquia, Caldas, Chocó, Córdoba, Quindío, Risaralda, and Valle de Cauca, and control a good portion of Bolívar, Santander, and Sucre. The federal Colombian government still holds the remaining twenty-one



departamentos: Atlántico, Amazonas, Arauca, Boyacá, Caquetá, Cauca, Casanare, Cesar, Cundinamarca, Guajira, Guaimía, Guaviare, Huila, Magdalena, Meta, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Putumayo, Tolima, Vaupés, and Vichada.

The Atlantic Coast and the North

The Atlantic coast varies from uninhabited tropical beachfront in the west (near the border with Panama) to densely developed industrial and shipping centers near Barranquilla. With a climate unsoftened by the mountain highlands of central Colombia, this region fits most people's idea of a tropical climate: hot and intensely humid, with unrelenting sun broken only by unrelenting rain. Highly developed in areas, this region is still primarily agricultural, though more densely cultivated than most of Colombia's rural regions. Principle agricultural products include vegetables, fruit, cotton, fishing and cattle. Barranquilla and Cartagena are the leading industrial centers, though industrialization has spread sporadically throughout the area, encouraged by the free trade zone at Barranquilla. Chemical processing plants line the coast near that city, and the entire area is a major import-export center.

In the late 50s and early 60s, Colombia made an attempt to turn the Caribbean coast toward the tourist trade. By the 70s, however, the attempt had failed—a reputation for political and drug-related violence, however mild, was too big a liability in the competitive Caribbean tourist market. Port cities along the north turned increasingly industrial, with shipping lanes bearing oil tankers and container ships more often than cruise liners. Manufacturing plants, warehouses and chemical refineries line the Caribbean coast, lending a gray tint to the tropical paradise. The late 90s has seen an increase in industrial development in this region, as the Colombian government has had to increasingly rely on this region's industrial and shipping assets.

In the extreme northeast, between Barranquilla and the Venezuelan border, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range rises precipitously from the coast to an altitude of 5,800 meters. Though most of the northern region is relatively flat and the Andes hit their highest points in the south some 1,000 kilometers away, two of the Sierra Nevada peaks—the Colón and the Bolívar—are the highest in Colombia.

Córdoba Department holds the site of the Sinú Indian burial grounds where conquistadors Heredia and Vadillo found considerable wealth in the Indian *guacas* or tombs. The Sinú style of pre-conquest Indian gold-work is characterized by false filigree or cast threads. Before the war, archeologists continued to uncover items in this area, the most common including large, semi-circular ear and nose pieces, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures, large-nosed birds, and breastplates, all cast in gold.

In contrast to other parts of the country, the main industry in San Andrés y Providencia Department is still tourism, despite the civil war. A small grouping of islands located far from the mainland of Colombia, the area is away from the fighting and even outside the radius of the international blockade, and still appeals to cruise ships touring the southwestern Caribbean. Ownership of the islands was contested in the early twentieth century, but the issue was settled by treaty with Nicaragua in 1928. The Colombian government, however, has been receiving reports that the islands may be in jeopardy of a hostile takeover at a time when Colombia has its hands tied with the civil war.

The Salt Cathedral at Zipaquirá

One of Colombia's major natural resources is salt, deposits of which have been mined since pre-colombian times. Located less than an hour from Bogotá, the salt mine at Zipaquirá has a long history. Long before the Spanish arrived, Chibcha Indians were making cakes of salt from the deposits on the mountain's rivulets. When the conquistadors entered the area surrounding Zipaquirá, they enslaved the Indians and forced them to mine the mountain. By the end of the nineteenth century, the mountain had been honeycombed with over 12 kilometers of tunnels on four different levels, and the mine was producing 250,000 bags of salt each month.

Around 1910, salt miner Daniel Rodríguez Moreno, created a small statue of the Virgin Mary to watch over the miners in their dangerous work. In the 1940s, Luis Angel Arango, former manager of the Bank of the Republic (which by then had acquired the mine), became interested in the miners' idea of creating an underground cathedral. José María Gonzales Goncha, an architect, was brought in and construction began in 1950. Four years later, Monsignor Tulio Botero, Bishop of Zipaquirá, conducted the official consecration service. He was careful to exclude a portion of the area in his citation, so that St. Peter's in Rome would remain largest church in Christendom. Over 120 meters in length, with a forty-five meter high ceiling supported by fourteen massive piers of salt each twelve meters square at the base, the cathedral can comfortably accommodate ten thousand worshippers.

An important hydro-electric plant in Sucre Department, where fighting between FARC and the federal government of Colombia currently rages, holds particular strategic value. FARC control over the hydro-electric plant in Sucre would deal a severe blow to the Federales.

Most of the Atlantic coast is still held by the Federales, who still have a firm grip on the industrial areas of Barranquilla and Cartagena. FARC holds the western third of the coast, most of which is remote and undeveloped, and is not being exploited or heavily occupied by FARC forces. Fighting around Sincelejo has been some of the most intense of the war, as the federal army holds out against FARC forces pushing along the coast.

Santa Marta

Located east of the mouth of the Magdalena, on the Caribbean coast of federal Colombia, Santa Marta sprawls along the beach. Its high-rise hotels and fancy restaurants would label it a tourist attraction, but tourists rarely come to the city anymore. The hilly coastline lifts the back of Santa Marta to where the entire city can be seen from boats in the harbor. At night, it presents a beautiful panorama of sparkling lights. During the day, however, Santa Marta's blemishes become visible in the unforgiving sunlight of the tropics.

Santa Marta is known for its open-air market. A pedestrian area nearly five blocks square, it is a place where vendors set up booths and lay out blankets to sell vegetables, fruit, jewelry, cloth, leather goods, flowers and a broad variety of other items. Crowds flow through the market every day, bustling and noisy, especially early in the morning. Visitors here often fall prey to pick-pockets and petty thieves, despite the constant presence of the National Police.

Barranquilla

Barranquilla sits at the mouth of the Magdalena, where the land is marshy and difficult to develop. Close to the river, the people of Barranquilla have built their buildings up on pilings to avoid the annual flooding and to provide extra stability upon the swampy land. Where the land rises away from the river, the buildings become more traditional. Many of the buildings exude an aura of transience, as if they were not meant to stand for very long. This may result from the annual flooding which can, during certain years, cover and damage large portions of the city.

Boats cram the river, from shore to shore (steamboats, tugboats, champánes, rafts and poled rowboats). The rumble of their engines and deep calls of their horns provide a constant background to the sounds of the city. Rickety docks line the river. Boats pull up to them to receive goods being shipped up river or out to sea where they will be transferred to ocean-going ships.

The Central Cordilleras and Magdalena Valley

The Eastern and Central Cordilleras mountain ranges strike up through Colombia from the south, to frame the northward-flowing Magdalena river. Much of Colombia's urban development is in this area, where temperatures are more temperate and rainfall less severe than in the lowlands. Industry varies greatly in this region, including well-developed agricultural, cattle, mining, and textile industries.

The distrito especial, Bogotá, is located on a plateau in the Cordillera Oriental. Cundinamarca Department includes and keeps its administrative center in Bogotá. Highly industrialized, the entire area has provided a wealth of resources, including two of the country's major products: salt and emeralds. In pre-Hispanic times, Cundinamarca held a large concentration of the Chibcha civilization. At the time, they formed sedentary village confederations surrounding their ceremonial centers at Sogamoso and Facatativá, and archeologists have uncovered thousands of artifacts from these lost villages—though the most famous Colombian archaeological remains are found at San Agustín in Huila Department.

South and east of Bogotá, in Caquetá Department, population and development drop off. This area has never been effectively settled or of major economic importance. Subsistence farming remains common, with large expanses of undeveloped land and hidden communities of Indians and farmers.

Tolima Department was the site of the Pijao wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Strategically important for communication routes, it currently sits at the edge of FARC territory and has seen major conflict as the FARC army attempts to gain control of it. The main office of Comunicaciones de Colombia, the major telecommunications company of Colombia, is located in Tolima. They have recently been preparing to move to Bogotá, but the loss of control of the telephone lines which radiate out from Tolima could prove disastrous for them.

FARC has taken much of the central Magdalena valley, but the upper Magdalena, along with Bogotá and her surrounding industrial and mining centers, is still controlled by the Federales. Fighting has been fairly intense recently, as FARC seeks to pressure these vital areas and the Federales look to push FARC back across the Magdalena and secure crucial transportation links to the north.

Bogotá

With more than 400 years of experience as a civil-ecclesiastical administrative center, Bogotá has served as the capital of Colombia since independence from Spain in 1819. Located in the distrito especial, it remains apart from the rest of the departments of the country, with its own Mayor appointed by the President. Despite this separate status, Bogotá also serves as the capital of the department that surrounds the distrito especial, Cundinamarca. All public services are carried out with the approval of the Mayor and a publicly-elected council.

The largest city in Colombia, Bogotá has a population of approximately four million people. It sits high on a plateau in the Central Cordillera, some 2600 meters above sea level. Bogotá has developed sophisticated and powerful industries. Its people make above-average incomes and have an overall better education than anywhere else in the country. A cultural center, Bogotá is home to many universities, museums, historical societies, and intellectual organizations. The Archbishop of Colombia resides here, at the Cathedral of Santa Fe de Bogotá. The descriptive term "Bogotano" has come to denote a character of austerity and excessive formality.

Strategically well-placed, the land descends all around Bogotá, down into the valleys of the Magdalena River and its tributaries. A sprawling city, Bogotá has broad streets and plenty of space between the buildings, none of which rise any higher than twenty stories. The late 50s

Gangs in Bogotá

The youth of Colombia resemble those of Los Angeles—the lost children of the 90s. Their anger and confusion at the events going on around them erupts in fatalistic violence. A number of gangs have formed in Bogotá and now grow in size and destructive force, as these youth search for a sense of belonging in a country torn apart by war. Many of these gangs wear "colors," meet in secret, establish territory and fight among themselves. One in particular, that calls itself the Unión de Intelligencia, has become the most influential of Bogotá's gangs. Taking up the weapons and even explosives so easily available in Colombia, the UI has become increasingly violent—to the increasing detriment of civilians and bystanders caught in UI attacks. This group boasts not just thugs and barrio children, but many students who, in another time or place, would be finishing their university studies and looking forward to a prosperous—and peaceful—life.

and early 60s saw the construction of the majority of Bogotá's buildings and their age now shows in the style and condition of their facades.

The federal government currently controls Bogotá. Located less than 100 kilometers east of the FARC line, the city holds its breath waiting for the moment when FARC troops will swarm up over it. The federal government has not moved its capital functions out of the city, and remains determined to hold it whatever the cost.

A state of martial law grips Bogotá. The streets rumble from time to time with armored vehicles and the stomping of army boots. A mandatory curfew keeps its citizens inside after midnight. Civil unrest explodes periodically in rashes of violence against federal troops, though in general these are more an expression of frustration and anxiety—taking the form of protest against rationing, martial law, or human rights abuses—than true, deep-rooted opposition to the government. In such tense circumstances, passions can run high and be easily exploited by agitators. But most Bogotanos—even those most critical of the government and its actions in the war—fear the Cartel much more than they dislike the Federales.

Nevertheless, such protest has led to a spiralling situation in Bogotá. Federal troops and commanders (most of whom have lost loved ones or

friends in the fighting) begrudge the students, peasants, or workers who would confront them. Such anger often manifests in violence, or worse—the army's human rights record is not beyond reproach. Something as simple as a rude hand gesture has been known to incite a federal soldier to descend upon a citizen. And more than one protest leader has simply disappeared, or been found the victim of a brutal murder.

In the mean time, Bogotá's population gets up every morning, eats breakfast and joins the throng heading to work on public transportation. The push for normalcy is the one thing that all Colombians seem to share—as if, by some miracle, merely ignoring the war will keep it off their doorsteps.

The Cordillera Occidental and the Cauca Valley

From Medellín south to Cali, the Cauca valley, framed by the Cordilleras Central and



Occidental, is heavily populated and well-developed industrially and agriculturally. This is the heart of Colombia's coffee and coca cultivation (though both spread, to a lesser extent, throughout the cordilleras). Cattle ranching remains an important part of local economics, and the Cauca River, which rises at the juncture of the three Andean Cordilleras and flows 1,000 kilometers before joining with the Magdalena River, is a vital transportation link to major cities along the Eastern and Central Cordilleras.

Antioquia Department, in particular, has played an important role since the sixteenth century in economic activities in mining, textiles, agriculture, commerce and industry. The nickname for its people, Antioqueños, has acquired a broader meaning and use, implying industriousness, thrift, and intense family and regional loyalties.

When the conquistadors and missionaries arrived in Colombia, they centered their communities in the west. As a result, much of Colombian history derives its important events from this area. The Chocó Department includes the valleys of the San Juan and Atrato Rivers. It once served as a slave-holding area and is historically important for gold, silver, and platinum mining. Although of more recent origin, 1863, Pereira (Risaralda Department) is today the eighth largest city in Colombia. The city's capture was one of FARC's major accomplishments in the war.

In Cauca, cattle-ranching and fishing are important industries, as is the mining of coal, platinum and a variety of other minerals and metals. Cauca Department has been an important political and cultural center since the 1530s.

West of the Cordillera Occidental lies the jungled and lightly-inhabited Pacific coast. FARC's control over more than half of the western coastline has not proved an important element in the war, as the lack of development has rendered the region strategically irrelevant. However, the Cartel has been working to increase overland access to the northern coast, on the theory that smuggling from villages along a broader length of coastline—even in the small quantities allowed by shallow-draft vessels—will stretch and thin blockade efforts. Drug traffic has shifted somewhat out of the Caribbean to this area, often headed for Mexico, Panama, the Philippines, and the western United States.

FARC controls most of this region, except for Cauca Department. Occupied elsewhere, the Federales are content at the moment to maintain a holding action, to prevent FARC from extending influence further south.

Medellín

Medellín sits high on a plateau, more than 1500 meters above sea level, in the Central Cordillera, the middle of the three mountain ranges that run up the length of the country. Low and sprawling, this city of two million spreads out upon the flat, nearly treeless land with plenty of space between the buildings. Like Bogotá, much of Medellín's urban growth came in the 50s and 60s, the architecture reflecting its era in boxy design and colorless exteriors. The city's tallest building, the Banco Federal de Colombia, stands only twelve stories high.

Historically, Medellín has always been the capital city of the drug lords, culminating in the creation of the Medellín Cartel in the early eighties. FARC moved into Medellín in 1996, claiming the city and

The San Agustín Archaeological Park

San Agustín, Colombia's most famous archaeological site, sits deep in the department of Huila near the source of the Magdalena River. Scattered across hills and forest-covered ranges, the site is dotted with monolithic stone sculptures, ancient mounds, and community remains that tell of a culture that settled in the region in the 6th century BC and disappeared before the arrival of the Spaniards.

The stone sculptures sometimes stand as tall as twelve feet and represent humans or deities. Many have heads exaggerated in size and jaguar-like features, their bodies thick-set with short, straight limbs. Experts believe the culture practiced a complex religion with special emphasis on funerary rites. Underground chambers contain statues or sarcophagi. They were lined with great stone slabs and covered with earthen mounds, some measuring over five meters tall and thirty meters wide. Ceremonial bathing pools, called lavapatas and created by underground springs nestled in the rocky landscape, are believed to have been an important part of the culture's religious practices.

In addition to the more dramatic remains, archaeologists have also uncovered housing structures and pottery pieces. In 1935, the Colombian government proclaimed the site (which sits a fair distance from the current fighting) a national park, and anthropologists continue to study the data collected as they reconstruct a profile of this early civilization.

turning it into their national headquarters. Since then, the city has changed dramatically as FARC has attempted to take over all the bureaucratic offices of the city, including utilities and services.

The public spirit in Medellín is an odd mixture of alarm, excitement, and hushed anticipation. FARC and the Cartel have little support among the middle class, and only slightly more among blue-collar workers and the urban poor. And yet there is also little open protest of FARC and the war in general—the people of Medellín have not fully accepted a future under FARC rule, but don't see an end to it any time soon. With such an uncertain vision of the future, they live day-to-day, making the most of the existing situation.

Oddly, entrepreneurship has risen to an all-time high. Under intense embargo, few imported goods make it into FARC-held Colombia. The Cartel has gone to great lengths to gain the support of the people of Medellín, its capital, and it remains the best place in FARC's territory for finding consumer goods, gasoline, rationed foodstuffs and other luxuries. This, and the near-complete shutdown of conventional commerce, have led to the creation of a vibrant, if still rarified, new economy. Unfortunately, this relative plenty has led to some backlash. The few instances of true protest against FARC and the Cartel almost always surround the requisition of goods, services or transportation facilities for military use.

In addition to this economic mini-boom, an atmosphere of bohemian abandon and debauchery can often be felt in Medellín. The city is a common destination for FARC troops on leave, and like soldiers everywhere, they take their relaxation seriously—a phenomenon fueled by the fact that Medellín is the only place in FARC-held Colombia that feels remotely normal. A new phenomenon—drug addiction—has grown to epidemic proportions in Medellín and the surrounding areas. Alcohol consumption has tripled since the war, and prostitution is rampant.

Occupied with the war, FARC and the Cartel have done little to rein in the growing excesses of Medellín.

La Policía de Medellín

Shortly after FARC took Medellín, early in the war, the city's police force was revamped and sent out in force as the Cartel's first attempt to impress the populace with its new leadership. Not surprisingly, the new force (handpicked from those the Cartel had bought in the years before the war) does not restrict its corrupt dealings to the drug lords. Medellín is now a city where justice is bought, when it occurs at all. Medellín's police stroll through the Parque de Bolívar, their gray uniforms neatly pressed, hands on their revolvers, chests out, eyes alert, watching for fights or other disturbances that threaten the security of the dealers and prostitutes that work there. But though they keep a semblance of peace in Medellín's most public areas, they are not sticklers for the law—and immunity to their justice is available to any that can afford it.

Cali

Located in southwestern Colombia, Cali sprawls upon the slope of the Cordillera Occidental, 975 meters above sea level. Overlooking the Cauca River, Cali is home to more than 1.4 million people.

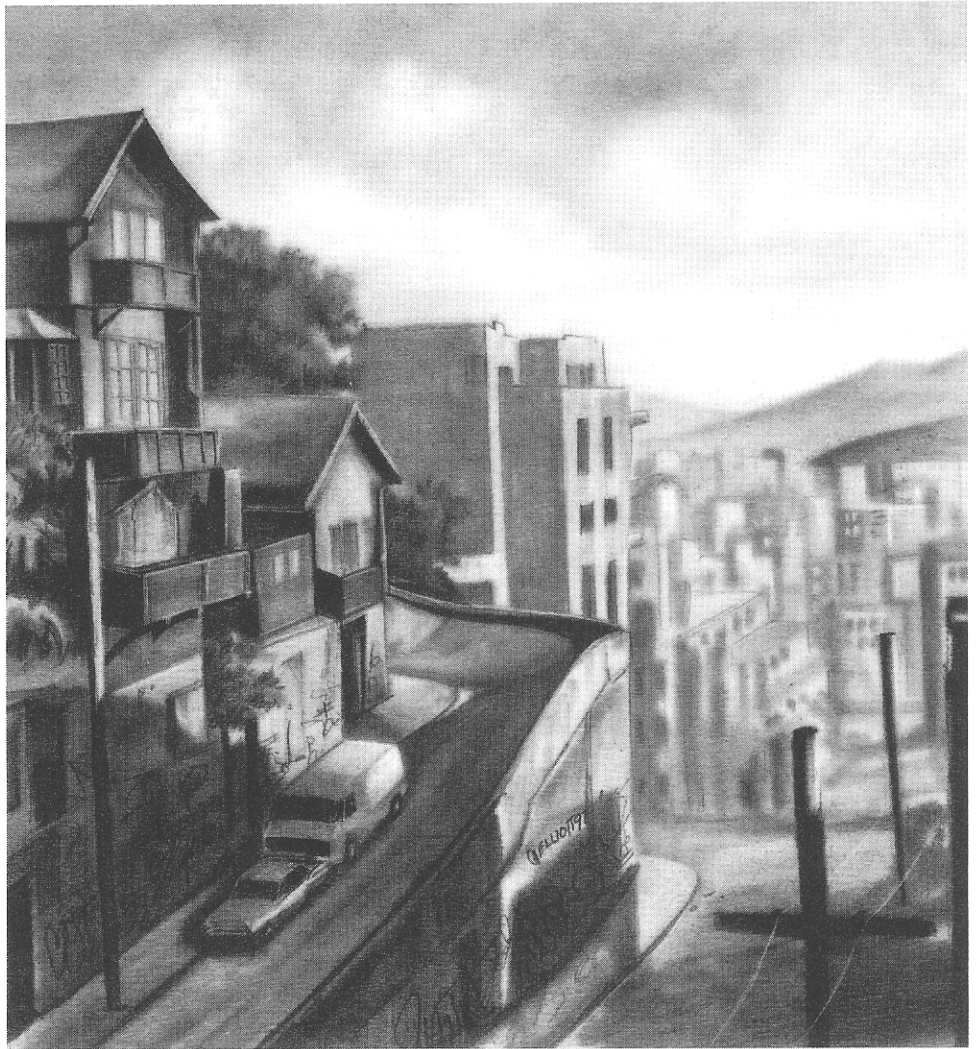
In recent years, people moved from the country to the city in an attempt to escape their impoverished lifestyles and a population explosion hit Cali hard. Prefabricated barrios and apartment complexes grew up everywhere, taking over the fields and forests surrounding the city. A solid mass transit system facilitates the commute from the outer neighborhoods into the city. New schools have popped up everywhere and suburban businesses, including La Buena Vida shopping mall, thrive. The war seems to have barely touched the middle-class neighborhoods of suburban Cali.

But Cali has a large underclass as well. Crime is escalating in the poorer barrios, where buildings left empty slowly decay. Small family-owned businesses that have survived for generations falter as people leave the crumbling neighborhoods for greener pastures. Street gangs of disgruntled teens roam the alleyways and hang out in doorways along pot-holed streets. They rob their own neighbors and harass the elderly who can't afford to move.

Cali's worst barrios squat in the shadow of the business district, whose mirrored skyscrapers and wide, tree-lined boulevards contrast

sharply with the squalor found only blocks away. The business district is a mixture of new and old. Spanish stonework and architecture mingle with the glass and steel. Buildings several hundred years old and brick courtyards with statues of conquistadors and national heroes nestle between the giant, modern structures. One such building is the Cali municipal courthouse, the oldest building in the city. Four stories tall, its foundation was laid in 1537, shortly after Cali was founded. Additions over the years have enhanced it, but the original style of the architecture remains intact.

The city shows no sign of physical wear and tear from the war. FARC took Cali without resistance early in the war, and the Federales have not returned since. But the front lines are only a few dozen kilometers away—close enough to make the rumble of artillery occasionally audible in the distance—and an atmosphere of tension is almost palpable. Most neighborhoods are like ghost towns, as people keep to their homes.



Buenaventura

Part resort and part industrial center, Buenaventura—a small city of about 160,000 people—is Colombia's only major port on the Pacific and the only deep-water facility held by FARC. One of the first cities taken by the insurgents at the start of the war, it remains critical to FARC's war effort despite an intense international blockade.

The entire northeastern portion of Buenaventura is an industrial sector, where a broad variety of manufacturing plants, warehouses and chemical factories squat awaiting the end of the war. South of the city, along the Pacific beaches, high-rise hotels built in the seventies and eighties offer luxury accommodations, conference rooms, and gambling parlors. Like the factories, most of these sit empty and unused, some bearing the scars of the last fights for the city.

FARC's overthrow of the local government of Buenaventura, including the arrest of its leaders, caused quite a stir among residents. The affluent of Buenaventura reacted more strongly than did the working class. They organized civilized protests and circulated petitions. Heated debate pitted neighbor against neighbor, over drinks or dinner. People

took sides on the issue. Of course, the situation was futile and did not change. Gobierno Manuel Lapaz and his cabinet remained incarcerated and eventually the protests died down.

Pereira

Nestled in the Cauca River Valley between the slopes of the Cordillera Central, Pereira boasts a population of over 400,000. Signs of the FARC siege scar the city's southern outskirts. Burned out and bombed buildings sit empty, their skeletal girders rising into the sky. By the time FARC actually managed to wrench the city from Federales hands, the residents of Pereira were glad just to get back to their normal routines.

The Cauca River links Pereira with the rest of the world. It provides transportation and is a crucial part of the economy. Taking Pereira was a major coup for FARC, giving the insurgency control of one of the major transportation routes in the country and stabilized their chance of winning the war.

Set high up in the mountains as it is, in a wide river valley, Pereira can easily be defended against any but the most vicious attacks. To date, the federal Colombian military has not initiated such an offensive.

The Llanos

To the east of the Cordillera Oriental, Colombia's terrain settles into a broad lowland plain. The northern third of the flatland—the broad basin of the Meta river—is made up of the grassy plains similar to the savannas of Africa: the llanos. Difficult living conditions in the llanos have discouraged settlement, creating a sparse population. Cattle raising is the major economic activity, although most of the population lives through subsistence farming. A few migratory Indian tribes still persist in this area, though these are slowly disappearing. The majority of these are Indians living in grass and mud huts among the trees and on the plains. Still tribal by tradition, they live in groups, share communal housing as well as food, and elect a chief who serves as their leader and judge, and their go-between with the government of Colombia.

Among the more modern settlements in eastern Colombia, cattle ranching is the major livelihood. Other products include grain, fruit, cotton and tobacco. Despite the overall lack of industrialization, some textile, iron, oil, emerald, and food-processing plants dot the region. Santander Department, which extends into the low mountains of the northern Cordillera Oriental, remains the most heavily populated departamento of this region. Many people move from rural areas to the industrialized eastern regions of Santander, seeking employment. Socorro Military Base, the heart of federal Colombia's military infrastructure, sits in this department.

The llanos region is well behind federal lines, and with the exception of the western half of Santander Department, has gone unthreatened by FARC forces but for a little guerilla activity. Devoid of key resources and industries, it has not been a strategic objective for either side.

Socorro

The main federal military airport is located just outside Socorro, a town in the central part of federal Colombia and currently less than ten

kilometers from the war front. Seated in the foothills of the Eastern Cordilleras, Socorro is surrounded by dense forest and rolling hills. A handful of low, wide buildings along one side of the airfield (including storage, barracks and headquarters) have been joined by dozens of newer hangars and facilities as they face out over acres of shimmering tarmac.

F-16s, A-10s, Mirages, Ospreys, HINDs, and a wide variety of transports land and take off on a regular basis at this airport; the roar of engines rumbles constantly in the background. Many of these planes fly on training missions, but there is a constant traffic of fully-loaded warplanes destined for raids on FARC territory and facilities. All military transports to and from Colombia land here.

The base is on continual alert. The government feels that only time stands between them and the moment when FARC will attempt to seize the base. Ground-to-air defense artillery (40mm L/60s purchased from Sweden and the U.S.) rings the base, and attack helicopters and A-10s constantly sweep the closer reaches of the front, on the lookout for artillery deployed close enough to bombard the airfield. All helicopters and transports are kept fueled and ready to deploy.

A sense of tension rings in the steps of the soldiers as they move about the airport. Everyone seems to rush, urgency in their voices as they bark orders and call out instructions in rolling Spanish. Perimeter guards armed with Uzis patrol with regularity. The threat of sabotage hangs heavy over the airport and aside from the barbed wire and fences, guards position themselves in the trees of the surrounding forest to watch for those who would attempt to sneak onto the grounds.

Puerto Carreño

Located at the crux of the Meta River and the great Orinoco River in eastern Colombia, Puerto Carreño has seen constant growth since the turn of the twentieth century. The flat land surrounding it has encouraged the town of 20,000 to spread wide rather than tall. Regular flooding plagues the city, but strategies to combat it—including a flood wall and trench built along the shore in 1997—have worked to keep most of the waters at bay. Regardless, much of the land surrounding the city is



wetlands with thick undergrowth and tropical forest, opening to the llanos to the west.

Puerto Carreño serves as the main exit point into Venezuela for the exportation of cattle and agricultural products from Colombia's east. The riverine shipping industry thrives here, where boats dot the broad Orinoco. Recent emigration from rural to urban areas has caused Puerto Carreño's population to spike. Sprawling shanty-towns surround the city, often in areas less well-protected from the flooding. In the spring of 1998, a major flood killed over 300 people, the majority of them in the southern ghetto district and shanty-towns.

The Amazon Basin

South of the llanos, below the Meta river, lies an expanse of tropical rainforest extending hundreds of kilometers towards the borders with Brazil and Peru. Though so flat that the break in the watershed can hardly be measured, the thousands of rivers in this region flow towards the Amazon (as opposed to the Meta, which feeds the northward-flowing Orinoco). Population is sparse, industry even harder to find.

Colombia's only direct contact with the Amazon River occurs in the far southeast. A large portion of the harvest of the rainforest has occurred in this area, where riverine transportation into Brazil provides an easy method of transporting products to their market.

The Amazon region, both within Colombia and her neighbors, has seen a steady depletion of the rain forest over the past several decades. Much of the destruction has been the result of large-scale logging and plant-harvesting. Several tribes of Indians still live in the forest, though, their lifestyles changed little from that of their ancestors. Transportation through Guainía Department remains difficult. Roads appear and disappear with the movement of the logging endeavors, making mapping impossible outside the established communities.

Leticia

Because of its geographical distance from the main population centers of Colombia, Leticia, a frontier town of 5,000, has an atmosphere of independence and free-thinking. Its citizens tend to feel no true alliance to Colombia, nor to Brazil or Peru, the two other countries whose borders lie directly adjacent to it. The town sits on the shore of the Amazon River in the far southeastern corner of the country, in the heart of the Amazon jungle. Despite its isolation, Leticia's population has acquired a reputation for political awareness and cultural savvy. Its buildings bear posters and graffiti protesting the rape of the rainforests, the abuse of children, the war, poverty, and any other cause-of-the-moment. Many Colombians, outside of Leticia, criticize the people there for being middle-class elitists who would rather protest than fight for their cause and who jump on whatever political bandwagon is chic that month.

Nevertheless, the protests in Leticia against the harvesting of the Amazonian rainforest has staved off some of the forest's depletion. Beginning in the early '90s, a Leticia-based organization called the People of the Forest undertook an international media campaign to educate the world about the rainforests of South America and to draw the attention of the global community to the Amazon valleys where massive

deforestation was occurring. It has met with relative success and the People of the Forest organization has become known as the champion of the rainforest.

BIENVENIDAS A COLOMBIA

Under the unique circumstances posed by the war, travelling to and within Colombia entails more than simply grabbing a plane ticket and passport. Whether entering as a guest of the government (or FARC), a private citizen, or an illicit alien, a trip to Colombia involves a number of special considerations.

Travelling to Federal Colombia

Despite the war, Colombia has endeavored to maintain a veneer of normalcy, especially in the business field. Although tourism has dropped off radically, many business travelers still visit Colombia on a regular basis—the Federal government strives to maintain commerce, especially in war-critical imports and industries. Buyers, salesmen, negotiators, and scouts are in and out of Bogotá on a daily basis. Ironically, most stay in the best hotels, eat at the primo restaurants, and are chauffeured in the most luxurious vehicles—their hosts strive to keep them as distanced from the effects of the war as possible. Many Colombian corporations, and even the federal government, provide important visitors with escorts who interpret for them as needed and provide yet another buffer between them and any inconveniences of the conflict.

For the modern traveller, federal Colombia doesn't offer much choice when it comes to international access points into the country. Commercial flights arrive daily at the international airport at Bogotá—Air Tiberius runs four flights a week from Miami and two from Caracas, while Aero Colombia offers two flights weekly from Caracas, and one each from Panamá City, Quito, and Miami. There is no commercial jet service to any other city, though smaller aircraft, charters, and commercial as well as military cargo transports do fly to Bucaramanga, Cartagena, Barranquilla, and Popayan. In other locations airports have been closed or all but abandoned; tarmacs and runways are old and in disrepair if operable at all.

Strangers arriving in federal Colombia are eyed with suspicion and mistrust. Anyone who cannot give Customs or Immigration a good reason for arriving is sharply scrutinized and may be turned back (business is a fine reason if one's story proves plausible; most international businessmen are allowed entrance with little or no hassle). The Colombian National Police (CNP) are ruthless in their search for smuggled weaponry, surveillance equipment, electronics and drugs. They do not hesitate to strip-search questionable travelers and almost always hand-search luggage and shipped crates. Travelers commonly retrieve their luggage from baggage turnstiles only to find them with broken locks, torn zippers and even sliced linings. Items often turn up missing and a traveler has little recourse for pursuing charges of theft or of ever retrieving stolen items.

Those preferring (or requiring) a less visible entrance into the country may consider an arrival by sea or over land. With the exception of the relatively well-maintained and well-travelled Pan-American highway from the south, there are no modern facilities for either route. There

Procuring Weapons

In both federal and FARC-controlled Colombia, thriving black-markets import a broad variety of weaponry from around the world. Army-issue weapons from both sides often find their way into the traffic here as well, as soldiers and locals sell weapons scavenged from the dead. The black market in FARC-controlled Colombia is much easier to contact and deal with than the one in federal Colombia, due to a more lax atmosphere. Prices vary greatly, often elevated in federal Colombia where the risk drives prices upward.

In the more rural areas of the country, individual farmers and other locals may have weapons that they will sell a passing traveler. Especially in areas touched by the war, locals often stash weapons in their cellars or bury them in their fields. Many see these weapons as a sort of insurance against banditos and complete poverty, as well as a safety net in the eventuality that they will have to rise up against the next regime.

are no rail lines from Colombia to any of her neighbors, and few major roads. There is no passenger shipping at all to the Pacific coast, and few modern ferries and no liners call at the Atlantic ports—although small (and often unsafe) private ferries do make the trip from Venezuelan ports to Ríoacha, Santa Marta, and Barranquilla every day, heavily laden with goods and passengers. Such a voyage is a true taste of the Third World, with absolutely none of the comforts expected by the modern traveller.

Overland entry into the country is difficult at best. There are decent two-lane highways running from Maracaibo and San Cristóbal in Venezuela to Ríoacha and Cúcuta, but these are choked with trucks and travellers. The wait at the Customs checkpoint coming into Colombia is often many hours long. Although not as severe, the same is generally true of the Pan American highway, which connects Pasto with Quito, Ecuador. Beyond that, there are few roads crossing any of Colombia's borders (which are for the most part quite remote from her developed areas), and most are dirt roads or narrow paved ones in severe disrepair.

Although not impossible, entering the country in rural locations, across wilderness, can be risky and difficult. In the southern and eastern Amazonian regions of Colombia, the population is so sparse and the land so untamed that the unlucky person may travel hundreds of miles before encountering a single farm or community. The border with Ecuador runs through some of the most inhospitable regions of the Andes. A crossing from Venezuela along the northern border is most feasible, but of course that region is also the most heavily patrolled. With a thriving market in contraband and constant fear of FARC guerilla infiltrations, Colombian border patrols are not likely to be sympathetic to anyone caught sneaking into the country.

BlackEagle operatives brought into Colombia by the federal government or the military are generally flown in on chartered or military flights. Direct flights from Miami and other U.S. cities are not out of the question, although Colombian military flights generally stage through Panama. Military aircraft fly through both the American Howard Air Force Base and Toreihos International Airport (both near Panamá City), though any flight carrying civilians will likely route through the latter.

Champánes

Though they have been disappearing in favor of modern launches and barges, even today the traditional *champánes*—flat-bottomed boats introduced to Latin America in the sixteenth century—float up and down the rivers of Colombia, carrying cargo and passengers deep inland. Enclosed, they have arch-shaped canopies that are open at the ends. Some modern versions have canvas enclosures, others use an intricate weave of wooden strips. Approximately thirteen meters long, two meters wide, and one meter tall, the champán can carry up to twenty-five tons. Most have a crew of anywhere from two to two-dozen *bogas*, or boatmen, and can travel nearly twenty kilometers per hour against the current—and sometimes twice that downstream.

Getting Around within Federal Colombia

A deteriorating transportation system presents a challenge to those traveling within federal Colombia. Generally, there are four options: road, rail, river, and air. The first three are inconvenient and unreliable to say the least, the last is preferable for most travellers but not always easy to arrange.

A single major highway connects Bogotá with Bucaramanga and points north. A two-lane road along much of its route, it expands to four lanes (divided) in what normally would be heavily-travelled areas. Unfortunately, the entire length is now quite heavily travelled, as alternate routes have been lost to FARC and military and related industrial traffic has expanded dramatically. Furthermore, for some 200 kilometers the highway runs fairly close to the front (at some points within five or ten kilometers—easy range for FARC artillery), and recent advances by FARC have actually taken a small loop of highway just south of Socorro. Diversions around this loop and other danger areas create nightmares of delays and detours.

The same highway runs south and west from Bogotá through Ibagué, but where it crosses the Cordillera Central it passes into FARC-held territory. It eventually meets the Pan American Highway, which emerges from FARC lands south of Cali to run through Pasto and into Ecuador. This is a two-lane mountain highway for most of its length, also busy but not nearly as much as the northern roads.



Secondary roads also see heavy use, which takes its toll. Many rural roads have degraded to the point where they have become impassable. The annual rains have washed some out, especially in the mountains. Potholes and crumbling asphalt make driving difficult—a common local joke is that the government is letting the roads degrade, to create tank traps against advancing FARC forces.

Many visitors to Colombia opt to rent cars—an expensive proposition, but still possible in most major cities and towns. The alternative is to take taxis and busses, the most common option for working and poor Colombians. Like the ferries plying the coast, most Colombian busses are privately owned and run on a loose schedule (if any schedule at all). Colombian bus drivers take great pride in excessive and gaudy decoration of their vehicles, but not so much in mechanical reliability, safety, or the comfort of passengers. Passengers can include anything from businessmen to chickens.

As an alternative, travelers may find taxis to carry them from one place to another. The majority of taxis are dirty, little sub-compacts owned, decorated (with the same vigor as the busses), and driven by local entrepreneurs. Interestingly, at night taxi drivers signal availability by driving with their headlights off—a fact which has brought more than one unwary foreigner to an untimely demise.

Most privately-owned cars are pre-war imports from the late 80s and early 90s, their bodies now dented and showing signs of environmental wear and tear. Colombia's well-developed middle class often drives compact cars, four-door sedans and two-door hatchbacks built in Europe or Japan. By far, the grand majority of privately-owned vehicles in Colombia belong to white-collar workers. To an extent, owning a car has become a symbol of prosperity, though only a small portion of the urban population has one. Students and youth scramble to gather enough money to buy a junker. They hang their crucifixes from the rear-view mirrors and cover their rotting seats with fake fur and other hand-sewn materials. Some paint their cars themselves, choosing odd colors and drawing personalized designs on the sides, hoods and trunks. Especially in Bogotá, where there is a major university, these startling and amusing vehicles provide the occasional bright spot among the sedans and compacts. By far, however, the majority of people living in the cities use public transportation or bicycles to get around.

Gas prices have risen to exorbitant levels in Colombia. Refineries in the Eastern Cordillera provide all of Colombia's petrol. Production quality has fallen in the past ten years. This, in conjunction with low standards for emission control, has caused many of the major cities, especially Bogotá, to suffer from smog and other vehicle-related pollution.

Hitchhiking is still socially acceptable in Colombia and many people, especially youth, use this method to get around. The thumb's up signal isn't recognized in Colombia, however. Instead, a simple wave from the side of the road is often enough to draw the attention of a passing farm truck or traveling businessman.

Rail lines through Colombia are even more fragmented than the roads. From Bogotá, a northbound line runs to Sogamoso; a second line runs to Chiquinquirá, where it passes into FARC territory. Before the war, this was the country's primary rail link between the capital and the Atlantic coast, and where it emerges from FARC-held land north of Bucaramanga it is still used to haul freight north to Santa Marta and Barranquilla. The south-bound line from Bogotá extends to Neiva, but west-bound lines are blocked by FARC forces. Like the roads, rail lines are choked with military and industrial cargo, but passenger trains do run. First-class seating is bearable (though hardly ritzy) by western standards; second-class coaches are generally crowded with people, baggage, and sometimes animals, and make for a tiring and unpleasant trip.

Boat travel remains a viable and quick means of travel, though like the roads and rails many of Colombia's navigable rivers are bisected by enemy lines. The Magdalena is a primary shipping route, bearing everything from tugboats to launches from Barranquilla up to Puerto Boyacá, but it is unfortunately severed by the FARC push between Sucre and Sincelejo, and again by FARC's easternmost holdings in the central Magdalena valley. For much of its remaining length, the Magdalena itself serves as the front, making its use hazardous at best. As a result, most shipping has been brought to a halt, though boats can be hired for local use.

In the Amazon basin, rivers are often the only way to travel, though there navigability is highly seasonal. Droughts choke up most smaller rivers in the dry season; floods make them too dangerous in the rainy season. Under the best of circumstances, only small, shallow-draft boats run by experienced pilots have any chance of successfully navigating the jungle waterways.

Most of the larger towns and cities have airports that accept private and commercial aircraft, though as mentioned above many of these are all but shut down. Still others have been largely or completely taken over for military use, and don't welcome private aircraft. Air travel within Colombia is heavily restricted—a pilot must keep well abreast of ever-changing airspace restrictions, and any craft flying without proper clearances may well be interdicted or attacked. Nevertheless, with ground travel options in so much disarray, many of Colombia's businesspeople and government officials travel across the country via air.

Individuals or groups employed by the government or the military are generally flown from place to place in small planes or jets, or military UH-60 Blackhawk or VH-22 Osprey aircraft. Drivers and vehicles are usually provided for local trips—dark Mercedes or similar sedans for civilian trips; HMMWVs or light trucks for military trips.

Crossing into FARC-Held Territory

Getting from federally-held territory into that of FARC can be tricky. Not surprisingly, there is no direct commercial traffic between sides, and (as mentioned below) few options for getting into FARC territory from third countries. The determined traveller is left with three choices: to fly into FARC-held lands, to take a boat by sea or river, or to travel overland on foot or by vehicle.

Flying is problematic at best. Both sides have recently been accelerating development of their air forces and air defense networks, so the chances of flying across the lines unnoticed aren't good, even in the most remote, least contended areas of the front. Any unidentified aircraft crossing the front is treated as hostile by both sides, and likely to be shot down.

Boat travel is a much more viable option—one used quite a bit by profiteers and smugglers. In river-side towns and villages all up and down the Magdalena, for example, many locals offer to take passengers through the lines for relatively low fares. Competition among these entrepreneurs is fierce, as the near-closure of the rivers has robbed most of them of their regular livelihood. In some places, they vie for customers along the docks—anyone who looks vaguely interested is quickly surrounded by barqueros asking, “A dónde van, Señor? Necesitan un bote?” Smaller boats are generally much more successful at making the cross-lines run without being stopped by either side. Interestingly, for the smuggler heading into FARC territory, the concern is Federale patrols rather than enemy interdiction. Federal Colombian patrols try to prevent any traffic from entering FARC-held areas, stopping and searching any boat that might be smuggling supplies or contraband to the enemy and simply turning back the rest. Once past Colombian authorities (which are stretched quite thin in most areas, and may be completely absent on many of the minor navigable rivers), a smuggler is not likely to be hassled by FARC patrols, which look only for infiltrating counter-insurgents and other direct threats. Smuggled goods for sale are, in fact, welcomed.



In regions where the fighting is ongoing and intense, of course, the rules are somewhat different. Any boat may well be fired upon—assuming a traveller could find a barquero willing to take him.

Despite what one might think, it is not always difficult to get into FARC territory via the countryside. Away from the active fighting, patrols are sparse and the line between the sides becomes hazy. In fact, in such regions, many people live in federal Colombia but work in FARC territory—or don't even know for sure which side of the line they're on. In such areas, one might be able to travel from village to village across country or even by road, knowing for certain that they're in FARC territory only when they bump into the first patrol or enter the first village with a FARC flag flying in the town square.

Trekking cross-country on foot can be a hazardous and difficult endeavor. Not only is it easy to become lost in the rainforests of Colombia, but natural obstacles (such as rivers, difficult ridgelines, and ravines) often drive a hiker many kilometers off his or her intended path.

BlackEagle operatives working for the Federales on assignments that take them into FARC territory are likely to be inserted by aircraft or on foot in areas where intelligence indicates an undetected approach is possible. The cooperation of federal Colombian military forces, of course, makes this somewhat easier than independent forays across the lines.

Travelling to FARC-Held Colombia

Not surprisingly, getting into FARC territory is much more difficult than entering federal Colombia. There are no commercial air flights into FARC-held cities; indeed, no commercial transport of any type. Under blockade and embargo, FARC's holdings are tightly locked up—but not so tightly that no-one can get in. Determined travellers can enter FARC-held Colombia by sea, air, or overland.

There are no commercial vessels calling upon FARC-held ports along the Atlantic coast. But like the internal river system (see *Getting into FARC-Held Territory*, above), quite a bit of local traffic moves between coastal villages on either side of the line, with only limited interdiction by the Federales. Most of the FARC-held coastline is fairly remote, making Lorica and Turbo, the only towns of any size on the coast, nodes of activity. Unfortunately, there is little there of interest other than the fighting around Sincelejo, but travellers can head by road the 250 kilometers to Medellín and the developed regions of FARC's holdings.

Despite the blockade, a good deal of Colombian Cartel shipping leaves from Buenaventura on the Pacific Coast. Using a complicated strategy of decoys and clever routing, in conjunction with reliable intelligence regarding blockade ship movements, the Cartel has managed to keep its shipping in operation. These vessels often smuggle people as well as goods out of the country—in fact, there's a sizeable market in the transport of wealthy refugees, much to the chagrin of the Cartel. However, none of this traffic is local—ships that make it past the blockade head for ports all around the world, and most of the vessels plot their schedules well in advance with the Cartel. Arranging to enter Colombia aboard one of these Buenaventura-bound vessels would require a great deal of intelligence, planning, and roundabout travel.

Travel by air requires a willing pilot and aircraft, and a route that bypasses both FARC and Federale air defenses and the multi-national

blockade. The only practical region of entry is the northwest corner of the country, over the Panamanian border or the extreme ends of either coast. Landing is as problematic as flying into FARC-held Colombia—no airport is open to civilian traffic, and many are defended by FARC forces. Uninvited international travellers—especially those arriving in such conspicuous manner—are viewed with deep suspicion and a shoot-first attitude.

The final method of travelling to FARC-held Colombia is over land. FARC's holdings border only a single foreign country—Panama—and that border is so remote that not a single road crosses it. At a minimum, an overland trek would entail a fifty-kilometer hike through the Darien—a region of thick jungle lowland still inhabited by unfriendly indigenous peoples—to bridge the gap between the closest Panamanian and Colombian villages. And even those villages are some distance from the nearest improved roads and telephones. The region is not heavily patrolled, however, by either the Panamanians or FARC.

As mentioned above, there are a number of options for getting into FARC territory through federal Colombia, though, not surprisingly, those are not any safer or more reliable than entering via a third country.

Travellers being brought into FARC territory by that organization or the Cartel might be transported through a variety of routes, depending on their importance, the need for haste, and whether FARC cares to compromise its assets. Low priority passengers—or those for whom other routes would be too compromising—would likely be shipped in via Turbo or Buenaventura. More important personnel might be smuggled in through federal Colombia (again, see above for methods), although such arrangements reveal agents and routes that FARC might not want to expose. Extremely important or time-sensitive passengers might be brought in by air, flying in from the north and relying on FARC's intelligence analyses to avoid blockaders.

Travelling within FARC-Held Colombia

The transportation infrastructure in FARC territory is in even poorer condition than that of federal Colombia, and travel options are far more limited. Rail travel is not available (as the few functioning lines have been taken over by the Cartel), air travel is practically impossible, and travel by road or by boat is severely restricted.

No car rental agency operates in FARC-held Colombia, so anyone planning to travel by automobile must obtain one by other means. Gasoline is also tightly rationed, and is often totally unavailable outside of the cities and larger towns.

Although there is no official policy against it, FARC's martial law discourages internal travel. Major highways pass through road blocks every forty or fifty kilometers—trucks and military vehicles are generally passed right through with a cursory glance, but private vehicles are stopped. Passengers are questioned and often turned back without good reason for their travel; suspicious drivers are detained. Colombian license plate numbers are coded to represent the region in which a car is registered—non-local vehicles in particular draw attention at these road blocks. However, what's considered acceptable rationale for travel varies from soldier to soldier, and a clever traveller (and one willing to risk a bribe attempt or two) might be able to slip through most road blocks.



Road blocks are less common on secondary roads, but there are other obstacles. Situated in the Cordillera ranges, FARC's country roads have been battered by the rainy season's mud- and landslides, and many are close to impassable. And FARC soldiers operate with impunity—even without road blocks, soldiers can stop vehicles at will, detaining passengers or even commandeering vehicles or fuel.

There is a great deal of river traffic on FARC-held stretches of the Magdalena and its tributaries, as well as the lower Cauca. As in federal Colombia, vessels of various sizes operate locally or along stretches not bisected by the battle lines, and often carry passengers. Despite the discouragement of travel, few boats operating within FARC-held territory are ever stopped or questioned without specific cause.

Personnel travelling within FARC-held Colombia at the behest of the Cartel or FARC would likely be driven by automobile or military truck, or flown in any of a variety of small craft. The quality of the travel arrangements varies dramatically with the importance of the guest—cartel leaders have access to the most luxurious of private jets, helicopters, and limosines, but less important travellers often find themselves in rickety trucks or barely-airworthy light planes.

Crossing into Federal Colombia

Many of the same options and considerations that apply to crossing from federal Colombia into FARC territory also apply in the reverse. Whereas FARC patrols tend to look the other way when goods are smuggled into their holdings, federal patrols generally welcome refugees or others escaping from FARC domination—though such travellers are likely to be detained and debriefed, to ensure that they are not insurgents and to glean any intelligence they might be able to contribute. On the flip side, official FARC policy is to prevent refugees from fleeing its territories. Enforcement of this policy is sporadic, varying from region to region or even with the whim of the individual FARC soldiers or officers. Flight

across the lines is a regular occurrence, and many FARC personnel are sympathetic to those who simply wish to escape the fighting and hardship. On the other hand, FARC patrols are very alert to potential spies, and will invariably stop and question anyone found crossing the lines if they have reason to be suspicious.

CHAPTER TWO

A HISTORY OF

CONFLICT ▼ ▼

Races condemned to one hundred years of solitude do not have a second opportunity on earth.

—Gabriel García Márquez, Colombian Novelist

Latin America has a history of revolt, civil war, and insurgency. Colombia is no exception, though its ties to democracy and free society run deeper and stronger than most of its neighbors—ties that have helped it survive the sorts of crises that have crippled other Latin countries. Nevertheless, civil conflict also runs deep into Colombia's past, shaping the events that led to and now drive *La Violencia Segunda*.

HISTORY

With a constitution based on that of the United States and a history almost completely free of dictatorship, Colombia is a Latin American model of successful democracy. But since before the birth of the nation in the early 1800s, Colombia has also struggled with civil upheaval—and the roots of the current war spring directly out of the deadly violence of the past five decades.

Colonization

For thousands of years before the discovery of the Americas by European explorers, Colombia was home to a variety of indigenous Indian populations. In the tropical flatlands, many of these peoples led (and still lead) simple and primitive lives. But there were also great civilizations—foremost among them the Chibcha. Somewhat in decline even before the arrival of Europeans, and never great builders like the Mayans and

Aztecs to the north or the Inca to the south, the Chibcha nevertheless had an advanced society whose accomplishments included the riches and gold so eagerly sought by the early European explorers.

The arrival of Amerigo Vespucci along the northern coast of Colombia in 1499, and Vasco Núñez de Balboa's discovery of the Pacific Ocean in 1513, opened up the western Caribbean and northwestern South America to European settlement. In the years that followed, an influx of Spanish and other European settlers, many seeking gold, rushed into South America. In 1538, the Spanish conquered the Chibcha, naming the northwest region of South America "New Granada." This colony was comprised of what is now Colombia, Panama and most of Venezuela.

New Grenada was the center of Spanish domination of the region for almost 300 years. An access point from the Caribbean to the west-coast colonies, a source of gold, and an agricultural center, it was one of Spain's primary colonies until independence in the early nineteenth century.

Early Democracy; Early Conflict

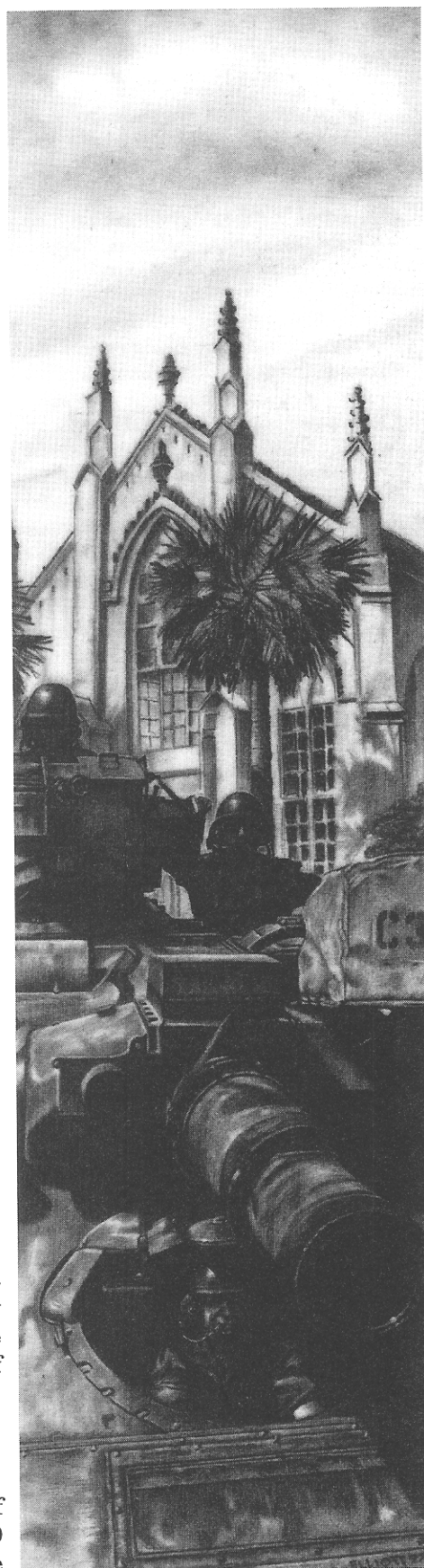
In 1819, Simón Bolívar freed the region from Spanish domination and formed the Republic of Colombia, made up of New Granada and Ecuador. Bolívar, a revolutionary hero of the region and the namesake of nearby Bolivia, implemented a democratic constitution closely modeled on that of the fledgling United States. At the event of Bolívar's death in 1830, this union fell apart and from it was born a confederation of states—less Ecuador and Venezuela, which declined to join the confederation—called The Republic of New Granada. Civil wars followed until 1863 when the states united, forming the United States of Colombia. In 1903, conflict over the construction of the canal in Panama (largely instigated by the United States of America) caused this province to secede. What remained is now modern Colombia.

Despite frequent low-level insurrection throughout this period and into the twentieth century, Colombia has experienced only three military coups, resulting in a total of less than ten years of dictatorship. Compared to other Latin American countries, this total is quite low, and Colombia has been fortunate in that each dictatorial takeover has been resolved in short order and with little direct bloodshed. Unfortunately, the factionalism and civil unrest that lie beneath all such coups have never been completely eradicated in Colombia; elected leadership does not always mean internal peace.

Conflict between staunch government Conservatives and the popular Liberals, struggling to lay a framework for the future tone of Colombian politics, caused the War of a Thousand Days at the turn of the twentieth century. This civil war cost approximately 100,000 lives and untold destruction to Colombia's urban areas. For the most part, it was not so much a conventional war as a string of guerrilla attacks aimed at government buildings and officials, followed by fierce reprisals. It finally ended in 1902 with the signing of a treaty between the factions aboard the U.S. battleship *Wisconsin*. The treaty became known as the Treaty of Wisconsin.

La Violencia

In 1948, a conservative faction assassinated the left-wing mayor of Bogotá and started a decade of civil strife during which over 250,000 people died. The twelve-year period became known as *La Violencia* ("The



Aboriginal Peoples of Colombia

In its ancient history, societies governed by chiefs inhabited the land now known as Colombia. These South American Indians included, among others, what archeologists name the Chibcha, Tumaco, Malagana, Cauca, Nariño, Quimbaya, Sinú, Urabá and Muisca peoples. These peoples were principally agrarian and lived in villages surrounded by fields or in huts tucked into the mountains and rainforests. They practiced a complicated, pantheistic religion. Using wax in a way that has yet to be understood by archaeologists, they created beautiful artifacts from gold and copper, and carved representations of their deities in stone. The Chibchan practice of covering their chieftains in gold dust during rituals spawned the legend of the "Lost City of El Dorado," which later caused many failed expeditions into the interior of the continent as conquistadors delved in search of great wealth.

Violence"), the namesake for the current war. Zealous followers of the Liberal and Conservative parties carried out an intense campaign of tit-for-tat violence against one another and any they saw associated with their opposition.

Frequent bombings, assassinations, and attacks in Colombia's cities resembled modern terrorism, and took a hefty toll in lives. But the real damage was done in the countryside. In entire regions, lawlessness reigned as authorities sat powerlessly by, or worse, took sides. Peasants and small landowners—often completely uninvolved in the politics that drove the conflict—bore the brunt of brutal attacks, with perhaps 200,000 of them dead before the *Violencia* drew to an end.

Colombia's modern problems are directly linked to this segment of its history. But ironically, it is not the conflict between the Liberals and Conservatives of the 1950s that lingers—it is the independence that the peasantry developed in that period that gave birth to FARC and the current war.

During *La Violencia*, peasants, small farmers, and squatters in the hinterlands became estranged from Colombia's federal government. Negligent department governments and federal agencies proved ineffective in overseeing or aiding local governments in the face of civil strife, so local governments took matters into their own hands or fell apart to be replaced by "peasant republics" and self-protection organizations. Often aided and encouraged by the Colombian Communist Party (abbreviated, in Spanish, "PCC")—which was not otherwise a major player in Colombian politics or the *Violencia*—these local groups armed themselves against incursions by the warring factions, and even adopted many of the critical services no longer provided by the state.

1957 saw an attempt to end the violence, as the Conservative and Liberal Parties formed a National Front and a plan to alternate the national presidency between them. The late 50s and early 60s were relatively peaceful, and it was during this time that much of Colombia's modern economic growth occurred. Unemployment reached an all-time low and the country seemed to peek through the clouds of popular discontent for a short while. But the government and police, forced to concentrate in the developing urban areas, loosened the already-weak reins holding crime in check in the rural areas of the country. Few attempts were made to reclaim control over the local governments and peasant-run regions that had taken matters into their own hands.

And then a period of inflation brought a return of economic despair to the country and the downhill spiral toward the current civil war began.

Communist Insurgency

In the aftermath of the first *Violencia*, the federal government sought to reestablish control over the lawless countryside, to redistribute power back to the departments and federal agencies that should have been exercising it all along. But to the independent regions, such federal and department meddling was unwanted and seemingly irrelevant—they had a decade or more of successful autonomy, and resented federal attempts to take it away. As the army gradually tried to reclaim the upper hand, it met with resistance from people in many regions. Over time, popular groups (many of them already armed against the terrorists of the *Violencia*) began to coalesce into grassroots armies with intense leadership and tight organization.

In the 1960s, three leftist guerrilla movements emerged. Two of these were directly associated with Communist groups: the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the People's Liberation Army (EPL). Although these two were the most influential and organized in the early 60s, they would be eclipsed by the third group: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

In 1965, groups of peasant fighters, which had years of experience defending their territories from right-wing death squads during the Violencia, coalesced under guerrilla leader Manuel "Tiro Fijo" ("Sure Shot") Marulanda with leftist guerrillas and members of the Communist Party to form FARC. FARC quickly grew to become the largest guerrilla movement in Colombia, far out-distancing the country's other leftist organizations. FARC appealed to the common people with a straightforward approach to justice and law in the area it controlled. By the late '60s and early '70's, FARC was the only force maintaining order in certain rural regions of Colombia that remained impenetrable to the Colombian government.

This unique history—these roots in self-organized peasant armies—set FARC apart from virtually every leftist insurgency in Latin American, including the ELN, EPL, and later the Democratic Alliance (AD/M-19—a coalition of small leftist parties). Most Latin American insurgencies began among intellectuals in urban areas who took their message of revolution into rural areas to convert the populace. FARC, however, was born among the common people, and though it historically had close ties to communism, its strategies placed the protection of the people at the forefront of its ideology.

FARC's actions through the first fifteen years of its existence were primarily defensive in nature. Under the leadership of Marulanda and Jacob Arenas, FARC was a true guerrilla movement. Though growing to become one of the largest in Latin America, it placed little emphasis on overthrowing the national government in Bogotá. Instead, FARC concentrated on weakening the government's influence in the areas in which it operated, and on striking out against large landowners that abused and exploited the peasants.

FARC's leaders didn't feel that the time had come for a country-wide revolution. They had more important things to do, such as keeping the peace in the areas they patrolled. A gap developed between FARC and the Colombian Communist Party which continued to advocate complete revolution. This eventually left FARC with no political representation.

Even without a voice in conventional political debate, FARC grew in influence. By the early 70s, FARC represented the only stabilizing force in some of the more remote areas of Colombia. While outside observers might not agree that FARC's rule was lawful or just, in the eyes of peasants, faced with the historical alternative of banditry and random violence, FARC offered a credible and welcome force for order.



But this concern with local issues eventually undermined FARC's membership, and the organization's activity level dropped to a low point in the mid-1970s. FARC became virtually inactive nationally, retaining influence only in its core regions in Cauca, Cundinamarca, Huila, Meta, Quindío, Risaralda, Tolima and Valle del Cauca.

One factor that later helped to revitalize FARC was coca. Prior to the 1980s, coca had been cultivated almost exclusively in Bolivia and Peru. Coca requires much the same cultivation conditions as coffee—as FARC's strongholds were primarily coffee-growing regions, the coca industry gravitated to regions of heavy FARC concentration. Even before the coca trade spawned the massive criminal empires of the Medellín and Cali cartels, it had developed into a lawless business that brought chaos and violence as well as large quantities of cash to the poor rural farmers and small landowners. FARC did what the government could not during this period—controlled this violence and, as it had throughout its history, maintained a semblance of law. By this time, FARC had gained the support not only of the underclass, but also of the small landowners and middle-class merchants.

At largely the same time, FARC experimented with electoral participation. Jacob Areñas, FARC's leader at the time, toyed with various cease-fire proposals put forth by the government, and FARC created its own political party—the Unidad Patriótica (UP). FARC's constituency grew to include blue-collar laborers as well as peasants, and membership in the organization rose again, soaring to over 10,000. It seemed a promising time for the insurgency. FARC was becoming embedded in the drug trade, was making good money in "taxes" on coca, and seemed headed for political legitimacy. Although it did not consider itself an ally of the cartels, but rather completely separate in both ideology and intent, FARC did not hesitate to use the drug trade to its own ends.

By 1990, however, FARC slipped once again into stagnation. Despite several attempts at peace, little had been accomplished. Moreover, FARC's ranks had been inundated with thugs and narco-criminals whose support of the peace process flowed lukewarm at best. The organization's leadership had grown tired of ineffectual guerrilla warfare and aborted attempts at government representation.

On top of all this, a more subtle process worried at the bindings holding FARC in check. FARC had never vigorously pursued complete overthrow of the government, but when political talks failed, it seemed that almost thirty years of guerrilla warfare had produced nothing. FARC had failed to become a significant factor in Colombian national politics through either insurrection or through the electoral process, and the future showed no sign of improvement. As FARC's muscles began to atrophy, a subtle change in attitude began to permeate the organization with leanings toward a more aggressive, violent response to government-established injustices.

THE SECOND VIOLENCIA

In the early '90s, FARC found the straw that broke the camel's back. Narco-crime had snatched from FARC the organization's most powerful weapon—the ability to pressure the government through violence. Drug-related violence had clearly become a much greater threat to national security than political insurrection had ever been, and FARC's ability to make headlines was being eclipsed. Suddenly faced with only two choices—withdraw or escalate the stakes—FARC deliberated its options.

The Trans-Gulf Airlift

In December of 1995, United Nations diplomats brokered a deal between FARC and the Colombian federal government, which allowed hundreds of thousands of Colombians to evacuate areas held or threatened by FARC under a brief cease-fire. Most of these Colombians moved to other areas of their home country, but one condition of the deal was that refugees would be allowed passage to third countries if they wished to leave Colombia. Venezuela, the United States, and the E.C. were among the nations that accepted the almost 100,000 Colombians that fled the war altogether, and in what came to be known as the Trans-Gulf Airlift, 30,000 of them were flown to Miami over the course of five days.

While the vast majority of these refugees were genuine, their ranks included scores or perhaps even hundreds of FARC and cartel agents, who have infiltrated expatriate Colombian communities and work to further FARC's goals around the world.

Drug Wars

Under the presidency of Dr. Belisario Bentacur, the coca industry became a more visible player in the politics and insurrections of Colombia. In 1984, the assassination of the Minister of Justice, who had been implementing harsh measures to combat narco-crime, caused a firm and immediate response from the government; Bentacur strengthened his antidrug campaign. The cartels reacted by supporting guerrilla activity throughout the country.

Liberal Virgilio Barco Vargas won the 1986 presidential elections by a record margin. Following another assassination, this time of Luis Carlos Galán, the leading candidate for presidency in 1990, Vargas declared a new campaign against cocaine traffickers. Shortly thereafter, judges, journalists and over 100 citizens became the victims of a series of bombings orchestrated by the cartels in retaliation for confiscation of property and the extradition to the United States of leading cartel members. The country's attention turned to the cartels and its narco-criminal activities.

The exact moment at which FARC decided to escalate its efforts and become formally affiliated with the Medellín Cartel is hard to pin down. From the first days of coca cultivation in Colombia, FARC had been involved in the trade and many of its low-level guerrillas had at one time or other also worked for the drug lords. In fact, some local guerrilla commanders occasionally hired out their units as mercenaries in the ongoing battle between the cartels and the government or in the much larger and bloodier conflicts among the drug lords themselves. The defining moment, however, probably occurred in November of 1994.

Pressure from the United States to eradicate the drug trade caused the government to further harden its stance against the cartels. The Colombian federal government began the aerial spraying of coca fields with herbicides. Peasants, guerrillas, and drug traffickers alike protested violently, participating in uprisings that eventually culminated in the occupation and destruction of two oil facilities in Huila Department. The army responded and was met in force by FARC guerrillas.

The army eventually defeated the guerrillas in what would become known as the Huila Uprising. Several weeks of intense guerrilla fighting gripped the area, during which the army brought in tens of thousands of troops and hundreds of vehicles and aircraft. For nearly a year thereafter, tensions remained high. During this time, FARC and the drug lords of the Medellín and Cali cartels began preparing for a major action against the government. Most of the drug lords had for several years maintained small personal armies—bands of mercenaries and local thugs, well-armed, but not good for much more than enforcement. Some owned a few heavy weapons or even armored vehicles, more for bravado than actual use, and all had strong connections in the international arms market.

In June, 1995, six top Colombian drug lords—including Gilberto Rodríguez-Orejuela, Henry Loaiza-Ceballos, Victor Julio Patino-Fomeque, Jose Santacruz-Londono, Julian Murcillo Posada, and Miguel Rodríguez-Orejuela—were arrested as the result of a renewed effort on the part of the Colombian National Police. Some of these kingpins continued to run their organizations from prison, but outside of those walls there was an immediate shift in power. Sons, lieutenants, and secondary leaders—an entire new generation—rose into positions of command and strategy within the families of the Medellín Cartel. Ironically, it was this sweep of

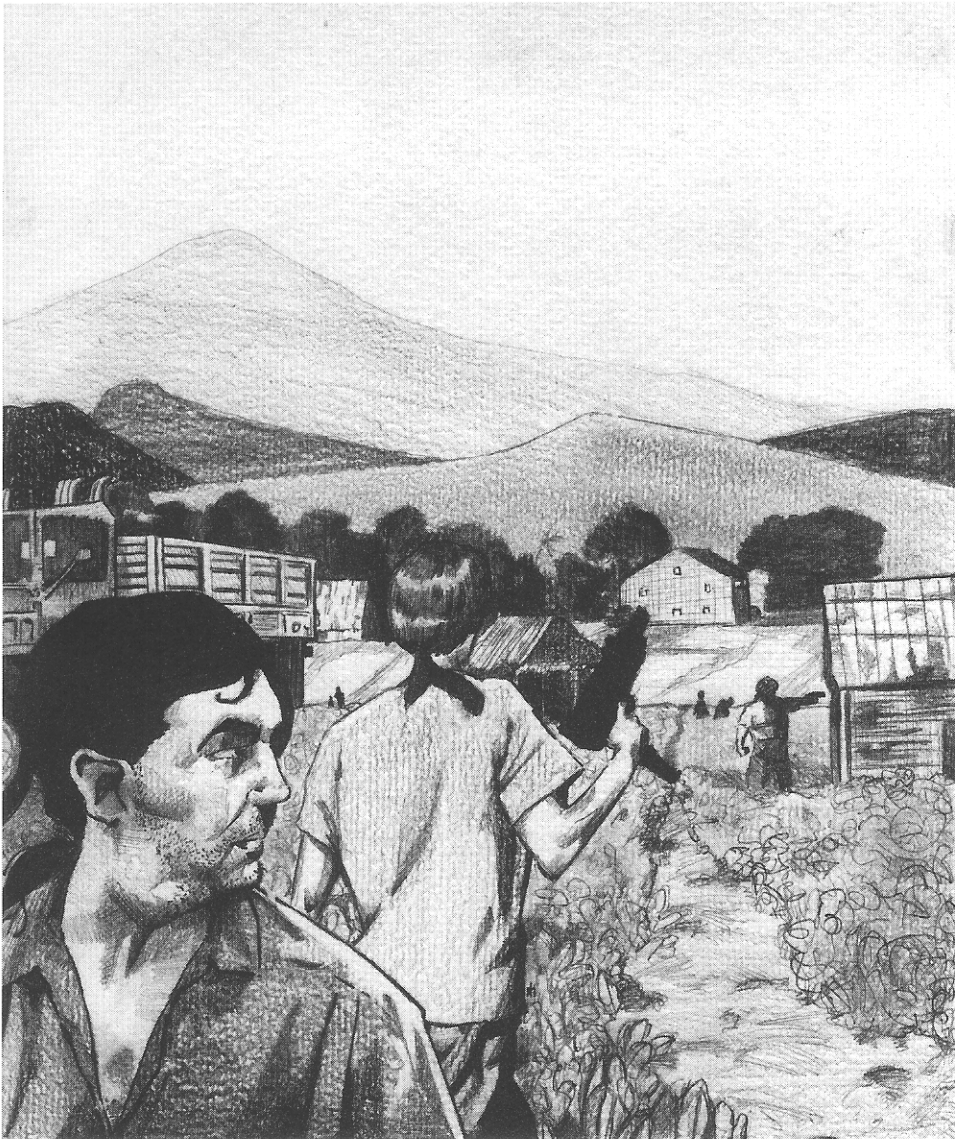
arrests and the changing of the guard that followed that led directly into the war.

Though decapitated, the cartels were hardly crippled. Indeed, many think it no accident that the CNP didn't finish off the Medellín Cartel in the months after the arrests—and the escape of Jose Santacruz-Londona from Bogotá's "La Picota" maximum security prison shortly thereafter seems to confirm this belief, though Santacruz was later killed in an attempt to re-arrest him. If the government were attempting to protect these powerful organizations from American pressure to destroy them—if the leaders of the Cartel allowed themselves to be arrested on the assumption that they would be released or allowed to control their empires from prison—then clearly both the government and the Cartel heads underestimated the influence that their successors would bring to bear in the months to come.

The new leaders saw the arrests as a major threat to their operations—or perhaps just as an opportunity. Either way, this was a generation that had grown up during the rise of the Cartel's power, and had never known a time when criminal organizations—either through neces-

sity or a sense of civility—lurked behind a veil of subtlety. They saw as commonplace the types of attacks and audacious actions that their patriarchs had only resorted to with reluctance and extreme need. They were inclined to take action, and they knew no bounds.

After the Huila Uprising, the relationship with FARC was already in place. The new leaders of the Cartel approached the insurgency with the idea of creating an elite guerilla force; an army that, backed by the Cartel's financial resources, could tell the government that the Cartel would not stand for further meddling. A force strong enough to control the countryside in the coca-producing states, and shake the CNP's grip on Medellín, Cali, and the scores of towns and villages that made up the Cartel's operational area. These were the resources FARC was looking for; the means to threaten the federal government and once more make FARC a force to be reckoned with. The agreement was struck, and plans put into motion.



The La Toro Raids

The parties went to work. Cartel smugglers sought out heavy weapons—artillery pieces, armored cars, heavy machineguns, and anti-tank and anti-aircraft rocket launchers—while FARC representatives sought out mercenaries and ex-military officials to train its guerrillas in their use. These efforts went largely unnoticed or underestimated by the Colombian government. By the fall of 1995, FARC had formed the units that would later become the nucleus of the Third Front—four artillery batteries, two engineer platoons, six armored car platoons, and three companies of ex-guerrillas trained in conventional infantry tactics and combined-arms assaults in concert with armored vehicles.

Finally, in December of 1995, the first shots were fired in what could be seen as the true opening of the current civil war. Nearly a year after the Huila Uprising, FARC guerrillas staged assaults on twenty-eight Colombian army bases and depots over the course of three days, hitting sixteen on the first night. The attacks, called the La Toro Raids, were carried out with a fair degree of precision and resulted in an amazingly low level of bloodshed—fewer than thirty people were killed in all twenty-eight attacks. It was later discovered that scores of sentries, guards and watch officers had been bribed away from their posts, allowing the guerrillas easy access to the bases. In the years to come, such corruption would prove to be the achille's heel of the Federales.

The raids netted FARC thousands of small arms, tons of explosives, and considerable quantities of mortars, vehicles, light artillery pieces, and logistical supplies. In the largest of the raids on the La Toro army depot in Valle Department, FARC guerrillas literally drove off with three dozen armored cars and military trucks, taking a dozen heavy artillery pieces with them. Colombian military units deployed to intercept FARC forces met a well-prepared and fierce rearguard that prevented the government from recovering most of the stolen arms.

Tens of thousands of Colombian troops were sent into the Cordillera Central, as the army conducted massive sweeps of FARC's stronghold regions. Fighting was sporadic but intense. Although the government forces successfully secured large areas of the countryside, they recovered only a fraction of the equipment seized by FARC. And perhaps more importantly, they failed to force any decisive confrontation with FARC's new units. The insurgency was marshalling its resources and picking its fights, and was well-prepared to slip around the army's heavy-handed effort to pin it down.

Three weeks after the La Toro raids, FARC forces staged attacks on seven Colombian military facilities near Medellín and Buenaventura. They came equipped not only with their stolen arms but also with considerable quantities of anti-armor weapons, anti-aircraft missiles and light artillery, the likes of which FARC had never before used. Though undertrained even by Colombian standards, and pitifully small comparatively, these forces surprised their opponents sufficiently to completely overwhelm them. Once FARC forces had initiated this attack, they went on to do something they had never done before. They stood their ground and held the captured areas rather than retreating back to the countryside. Federal forces moving into the areas met FARC units dug in and prepared to fight to keep the facilities and terrain they had captured. FARC had grown beyond its status as a purely guerrilla organization. The conventional war in Colombia had begun; the Second Violencia had arrived.

Escalation

In the following months, FARC forces not only repelled the shocked Federal Army's weak counterattacks, but consolidated their holds on the areas around both Medellín and Buenaventura. In January of 1996, the mayor of Cali, long thought to be in the pocket of the drug lords, announced support for the uprising and ordered all federal officials in the city arrested. The move was timed to precede a FARC takeover of the city and meant to conciliate FARC before they stormed in, but this strategy proved a little too ambitious. Less than a week after it rolled into the city, FARC pulled its forces out again to reinforce positions closer to Buenaventura. The government retook Cali with virtually no resistance. A precedent had been established, however, and the news was marked throughout 1996 with announcements of various mayors and governors, under varying degrees of duress, embracing the insurgency.

Such offending city officials were, of course, arrested and immediately tried for treason whenever towns or cities were retaken, and it wasn't long before such declarations fell back out of vogue. Many officials, too, remained staunchly loyal to the federal government, some facing retribution at the hands of FARC when they refused to cooperate with a takeover. Throughout 1996, and into the following years, many Colombians wound up in front of a firing squad. The government's judicial system opened up its trials to reporters, so that the system would be above criticism—in fact, several of these trials became sensational television spectacles watched all around the world. But despite this attempt at openness (and largely legitimate cases for the federal government), a tone was being set for the war. By 1999, many, many Colombians would find themselves forced to openly choose sides, when the wrong choice—or even any choice—meant death.

International Ambivalence

Chicha and Anisado

Chicha is a Colombian beer-like beverage, made of corn fermented with saliva. Frequently associated with the lower classes, repeated efforts to ban or regulate its consumption have failed. Although the development of the modern brewing industry has nearly eliminated its production, many small, local breweries still produce it, marketing it as a working-man's drink.

A more popular drink is Anisado, a liquor that originated near the mouth of the Magdalena and remains most popular in Barranquilla and other ports along the river. Its pronunciation has become somewhat bastardized: the *d* is totally eliminated, leaving the word pronounced "anisáo." Similar to rum, anisado comes from the seed of the *Anethum Foeniculum*, or anis plant, which gives it a strong licorice taste. Rarely do Colombians mix it with anything, but drink it straight.

By the end of 1996, international involvement was not limited to television viewership. It was clear that FARC relied on imports to bolster its forces, and equally clear that the Colombian navy could never hold closed the scores of tiny ports available to the Cartel. The U.S. led an international effort to blockade FARC-controlled coastline, and vessels from over a dozen nations participated.

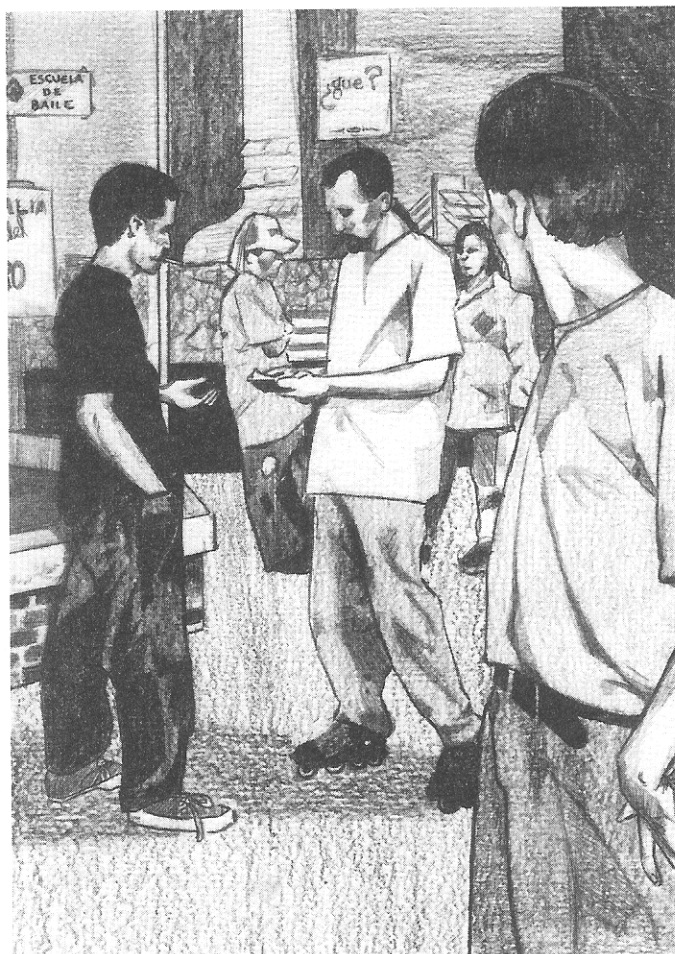
Unfortunately, the government of then-president Ernesto Samper was struck by controversy just when international support was becoming most critical. It was revealed that the American D.E.A. and other international law enforcement agencies were investigating the Samper for taking cartel money to fund his election campaign of 1994. Several of his advisors were also under scrutiny. Politically weakened by the charges, Samper and his administration failed to convince an already dubious American congress to send troops and aircraft into Colombia. Furthermore, Samper did nothing to curb Colombian congressional attempts to placate the Cartel by repealing existing laws against drug trafficking. Whether he was complicitous in this last example of Cartel influence over the Colombian political process, or simply lacked the clout to oppose it, will never be known—but Colombia's relationship with Washington and Brussels remained lukewarm until 1998 when the Colombian congress forced a general election despite the war. The blockade remained in place (and still does), but calls for more direct support would fall on deaf ears until, perhaps, too late.

Smuggling and Corruption

FARC's 1995 offensive may have changed the face of its old insurgency, but behind the lines the Cartel still relied on two of its oldest weapons: bribery and smuggling.

In the first years of the war, the Cartel could still extend corruption and terror throughout the country. Military officers could be paid to slacken patrols in key areas; customs officials could take a cut of contraband money if they failed to look at it too closely. Later, however, as ground combat intensified and the battle lines grew firmer, it became increasingly clear that the war was more than a passing phase of Colombia's endemic violence. Bribery and corruption—traditional in Colombia, as throughout Latin America—quickly became a much less effective tool as the Colombian people realized that in times such as these, there was no such thing as a “harmless bribe.” Penalties increased and offenders went to jail—or the firing squad. But more than that, the average Colombian began to see the acceptance of Cartel money for what it was: aiding and abetting the enemy.

Early in the war, FARC managed to obtain weapons with breathtaking speed, often getting around the international blockade by simply smuggling them through federal territory. Before the battle fronts coalesced in the actions of 1996, much of the weaponry FARC obtained traveled through government-controlled regions, purchased from black market outlets in federal Colombia or imported from abroad. Even into the later years, a significant volume of contraband continued to come to FARC through federal Colombia. But direct overseas smuggling—right through the international blockade—was always an important method as well, which the Cartel relied on more and more as other options dried up and weaknesses were found in the blockade. Control of deepwater ports like Buenaventura allowed the Cartel to bring in large ships (necessary for the importation of large weapons such as armored vehicles), but naturally such ports were subject to the most interdiction. The majority of smuggled goods continued to flow in and out of FARC-held Colombia on small boats and aircraft.



U.S. Involvement

Despite suspicions about the Samper government and a general reluctance to involve itself in international conflicts, the U.S. was a factor in the war from the very start. Even before the La Toro raids (indeed, back into the 1980s), the American D.E.A. maintained personnel and other assets in Colombia, to work with Colombian authorities in fighting the drug trade. The U.S. led the effort to develop the multinational blockade on FARC-held ports along the Pacific coastline when the war opened up, and used American aircraft to gather intelligence over FARC territory. In addition, the U.S. Navy participated in a half-dozen air strikes, planned and ostensibly carried out alongside the Colombians, though they used

American aircraft almost exclusively. The U.S. Army sent in several hundred advisors and trainers to help bring the Colombian Armed Forces up to speed with the latest weapons and tactics of war.

The question of whether to send in a U.S. combat force (consisting mainly of air units, but possibly including up to four ground divisions, or 75,000 troops) entered the arena of national debate early in the war, and could have occurred as early as mid-1997 despite concerns about Samper's administration. In May of that year, however, the U.S. frigate *Edward MacDonald* was struck by a FARC missile off the coast of Buenaventura, with the loss of over 100 lives. Overnight, the tone of the debate changed. A filibuster stalled appropriations discussions in congress, and the president refused to take unilateral action. Proponents of American action could not rally sufficient support to overcome resistance to the idea of Americans fighting in a bloody and, to many, incomprehensible foreign war.

But a large, publicly-backed military commitment wasn't the only option. In addition to the blockade, which continued (though less intensely than in 1996), programs to sell and lease military equipment were put into place, along with increases in advisors and training programs. The U.S. still provided intelligence, including overflights of FARC territory. A few secret operations were carried out on the ground by American special operations units, well out of the scrutiny of congress and the American people. And the D.E.A., still sanctioned to operate in Colombia with no congressional restriction, began to upgrade its arsenal military-grade weapons, to include HIND-D attack helicopters purchased quietly (and inexpensively) on the international market and an AC-130 gunship discretely leased from the U.S. army. Although the D.E.A. was mandated only to shut down drug production and smuggling, the line between these operations and FARC combat targets was growing increasingly thin.

All of these actions, however, bore little weight compared to what the U.S. could have done. Fortunately for FARC, the threat of true U.S. military might coming to the aid of the Colombian government all but dried up by 1997—whether it will revive in 1999 remains to be seen.

MODERN STRATEGIES

On either side of the fence, the Colombian civil war has been driven by strategies and objectives that are poorly-defined at best, and often downright contradictory. For the Federales, a failure to understand the full implications of FARC's early actions led to a continued treatment of the war as just an extension of the drug-eradication and counter-insurgency that had been going on constantly for decades. It wasn't until recently that the government woke up to the full seriousness of the situation, and began to treat the conflict like the all-out war it had already become. For their part, FARC has found that its successes have outstripped its initial objectives, and has been forced to reevaluate its goals in light of its even greater potential victories. For an organization with such pragmatic and experienced leadership, this should be a minor obstacle—but FARC's bedfellow, the Medellín Cartel, is a separate entity with its own agenda.

A Landscape of Strategic Objectives

Even with such poorly-defined end goals, a number of objectives critical to the success of either side are clear. In fact, most of the focus from either side has surrounded the country's resources and their transportation. Industrialized areas are key to both sides, as they provide critical war supplies. Exportable resources—oil, emeralds, and (on the FARC side, at least) coca—provide capital for imported goods. Control of rivers, rail lines, and highways are critical for transportation of troops and the maintenance of the economy, while the ability to sever these routes denies their use to the enemy. And then there are the ports and coastlines, the vital link to the outside world in a country with almost no overland connections to its neighbors. The Federales rely heavily on the developed ports of the Atlantic coast, while to FARC, every kilometer of coastline controlled is one more kilometer the international blockade must spread its thin resources over.

Geographical considerations play a large role for both sides, especially since Colombia's geography has so dramatically shaped its development and continues to determine its methods and routes of transportation. Only the developed highlands and the northern region have been significant in the war—neither side has much concern for the empty and largely resource-free lands of the Amazon basin or the western coastal jungles. In the highlands, the three spines of the Cordilleras form high, snow-capped walls not easily crossed—a natural borderline between the warring sides. The major rivers—especially the Magdalena, also serve as natural break lines. Control over just one shore gives either side the ability to close down river transportation.

The Economy of War

For the latter half of the twentieth century, Colombia has had a fairly well-rounded economy based on a mix of industry and abundant natural resources. Colombia's exported products included coffee (Colombia was the world's second-largest producer and the main supplier to the United States and Europe), emeralds (Colombia produced ninety percent of the world's supply), oil, coal, bananas, fresh cut flowers—and, of course, coca and processed illicit drugs. These exports provided an income for imports including equipment, grains, chemicals, consumer goods, and metal, plastic/rubber, and paper products. Much of this came from the United States, Venezuela, Japan, Germany and France.

Since the start of the war, Colombia's industrial and natural resources have been split between the two sides. Although FARC's territorial gains have deprived the Federales of almost half of Colombia's industrial infrastructure, FARC can't effectively reach international markets. Unprocessed goods—especially those that have a high value relative to weight and bulk (emeralds, coca, and to a lesser degree coffee)—are another story, and significant quantities of these products are smuggled out of FARC-held Colombia.

Imports are as problematic on the FARC side of the line as exports. With little functioning industrial capacity, FARC-held Colombia relies on imports for nearly all manufactured goods. The limited smuggling capacity is tied up almost entirely with war goods, leaving only a trickle of consumer goods entering the region—mostly through a black market that brings in goods from federal Colombia.

Foreign Support for the War

The United States has been far and away the most active foreign supporter of the Colombian government in the war against FARC, but it hasn't been the only one. Other countries that have stepped in on the side of the Colombian federal government include France, Great Britain and Russia. As in the United States, public opinion in these countries hasn't favored interventionism, so their aid has been given in small, low-key doses. Financial assistance and arms sales have been most common form of aid, along with participation in the blockade and a sharing of intelligence. None of these countries have sent military personnel into Colombia, beyond the odd liaison, trainer, or advisor.

One country which has taken more open steps to support the government is Saudi Arabia. Ostensibly in gratitude for Colombia's minor role in the Gulf War (and perhaps also to strengthen a bond with another potential oil exporter), Saudi Arabia has been a major financial donor. In addition, Saudi Arabia has gone one step further than any other foreign country, even (on the surface, at least) the United States: the commitment of ground forces. Four batteries of heavy artillery have been lent to Colombia, along with two platoons of Saudi special operations troops, now attached to the 21st Lanceros Brigade.

The Federales don't face similar problems in exporting goods, but have suffered from the loss of resources and industry. Colombia still exports coal, tropical fruits, and flowers in quantity (though not as plentifully as before the war). Exports of petroleum have been reduced due to lost oil-producing territory, sabotage of facilities, and increased military demand, while emerald and coffee production have been cut in half due to the loss of productive regions to FARC. As for imports, the only restriction is the loss of deepwater ports, which ties up incoming shipping and overburdens the few highways that connect Colombia with its neighbors. Many consumer goods are hard to find or outrageously priced, and a black market for rationed goods has sprung up. But critical resources still flow—for the moment, at least.

Federale Plans

Only in the past year or two have the Federales begun to look at their situation as a war to be won rather than an insurgency to be suppressed. Initially, the main goal of the federal government was focused entirely on stopping the FARC advance, breaking "regular" FARC units, and destroying drug crops and transportation routes. Efforts were limited to piecemeal (albeit often large) operations with limited objectives; there really was no overall game plan.

Recent federale thinking theorizes that if they can keep FARC from establishing a true economy, FARC's ability to keep a firm grasp on the reins of their new government will falter as well. Federal resources—those that can be spared from the defensive battles around Sincelejo and Sucre and the offensive in the middle Magdalena region—are tasked to keeping the seal on the blockade and striking at key industrial and transportation infrastructures in FARC territory. But government leaders are well aware that every civilian killed is a Colombian citizen. Most Colombians, even among the most hardline, have relatives or friends behind FARC lines.

So the government picks its targets carefully, hesitant still to blast Medellín, Cali, or other cities within FARC's grasp. And it fights a largely defensive battle, determined to maintain control of what ground it still holds and ensure that its own infrastructure, industry and shipping remain intact. Most important is that the government retains control of the Magdalena Valley and the Caribbean coastline. If FARC managed to push east as far as the Venezuelan border, the Federales would have to resort to shipping goods through Venezuela in the northeast.

Once the north and the Magdalena are secure, the army's attention will turn towards the upper Cauca, and the taking of Cali, Buenaventura, and the heart of the Cartel's coca croplands.

FARC's Strategies

FARC approaches the war with the strategic emphasis on gaining important territory. Being on the offensive, most of the war's hottest spots reflect FARC's priorities—advances along the Atlantic coast, along with a severing of the north from Bogotá and its surrounding industrial and mining resources.

The inner circle of FARC's leadership is fairly focused in its goals, but is sometimes stymied in its objectives by the Cartel's Leadership Council (see Chapter Four) and powerful individual members of the Cartel. There

is division on the ultimate war strategy—some among the Cartel seek the absolute defeat of the government, while others wish simply to take and hold a portion of Colombia, in which to form a new nation. Still others merely want to defang the government—to prove that they are a dominant, untouchable force without adopting the responsibilities that would go along with the formation and governance of a new nation. Any FARC initiative or offensive is subject to the meddlings of Cartel leaders, who control resources and have loyalists within FARC's chain of command. As a result, though FARC's strategies have generally been more pragmatic than the government's, they too have been occasionally lacking in focus.

CHAPTER THREE

Los FEDERALES ▼ ▼

The turning point was Pereira. The day we lost Pereira, we woke up. But that day, we also lost the war.

—Donaldo Seguera, Colombian Senator

Faced in late 1995 with an unexpected advance by FARC and the narco-traffickers, the Colombian government was slow to fully appreciate the seriousness of FARC's commitment to the war. In 1999, after four years of combat and a substantial loss of territory, the realization has fully set in—and the Colombian government has thrown itself into war.

TERRITORY

Federal Colombia was surprised with the speed and efficiency with which FARC took and held the northwestern section of the country. Once the surprise wore off, however, the Federales dug in and secured their hold on much of the east. Unfortunately, the east offers less useful and developed land than the west. In a very short time, FARC usurped half of urban and arable land by occupying only 20% of the entire country. The Colombia government's greatest struggle has been to keep control of the main waterways that connect it to the Caribbean coastline, including the Sogamoso and Magdalena Rivers. In the south, the Federales maintain a loose hold on the Pacific coast south of Buenaventura. FARC advancement into this area has produced intense conflicts between the two armies, as well as bloody guerrilla warfare that has crippled local industry and agriculture there.

The Federales cling to certain areas, without which they would be crippled. Among these are the communications hubs south of Bogotá, the Caribbean coastline with its ports, and the rivers which provide a means

of quick transportation from the south and center of the country to the shipping depots in the north. Once the initial shock of FARC's violent, swift and effective campaign wore off, they quickly formulated plans to protect those areas without which they could not survive, and which were critical to FARC's success as well.

GOVERNMENT

The Colombian federal government remains as it was before the commencement of the full-scale war with FARC. Democratic in nature and founded on the same constitutional model as the United States, its emphasis centers around personal rights and democratic suffrage. Its head of state is President Franco Carreño, a Conservative elected in May of 1998. Presidential general elections occur every four years, with alternating Conservative and Liberal constituents taking the position.

The elections in 1998 provided a unique challenge to the federal government of Colombia. The country was split in two by the war and the Federales had to decide whether to even hold an election. In the end, international investigations into President Samper forced the issue. Colombia could not afford a president who was not trusted by the United States and other major countries around the world. Those people living in FARC territory could not, of course, vote, but elections went off smoothly in federal Colombia. Nevertheless, though the issue has not yet come to the forefront, there are factions that dispute the legitimacy of Carreño's administration.

Government Structure

The legislative branch is comprised of a bicameral *Congreso* (Congress), including a *Senado* (Senate) with a total of 102 seats, and a *Camara de Representantes* (House of Representatives) with a total of 161 seats. Elections for the senate and house are held in March, every four years. The last occurred in 1998, though only those citizens living in federally-held territory could vote.

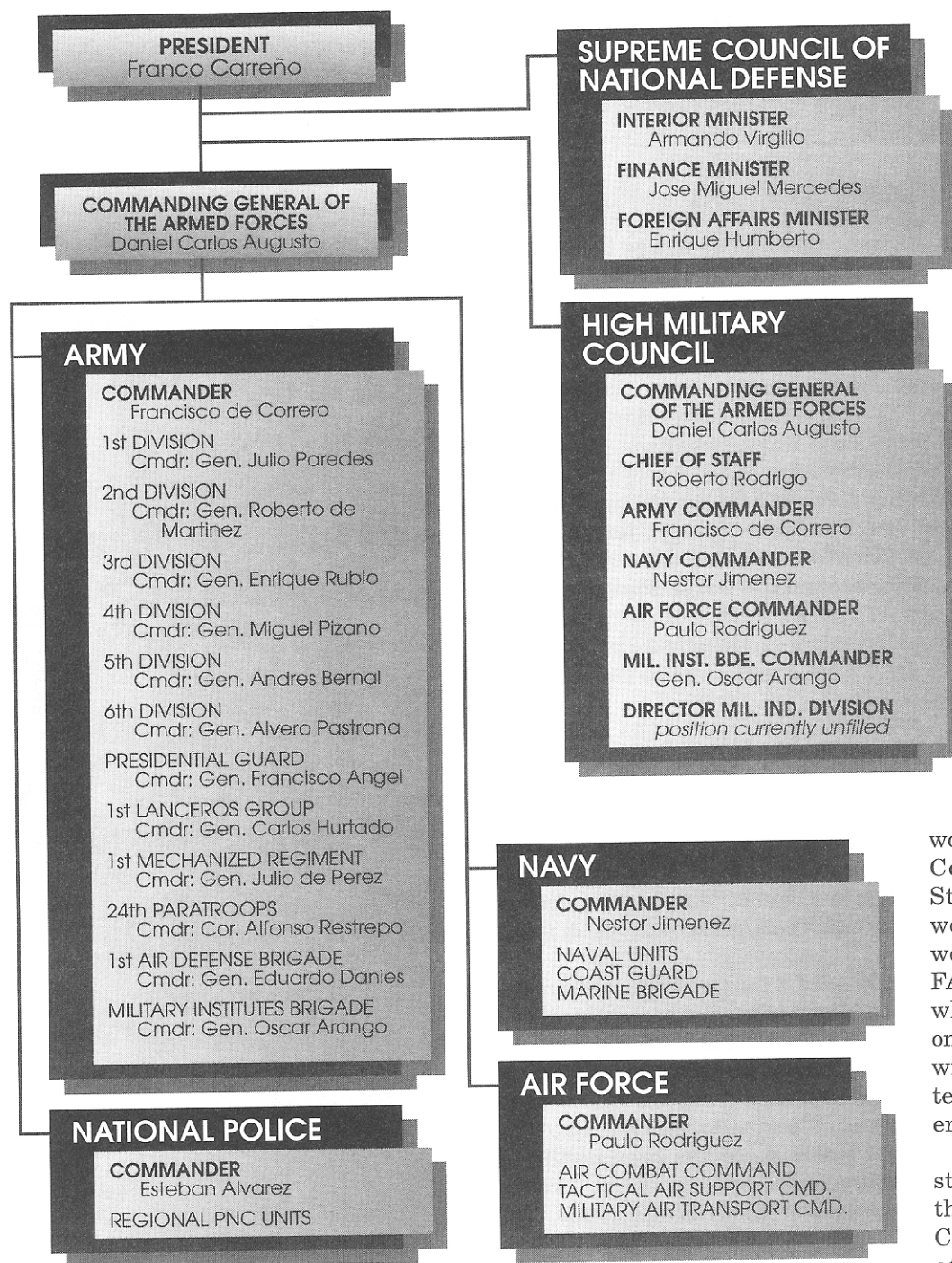
The Departments are each headed by a *Gobierno* (Governor) and local, city government consists of a Mayor who serves in conjunction with the local head (usually a colonel) of the Colombian National Police (PNC) stationed there. The Mayor handles bureaucratic matters with the help of an advising council of elders and affluent business owners, while the local PNC leader addresses matters of local security and peace. In this time of martial law, the National Police Force has been instilled with judicial power as well as law enforcement. Appeals travel through the judicial system to the *Corte Suprema de Justical* (Supreme Court of Justice).

Factions and Powers

Since the second world war, Colombia's politics have been dominated by two powerful parties: the Liberals and the Conservatives. That division, already weakening in the last decade or so of the twentieth century, has become largely irrelevant since the outbreak of the conventional war and, particularly, the election of 1998, in which war-related issues played a much greater role than party ideology.

Currently, there are two major positions on the war issue: the government must destroy the uprising; or it must accept that the war is





unwinable and seek a negotiated settlement. Within these two general positions, however, there are nearly as many variations as there are politicians, or even citizens. Among those that would fight the insurgency, some would crush it by the greatest application of force, regardless of cost, while others seek a strategy that minimizes loss of Colombian life on either side of the front. Some see foreign (and particularly American) aid as the only salvation, while others blame U.S. pressure on Colombia to crack down on the cartels for the start of the war, and

would rather lose than indebt Colombia to the United States. Among those who would seek a peace, some would grant independence to FARC within their territory, while others would settle only for a unified Colombia—with FARC and/or the Cartel represented in the government.

At the moment, the strongest single faction is that headed by President Carreño. A group of moderate Conservatives deter-

mined to defeat FARC, Carreño's constituency professes concern for innocent Colombians caught behind enemy lines or living in enemy-held cities, but has nevertheless been increasingly heavy-handed in its military actions over the past year.

Unfortunately, political and military power in Colombia is far from centralized, and not all of Carreño's policies are followed to the letter. In 1999, his biggest threat comes from ultra-hardliners within the government and military. A growing power especially within the National Police, these groups sometimes seek to undermine the administration's orders or policies.

BlackEagle in Colombia

The Colombian government calls upon BlackEagle for a variety of assignments, and in fact was BlackEagle Miami's fifth biggest client in 1998. Most assignments are paramilitary in nature—special operations jobs, often in FARC territory, that the Federales don't have the resources for (and can't call upon the U.S. military to handle). As a result, the actual client in most cases is the Colombian army. In a few instances, BlackEagle has been hired by other government arms, including the intelligence service. Some of these assignments are not even set in Colombia, but in other areas of real or suspected FARC or Cartel activity—including Miami.

The Colombian military, and sometimes other branches of the government, is represented in Miami by a Major Fernando Marquez. Officially a military liaison, Marquez coordinates Colombian interactions with U.S. military advisors, the C.I.A., and the D.E.A., as well as BlackEagle and similar private agencies. Marquez is an army officer still officially with the Lanceros group (specifically, his position is Adjunct S-3 (Intelligence Officer) of the 19th Lanceros Brigade); he understands from personal experience what is involved in special and covert operations and still sometimes goes into the field on such ops. He's widely respected and generally liked by those he works with. For more information on Marquez, see the *GM Screen and 1999 Datasource* (page 19).

THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY

Though nowhere near the standards of the U.S. or European armies, the Colombian military has a reputation as one of the most professional armed services in Latin America. Unlike the militaries of most of its neighbors—indeed, most of the Third World—the Colombian federal army has remained largely detached from internal politics. Even when the army seized control of the country in 1953 (under circumstances of grave civil chaos and violence), it relinquished power peacefully within four years.

The training of Colombian military personnel remains superior to that offered in other Latin American countries. Colombia puts an emphasis on basic training, conducted at a central school rather than through osmosis within units. Aside from the standard physical, strategies and weapons training, illiterate conscripts are taught to read. Officer candidates chosen from among high school students via a competitive examination and receive their training at the cadet school in Bogotá and go on from there to arms schools and staff training at the *Escuela Superior de Guerra*, a special officers' school and war college. These military schools and training units form the Military Institutes Brigade. Many of them are located in and around Bogotá.

As per the American model, the President of Colombia commands the armed forces. Two bodies advise the President in military matters: the Supreme Council of National Defense and the High Military Council. The Supreme Council of National Defense is comprised of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance and the Interior, whereas the seats on the High Military Council include the Commanding General of the Armed Forces, his Chief of Staff, the commanders of the individual branches (Army, Navy, and Air Force), the Commander of the Military Institutes Brigade and the Director of the Military Industry Division. The Minister of Defense occupies a basically administrative post and doesn't hold a

Women in Colombia

In the modern world of 1999, women in the U.S. and other developed nations are fairly well integrated into most aspects of society, with a generally equal footing in business, government, the military, and even such non-traditional roles as BlackEagle operatives. Outside of the developed world, the same is not always true—especially in highly-traditional societies like those of Latin America. Colombia offers women little opportunity for anything other than marriage and children. Sexism runs rampant. Few married women work outside the home and those that do tend to be of the younger generation. Single women sometimes attend college and make careers for themselves, however once they marry, they are pigeonholed into the traditional role of wife and mother.

The Colombian army does not allow female soldiers—and certainly not female officers. Women in the federal army serve only as nurses or secretaries. FARC embraces a more flexible policy, allowing women to fight—but they often have to work twice as hard to prove themselves and gain the acceptance of their compatriots.

There are some roles for women in Colombian business and the government, but such positions are the exception rather than the rule. In 1999, no women are ranked among the highest levels of responsibility in either the federal government or the Medellín Cartel.

Colombian Military Rank

The Colombian Army uses a rank structure similar to that of the U.S. Army (see the *GM's Companion*, page 133). The ranks used for Colombian officers, their equivalents in the American ranking system, and the insignia that represent them are:

General de Division (Major General):
two gold suns

General de Brigada (Brig. General):
one gold sun

Coronel (Colonel):
three gold stars, with a bar

Tenient Coronel (Lt. Colonel):
two gold stars, with a bar

Mayor (Major):
one gold star, with a bar

Capitán (Captain):
three gold stars

Teniente (First Lieutenant):
two gold stars

Subteniente (Second Lieutenant):
one gold star

position in the command structure. The President issues his commands through the Commanding General of the Armed Forces, who in turn passes these orders down to the commanders of the Army, Navy, Air Force and National Police.

The Army (Ejército Nacional)

Before the war, the Colombian army numbered fewer than 50,000 personnel, organized into twelve regional infantry brigades (falling under four divisional headquarters) and a smattering of brigade and battalion-sized special units. This structure became awkward early in the war, not only because of rapid growth in the size of the force, but also because FARC's seizure of territory made the regional association of units irrelevant. In 1997, the army reorganized into eight divisions of three brigades each. For the most part, the brigades themselves were not internally reorganized (eleven brigades, under three new divisions, had already been added), and most brigades remained under their existing divisions. At this time, they also beefed up several of the independent units, such as the Presidential Guard and the Lanceros (Rangers).

On the surface, the Colombian army strongly resembles the American Armed Forces. They use uniforms and equipment only superficially different from U.S. issue and share similar protocols and philosophies, both tactical and command.

The Infantry Divisions

The centerpiece of Colombia's army is its eight infantry divisions. These units are fairly large by American standards, consisting of three brigades of six battalions each—generally three infantry and one each of engineers, artillery and either mechanized infantry or armored cavalry. Three to five companies comprise the infantry battalions, putting the total manpower in a typical brigade at roughly 3,500 combatants. With three brigades and an enlarged service battalion consisting of medical, logistical and ground transport units, the typical division weighs in at around 15,000 men.

Three platoons of approximately thirty-five men each make up a typical infantry company at full strength. They are organized in accordance with the American model into three nine-man squads and a headquarters element. A company may have one or more heavy weapons sections in addition to its three platoons: 60mm and 81mm mortar sections are common, as are anti-armor and heavy machine-gun sections.

A third to one-half of the soldiers are conscripts, most from the peasant or laborer classes, and all have undergone a competent basic training. They carry HKG3A3 and CETME C assault rifles, with the occasional appearance of an MG49/52, though the standards of weaponry and equipment maintenance vary greatly from soldier to soldier.

The Colombian military organizes its engineering companies almost exactly like regular infantry. Though the personnel are trained in building and breaching obstacles, constructing and destroying fortifications and infrastructure, and placing and removing mines, they are often tasked to regular infantry missions as well.

Mechanized infantry battalions, of which there are only four scattered among the eight regular divisions, are also organized similarly to regular infantry units. They ride into combat in Brazilian-made EE-11 armored personnel carriers.

Most brigades, however, have armored cavalry battalions instead of mechanized infantry. These units organize into companies made up of four troops of four vehicles each. They equip themselves with Brazilian-made ENGESA EE-9 armored cars.

Artillery companies break down into batteries of four guns each. Most companies have two batteries, the majority of them using the American-made 105mm howitzer, although some use heavier guns.

The Presidential Guard

In addition to the eight regular infantry divisions, the Colombian army also features an elite brigade called the Presidential Guard. This unit consists of two combined-arms battalions, each of which has three infantry companies, a cavalry company, an armor company, and an artillery company, along with several support weapons sections. The Presidential Guard is generally kept in reserve and deployed in the Bogotá area, but it has seen combat several times in the middle Magdalena valley and during the Federales' offensive of 1998.

The Presidential Guard carries different arms and equipment from those used by regular infantry units. The standard Presidential Guard infantry weapon is the M16A2, backed by the FN Minimi machine-gun. Their cavalry companies are equipped with twelve American-made M2 Bradley IFVs, while the armor companies are equipped with twelve M551 Stingray light tanks per company.

The Lanceros

"Lanceros" is the Colombian term for what the American army calls Rangers (elite infantry units capable of operating out of contact with friendly forces, often on enemy terrain, as they conduct wide-area reconnaissance sweeps and guerrilla warfare). As with their American counterparts, the Colombian Lanceros are not special forces units, although Colombia's small Special Forces contingent is part of the Lanceros group. They are simply well-trained infantry troops tasked to the most grueling of infantry missions. Most of the Lanceros have considerable combat experience; none are conscripts and many have trained with the American forces in Panama or at the U.S. Army Ranger school.

Like the regular infantry divisions, the Lanceros consist of three brigades. Each has two small battalions. Only one of



these six battalions is a Special Forces unit. All the battalions are divided into three companies and generally organized identically to regular infantry companies. Like the Presidential Guard, the Lanceros use M16A2s and FN Minimis. Sometimes they also carry FN P90s and/or IMI Uzis. The Lanceros units also regularly use night vision gear, GPS navigation systems and high-quality comms gear.

Whereas the government usually deploys regular infantry divisions to the areas of heaviest conflict where they participate in conventional light infantry combat, the Lanceros operate away from the heaviest fighting, behind enemy lines or in areas of FARC guerrilla operations. Their missions often involve recon and surgical strikes against prime FARC military holdings.

The Navy (Armada Nacional)

With the increasing strategic importance of the Caribbean coastal area, the Colombian government has concentrated its naval presence there and along the Magdalena and Sogamoso Rivers. It lends support to and protects commercial transports leaving from ports along the federally-held Caribbean coastline. However, because the FARC naval threat remains minor, the Colombian Navy deals mostly with interdiction and blockade along the coastline, and with shore and guerrilla attacks along the rivers.

On the Magdalena and Sogamoso Rivers in particular, the navy faces its biggest daily challenge in controlling the flow of contraband into FARC-held territory. Scores of small and medium vessels patrol the rivers where they adjoin or flow into enemy territory, stopping and inspecting the hundreds of boats that ply the inland waterways. Navy riverine vessels are also instrumental in supporting attacks on FARC holdings adjacent to Colombia's rivers, and in inserting and extracting federal troops on operations into enemy territory.

The Colombian navy boasts over 13,000 personnel, although only about 3,000 of those personnel are part of the conventional bluewater (oceangoing) navy. The bulk—nearly 8,500 personnel—are assigned to Colombia's Marines Corps, while another 1,500 make up the Coast Guard, which patrols Colombia's rivers as well as coastal areas.

The Bluewater Navy

Overall, the Colombian navy is small relative to U.S. standards—and the part that actually operates on the open ocean is even smaller. The navy is headquartered at Cartagena, with a second base at Barranquilla. Major vessels include two attack submarines and five frigates: four *Almirante Padilla*-class vessels and a *Courtney*-class flagship. The frigates, which were all primarily designed for anti-submarine warfare, serve fine in their current role as blockaders, aided by their Bofors Bo-105 helicopters (armed with MM-40 Exocet surface-to-surface missiles), four-inch and 76mm guns, and torpedoes. Other deepwater patrol vessels include five ocean-going tugs converted to military use with mounted .50-caliber machineguns and Stinger missiles, along with two *Asheville*-class fast patrol ships and one 32-meter Swiftship. Finally, the Colombian navy has recently converted a 30,000-ton bulk freighter into duty as a tender, to support Colombian and allied ships operating off the Pacific coast and reduce the frequency at which they must return to their Atlantic coast ports.

Blockading ships (Colombian, American, and otherwise) operate some distance from the coast, working in concert with reconnaissance aircraft (locally) and international intelligence agencies (globally) to locate and track vessels approaching FARC-held coastal areas. Although they seek out any and all ships or boats heading to or from shore, vessels that are small and fast, remain close to shore, or are lucky or well-informed enough to hit a hole in the blockade frequently slip through. Those that are spotted in time are tracked, and sometimes intercepted by aircraft. Those that are not still face the possibility of interception by Coast Guard vessels closer to shore. In either case, the Colombian navy and its allies do not hesitate to use force against blockade runners—over 250 suspected smugglers have been sunk since the initiation of the international blockade in early 1996.

The Marine Division

Approximately 8,500 soldiers, divided into three brigades of approximately 2,900 marines each, comprise Colombia's marine corps. Brigades are further divided into eight battalions averaging 350 persons each. Three to five companies, like in the army, make up the battalions, with three platoons per company. The marine division has its own service battalion, with medical, logistical, and transport (both ground and amphibious) units. Less than a third of the marines are conscripts and all undergo an intense and competent basic training which includes instruction in weaponry, boat piloting, and amphibious assault. Like their army counterparts, marines carry HKG3A3 and CETME C assault rifles.

Colombian marines do not share quite the reputation for toughness (relative to conventional infantry) that U.S. marines do, but with their relatively high level of training they are still treated as elite units. Colombian marine brigades are generally deployed only in short, sharp offensive engagements, and are otherwise kept in reserve. Ironically, they are not well-trained in amphibious operations, as Colombia has next to no amphibious capabilities.

Coast Guard

Whereas the major ships of the navy concentrate their attention on the open ocean, the Coast Guard is responsible for the supervision of areas close to shore as well as Colombia's rivers. Traditional Coast Guard duties include marine law enforcement, search and rescue, and the interdiction of smugglers—these days the latter task thoroughly dominates the duties of a force that has grown considerably larger and more military since the start of the war.

The Coast Guard operates out of the naval bases at Cartagena and Barranquilla, as well as bases at Plato and El Banco on the Magdalena River (other river bases having been evacuated in the face of FARC advances). The Coast Guard has the same authority as any other branch of the Navy, able to board vessels and seize cargos without repercussion. Approximately thirty Coast Guard cutters operate on the Atlantic coast, patrolling the shore from Puerto López in the Gulf of Venezuela to San Bernardo Island at the FARC—and sometimes well beyond. Coastal patrol cutters vary in size from local runabouts to 34-meter *Island*-class patrol craft—all fast and maneuverable, if low-endurance vessels—and typically carry from four to twelve crew members. Most Coast Guard

Colombian National Police (PNC)

Colombia organized its police force into a national entity (*Policía Nacional de Colombia*) under the control of the Minister of Defense in 1961. Stationed throughout the country, the police maintain peace and law in rural and urban areas. Groups of officers patrol the countryside in an attempt to cut down on the banditry occurring there. National Police are trained in special academies called *Escuelas de Policía* where they receive instruction on weaponry, building assault tactics, and crowd control. This last has proven particularly necessary in urban areas where riots have increased in frequency and ferocity.

Police officers carry a broad variety of pistols scrounged from army surplus, as well as having access to an arsenal of HKG3A3s. Many of them are armed with tear-gas grenades and mace as well, especially in the cities. The National Police in each city includes a bomb-disposal group and a special-weapons and tactics squad. Units in larger cities have access to EE-9 Cascavel and M-8 armored cars.

vessels are equipped with radar and all go armed, generally with medium or heavy machineguns and occasionally Stinger missiles.

The riverine squadron consists of five divisions of approximately ten boats each—most less than ten meters in length crewing ten or fewer personnel. The Coast Guard does, however, operate six heavily armed and armored river tugs, which support army operations along the Magdalena (and sometimes Sogamosa) and counter any potential threat from armed vessels operated by FARC.

All of these vessels—on the rivers and along the Atlantic coast—spend the majority of their time stopping and searching boats and ships entering Colombian waters or headed towards FARC ports, looking for drugs, weapons, or illegal passengers.

Naval Aviation

Land-based planes (Commander patrol aircraft) and helicopters (Bofors Bo-105s), of which the navy has a total of ten, assist the Coast Guard in patrolling the rivers and along the coastline. They are also used for recon of FARC positions along the rivers, in patrolling the open ocean in concert with the blockade, and for search and rescue inland as well as on the water. Most of these aircraft are based at Barranquilla.

The Air Force (Ejército Nacional del Aire)

The Colombian Air Force is made up of three operational commands, plus a training command and various support services. It has never been a strong offensive force, but has historically focused instead on supporting the Army's counterinsurgency efforts with transportation and ground-attack capabilities. Those two requirements are stronger than ever now, but the air force is also attempting to develop its air combat capacity.

Air Combat Command

When the second Violencia began in 1995 the Colombian Air Force had two squadrons of modern jet fighter-bombers: one equipped with fifteen French-made Mirage 5s, the other with thirteen Israeli-made Kfir. Only twenty-two of these aircraft were truly operational at the start of hostilities, and seven of those were lost to FARC ground-to-air missiles in the initial battles for Buenaventura and Antioquia Department. By 1997, the Air Force had lost a total of sixteen of its fighters to enemy fire, and two to accidents, leaving it with only four tactical aircraft. This diminishing capability faced both improving FARC ground defenses and the threat of an emerging FARC air force that included ground-attack aircraft and possibly even fighter-bombers.

In 1998, the government forged a major procurement deal with the U.S. that included a sizable number of aircraft. Twelve F-16s and three F-4G Wild Weasels were delivered that year, with another twelve F-16s to be delivered in 1999. In addition, two AWACS aircraft are scheduled for delivery in March of 1999, part of a coordinated air offensive capability to be in place by late 1999.

The Air Combat Command currently operates two Squadrons: one outfitted with the seven remaining Mirages and Kfirs plus the three F4Gs; the other newly-outfitted with twelve F-16s. The arrival of the second batch of F-16s will see the creation of a third air combat squadron. These squadrons operate from Socorro Air Base, at least for the time

being, from which they carry out primarily ground attack, recon, and combat air patrol missions. A great deal of time is also spent in training, as the Colombian Air Force has a severe shortage of experienced fighter pilots.

Tactical Air Support Command

The Tactical Air Support Command provides ground attack capabilities and air support for ground actions. The command's aircraft comprise the largest collection of combat air power in the region, and consists of eleven Hughes 500Ds (observation helicopters designated OH-6s), fifteen Hughes 500MGs (gunship versions of the same airframe), nine OV-10s (another observation helo), twenty one UH-1 Huey helicopters configured for ground attack, and six UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters similarly configured. In addition, the Colombian Air Force has just accepted delivery of twelve American A-10s, part of the 1998 procurement agreement mentioned above. As of mid-1999, most of these air units operate from the base at Socorro. From there, they conduct frequent missions in support of ground operations.

The Tactical Air Support Command also works closely with the American D.E.A., which has an AC-130 Spectre gunship and several Russian-made HIND-D attack helicopters. These aircraft are based in Miami, but all (especially the AC-130) rotate frequently into the theatre, deploying at the request of the Colombian air force from Socorro or Howard Air Force Base in Panama.

Military Air Transport Command

With only eight divisions to defend and retake the entirety of Colombia, the Army has made flexibility and responsiveness a priority. Prior to the war, the Air Transport Command had eight C-47s and seven C-130s in various configurations, as well as a hodgepodge of smaller transports. Six of those original fifteen major transports have been lost—the Air Transport Command has replaced those with four more C-130s bringing the total to ten C-130s and three C47s.

Those larger transports serve to move large units between regions—the Air Transport Command is also responsible in part for helicopter transportation for air-mobile combat operations. Losses in this category have been heavy, as have been replacements. Of its pre-war complement, Colombia has only three UH-60s and six Bell 205s. After losses, the total at the beginning of 1999 is twenty-nine UH-60s and six Bell 205s organized into three squadrons, and sixteen VH-22s in two additional squadrons. Currently, this limits the government's air assault capability to no more than three battalions in a single lift (assuming all aircraft were operational and could be tasked to a single action), so plans are underway to procure an additional twenty or so UH-60s and fifteen VH-22s in 1999.

CHAPTER FOUR

FARC AND THE

CARTEL ▼ ▼

If you think you know where this terrible conflict is heading, think again. The fighting between FARC and Colombia's government is just the beginning. The Federales are losing that battle, and sooner or later they'll be out of the picture. Then the real war begins—the war between FARC and its current masters, the Medellín Cartel.

—Crichton Smith, Journalist

Prior to 1995, few people outside of Colombia had ever heard of FARC. It's ironic, then, that after thirty years of committed, ideological independent conflict against the Colombian government, FARC would finally receive worldwide attention as nothing more than the armed wing of maniacal drug lords. The truth is far more complex: FARC and the Medellín Cartel remain two separate entities, intertwined but independent, pursuing goals and strategies that don't always align.

TERRITORY

In a relatively short time, FARC has managed to take and maintain one fifth of the country of Colombia. But that number is deceptive, for the majority of Colombia's countryside is remote and sparsely populated—the 20% that FARC has come to control actually represents about half of the population and urban areas of the country.

FARC was aided in its offensive by the element of surprise: the audacity of their early actions shocked Colombia, and few could conceive that FARC might consolidate and hold its gains over the long term. It wasn't until this element of surprise wore off that Federal troops managed to dig in and halt the advance of the FARC line. For the moment, they

have succeeded in frustrating FARC's attempts to push further east and north, to the point that leaders of FARC's and the Cartel's coalition debate halting the advance there, taking what they have, and abandoning the war. Others, however, realize how close they have come to complete overthrow of the federal government. They believe that if they can acquire the Caribbean coastline as well as the Magdalena River valley, then the war will end of its own accord—not because FARC decided to call it a day, but because the federal government will have surrendered, crippled beyond repair.

FARC AND THE CARTEL: UNEASY BEDFELLOWS

FARC's alliance with the Medellín Cartel in 1995 was just that: an alliance. Despite the widespread impression propagated by the media, FARC has not sold itself to the Cartel, nor has it truly abandoned its original goals of social revolution. It is generally assumed that since the Cartel is obviously supplying the resources for the war, the Cartel must be setting the agenda. In fact, no completely consensual agenda exists between the organizations. The only shared principle is the desire to overthrow the existing government and social structure, replacing it with a new order more sympathetic to the goals of both FARC and its agrarian constituency, and to the Medellín Cartel and its massive and illicit export business. So far, the overthrow has been well-planned and executed, though the replacement is still a rather hazy ideal, subject to as many differing interpretations as there are parties to the conflict.

In 1999, the future of the war remains uncertain. Not everyone—perhaps no one, in fact—who was involved in the original decision to confront the Colombian government openly through force, really expected events to unfold as they have. Some perhaps thought the war would go easier, a simple overthrow of an unprepared government. Others might have expected it to end in early defeat, more of a muscle-flexing exercise to intimidate the government than a determined attempt to destroy it. The military leaders of FARC were perhaps the most prepared for the war's present evolution. The leaders of the Cartel, pampered and surrounded by yes-men, were in general the least prepared.

Currently, there are conflicting ideas on how to proceed. While FARC pushes on with an overall strategy aimed at outright victory within two years (facilitated by the taking of Bogotá and the Caribbean ports), the Cartel seems to have a different opinion of how events should evolve. A number of alternative goals are continuously debated among the Cartel heads: grab all the land west of the Magdalena, then call a halt; withdraw to areas around Medellín, having taught the government a lesson; offer a halt to the war in exchange for a rewrite of the constitution and a government that includes the Cartel leadership.

Another issue concerns who will form and lead the new government should the war end in success. This issue was not resolved when the two organizations first allied and has not been fully addressed since. Both organizations feel that the right to govern is theirs—the Medellín Cartel because it is bankrolling the war; FARC because it is a self-styled political movement with a history of aiding the Colombian underclass in governing themselves. To one degree or another, both sides assume that their vision of the future is shared by the other. When, eventually, these issues actually need to be addressed, the two counterparts will find that they have much to discuss.



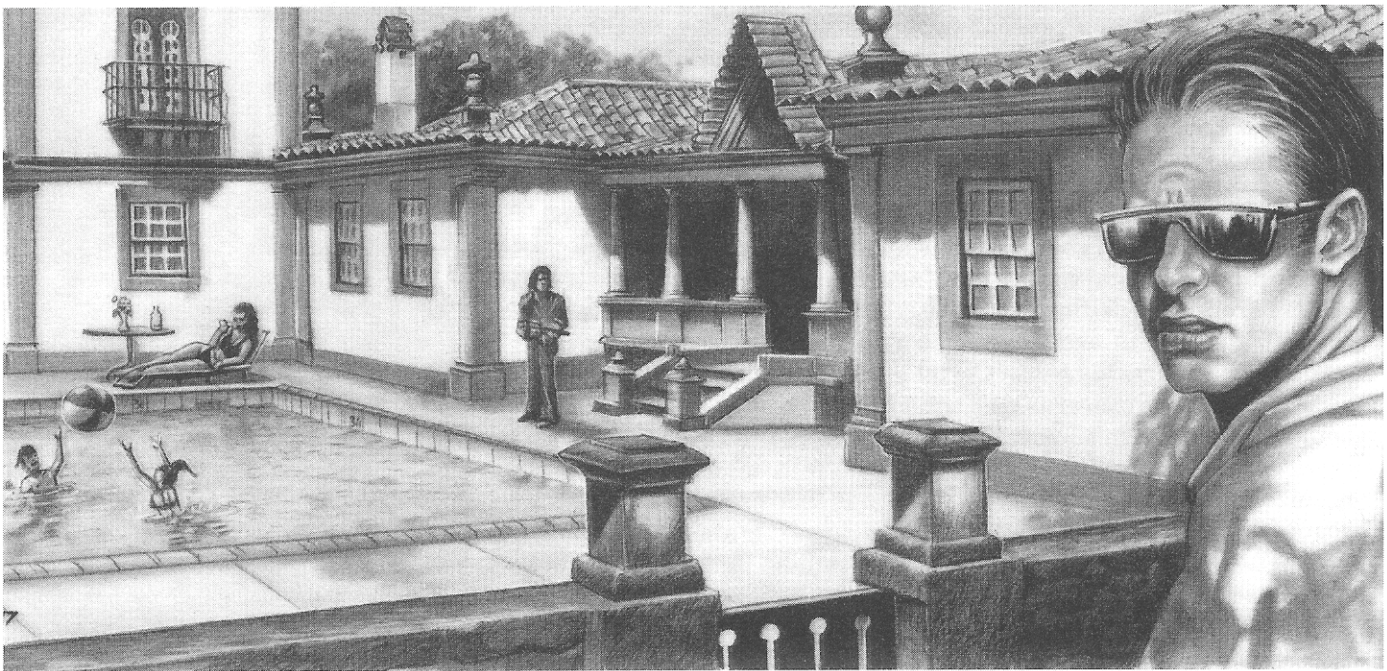
The Medellín Cartel

The cultivation and processing of coca came to Colombia in the 1980s, less than twenty years ago. As demand for cocaine grew, primarily in the U.S., Colombian traffickers began to import coca leaves from Peru and Bolivia in their natural form, to chemically process them into cocaine HCl for international distributors. Coca farmers from Bolivia and Peru came to Colombia to escape the growing anti-narcotics movements in their own countries, bringing the cultivation of coca to Colombia's poor rural farmers, who saw in it a lucrative cash crop.

The coca and cocaine trade organized itself as it grew, with the creation of relatively stable purchasing and distribution networks. From these traffickers grew the cartels—rings of powerful criminal overlords centered around Medellín and Cali, cities in the heart of the coca-growing region of Colombia. The fortunes of these families rose and fell throughout the tumultuous 1980s, as they raised enormous fortunes and battled Colombian and U.S. narcotics agencies, and (to an even greater extent) each other, over the gold mine which was cocaine.

By the 1990s, the cartels were enormously influential not only in Colombia, but throughout Andean South America and all around the world. Excesses in spending and in violence reached alpine heights. Cartel leaders were virtually untouchable; and it seemed that no victory in the fight against narcotics smuggling could put a measurable dent in their business. Relationships with FARC, which virtually controlled much of rural coca-growing areas and which often provided freelance troops to the cartels, were already in place.

In 1995, under intense pressure from the United States and fearing for its own sovereignty in the face of the cartels' power, the Colombian government launched an intense crackdown. Several major drug lords were arrested and held. The cartels faltered and might have been seriously crippled—in fact, the weaker Cali Cartel was. But though its leaders were imprisoned, the well-organized infrastructure of the Medellín



Cartel remained in place, and a new generation of leaders was ready take over where the old kingpins left off. These leaders went on the immediate offensive, joining forces with FARC to destroy the government's influence in the Cartel's regions of power, and perhaps even overthrow the government itself.

In terms of the war, the Medellín Cartel is not technically an official body—in fact, it is and has always been a rather informal organization, a feudalistic structure of fourteen drug-running criminal families. Each of these operations, like most organized criminal groups, is headed autocratically by a single individual—invariably the male head of the family at the heart of the empire. These individuals represent their organizations to the larger Cartel, which makes decisions concerning their commerce. Those at the top of the hierarchy carry the most weight; those at the bottom have the least influence, but at least benefit from inclusion in the Cartel's activities and the relative security that offers. Nevertheless, this structure encourages intrigue and dissatisfaction among the (largely ego-driven) family bosses, and even their common stake in the war has not ended all internal struggle within the Cartel.

Factions and Powers

The war has been more successful than most of the Cartel's leaders had initially thought possible, and there's quite a bit of dissent on how to proceed. Many in the Cartel saw the early actions of the war as a sort of warning to the federal government—an insanely audacious act of hostility that would break the government's already weak commitment to destroying the drug trade. The Cartel had not initially planned to continue funding for FARC's operations beyond the expected crushing response from the military. But that response did not occur early on, so FARC's advances continued. Now, the war may have reached a point of no return, and debate on what to do about it is heating up.

There are three general factions. One, led by Cartel head Eduardo Benedetti, believes as FARC does that the war is winnable, and should be pursued to the bitter end. Another perspective is that of Francisco Delgado: the initial goal of terrorizing the federal government having been met, the Cartel should end the war, allow the government to ostensibly regain control of the country, and return to the conventional business of drug production and distribution. In the middle lies a third option, promoted by the Rodríguez-Orejuela and Dereyo-Calazón families: the Cartel now controls almost all of the territory it's ever used in drug production and smuggling, and so while it should not return any territory to the Federales, it also shouldn't bother trying to take the remainder of the country.

Currently, the Benedetti position is policy. However, Benedetti's hold on power within the Cartel is increasingly tenuous—his family is by far the largest and most powerful in the Cartel, but he himself has been a weak leader in the past year or so. Furthermore, Dominic Dereyo-Calazón is the official head of the Leadership Council, having been elected by the Council (with Benedetti's approval) for his organizational skills and close ties to FARC's leadership. While Dereyo-Calazón has yet to openly challenge any of Benedetti's strategies or directives, he is in a position to dilute them through counterproductive Council actions and perhaps even to lead an overthrow of Benedetti should that come to pass.

What is a Cartel?

The American Dictionary of the English Language defines a cartel as “a combination of independent business organizations formed to regulate production, pricing and marketing of goods by the members.” This definition leaves out much of the baggage carried by the word “cartel” in Latin America and throughout the world. The drug cartels of Colombia do indeed fit this definition—but there is much more to them.

A cartel in Colombia resembles the mafioso of Italy, with a strong patriarchal figure at its head. More often than not, the leadership of the cartels passes down through family members and the cartels remain very family-oriented. Each sees itself as a family business, the grandfather or father who came from the fields and built the cartel is deeply respected by the rest of the family—now living in luxury.

Any particular cartel—and there are many minor ones beyond the Medellín Cartel—consists of a number of families who have joined forces, in a strict hierarchical structure. In many ways, the hierarchy of the cartels resembles that of feudal Europe. Often geographically related, there are proverbial counts, dukes, and the king with his knights and serfs. The prince takes his father's throne when the time is right. The princesses marry princes.

All in all, it is a rather archaic structure in which the modern-day king rules by the right of might. Intrigue among the ranks commonly causes insurrections, assassinations and betrayals. Competition between the cartels breaks out regularly in violent confrontation, although this has become less frequent since the beginning of the civil war.

Although the Medellín Cartel prefers to think of itself as a family organization, it approaches business very seriously. The new breed of drug lords do not all come from within the families of the kingpins who were brought down by the Colombian National Police. Their loyalties do not string back several generations. This gives the new organization a whole different feel from that of the original Medellín Cartel, and presents an array of new challenges to those who combat drug trafficking.

The Leadership Council

Technically speaking, the regions controlled by the Cartel and FARC are not truly governed by them—neither organization has formed a real central government and much of the governing has been relegated to local authorities. Civil order is maintained with a sort of martial law imposed by what has become the defacto government: the simply-named Leadership Council. This council is more-or-less synonymous with the Medellín Cartel itself, though it is organized more democratically. Comprised of fourteen individuals (the same fourteen who head the organizations that make up the Cartel), and headed by Dominic Dereyo-Calazón, the Leadership Council was formed to establish and oversee the FARC/Cartel strategy for the war. In this regard, the Leadership Council has done anything but lead—the Council has never established clear strategic goals for the resolution of the war, but has occupied itself with heated debate over interim objectives and the constant challenge of replacing vital government functions in FARC-held territory.

The Leadership Council has spawned dozens of committees, responsible for many of the tasks that would be carried out by a provisional government. This system has proven inefficient, as the committees are poorly-defined and autocratic. Long on ego and short on expertise, few members of the Council have what it takes to get a banking system, telecommunications network, or other infrastructural systems back on-line.

As for oversight of the war, debates within the Leadership Council are often irrelevant, as the War Council—the next step in the military chain of command—generally ignores the Leadership Council's directives in favor of its own (generally much more sound) strategies. To date this has led to no major punitive action by the Leadership Council, and FARC's objectives are largely in line with the Council's (and in particular Benedetti's), and results speak for themselves. That may change, however, as combat in hotly-contested areas such as Sincelejo intensifies, FARC successes slow down, and the interests of the insurgency begin to diverge from those of the Cartel.

FARC

As mentioned in Chapters One and Two, FARC's roots as a guerilla insurgency go back thirty years prior to the start of the open war in 1995. It's relationship with the Cartel extends back into the 80s, though it was not until after the Huila uprisings of 1995 that the two began to operate in concert and FARC began to accept massive Cartel funding for its operations against the government.

Prior to 1996, FARC was run by an Revolutionary Council, which oversaw military operations and set strategy and policy for the group. Most of the power, however, lay in the hands of the individual regional commanders who led their guerillas and set their own objectives. In 1996, FARC reorganized and created the War Council, a much more centralized body with greater control over combat units, general strategy, and accountability to the Leadership Council.

The War Council is the official head of FARC, but the power behind that throne is an inner core of old-guard FARC officers: Manuel Rivera; Carlito Jacobo Valente; Armando Pardo Mazuera; Gustavo Villamizar; and perhaps also Ernesto López Uribe. All were members of the Revolu-

tionary Council before the war, and all now sit on the War Council. But most major strategies are decided by these five officers before the War Council even takes them up.

Unlike the Cartel, this inner core—and the War Council in general—is fairly cohesive. It is FARC's intent to defeat the federal government, and to supplant it with a socialist government installed by FARC and headed, initially at least, by FARC's leaders. At some point, these objectives will inevitably come into conflict with those of the Cartel—in the formation of the government at least, if not much sooner. But FARC controls the military, and, more importantly, the loyalty of its troops and peasant supporters. Even with all of its financial resources, the Cartel would be hard-pressed to match this hidden strength, which FARC is gambling will be enough to give it the upper hand when any conflict with the Cartel finally materializes.

The War Council

FARC has no direct representation in the Leadership Council, but it dominates the other major body in the coalition: the War Council. The War Council commands the army itself, and consists of the Commander in Chief, Chief of Staff, Head of Intelligence, Air Defence Commander, Coastal Defense Commander, nine Front Commanders, and two Leadership Council representatives. Although technically an organ of the Leadership Council, the War Council remains largely autonomous.

FARC's commander, General Manuel Rivera, heads the War Council and reports only to the Leadership Council. His Chief of Staff, Coronel Carlito Jacobo Valente, assists him. FARC's actual combat commands report to the Chief of Staff. They include the commanders of the nine Fronts of the ground war along with the Air Defense Command and the Coastal Defense Command.

FARC's command structure consists primarily of the leadership that came into power before 1995. Since that time, however, a number of Cartel-backed officers have slipped into the chain of command. These individuals operate with varying degrees of efficiency, but in most cases, their loyalty to the Cartel remains stronger than their loyalty to FARC and that organization's ideals. Most FARC officers, however, remain aware of such infiltrations—and such individuals sometimes find themselves cut out of the chain of command on important or sensitive decisions. Furthermore, there is a known elite of officers at all levels whose service goes back to the guerilla days and whose loyalty to Rivera and the insurgency is unquestionable.

FARC FORCES

Three military arms make up the body of FARC: the Air Defense Command, the Coastal Defense Command, and the Army. FARC adopted this model in 1997, after rapid growth and the decision to continue to hold seized territory indefinitely. In a boon to the local textile industry, FARC followed up this reorganization with an attempt to uniform their troops in early 1998. Two different uniforms were handed out, one a green and black tiger-striped battle camouflage and the other, more formal, a tan khaki with the FARC phoenix sewn onto the breast pocket. A system of rank insignia, similar to the federal Colombian standard, was adopted. FARC troops in the field wear the camouflage uniform, when available,

FARC Database Listing

On the next two pages is a report on FARC from the BlackEagle/BlackEagle L&P Branch database on criminal organizations. It can be shown or given to any players who access that information source or any close equivalent. BlackEagle relies on published (though not necessarily public) information put together by other intelligence agencies, and as a result, while the L&P database is generally accurate, it can contain omissions, inaccuracies, outdated information, and even the occasional falsehood. Where it conflicts with information elsewhere in this book, assume that the database listing is inaccurate.

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)

#CR00000591

(also Frente Actionista Revolucionario Colombiana, Colombian Democratic Alliegence Armed Front)

Source: CIA, Interpol

Type: Insurgent guerilla organization/political terrorist group

Scope:

Large, well-organized military force carrying out conventional and low-intensity insurgent operations in Colombia.

Affiliations:

Financed by the Medellin and Cali drug empires. May have originally spawned the communist insurgent group M-19, but currently has no ties with that organization.

Personnel: 70,000-100,000, with hundreds of thousands of active sympathizers in FARC-held territory and a network of perhaps 10,000 additional sympathizers in other areas of Colombia.

Operating Since:

1966

Structure:

Military-style hierarchy with three Commands: the Army (by far the largest); the Coastal and River Defense Force; and the Air Defense Force. The Army is divided into nine Front Commands, further broken into brigade and battalion-sized conventional units and/or battalion and company-sized guerilla units. In addition, civilian supporters are organized into Patriotic Guard units.

Leaders:

General Manuel Rivera (FARC Commander-in-Chief), Colonel Carlito Jacobo Valente (Army Commander)

Legitimate Connections:

Formed the Patriotic Union (UP) political party in 1985, but that organization has been almost defunct since 1995. Past ties to the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) have probably been severed. Support from the Soviet Union may have been replaced by support from Cuba or North Korea.

Resources:

Within the regions controlled by FARC's conventional military elements, FARC operates as a modern light infantry force with limited combined-arms capabilities. The blockade of FARC-controlled coastline has hardly slowed the flow of arms and equipment to the insurgency, and since 1997 FARC has had access to artillery, light armored vehicles, helicopters, sophisticated air defense equipment, man-portable weapons of virtually every description, and even riverine patrol boats, light tanks, and fighter aircraft. FARC is believed to have conscripted over 100,000 peasants into its armed forces, and levels of training for these personnel are comparable to those of the Colombian Army. In addition, FARC seems to have built an intelligence capability with standards quite a bit higher than those of regional states.

Outside of Colombia, FARC terrorists and insurgents rely on much restricted logistical capabilities, but, backed by a quality intelligence system and extensive drug cartel financial resources, generally have access to modern smallarms, explosives, and heavy weapons.

Suspected Criminal Activities:

Hundreds of bombings and assassinations and thousands of kidnappings and insurgent actions within Colombia, 1965-1999. Narco-criminals associated with the Medellin and Cali cartels (FARC's current masters) also committed hundreds of similar attacks, 1980-1999. Bombing of IBM, GTE, Union Carbide and Xerox facilities in Medellin in 1985. Attempt to extort \$100 million from Shell Oil in 1996; Shell left the region rather than accede to the demands. Attack on a Venezuelan border outpost in 1987 to capture weapons and ammunition later used in the bombing of three churches and murder of 21 policemen and soldiers over the next three months. Firebombing of the Union Richfield oil facility in 1994, followed by several months of intense guerilla combat with the Colombian army. Seizure of the La Toro military depot, 1995. Missile attack on the U.S.S. Edward MacDonald, 1997. Assassinations of Cecilia Ema Sarmiento (Governor of Choco Province) in 1995, Horacio Sol Navia Guerrero (Colombian Supreme Court Justice), and Nestor Juan Protocarrero (Colombian Minister of Defense) in 1998. Protracted guerilla and military actions against the Colombian military, 1995-1999. Thousands of instances of torture, assassination, and execution, 1995-1999.

Additional Commentary:

FARC was formed in 1966 from unofficial local militias that had been created by peasant groups to defend

themselves against the severe and violent political unrest of a period known as La Violencia. When La Violencia ended in the mid-1960s, the army attempted to force these organizations to disband. They resisted and joined forces with Communist agitators to form FARC. In this regard, FARC has a unique history--it is perhaps the only true grassroots insurgency in Latin America in which ideology followed popular action rather than fomenting it.

One of the largest of Latin America's many communist guerilla movements (at one point, there were four in Colombia alone), FARC experienced varying levels of activity and membership throughout the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. In the mid 1980s, FARC went through a series of cease-fires and negotiations with the government, and spun off the UP political party.

In late 1994, massive protests over a government aerial coca-eradication program led to the destruction of the Union Richfield oil facility in Narino province. It is generally believed that the demonstrations were staged by FARC to provoke a government response--when the army did move into the area, it was surprised by a large FARC offensive. Guerilla combat in the region dragged on for several months before the army restored government control to the region. This later came to be regarded as the first action of Colombia's current crisis.

In November of 1995, FARC guerillas simultaneously attacked twenty-eight army and police facilities in the Cordillera Central region, killing well over 1,000 people in the best-coordinated attack the organization had ever staged. The biggest target was the army depot at La Toro, from which FARC guerrillas stole trucks, armored cars, and artillery pieces as well as hundreds of smallarms. The government began a massive crackdown in the region, but was unable to recover most of the stolen equipment.

The following month FARC staged simultaneous attacks on military and government facilities in the cities of Buenaventura and Medellin, as well as a number of outlying towns and villages. Military units responding from outside of these areas were met with a surprisingly well-organized and well-equipped guerilla force that backed itself with artillery and anti-aircraft missiles. Through 1996, FARC forces maintained nominal control of much of Colombia's western coastal regions and disputed control of segments of the rich and populous Cordillera Central region. By 1997, FARC's control of these regions had solidified and a large portion of its growing force was beginning to resemble a conventional army.

U.S. support of the Colombian government was firm throughout the early years of the war, but was shaken by the MacDonald incident of 1997. In May of that year, the frigate U.S.S. Edward MacDonald, part of a coordinated blockade of FARC ports that included over thirty ships from seven nations, was struck by a land-based cruise missile. The severe losses altered U.S. policy in regards to the war, and the American military and DEA presence in Colombia was greatly reduced. Although the naval blockade remains in place, interdiction efforts are not as intense as they were in 1996.

In 1998, FARC opened offices in a dozen cities around the world. Referred to as Consulates (though recognized diplomatically only by Cuba and North Korea), the official purpose of these offices is to cultivate diplomatic connections and develop trade. The expansion of FARC's alleged illegal drug revenues, however, is probably as important as the political agenda. In April of 1999 the FARC consulate in Miami was bombed. While drug connections are suspected, an anti-Communist, Cuban expatriate organization claimed responsibility for the attack.

Last Update: March 3, 1999

though many (especially those stationed in the more remote areas of the countryside) wear a mish-mash of surplus fatigues, stolen federal army uniforms, or even civilian clothes. Equipment, as well, varies in commonality, condition, and standard.

FARC troops vary dramatically in quality. At its core FARC is a veteran insurgency, with experienced fighters who know their trade, their territory, and the habits of their enemy. But in conventional warfare, these guerilla strengths are at their least advantage. Furthermore, the vast majority of FARC's troops are recent recruits, virtually untrained (though often quite experienced after even just a few months in the army) but usually fairly well disciplined. Sprinkled among these FARC veterans (perhaps 15% of the total force) and newbies (the vast majority) are occasional foreign mercenaries and experienced defectors from the federal army.

The Army (Ejército Revolucionario)

The War Council has divided the Army into nine Fronts. The organization of military units into Fronts originated in FARC's guerrilla days and typifies guerrilla insurrections. It worked well in the early days of the war, but has become somewhat of a liability as the conflict grows increasingly conventional.

FARC troops carry a variety of weapons. The majority are armed with Beretta AR 70s, CETME Ls, CIS 88s, SIG SG 540s, or other inexpensive 5.56mm assault rifles, although AKMs are still carried and are quite popular with the troops (so long as ammunition is available). Infantry platoons are generally supplemented with light machineguns, including CETME Amelis, HK 23Es, MG 42/59s, and M60s, as well as RPGs and sometimes Stinger missiles.

FARC infantry units are organized more or less the same as those of the Federales: three or four squads of eight or ten men make up a platoon; three or four platoons make up a company. Guerrilla companies are generally independent, coming under direct control of their front commanders. Conventional companies are organized into battalions and brigades, which then answer to front commanders. Engineers, artillery, cavalry, and other organic units are organized in the conventional manner internally, but are frequently shuffled around as needed, and attached to battalions, brigades, and fronts in a manner considerably less structured than in the federal army.

The Fronts

First Front, a guerrilla action, works out of the southern reaches of the Magdalena Valley. This area remains firmly controlled by federal Colombia, but stands at the heart of FARC's original insurgency and many FARC sympathizers make their homes there. The Leadership Council strongly supports this Front, which sees a lot of low-intensity action. As soon as First Front manages to overtake this region, FARC will have a much stronger position from which to advance upon Bogotá. Six companies of guerrillas and two "Special Units" make up First Front. Several air transport and artillery detachments support it, generally operating from behind the lines held by Fifth Front.

Second Front, also an urban guerrilla action, operates in the Santander Department east of the Magdalena River. This region offers less hospitality to FARC guerrillas, and they've had less success than

First Front. Activity levels and support falter. Only two companies totalling approximately 180 guerrillas form Second Front.

A conventional infantry unit, Third Front spearheads the offensive along the Caribbean Coast. It remains one of the busiest elements in FARC's forces in early 1999, leading the assault on Sincelejo. It currently consists of six infantry brigades totally 25,000 personnel, complete with organic air, artillery, and armor support.

At the forefront of the drive to take the Magdalena from the Federales' hands, Fourth Front operates south of Third Front east of the Magdalena. A conventional element, similar to Third Front, its three brigades (totally roughly 15,000 personnel, including armor, air and artillery units) occupy most of FARC's territory along the eastern shore of the Middle Magdalena. The heaviest of FARC's forces, it has more armor, vehicles, and heavy artillery than the rest of the army put together. Much of this has been recently diverted to Fourth Front as part of the push across the Magdalena.

The large and busy Fifth Front operates south of Fourth Front, along the southern Cordillera Central, from La Dorada to Ibagué. Though currently occupying land west of the Magdalena, Fifth Front will work in conjunction with Fourth when the time comes to cross the river and expand FARC's eastern holdings. Although this region was once FARC guerrilla stomping grounds, the Federales have made conventional advances in this area very difficult. A conventional unit, Fifth Front consists of four brigades and an assortment of attached elements, totalling approximately 20,000 personnel. As well as offering support to Fourth Front, it also works regularly with First Front to the south.

The conventional forces of Sixth Front encompass the southernmost FARC holdings west of the Cordillera Occidental, including the

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

COUNCIL HEAD

Dominic Dereyo-Calazón

COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Juan Basoalto
Eduardo Benedetti
Francisco Delgado
Daniel Esguerra
Miguel Fuentes
Julio Guzmán
Boris Lorca-Llosa
Martín Marcos-Valdez
Jaime Patron
Juan Rodríguez-Orejuela
Paulo Antonio Rostand
Roberto Valesco
Gabriel Vargas

WAR COUNCIL

CHIEF OF STAFF

Cor. Carlito Jacobo Valente

HEAD OF INTELLIGENCE AND OVERSEAS PRODUCEMENT

Cor. Armando Pardo
Mazuera

COASTAL DEFENSE COMMANDER

Cor. Daniel Esguerra

AIR DEFENSE COMMANDER

Cor. Ernesto Mejía

FRONT COMMANDERS

Cor. Rodrigo Urrutia
May. Juan Martínez Galán
Gen. Gustavo Villamizar
Gen. Ernesto López Uribe
Gen. Víctor Marín
Gen. Miguel Alvargonzález
Gen. Julio Martínez
May. María Perry Castro
May. Ricardo Peña

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Martín Marcos-Valdez
Gabriel Vargas

FARC COMMANDER

Gen. Manuel Rivera

ARMY

1st FRONT COMMANDER

Cor. Rodrigo Urrutia

1st FRONT

2nd FRONT COMMANDER

May. Juan Martínez Galán

2nd FRONT

3rd FRONT COMMANDER

Gen. Gustavo Villamizar

3rd FRONT

4th FRONT COMMANDER

Gen. Ernesto López Uribe

4th FRONT

5th FRONT COMMANDER

Gen. Víctor Marín

5th FRONT

6th FRONT COMMANDER

Gen. Miguel Alvargonzález

6th FRONT

7th FRONT COMMANDER

Gen. Julio Martínez

7th FRONT

8th FRONT COMMANDER

May. María Perry Castro

8th FRONT

9th FRONT COMMANDER

May. Ricardo Peña

9th FRONT

AIR DEFENSE COMMAND

COMMANDER

Cor. Ernesto Mejía

AIR TRANSPORT WING
TACTICAL AIR WING

COASTAL DEFENSE COMMAND

COMMANDER

Cor. Daniel Esguerra

ATLANTIC DIRECTORATE
PACIFIC DIRECTORATE
INTERIOR DIRECTORATE

cities of Cali, Palmira and Buenaventura. Although the region to the south of Sixth Front was once a FARC stronghold (and the Eighth Front remains active there), neither FARC nor the Federales consider the area to be particularly important strategically. Thus, Sixth Front remains small, with less than 8,000 troops, and primarily defensive in deployment. Recently, however, with FARC advancing along the Caribbean coast, the Federales have begun to eye Sixth Front's holdings with more interest. Access to the Pacific coast will become critical if Bogotá is cut off from the Caribbean, and control over the southern Cauca valley will put the Federales within striking distance of the Cartel's key coca-growing lands.

Seventh Front, another conventional force, operates along the northeastern edge of FARC territory, between Third and Fourth Fronts. A key in the advance upon the Magdalena River, this Front remains fairly active and engages with federal troops on a daily basis. They strive to consolidate FARC's holdings west of the Magdalena and once they have pushed forward all the way to the river, the entire line, including Fourth and Fifth Fronts will move en masse across the river. Seventh Front is not as heavy a unit as either of the Fronts to its flanks and consists of only about 12,000 troops.

Eighth and Ninth Fronts, both guerrilla actions, have become the least active of the Fronts, offering only sporadic resistance to the federal government. Eighth Front operates along Colombia's southwestern coast, south of the line held by Sixth Front. Ninth Front operates in the eastern Amazonian regions of the country. Eighth Front consists of two companies totalling about 200 guerrillas, while Ninth Front operates in three much smaller companies, totaling about 180 fighters.

Special Units

FARC's organization treats each Front almost as its own separate army, with secondary units (though often swapped between Fronts as needed) treated as integral to the Fronts. There are, however, a small number of independent units. Most of these are bodyguard and staff units for the leadership; although there are several elite companies of FARC's most experienced guerrillas and even some high-end mercenary units scattered among the fronts, FARC maintains no independent units equivalent to the Federales' Lanceros or American special operations detachments.

Air Defense Command

Although its name might mislead, the Air Defense Command is actually a fledgling air force, consisting of two air wings: the Air Transport Wing and the Tactical Air Wing. The Air Transport Wing has approximately forty aircraft at its disposal, organized into ten equal squadrons. These include helicopters of a variety of types, including Bell 205s, 212s and 412s, mostly scrounged and bought used from other countries. Helicopters have proven especially useful in Colombia where the terrain often prohibits the landing of conventional aircraft, and they allow more freedom of movement and broader options for use. The Air Transport Wing uses its helicopters for a variety of activities, including personnel and cargo transport as well as recon. They use their limited number of fixed-wing aircraft, including several types of Cessnas, for the same purposes. FARC bases the Air Transport Wing at the international

airport in Medellín, though at any given time around half of the squadrons are tasked to airfields at Montería, Pereira, or elsewhere.

The Tactical Air Wing consists of one fighter squadron, equipped with four MiG 27M Flogger-J fighter-bombers, and a squadron each of ten Hughes 500D and Hughes 300C helicopters with missile capability used mostly for ground support. FARC has placed an emphasis on training for the moment, with two of the fighter planes and several of the helicopters used almost exclusively for training. They have hired mercenaries from around the world to aid in maintenance and training their fledgling pilots until FARC gets the hang of things and develops qualified personnel of their own—few of FARC's combat pilots, at this point, are Colombians. FARC keeps the Tactical Air Wing stationed at a newly built air base in Manizales, south of Medellín. They have also started construction on another such base in the northern part of FARC territory, at Montería, although it is not yet ready for use.

FARC prioritizes the missions of its fighter squadron toward the downing of the D.E.A.'s AC130 (called "the Black Cross" by FARC ground troops) and U.S./Colombian AWACS assets. Not only are these key tactical assets of the Federales', but FARC also reasons that destroying these targets might contribute to the "*MacDonald* effect" (see below), triggering further withdrawal by the U.S. from Colombian affairs.

Coastal Defense Command

FARC had never considered establishing a navy before its offensives of 1995. When the multi-national blockade went into effect, however, and the Cartel's ability to smuggle goods through Colombia fizzled, it became clear that the seas held the key to survival—let alone victory. FARC created the Coastal Defense Command in 1996 ostensibly as a naval force, but more realistically as an armed smuggling operation. It still functions largely in this role, commanding scores of small boats that make regular runs to Panamá, Ecuador, Peru, Cuba and other destinations in the Caribbean. Only the *MacDonald* incident of 1997 legitimized it as a military force in the eyes of its enemies.

The missile strike against the frigate U.S.S. *Edward MacDonald* succeeded remarkably and became a defining factor in shaping U.S. policy toward the war. At the time, FARC controlled none of Colombia's Atlantic coast and the multi-national blockade focused entirely around Buenaventura—the only significant port on the Pacific coast at the time. In a show of force, blockading ships often sailed within a few miles of shore, within easy view of the port. Coastal Defense Commander Capitán Rodrigo Serpa Velasco pressed for permission to meet that audacity with an equally audacious response—but his superiors in the Medellín Cartel had not seriously considered taking on the navies of the world's powers, and focused only on the increase of smuggling activities.

Using his own resources (his family played a minor role in the Cartel), Velasco sought out eight MM-40 Exocet missiles on the international black market. He went to great lengths to mask his intent and camouflage the coming attack, even arranging for dozens of small craft to move about in the Buenaventura area for hours every night several weeks prior to the deployment of the missiles. He carefully chose his target—Cartel intelligence had been watching and cataloging the ships involved in the blockade for months. Velasco chose the ship he felt had the most vulnerability and the lowest potential for retaliation. Early in the

morning on May 18, 1997, having kept coalition ships busy tracking aircraft just inland from the coast all night, Velasco launched five of his eight missiles. The results were astounding. Velasco had assumed a better defense on the part of the ship, and was elated when the *MacDonald* was sunk with the loss in life of 127 American sailors. But he had no opportunity to celebrate his success. The Leadership Council, certain that the unsanctioned provocation would lead to a major American retaliation, had Velasco shot before the day was out.

The incident had more profound effects on international involvement in the war than even Velasco had foreseen. The U.S., embarrassed at the loss and eager to avoid additional loss of American lives, pulled its forces back to a more cautious posture. Retaliatory airstrikes followed, but only after weeks of debate—and only against select, largely unimportant targets with little air defense. No American warship has been seen from the shores near Buenaventura since the incident, and although the blockade continues in force over the horizon, Velasco's successor, current Coastal Defense Commander Daniel Esguerra, stepped into a job made much easier by Velasco's actions. Esguerra has a freer hand in sneaking contraband past the loosened blockade and in building the means to strike out against the blockade itself.

FARC divides the Coastal Defense Command into three Directorates: the original Pacific Directorate; the Atlantic Directorate, which handles the same sorts of missions along the Caribbean coast; and the Interior Directorate, which patrols and defends FARC-controlled navigable inland waterways. The Pacific and Atlantic Directorates keep their bases at Buenaventura and Turbo, respectively. They rely heavily on shore to ship defense weapons and diversionary tactics to pass their cargo-carrying vessels through the blockade. They employ small, fast speed-boats and 32-meter patrol ships equipped with radar and sonar to patrol the waters off the Pacific and Atlantic coastlines. Recently, FARC also managed to purchase a *Boyaca*-class frigate, a small vessel armed with a 76mm gun and six 324mm torpedo tubes. This ship (renamed the *Gilberto Rodriguez-Orejuela*) is based in Buenaventura, from which it has only sallied forth only twice, so far avoiding engagements with blockading warships.

The Interior Directorate, based at Caucasia (Cauca River), Montería (Sinú River), and Puerto Berrío (Magdalena River), employs a rag-tag collection of small boats—everything from outboard launches to powerful speed boats to slow but rugged river tugs. In the struggle to secure the Magdalena north of Barrancabermeja, FARC has begun to build a force of fortified and armed tug boats, stationed at Puerto Berrío. These behemoths are the equivalent of floating tanks, covered in dense plating and sporting mortars, heavy machineguns, and even cannon. FARC has also acquired several top-of-the-line riverine hydrofoils, though these have not been deployed as yet.

The Coastal Defense Command oversees one project that is so far entirely shore-bound. The Leadership Council has mandated the construction of a road along the Pacific Coast—a road that will make every remote coastal village from Buenaventura to Juradó (near the Panamanian border) accessible to trucks and other vehicles. Though there are no deepwater ports or developed facilities anywhere along this 400 km stretch, there are literally hundreds of coves, villages, and inlets where small vessels could take on and discharge cargo. The opening up of this coast will force the blockade to cover a much broader area, loosening

coverage of Buenaventura and giving the Cartel a much greater range of smuggling options. The road has been a favorite target of airstrikes by American planes based in Panama, but such attacks have done little to slow the construction.

Cartel Intelligence Services

FARC's overt consulates in the U.S. and Europe serve primarily as propaganda organs, though they are also critical to FARC's logistical efforts, most of which (due to international mandate) are illicit. They also provide staging points for FARC's and the Cartel's rather extensive and efficient intelligence effort.

As in many other aspects of their relationship, FARC and the Cartel work ostensibly together on intelligence and covert activity, though they often operate at cross-purposes. FARC agents are primarily focused on logistical procurement and military and political intelligence—areas that directly affect the war on the ground. With substantial financial resources and solid working knowledge of the political infrastructures and military industries of Europe, the U.S., and to a lesser degree the Pacific Rim, FARC has succeeded fairly well in this regard. FARC has good, specific knowledge of most American forces in Colombia and tracks the movements of foreign ships involved in the blockade with great precision. In 1998, as Colombia was acquiring U.S. AWACS surveillance aircraft, FARC agents managed to obtain IFF data that would, at the least, create temporary confusion in the Colombians' attempts to track FARC aircraft.

The Cartel's agents work less on direct military intelligence than on keeping open the flow of narcotics out of Colombia, and maintaining Cartel control over corrupt officials outside and inside Colombia. They also strive to keep the competitive international drug traffickers in line. Terrorism remains one of their more frequently used tools.

CHAPTER FIVE

THIRD PARTIES▼▼

The Colombian civil war touches people, governments, and organizations far beyond the borders of Colombia itself. The smuggling kingpins of Cuba and Panama, the governments of Ecuador and other Andean nations also struggling with powerful narco-criminals, and the multinational corporations heavily linked to Colombia's oil, gold, coffee and emerald industries all have a vested interest in the outcome of the war. Many of these offer support to one side or the other, in the hopes of turning the tide more fully in a direction that will protect their own interests. What results is a complex and changing dynamic that makes it difficult to either quantify or qualify the atmosphere in war-torn Colombia.

NATIONAL INTERESTS

The most influential outside party in the Colombian civil war is without a doubt the United States. But the U.S. isn't the only nation with a vested interest in the outcome of the war—Colombia's neighbors, in particular, watch events with a very keen eye.

The U.S.

The mood among American politicians—and much of the populace—runs against involvement in regional conflicts. But there can be little doubt that the Colombian civil war is of vital national interest to the U.S. America is the biggest market for the Cartel's illicit drug trade—a trade that would be impossible to stem after a FARC victory in Colombia. A Cartel-led Colombia would be a force for despotism in Latin America, reversing the nation's historical influence towards democracy. Failure to act would undermine American credibility worldwide. And perhaps most importantly, a Cartel overthrow of the Colombian government would set an international precedent for lawlessness. Fortunately, the hysterical

national isolationism that has infected much of the U.S. population and its elected leaders has not reached every policy-maker. While the U.S. has little overt military involvement on the ground in Colombia, American influence on the war is ever-present.

The Blockade

The U.S. Navy probably plays the biggest American military role in theatre. Since the first days of the war, the U.S. Navy has been instrumental in the blockade of FARC-held Colombia. At any given time, there are at least three and as many as five or six U.S. frigates patrolling the coasts of Colombia. Most Cartel smuggling goes through the Atlantic coast, so that's where the blockade pays most of its attention—though there is always at least one American ship in the vicinity of Buenaventura.

The U.S. Southern Command, headquartered in Panama, organizes and commands the blockade, which also includes five Colombian frigates and, at any given time, another two to four vessels from E.C. nations or other allied countries. On a good day, there might be six or seven warships plying Colombia's Atlantic coast, with another four or five along the Pacific.

Overwhelmed by the immensity of its challenge, this force interdicts (directly, or by aircraft or Colombian Coast Guard vessels tasked to tracked targets) perhaps only half of traffic heading into or out of the 800 or so kilometers of FARC-controlled coastline. Most major vessels are stopped, but many, many smaller ones get through—perhaps twenty or thirty boats or ships and half a dozen aircraft a day. The blockade greatly reduces the efficiency of Cartel smuggling efforts, as those vessels that do get through are forced to remote ports or even undeveloped coastline to transfer their cargoes. But FARC's intelligence on the activities of blockading ships is excellent, and many of the interdicted vessels or aircraft are empty decoys, employed to distract the blockaders while the real cargoes slip through the net.

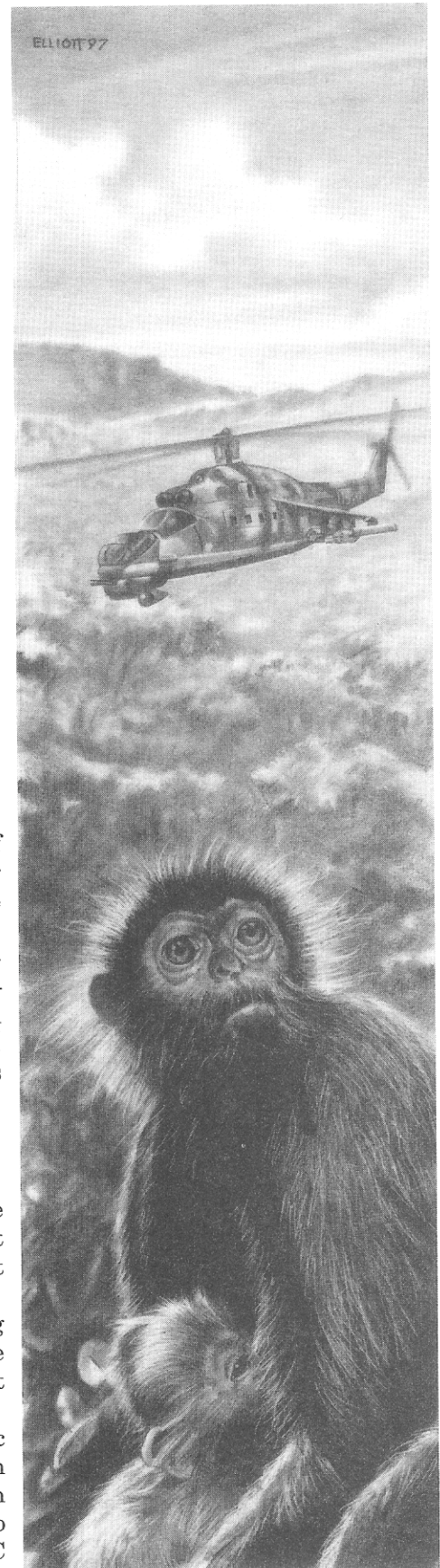
In addition to the blockade, U.S. and allied ships sometimes participate in coastal bombardment in support of federal actions onshore—though that's rare, given the threat of FARC ship-to-shore missiles and the limited utility of such attacks in this war. On a few occasions, U.S. ships have launched cruise missiles at specific FARC and Cartel targets in coordination with Federale actions.

Air Action

After the blockade, the U.S. is most active in the Colombian theatre in the air. From Howard Air Force Base in Panama and an occasional aircraft carrier well off the coast, the U.S. flies recon and sometimes combat missions around Colombia.

AWACS radar planes are an integral part of the blockade, flying virtually non-stop off Colombia's coast. These aircraft routinely provide intel on air activities well into FARC territory. In addition, recon aircraft are frequently tasked to flights over Colombia.

Combat missions are less frequent, occurring only when specific strategic ground targets are identified and only in close coordination with the Colombian military. Only the most vulnerable of targets have been struck to date; it's generally feared that any loss of aircraft will lead to further restrictions on U.S. involvement. And to date, only one FARC



aircraft has contested American planes over Colombia—and it was handily shot down.

The U.S. Military on the Ground

Officially, U.S. military involvement in the war ends at Colombia's borders. America sell arms and equipment to Colombia, assists in the training of military personnel, and shares intelligence with the government—but direct military action is limited to the sea and the air. There are U.S. military personnel within Colombia, though: liaisons, trainers, advisors—even maintenance personnel to support arms and equipment sold to the Federales. All of these avenues of assistance are legal and overt, though the American public knows little about them. Nor do they—or most of Congress, for that matter—know about the many covert operations in which the U.S. is involved.

At any given time there are as many as 200-300 American advisors in Colombia. Ostensibly, these military personnel serve as trainers, analysts, and tacticians to Colombian units, operating well off the lines in Socorro, Bogotá, and other Federales facilities. In reality, many of them go into the field with combat units, where they can directly advise commanders on-site. Though this usually doesn't involve them in the fighting, it does put them at risk and occasionally makes them direct participants in the combat—both of which are well outside their congressionally-approved role. Casualties among American advisors in Colombia are kept very quiet.

Even more secretive are U.S. special operations troops active in Colombia. The requirement for deep recons, counterinsurgency operations, and surgical strikes in Colombia is never-ending, and the Lanceros Group has only limited resources. When it has more missions than available units, the military turns to the U.S. for assistance (or, when that help is unavailable, to private agencies like BlackEagle). Such aid is strictly outside the military's legal mandate, but it doesn't mean that the U.S. Southern Command won't provide it anyway, if the mission is vital enough or the U.S. can barter key Colombian cooperation elsewhere. No dedicated Special Operations troops are stationed in Colombia, but at any given time there's a good chance that a unit is active somewhere in the country.

The D.E.A.

The strongest U.S. military presence in Colombia isn't actually military at all—it's the D.E.A. (the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration). The D.E.A. has proven a convenient asset for American policy makers who want to provide direct assistance to the Colombian government. Under the dominion of the U.S. Justice Department, the D.E.A. does not carry the stigma of military responsibility—its mandates concentrates solely on combating the flow of illicit drugs, which the American public more readily supports. Furthermore, the D.E.A.'s budget allows greater discretionary spending than military funding—allowing officials to more easily mask D.E.A. activities from Congressional and public oversight. The D.E.A.'s combat forces in Colombia (which, ironically, rival that of some Latin armies) aren't secret or covert—they're just kept very quietly out of the public eye.

Since well before the war, the D.E.A. has aggressively pursued joint projects with foreign governments to stem drug production and traffic at

the source. The D.E.A. Office of International Operations oversees all international drug investigations and maintains staffs in more than forty-four countries—including field divisions, each managed by a Special Agent in Charge (SAC), in Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and Peru. In addition to aiding and advising foreign governments, D.E.A. agents have a long history of direct tactical involvement in overseas anti-drug operations, working in conjunction with local military and police forces. So when the war heated up, the D.E.A. was ready to step in where the military couldn't.

The D.E.A.'s most impressive assets are its strike aircraft. The D.E.A. had been deploying helicopters for the support and rapid insertion of tactical teams operating in coca-growing regions of the Andes since the late 80s. In the early 90s, the D.E.A. added a limited number of heavily-armed attack helicopters, giving it a match for the growing firepower of drug traffickers, as well as the ability to neutralize opposition from the air before sending ground units into raids on hostile, remote jungle sites. These became particularly valuable as the war heated up and it became impossible to send ground units after Cartel farms, processing labs, and distribution hubs. In 1997, the D.E.A. acquired the crown jewel of its air arm: an AC-130 Spectre gunship. Based in Miami, the "Black Cross" (as it's become known in Colombia) spends most of its time in-country, operating out of Socorro.

In addition to this plane, the D.E.A.'s several Hind-D helicopter gunships and a handful of E2-C Hawkeye AWACS aircraft (also based in Miami) are also active in Colombia. In all, the D.E.A. has over ninety aircraft based near enough to Colombia to be pulled in with as little as one day's notice. Most D.E.A. pilots have the added advantage of being experienced criminal investigators as well as highly qualified aviators.

Though technically only tasked to anti-drug operations, the line between drug-related missions and war-related missions is growing increasingly thin in Colombia. Colombian cooperation and approval is necessary for every sortie, giving the Federales great influence over mission calls for D.E.A. aircraft. Though unorthodoxed, the tasking of D.E.A. missions to combat support is not a source of contention—the Colombian military rates combat missions more important than anti-drug strikes, but doesn't mind a chance to go after the Cartel's economic base; the D.E.A. prefers anti-drug operations, but doesn't mind aiding the war effort.

On the ground, the D.E.A. has a force of over 1,000 agents (nearly one fifth of the entire D.E.A. Enforcement Branch) in Colombia. These agents aid the Colombian military in operations in coca-producing regions, with as many as 500 agents in the field with military units at any given time. Many D.E.A. agents are trained in assault tactics and weaponry—in fact, many of them are ex-military and even ex-special forces. This training is not without use—D.E.A. personnel are on the front lines (or behind enemy lines) every day, and frequently see combat.

In addition to tactical agents, the D.E.A. operates dozens of non-combat task forces—small units of up to twenty personnel—throughout Colombia. These units bring special expertise, usually in the areas of intelligence gathering and interpretation, chemistry, and economics or finance (to track the assets of the drug lords and to locate money-laundering operations) to the aid of the Colombian National Police in the combat of drug manufacturing and smuggling in Colombia.

Panama

Although Panama—foreign country bordering FARC territory—has officially declared its support of Federales, its relations with the various factions in Colombia remain much more complicated than any stated alliance. The 1989 invasion of Panama by U.S. troops that resulted in the arrest of General Manuel Noriega on charges of drug trafficking forced Panama—in order to maintain important international relations—to publicly denounce the movement of narcotics through its waters and over its territory. But Panama is a highly corrupt nation, even by the standards of Latin America, and the end of official complicity has not brought drug smuggling through Panama to a halt.

Where once a Panamanian president and his entire administration participated in the drug trade by policy—indeed, was an open ally of the cartels—now, Panamanian officials participate in the drug trade on an individual level, and more secretly. Panama remains one of the Cartel's most reliable avenues of distribution for their drugs. Drugs are brought into Panama by the ton, where they are hidden on aircraft and ships for transport in smaller, more carefully concealed quantities to the U.S. and Europe. Panamanian Customs and police officials, well-bribed, make arrests only when it is politically expedient to do so.

These facts are well known to both American and Colombian officials, but the value of Panama as a staging ground and the nearest access point to the northwest half of FARC's holdings is too great to risk contention. Panamanian officials allow full use of Toreihos International Airport and the ports at Colón and Balboa as well as priority access to the canal. They have allowed the Federales to set up a small base in the Darien region, the remote southeastern portion of the country near the border with FARC-held Colombia. They have even agreed to a delay in the closure of the American Howard Air Force Base, considered especially important as it is the only secure site in the country—even Panamanian government officials can't directly monitor activities on the base.

Not surprisingly, neither the FARC regime nor the Colombian or American governments trust Panama completely.

CORPORATE INTERESTS

Several corporate powers have vested interest in the outcome of the Colombian civil war. Many of these corporations have chosen to directly involve themselves in the conflict, to protect their interests or encourage a particular outcome. While for most businesses a stable, lawful government is clearly preferable to a FARC victory, many are playing both sides of the table—or placing their bets on a government defeat.

Nueva Granada Petroleum Company, SA

Nueva Granada Petroleum Company, Inc. began as a successful chemical company based in Santa Marta on the Caribbean coastline of Colombia. Locally owned and operated, it didn't come into its own until the discovery of oil in the Santander Department, when it went public and won drilling rights. NGPC became the leading producer of petroleum in Colombia, providing more than 90% of the country's supply.

Oil is a critical national resource in Colombia, and was even before the war. As a result, the Colombian government has always kept a heavy

thumb on the petroleum industry, imposing tariffs on the export of petroleum that ensure that the lion's share remains in the country. Since the opening of the war, the government has mandated the sale of petroleum to the military at exorbitantly low prices.

The majority of the executives at Nueva Granada Petroleum support the government, accepting the tariffs and price structures and even offering the use of their emergency vehicles and transport helicopters to the army in time of need. Their fire-fighting equipment and in-house demolitions experts in particular have come in handy for the Federales. Philippe Labrador, the CEO of the company, has led the company in this policy of aid.

But a minority of Directors at NGPC feel that this amounts to cutting the throat of the company. Like every major business in Latin America, NGPC has made its share of payoffs and bribes for the simple right to do business in a corrupt society. These Board members see the federal government as a perpetuation of that system—a network of greedy officials struggling not to save Colombia, but to milk it for the last penny they can get before abandoning the country to chaos. And they see the end in sight—a day not too far off when the Federales will crumble and Colombia will belong to the Cartel.

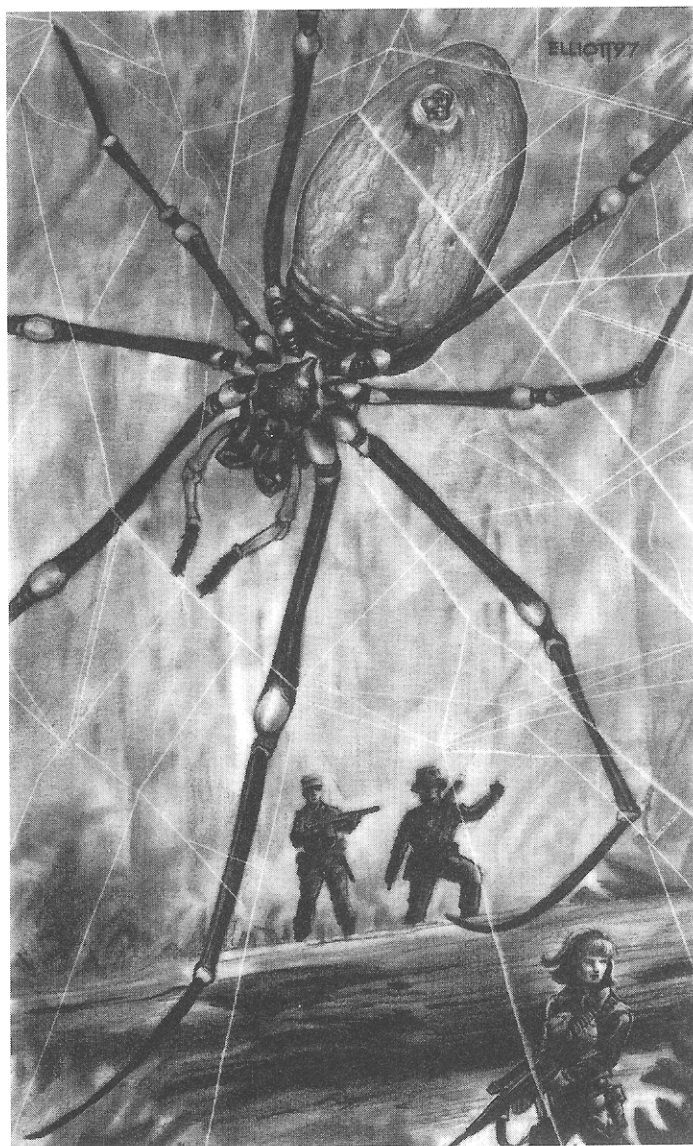
This corporate faction, led by Vice-President Juan-Philippe Labrador—the son of the company's founder—have kept these concerns out of the limelight and criticism of the older members of the Board. Where once he felt that debate could turn Board opinion in his direction, now Juan-Philippe realizes that only action will prove to his father and the other cronies that he has been right all along.

Juan-Philippe, a man of considerable personal wealth, has instigated and overseen a number of secret actions that further his agenda. He's made overtures to Cartel leaders, in the hope that NGPC will be seen as an ally and given favorable treatment after the Cartel takes over. He's been complicitous in the hijacking of oil barges on the Magdalena, delivering details on scheduling and security of petroleum shipments. Juan-Philippe believes that although such actions hurt the company in the short term, in the long run it will be its saving grace. To date, Juan-Philip's involvement with the Cartel has not surfaced.

La Matina International

Founded in 1926, La Matina International is Colombia's—indeed the world's—largest producer of coffee. When it incorporated in 1978, the company used the resulting revenue to purchase land and equipment, vertically integrating its operations and tripling its production levels over the next couple years. The primary stockholder and president of La Matina died a billionaire in 1986. His will split his La Matina shares among the heirs, dismantling the family's controlling interest. The resulting reorganization placed several international stockholders in key positions on the Board of Directors.

The La Matina plantations dot the Cauca Valley to the north of Cali. They are all run by hired management firms, agricultural and coffee-growing experts from around the world. La Matina depends little on other Colombian companies to grow, process and ship its coffee. Its trucks, planes, seagoing ships and riverine boats bear the red and brown La Matina logo and are a common sight both in Colombia and in major ports around the world. Over the past ten years, La Matina has grown into a



multinational corporation with processing plants and distribution centers located in the United States, Great Britain, Morocco, and New Zealand.

But the war could not have come at a worse time for the company. Recent expansions had nearly tapped La Matina's cash reserves and left the company highly leveraged. Any serious, sustained drop in revenue would drive the company towards bankruptcy. The worldwide depression and predatory international business climate of the late nineties offered the company few viable options for riding out the disruption of the war.

Further complicating the situation was the fact that Cartel member Paulo Antonio Rostand, along with Jaime Patron, son of the Cartel member of the same name, both sat on the board and owned significant shares of the company. Rostand resigned from the board shortly after the open war, but his departure was not unfriendly, and though his shares have been seized by the U.S. Justice Department, he still communicates with and has great influence over the company's other directors.

Given its precarious position, the company has aggressively sought to keep its operations in Colombia, which have squarely straddled the most stagnant of the battle lines since the conflict's first months, up and running. The directors of La Matina maintain a professional relationship not just with the Federales, but also with the Medellín Cartel (through Rostand and Patron) and FARC, on whose land most of their growing operations sit. The company has maintained a strictly neutral stance on the war, offering only the weakest possible public support for the government and never speaking openly against FARC or the Cartel. As a result, it's kept most of its production in FARC-held territory running, generally unmolested by the insurgency. Furthermore, though the interna-

tional embargo keeps La Matina from directly exporting coffee from FARC territory, company trucks are allowed to cross the boundaries between FARC and federal territory on a regular basis.

There is pressure on both sides to end this relationship. FARC mistrusts the multinational, which, with policies sometimes seen as oppressive to local growers, is highly unpopular with FARC's peasant constituency. On more than one occasion, local FARC commanders have blocked La Matina trucks or seized the company's vehicles, equipment, gasoline or other supplies for military use. The Federales face intense pressure from the U.S. to close down all commerce from FARC-held territory. But the president of the company, Juan-Franco Sanchez, has quietly made it clear to both factions that concerted disruptions of La Matina's distribution will "severely damage the corporation's current and future relationship" with the offending party. The coffee industry has to be a major part of either side's plans for the economic future of Colombia, and neither side wishes to make an enemy out of its biggest and most powerful player.

Furthermore, as the largest entity aside from the Church that straddles the lines, La Matina has proved to be a convenient diplomatic avenue. It was through the company that first contact was made in the arrangements for the 1995 evacuation and Trans-Gulf Airlift, and several covert prisoner exchanges have likewise been arranged through La Matina principals. The value of this connection, along with the importance of the company to Colombia's future, assure that La Matina will continue to operate in some manner throughout the war.

Air Tiberius

Known throughout the world as the friendliest and safest airline, Air Tiberius' motto states, "Your Safety Comes First." Their safety record supports this claim, despite the fact that they fly into some of the more dangerous areas of the world, including Colombia. Miami International Airport serves as its main hub, where AT rotates eighty-seven jet airliners through its exclusive domestic and international concourses. This fleet serves destinations throughout southeastern and western United States, Europe, and Central and South America. Plans for a new Asian route will see implementation in late 1999.

AT protects itself, its cargo, and its passengers with rigorous security measures. Two x-ray devices and chemical sniffers check every piece of luggage, which is then shrink-wrapped to prevent further tampering. Security guards remain with grounded planes at all times, and one serves as a permanent member of the crew. All A.T. personnel receive cursory training in terrorist tactics, self-defense, and weaponry, and company personnel have, on several occasions, foiled terrorism and hijackings on their flights. Flights to Colombia are particularly well-screened—passengers must pass through two metal detectors and submit to a personal search.

The reason AT maintains such a high-level of security has nothing to do with the safety of its passengers. In truth, they use their planes for a highly sophisticated drug smuggling operation—one of the largest and most successful in the world. In 1998, nearly a third of all the cocaine entering U.S. territory came in on Air Tiberius, much of this from the Medellín Cartel. A.T.'s savvy security and cover-up methods have kept it out from under severe D.E.A. scrutiny. They use a strategy of strong public relations along with establishing a reputation among law enforcement agencies for fighting drug smuggling. They often set up smaller unsuspecting smugglers to take a fall on their flights so that they can claim credit for their discovery and capture. To date, A.T. has never had a drug shipment discovered that was not meant to be.

Drug shipments board AT aircraft in Caracas, Quito, Maracaibo, and in particular Bogotá and Panamá City. Nearly all of it originates in Cartel territory; so not surprisingly AT has fairly close ties with the Cartel. Unfortunately, this puts the company in a very uncomfortable position: while drug smuggling has brought in an enormous amount of revenue over the past decade, the war is making transport more dangerous by the day. Rather than reducing its activities, however, the airline has had to actually increase them, under pressure from Cartel leaders who have the power to expose the company. This increased volume, in combination with a decreasing number of flights into the reason, is forcing the company to take risks it never would have considered in the past. Should an oppor-

The Miracle at Our Lady of Santa Marta

In early December, 1998, an event occurred at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Santa Marta that drew international attention and sent the local population, as well as Church officials, into a spin. Excerpted below, an article in Santa Marta's daily newspaper described the event in prosaic detail, undoubtedly embellished by the author's imagination.

An eight-year-old child of the streets (I'll call her Martacina), her eyes matured and made serious by the horror she had seen in her short years, wandered into the Cathedral of Our Lady of Santa Marta. Perhaps Martacina felt drawn by the richness of the church, a place far removed from the pain of the world outside where she could wrap herself in peaceful closeness to God. Here, she could escape for a while from the rapists and murderers who pursued her through the dark alleys of the city. Or, perhaps she had heard the call of one who would use her as His messenger.

The child stayed in the shadows, moving around the periphery of the sanctuary to a small side altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Here she paused, looking up at the loving face of her Mother, the outstretched arms that call all children to come into their circle and be embraced, and the candles burning at the Virgin's feet, each one representing to Martacina the soul of a friend—those she had known who had died or disappeared in the city.

Martacina knelt and prayed, her soft voice cutting upward, through the cries of pain and fear, past the thunder of guns, upward to Heaven. Her prayer for salvation from the life that no child

tunity arise to extricate itself from the arrangement, or shift the balance of power between the Cartel and its other Andean rivals, Air Tiberius would certainly take it.

For more information on Air Tiberius, see the *Miami Sourcebook*.

M-19

The war in Colombia has overshadowed all other political movements—but it hasn't eliminated them completely. Colombia actually faces two insurgencies—that of FARC, and of M-19, a second communist guerilla group. M-19 continues to be active, combating both the federal government and the Cartel.

In the late 1960s, in the aftermath of the First Violencia, a coalition of Liberal and Conservative parties called the Unidad Nacional ruled Colombia. This organization controlled the country with little opposition, facing its first serious contender in the elections of the spring of 1970, in the form of a growing party called ANAPO. Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, who had been dictator for a few years between the 1953 coup and the rocky return to democracy prior to the First Violencia, led the ANAPO. The elections did not go well for ANAPO and many observers felt that they were patently fraudulent. ANAPO quickly crumbled as a political organization, but not before it spawned a militant splinter group: the Movimiento 19 de Abril, named for the date of the election.

The leader of M-19, as the group became popularly called, was Jaime Bateman. Bateman and most of M-19's leadership had ties to FARC—many of M-19's members belonged to FARC at the time—and Bateman sought arms and assistance from that organization. Many differences existed between the two organizations, however. M-19 was an urban insurgency, more ideological than FARC and more geared toward national overthrow. Early ties quickly withered, and the organizations became estranged.

M-19 remained active throughout the 1970s and '80s. Through its overt actions, it breathed new life into all of Colombia's insurgent movements. Although it did eventually spread into the countryside, where it combated drug runners as well as government forces, M-19 concentrated primarily in urban areas. In November 1985, M-19 shocked the country and the world with a daring strike against the Colombian Palace of Justice. Approximately forty guerrillas stormed and held the building, killing twelve of the twenty-three Supreme Court Justices. The world watched in amazement as the battle raged on for more than a day, the dramatic video footage culminating in images of armored personnel carriers driving up the steps and into the building's massive front doors. Over 100 people were killed in all, including the guerrillas.

Like FARC, M-19 toyed with the political process and various cease-fire proposals during the late '80s. In 1990, M-19 gave up arms and entered legitimate politics. Later that year, however, right-wing radicals assassinated the group's leader while he was campaigning for the vice-presidency. Despite this, M-19 upheld the cease-fire for several more years before returning to violence in 1993.

In 1999, M-19 continues its campaign against the government, striking out at FARC and the drug lords as well. It retains its communist ideology, in a purer form than FARC's, and sees both sides as corrupt and exploitative of Colombia's people. Still an urban operation, M-19 draws students and an increasing number of frustrated professionals into its

ranks, but it remains a small organization of little influence. M-19 has perhaps 200 active members split among a half-dozen or so cities, backed by a network of around 500 reliable supporters.

Active on both sides of the line, M-19 collects decent intelligence on the military activities of both FARC and the Federales, and a favored tactic is to feed information about one side to the other, to encourage as much conflict between them as possible while preventing either from gaining a decisive advantage. But conventional terrorism is still a much larger part of M-19's agenda: its more visible methods include bombings, kidnappings, assassinations and arson. The organization is most active in Bogotá, where it must work with extreme caution since martial law came to the city. It also operates in Bucaramanga and Barranquilla, with additional forces in Medellín, Cali, Palmira, Cúcuta, and Pamplona.

THE CHURCH

A powerful force throughout Latin American society, the Roman Catholic Church has a long tradition of missionary work and political involvement in Colombia. In the sixteenth century, priests accompanied settlers to Spain and brought with them the religion that would eventually conquer Colombia. Jesuit, Dominican, Franciscan and Augustinian missionaries carried the gospel throughout South America, and began an active movement toward the conversion of the local Indians. A stance of aggressive conversion over the centuries has given the Roman Catholic Church a firm hold among the people—more than 95% of all Colombians practice or profess Catholicism. Churches, both large and small, dot the rural landscape and sit on city street corners. Every city has at least one major cathedral, including both Medellín and Bogotá, which is the seat of Archbishop of Colombia Joaoquim dos Prazeres.

The Vatican has been slow to take action with regard to the civil war (beyond the same hollow condemnations issued by nations around the world), leaving the bishops and priests in Colombia to forge their own strategies. This has led to some dissention—though most church leaders are staunchly opposed to the insurgency, many are still less than fully supportive of a government riddled with perceived corruption. Some, especially in the rural areas where FARC was long a force for the protection of the peasantry, actively support FARC's cause.

The Church and the People

Among the people of Colombia, the influence of the Catholic Church varies greatly. Tradition and the Church often dominate the day-to-day life and thinking of blue-collar workers and peasants—but that faith is not nearly as strong among Colombia's urbanites, upper classes, and youth. Nevertheless, few aspects of Colombian life are completely free of the Church's influence, and the civil war is no exception. Several strong movements have arisen with religion at their core. The largest and most successful of these—successful enough to garner worldwide recognition and a Nobel Peace Prize—is the Peace Movement through Christ, or PMC.

The PMC works in the streets of urban areas to relieve the suffering of the people. PMC members include people from all walks of life, many of whom give of themselves with abandon, working in the *favelas* (shantytowns) and government-sponsored shelters. The majority of its full-time

of God should ever have to live flew to God's ears on wings of innocence and sincerity. He heard.

A priest in the cathedral approached Martacina from behind. As he neared, he saw Martacina turn and place her lips against the side wall of the alcove. To his amazement, she kissed the wall for a long moment. Thinking she had lost her mind, he quickened his steps and knelt beside her. The look on Martacina's face as he spun her toward him was one of rapture. The priest must have assumed that Martacina had taken drugs. To his amazement, however, when he glanced back up at the wall, an image was slowly appearing. In the spot where Martacina had kissed the wall, the priest found the face of Christ looking back at him.

Word spread quickly of the miracle and soon people from across Colombia began to make pilgrimages to see the face of Christ. Despite the Church's best efforts to keep the cathedral under lock until they could perform a proper investigation, the hoards broke down the doors and stormed into the church. "Martacina" has since disappeared. Unknown to the public, Church officials whisked her away for interrogation and to keep her from becoming a rallying point for the people. She is currently being held in the Cathedral at Bogotá.

Holiday Hiatus

Strong religious conviction among both FARC and federal troops produces unofficial cease-fires on certain Christian holidays, including Christmas and Easter. On these days, and others, the constant rumble of the war stops. For a short while, a peaceful silence lays upon the land and people move out into the streets again, momentarily without fear. Brief respites from the stress and terror of the war, these holidays produce a certain euphoria among the people. The relief they feel overwhelms them. Almost a miracle in its own right, this phenomenon produces joyous sharing, crowds and parades of people linking arms in solidarity, and frenzied celebration. The churches fill to bursting. Soldier and civilian stand side-by-side, all differences forgotten for the moment—until morning returns, bringing with it a return of the war's thunder.

missionaries are women, young or middle-aged, housewives and mothers who devote their time to the only influence they can bring to bear on the war and its effects. They counsel victims of rape and other violent crimes, often injecting a healthy dose of feminism into their advice. They also vocally advocate an end to the war, targeting both the Colombian government, FARC, and the Medellín Cartel for criticism. The PMC received international attention in 1998 when one of their missionaries, Rita Paledro, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts to save Colombian children from the horrors of the street. This attention has given the PMC some leverage in public debate and lobbying efforts, through both of which channels the PMC presses for a cease-fire.

Though the PMC works closely with both the Jesuit and Dominican orders in Colombia, it is not actually sponsored by the Church and has no direct ties to the Archbishopric. In fact, its independence and feminist leanings have created some tensions. Archbishop Prazeres has made several attempts to bring the organization under the Church's direct control, but they have been rebuffed by the PMC's leadership.

A more militant religious movement to arise as a result of the civil war has neither a name nor an official structure or leadership, but its insidious nature has created an organizational web that crosses the country from border to border. Led by dissident priests who believe that their mission is to lead the people from their binds of poverty and tyranny, the organization sponsors its own form of guerrilla warfare, targeting both FARC and the federal government. Manifesting primarily in rural areas, these religious guerrilla groups, often led by a priest carrying arms, stage revenge attacks on FARC and government troops who abuse or neglect the populace. Ironically, these groups in some ways fill the role that originally spawned FARC in the 1950s—the protection of the peasantry from warring factions between which they have been once again trapped.

The Church and the Federales

The Church's influence on the federal government begins at the top: Archbishop Prazeres carries a great deal of influence with President Carreño, who includes him among his closest circle of advisors. Prazeres visits the President daily, generally for an early morning prayer and consultation meeting, and Carreño discusses much of his strategies for the war with the Archbishop before sending his orders on down the line.

Though the president could hardly ask for a more discrete confessor, military strategy is not the Archbishop's forté, and many question his extremely conservative social agenda as well. Carreño has been criticized for his close relationship with Prazeres, and there is a growing rift between the administration and those members of congress more heavily influenced by the PMC's take on the war.

Both the Colombian government and the Catholic Church are large, multifaceted organizations, and the relationship between Carreño and Prazeres does



not define all interactions between the two. Another visible collaboration between the Church and the state is a joint advertising project through which they attempt to turn popular opinion against FARC and other guerrilla organizations. A series of television commercials, billboards, and signs depicts FARC as a drug-infested, brutal organization of baby killers and rapists. They present interviews with priests who describe the horrors of the war and the careless violence of FARC and the drug lords. Many of the commercials show actual footage of supposed “FARC” troops killing priests, women, and children in heinous, cruel ways. This advertising campaign plays strongly on the emotions and is beginning to galvanize public resolve towards the war.

The Church and FARC

FARC has little time to consider religion and the Church as a possible means of reaching the people. Few of its leaders—dogmatic socialists—practice regularly. The drug lords, on the other hand, tend to lead—at least publicly—a much more traditional life, going to church on Sundays and encouraging a hypocritical dedication to God in their followers. Many of them appear each Sunday for mass at Medellín’s great cathedral, arriving in limousines and sedans, wearing Italian suits and smoking Cuban cigars, surrounded by an entourage of family members, aides, and visibly-armed bodyguards. They regularly make large contributions to the churches and orphanages of their regions, and aren’t shy about advertising that fact.

But the relationship with the Church that the cartel leaders would like the public to see is far from the whole truth. Bishop of Medellín Arturo Canterra is a vocal critic of the cartel and of FARC. He has, on more than one occasion, openly criticized cartel leaders during mass, when those individuals were seated directly before him at the head of the thousands of Medellín citizens crowded into the cathedral. The cartel, eager to gain public acceptance in its capital, has not yet resolved to kill or remove Canterra, but he has been placed in a sort of loose house arrest. He still speaks at mass, and filters his message out to sympathetic priests elsewhere in FARC-held Colombia, but he has little access to the public. In the mean time, cartel leaders have begun replacing hostile priests and bishops in Medellín and Cali with those from FARC-loyal rural parishes who will speak sympathetically, or not at all, about the war.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MEDELLÍN

AGENT ▼▼

A cut-and-dried counterinsurgency assignment takes a BlackEagle cell into the heart of Colombia's steamy jungle highlands, where an inaccessible radar installation is all that stands in the way of a decisive Federale campaign against FARC's coca-farming heartland. The client, however, may have had something else in mind when he hired the operatives, and a series of unexpected twists may force the operatives to undo their own work.

THE ASSIGNMENT (PART 1)

Raleigh Tykes, the Senior Cell Leader at BlackEagle's Miami office, has contacted the operatives and asked them to meet a client for lunch at La Teresita, a Cuban restaurant on Calle Ocho in Miami. At the time of the call, he didn't have any details, except that the client had requested a cell with "strong military skills" for an operation that would be commencing right away.

As they arrive at the restaurant, the operatives have little difficulty identifying the client. La Teresita is a small eatery, a mom-and-pop operation lacking the atmosphere of the glitzier tourist spots, but favored by locals who enjoy authentic cuisine and know where to find it. A tall, well-dressed man waits at the bar, reading a carefully-folded copy of *El Nuevo*. He looks up as the operatives arrive and stands to greet them. A tall, powerful Hispanic man, he moves with the grace and confidence of someone whose physical limitations are both expansive and often-tested. Alone, he approaches the operatives and motions for them to join him in a booth at the isolated rear of the restaurant.

Speaking in fluent but heavily-accented English, he introduces himself as Julio Delacuarda. "I'm here on behalf of the federal government of Colombia. We have a small tactical problem in the region of Pereira that requires specialized skills and a certain... touch. It is a small operation..." he shrugs, "but it pays well."

A waitress approaches the table, interrupting Delacuarda. Without looking at the menu, he orders *vaca frita* with a side of fries, recommend-

Notes for the GM

This is a two-part scenario, containing two separate Assignment, Real Scoop, and Action sections. Both parts of this scenario are very tactical in nature and follow a fairly linear structure. Therefore, no Clue Tree has been included with this adventure. Because there are several potentially deadly encounters within both parts, be wary of seriously injuring or killing characters early in the game, as they won't have the opportunity to reach the second half of the mission.

ing the same to the operatives. The waitress departs and Delacuarda continues, "As you may be aware, if you follow events in my country, Pereira and the southern Cauca Valley have special economic and strategic importance to FARC. This area represents the Cartel's breadbasket, where three-quarters of the insurgency's coca grows. Unfortunately, the terrain in the region makes conventional military operations difficult. Offensives in the region have continually become bogged down since the start of the war. In this type of terrain, FARC guerrillas gain an advantage that increases their efficiency even without the support of their heavier forces. Before the open war, we relied on air support and air assaults to aid decisive offensives, but these days FARC has sophisticated and highly effective air defenses along the Cordilleras."

Delacuarda pauses, glancing at the faces of each of the operatives in turn. "What I am about to tell you is very sensitive. You must understand that this remains confidential, even if you do not take the job."

"In the near future, the Colombian armed forces will be launching a major offensive against the coca fields and regional strong-points of FARC's southern holdings. They have concentrated most of their attention on the northern coast; now is the time to strike their vulnerable heart."

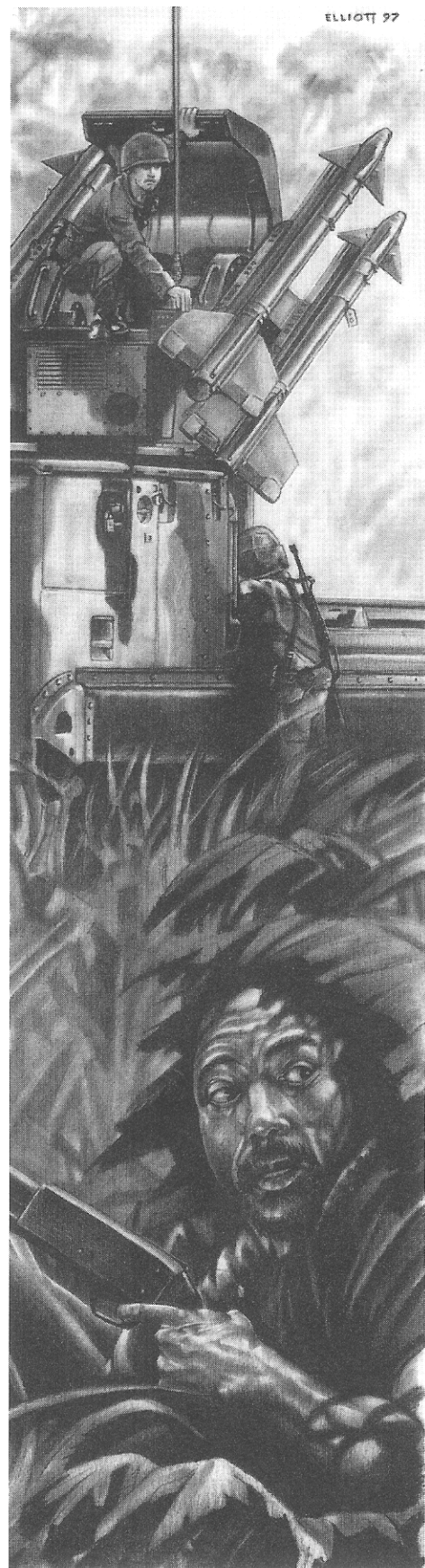
"To make this work, we have devised a diversionary scheme to draw FARC air-defense resources out of the Pereira region with false buildups and air activity elsewhere. Our attacks farther north have pulled most of FARC's major radar and defense sites out of the area, creating a vulnerable air corridor through which we can operate. However, a few obstacles still remain that must be removed. These include the mobile air-detection facility near the village of Cantuara, south of Pereira, which must be destroyed in order to fully open the air corridor. For this, I come to you."

"You see, FARC has a very extensive network of informants. They have learned of a major attack of some sort, but don't expect it from this weakly-protected flank. We must remove the remaining obstacles in a swift and silent manner. Attacks from the air are too risky, since the remaining sites are mobile, and FARC's spies will quickly learn about any large-scale ground mobilization. We are relying on small covert attacks in a coordinated effort, mere hours before we will pour through the corridor. Our own special operations resources are at their limit. We need your help."

If the operatives seem interested, Delacuarda fills in additional details. Although FARC frequently moves the radar installation, they always locate it in the dense forests on the southern slope of Nevado San André, a small peak in Colombia's Cordillera Central. The Colombian army can insert and extract the cell from positions within ten kilometers of the site. Delacuarda will send tactical maps of the region and recent satellite analysis of the target after the meeting. In order to maintain secrecy, Delacuarda asks the operatives not to contact the Colombian forces in the area and to maintain radio silence.

The operatives may have some questions for Delacuarda. If they ask for more specific details on the target, Delacuarda will tell them the site consists of a radar unit, control trailer, and satellite uplink. "The site," he says, "must remain out of operation for forty-eight hours minimum, though destroying it completely would be optimal. Taking out either the radar itself or the control trailer would suffice—half a kilo of C-4 would do the trick."

When asked about resistance, Delacuarda will explain: "The unit lies fairly deep in FARC territory and the *insurreccionistas* rely on



mobility for protection. We expect no more than a dozen personnel at the site, many of them technicians. FARC guerrillas patrol the region fairly heavily on foot in squad and platoon-sized elements and sometimes by helicopter. With luck and care, you should have no trouble avoiding the ground patrols. It is vital that they remain unaware of your presence. The FARC forces are well-coordinated and, unfortunately, highly-effective. If they become aware of you, I have no doubts that they can and will use air support to assist in dealing with you. It is also probable that they will alert all of their outposts near your location—meaning you will have a much more difficult time completing this assignment.

“Once at the site, you will undoubtedly have to engage some of the personnel. Keep it quick and quiet and you will avoid a great deal of trouble. Then, your only challenge will involve getting out quickly. I’ll also warn you to avoid encountering federal army patrols when you are near the borders of FARC-held territory. They are unaware of your identity or purpose and will undoubtedly assume you to be the enemy. You will be much better off keeping out of their way.” Delacuarda provides additional details later, including a complete OpOrder and intelligence report on the site.

Another question may arise, especially if the operatives have done work previously for the Colombians. The usual liaison for this sort of thing is a man named Major Fernando Marquez. The operatives may have met him before (Tykes and other BlackEagle Miami operatives certainly have), and may wonder why Marquez was not the Federales’ point man for this assignment.

“As I mentioned before,” Delacuarda explains, “FARC’s spies have already gotten wind of this operation. Marquez is a good man, but we believe that some of the leaks are occurring between Miami and Bogotá. For this operation, we’re working through completely different channels. Marquez would be surprised to even know that I am in Miami. For now, we’d like to keep that little secret.

“The time frame for this project is very tight,” Delacuarda will finally conclude. “Not so for the budget. We will pay fifty-thousand dollars for the job, but we must leave Miami by tomorrow morning.”

Delacuarda is not a particularly shrewd negotiator. He has been authorized to offer fifty-thousand and he can’t go any higher on his own authority. He can offer half up front and have it wired to the company account by that afternoon. As he and the operatives hammer out the details of the contract, he’ll specify that the radar site must remain inoperable for at least forty-eight hours.

THE REAL SCOOP (PART 1)

Delacuarda is an officer in an elite Colombian infantry company known as the GMN (the “Black Death Group” of the 20th Lanceros brigade). His intent in hiring the operatives is entirely straightforward, although he has held back the Colombian government’s real plans for the air corridor (covered in a later section). The Federales have something even bigger up their sleeves—something so secret that neither the American government nor even the Colombian representatives to the U.S. (including Major Fernando Marquez, BlackEagle’s Colombian contact in Miami) know about the operation.

But FARC knows. FARC’s intelligence network has learned that a potentially vital blow against the cartel’s economic heartland is in the works. Although the specifics of the plan have thus far eluded the

insurgent group, FARC agent Antonio Chicua has followed Delacuarda since he arrived in Miami. Pursuing Delacuarda for the past few months, Chicua has grown convinced that the Federales have a plan much bigger than a military offensive up their sleeves. He suspects that Delacuarda's operation involves obtaining and deploying weapons of mass destruction. Although direct evidence has remained out of his grasp, there have been small indicators of Delacuarda's intent—and plenty of proof to suggest the importance and unusual nature of the plan.

By the time Delacuarda meets with the operatives, Chicua has reached the end of his rope, fearful that the operation will commence in only a matter of days before he can do anything about it. He's desperate to stop or slow the operatives, and learn as much as he can about their assignment. Unfortunately, he has limited resources in Miami and his uncertainty regarding how to proceed causes him to hesitate.

Delacuarda is a military man, not a spy. He has no idea that Chicua has been following him—if he did, he would have warned the operatives.

In case the operatives get into trouble behind enemy lines, Delacuarda's OpOrder includes a panic azimuth toward the GMN's forward fire base. He has also included a password which will allow the operatives to enter the base safely. The guards at the fire base have been instructed to provide shelter and assistance to anyone who presents the password. Of course, they'll also be instructed to keep an eye on them, and report their presence to Delacuarda as soon as possible. Having the operatives travel to the GMN base is only a backup plan, and Delacuarda doesn't even bother to mention it to the operatives in person.

THE ACTION (PART 1)

Events will unfold in three segments: the few hours between the meeting and the departure for Colombia the following morning; the trip itself; and the action on the ground in-country. The operatives may wish to conduct a little background research before the trip, and will also have a couple of encounters with FARC personnel trying to dissuade them. The trip itself will proceed without problems, but offers an opportunity to build tension before the operation and to give the operatives a little insight into the state of Colombian affairs. Finally, the ground operation should proceed in a more-or-less straightforward manner—right up until the end of this part of the adventure.

Preparations

The operatives have only one day to prepare for their assignment. Delacuarda, as promised, uploads all required travel instructions and tactical maps to the office immediately after the meeting. Give the players handouts A, B, and C. Encourage them to plan carefully for the raid, emphasizing the seriousness of being behind enemy lines and the possibility for errors in intelligence.

The operatives may have previously dealt with or at least heard of Major Marquez, and they may give him a call to check up on Delacuarda. If so, Marquez tells them that Delacuarda works for the GMN. He briefly describes the unit as an elite infantry company, part of the 1/20th Lanceros battalion. Marquez has never personally met Delacuarda and had no prior knowledge of the alleged military offensive. He also, as Delacuarda predicted, is surprised to learn that Delacuarda was sent to Miami without his knowledge. He'll check up on these things, but

unfortunately won't be able to learn anything until well after the operatives leave Miami.

FARC Takes Action

The action begins shortly after the operatives' meeting with Delacuarda. As the group emerges from La Teresita, Chicua (who followed Delacuarda there) has to make a quick decision: stay with Delacuarda or shift his focus to the operatives. He goes with the latter choice and tails one or more of the operatives from the meeting (allow a Perception roll at -10 to spot him if the operatives are alert, or at -40 otherwise). He stays with them until they leave Miami or until Chicua thinks he's been spotted (unless the Operatives make overt actions, Chicua must make a Perception roll to notice that they've spotted him).

Chicua keeps a good distance between himself and his target. He will lose the operatives rather than follow them into a potential trap or give himself away by chasing them.

The first FARC attempt to dissuade the operatives comes in the rather lame form of a threatening phone call to the office. A few hours after the meeting with Delacuarda, an unknown male voice, asking specifically for the cell leader, calls and blurts out the following message: "*Nuestros paizanos Colombianos no moriran como perros. Deshagense del caso Delacuarda o ciertament quemaran en el Infierno con la sangre de miles en sus manos.*"

The caller hangs up before engaging in conversation or even identifying himself. If the cell leader, or whoever answers the phone, speaks Spanish, a successful Romance Languages/Spanish roll grants this translation: "The people of Colombia will not die like dogs. Drop the Delacuarda case or you will burn in Hell with the blood of thousands on your hands." If not, then the recording can be retrieved from the office vault and someone in the office will translate it.

The call came from an unlisted number, though any investigation tracks the call to a telephone booth only a block from the office. In their limited time before departing for Colombia the operatives can find no further leads with regard to the call or the caller's identity.

The second attempt strikes more directly at the operatives. A handful of thugs, hastily employed by Chicua, attempts to kill one or more of the operatives. Two scenarios, below, offer options for how these events might play out. Use the one that best fits into the operatives' actions in the final hours before they depart, or improvise one which will increase the drama of the action.

The operatives will undoubtedly become suspicious as either incident unfolds. That's fine—this event could turn into a real adventure-stopper if any of the operatives become seriously injured. The FARC-hired assassins will attack in earnest, but unless the operatives become exceedingly careless or unlucky, they should escape with their lives.

If caught and questioned, Chicua endeavors to gain as much information from the operatives as possible, while giving them little in return. He's a cagey conversationalist, capable of picking up on unspoken clues and noting sensitive issues, without giving away much vital information.

He doesn't trust the operatives, but if they catch him prior to his attack on them, he will admit to his association with FARC and the information-gathering bent of his mission. If any of this occurs following the attack, he'll clam up entirely and take his lumps with the American judicial system, remaining loyal to FARC to the end. If the operatives

succeed in capturing Chicua, another FARC agent will conveniently step into his role for the remainder of the adventure.

A Visitor at Home

Should any of the operatives (preferably the cell leader) choose to return home for supplies, clothing, or to say good-bye to family or friends before leaving, they'll be followed by Chicua and his thugs. If anyone in the vehicle being followed actively watches for anything suspicious, he or she may make a Perception roll at -25 to notice that a gray BMW seems to be following them. When the character arrives at his or her destination, the BMW parks a block away and waits.

When the operative comes back out of the house, the BMW is still parked a block away. Suddenly, however, a second car—an Audi—speeds up from down the block and two occupants open fire, drive-by style. The two assassins—use the Cheap Thug stereotype (page 156 of *Millennium's End v2.0*)—are armed with Uzis. Alert characters should have several seconds to react to squealing tires and the screams of passers-by before the attackers have a real shot at them. If they quickly take cover, there is little chance that they will be hit.

If the attack obviously missed, the vehicle will screech across the road in a sliding U-turn and pull to a stop near the location of the target. The two assassins get out on the far side of the car to engage or pursue the operative. Their tactics are not very effective, however, as they rely on massive volumes of lead more than careful attempts to outflank their target. If the situation continues to go against the operative or operatives, have a Metro-Dade Police patrol team (see page 80 of the *Miami Sourcebook*) arrive within a few rounds.

Chicua, sitting in the BMW, will drive away quickly if the situation turns against his men or if he believes that the operatives involved are dead.

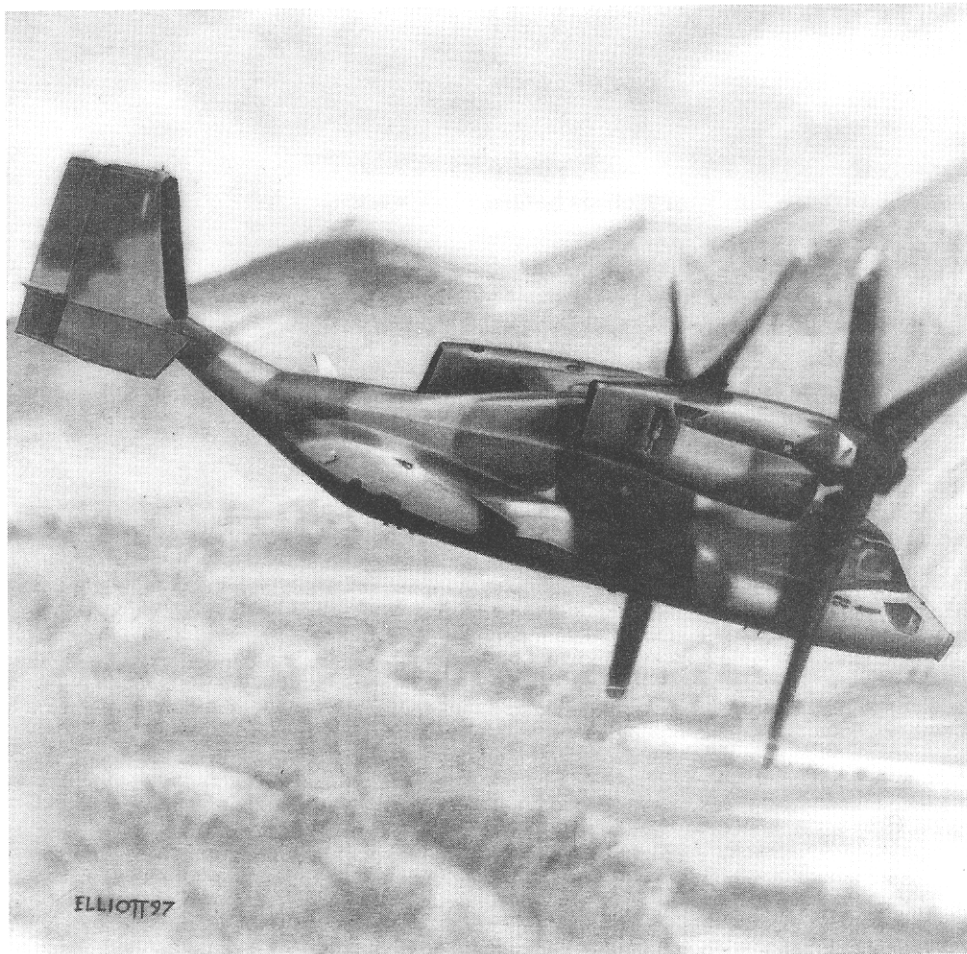
A Roadside Ambush

As the operatives make their way to the airport, anyone succeeding in a Perception roll at -20 notices a gray BMW following them from the office to the highway, at which point it drops back and lets them go.

As the operatives approach the exit to the airport (or some other suitable point on their route), a second car (an Audi) roars past them and down the exit ramp. Appearing to lose control on the ramp, the Audi swerves, then slides to a halt, partially blocking the operatives' path so that they must slow down and steer onto the shoulder in order to drive past. Alert operatives may suspect that the accident was intentional. A driver and passenger stagger out of the Audi as the operatives draw near—use two Cheap Thug stereotypes (page 156 of *Millennium's End v2.0*).

If the operatives stop, the occupants of the Audi act convincingly distressed about their situation, appearing to be dazed and injured. As soon as the first operative gets out of their vehicle, the occupants of the Audi reach into their car, pull out Uzis resting on the seats, and open fire on the operatives. They'll try to catch the operatives by surprise—making every attempt to veil their deadly intentions until it's too late.

If the operatives decide to drive past the Audi, the assassins will not hesitate to pull out guns and open fire. The driver will attempt to disable



the operatives' vehicle, while the passenger shoots at windows and doors, trying to hit as many operatives as possible.

Again, beyond the initial deception, the attackers' tactics are not sophisticated. Once they pull out weapons, they will rely on an excessive use of firepower to complete their objective. If the situation looks bad for the operatives, have a Metro-Dade Police patrol team arrive soon after the shooting begins.

Chicua, in the gray BMW, stops back on the highway—not on the exit ramp—to watch. A Perception roll at -20 will allow an operative to notice him. Chicua will drive away quickly if he feels threatened or believes that the operatives are dead.

Travel

Other than their own preparations, nothing else stands between the operatives and their trip to Colombia. After dealing

with Chicua's men, they won't have any additional problems getting to the airport in time to catch their flight. Traversing the jungles of Colombia will prove to be a much more difficult challenge, as the operatives will have weather, terrain, and FARC patrols to contend with.

The Trip

Delacuarda is waiting for the operatives when they arrive at Miami International Airport. He ushers them straight onto a readied Gulfstream G-4 business jet which takes off promptly at 08:00 for the three-hour flight to Panamá City. If the operatives report the assassination attempt to him, Delacuarda mentions that he thought someone had been following him for much of the time he was in Miami, but military intelligence indicates that FARC still doesn't know what's really going on. He points out that although overt assassination attempts don't occur often, FARC and Federale personnel frequently keep tabs on and even harass one another when in the States.

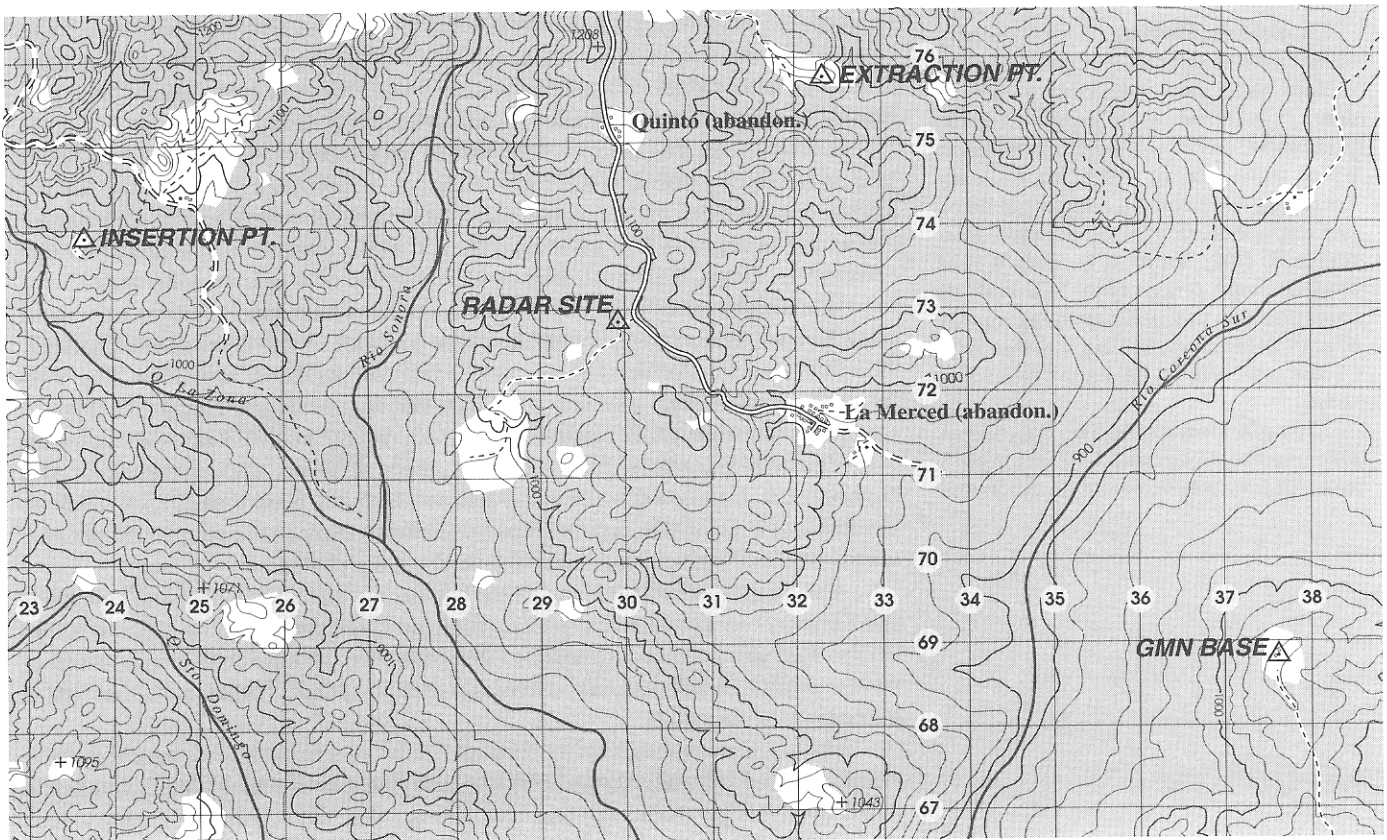
The Gulfstream touches down at the Toreihos International Airport just outside of Panamá City at 11:15. It taxis to a tarmac away from the passenger terminal, where a dark green C-130 sits in the shimmering heat. Turbines whine as Delacuarda and the operatives cross toward the Colombian Air Force transport and, ten minutes later, they're airborne again. The loud, drafty turboprop proves considerably less comfortable

than the executive jet, but far more spacious. The operatives share the empty cargo hold with just Delacuarda and one crewman.

Delacuarda announces that the flight will take three hours to arrive at the Army base at Socorro. Unless engaged in conversation by the operatives, he sleeps most of the way there. Half an hour before landing, however, he checks with the cell leader to ensure that he can offer no additional assistance. Once they land at Socorro, the cell won't have much time for further preparations. In truth, Delacuarda can provide little more at this point, except perhaps clarifications on any potential points of confusion. If absolutely necessary, Delacuarda can radio ahead to the base and arrange for last-minute supplies that the operatives might have forgotten, though only for items which can reasonably be obtained on a military base with a mere half-hour's warning.

The base at Socorro looks a lot like the airport in Panama, with vast areas of shimmering tarmac surrounded by low jungle-covered hills. Socorro bustles with activity. Colombian (and one or two American) C-130s and C-17s load and unload HMMWVs, pallets of supplies, and artillery pieces. Maintenance crews buzz around black-painted UH-60s and VH-22s with their engine cowlings removed. F-16s line a distant tarmac, barely visible through the shimmer of heat waves. The front may be twenty kilometers away, but the operatives have definitely entered a war zone.

Not far from where the C-130 pulls to a stop, a Colombian army VH-22 awaits, its rotors already roaring. Delacuarda leads the operatives down the cargo ramp and across the broad, hot pavement to the Osprey. Its engines rev as the operatives board and buckle in under the direction of the aircraft's crew chief.



Jungle Travel

Traveling through the dense Colombian jungles isn't easy, and getting lost is only one of the many problems that the operatives face. On any leg of travel through the jungle, have the operatives make a Navigation/Land roll—if using a GPS receiver, apply a +10 modifier to the roll; if the operatives are only using a compass, apply a -20 modifier. Require two rolls for every four to eight hours the operatives spend in the jungle.

Through the thick vegetation and steep terrain, the operatives only can travel at two kilometers an hour if they are rushing. If they're cautious, however, they will be hard pressed to travel even one kilometer in a hour. Because of the difficult terrain, the operatives may encounter other unexpected delays—muddy ravines, dense sections of jungle that are often impassable and dangerous creatures native to the tropical jungles of Colombia—and time must be taken to find a way around these difficulties. For each failed roll, either add an hour to their travel time, or have them stumble across one of these difficulties:

A Muddy Ravine: A particularly nasty ravine stretches almost twenty meters wide and over twelve meters deep. Cluttered with jungle vegetation, the sides of the ravine are made up of thick, damp mud. An unlucky operative may end up slipping if he or she isn't careful. If the operatives attempt to hike through it, they'll find that in some places they will sink to their knees in the mud—causing a great deal of delay and making it difficult to outdistance the FARC patrol following them.

Jungle Denizens: The operatives also need to watch out for the jungle's natural inhabitants—not so much the

Just as the VH-22 begins to take flight, the engines suddenly change pitch and the VH-22 settles to rest again. The crew chief nods and mumbles something inaudible into his mike, then turns and taps Delacuarda on the shoulder. He points across the tarmac to an officer running toward them.

The officer ducks under the rotors and steps up to the open cargo door of the Osprey. He hands some paperwork up to Delacuarda. They talk for a moment, their conversation unintelligible over the buzz and blast of the aircraft's rotors. Delacuarda gives a map to the pilot, shouting a couple of words in Spanish, then turns to the operatives. "There's been a change of plan," he shouts.

The Fog of War

"They have moved the radar site," Delacuarda continues, struggling to be heard over the engine noise as the aircraft lifts off. He pulls out his map and indicates a new position (as marked on the map on page 101). "We've located it here at grid 72952990. We'll still insert at the same location, and the extraction point will stay at...." He checks his paperwork, then points to either his map or the cell leader's, if it's out. "75803245. The timetable stays the same, and intel says you can expect the same disposition of enemy forces." He shrugs, "Of course, the photo recon is trash now. We can't get a satellite shot for several hours more, so you have to go in the old-fashioned way—blind."

If the operatives express concern over this sudden change in plans, Delacuarda shrugs it off with a touch of sarcasm, "These things happen all the time. FARC moves their radars around every week or two as standard procedure—that's why they call them mobile units." If the operatives begin to hedge, Delacuarda will become incredulous, "You can't make a simple raid without satellite photos?!" He just shakes his head, "Bueno. Look on the bright side—they've only been there for a few hours, so they probably haven't even dug their foxholes yet."

Delacuarda has sparse additional intelligence, but he shares what he has with the operatives. Although there is no information on the layout and local terrain at the site, all other factors seem much the same. Delacuarda signals the pilot to take off. He'll answer any questions the operatives have, if he can, before they arrive at the insertion point.

The flight takes over two hours—the first hour and a half is calm and easy as the plane passes over the snowy peaks of the Cordillera Central. The last segment of the flight takes a harrowing forty minutes. The VH-22 drops to roar nap-of-earth through the increasingly ragged valleys of central Colombia with rotors half-tilted, flying at 200 knots while open gun doors blast the cabin with the rush of wind and the roar of the turboprops. Hills and valleys, green with thick forest, roll away below. From time to time, the operatives spot rivers that cut through the jungle, strips of clear water that sparkle in the bright sun.

Few signs of civilization break the heavy carpet of trees roaring past the Osprey—a small rural plantation; an old cabin that hasn't seen use in the last decade; an occasional gravel road. The insertion route effectively avoids most human development, hopefully attracting as little attention as possible.

Delacuarda signals when the insertion is a minute out, and the crew chief has the operatives unbuckle from their seats as he rolls open the right-side cargo door. Without warning, the thick jungle canopy just meters below the aircraft drops away to reveal the floor of a clearing thirty

meters deep. The Osprey banks wide, turns back upon the clearing and settles down to hover just above the thick, tossing underbrush.

The crew chief signals the operatives out while the gunner nervously surveys the surrounding vegetation. If the operatives hesitate, the crew chief and Delacuarda shout and push them out the door to drop two meters to the ground below. When all the operatives have cleared the helicopter, the VH-22 roars up and disappears over the lip of jungle vegetation surrounding the clearing. Within thirty seconds, the sound of its rotors diminishes, lost against the hum of the jungle as the operatives find themselves on their own. The time is 16:15—precisely on schedule.

A Jungle Trek

A ramshackle, falling barn and fence reveal that the clearing belongs to an abandoned farm, once a field now thick with several years' feral growth. Even this late in the afternoon, the sun beats down intensely. Insects swarm and bite. Birds cry in a perpetual din from within the surrounding trees. Once under the jungle canopy, no breeze can reach through the foliage to relieve the oppressive humidity which drenches the operatives with sweat in just a few moments. The operatives may be in the relatively cool Colombian mountains, but they are—without a doubt—in the tropics.

Marching to the radar site will take approximately four to eight hours (barring navigational errors) and extend well past nightfall (see sidebar). Exactly how long the march takes depends upon the route chosen by the operatives, as well as how quickly—or cautiously—they travel. Dusk diminishes the heat a little, but not the humidity. Birds and night animals call out, and the drone of insects grows so loud that it makes normal conversation difficult. Anyone not wearing insect repellent will have a miserable night. Those that do will still end up with welts, rashes and sores by the end of the assignment.

Shortly after the Osprey leaves, the operatives may hear (allow a Perception roll at -10) Spanish voices in the nearby jungle. A small FARC patrol (see sidebar) happened to be traveling within earshot of the operative's insertion point when the Osprey roared by. Fortunately, they weren't close enough to spot the VH-22. However, they heard it's engines and have moved in to investigate. Depending upon how quickly and how quietly the operatives are travelling, the FARC patrol may or may not be able to detect and keep up with them.

As the map shows, the terrain is steep and rugged, with scores of ravines and slopes, making travel along any direct route nearly impossible. The jungle is dense, more so in low-lying areas than along the hilltops and ridgelines—but the "clear" areas on the map are even worse. Except for the occasional farmed clearing, most clear areas are choked with dense scrubby growth. Trails and unimproved roads marked on the map are often grown over or missing altogether, while other, unmapped paths occasionally criss-cross the jungle.

The first few hours of travel will be slow-going, but the operatives won't encounter any seriously problematic terrain beyond especially thick patches of forest and areas of steep, rugged ground. If the FARC patrol has detected and followed the operatives, they will occasionally catch far-off snips of Spanish, spoken in low, hushed tones, or other signs of pursuit.

Several significant obstacles may cause problems for the operatives, depending on the route they choose. One unavoidable obstacle, the

larger creatures as the many poisonous spiders, insects, snakes, and even frogs. An operative stumbling across a lurking snake, running through a web, or leaning against a tree covered with poisoned caterpillars might be bitten or stung. The poison will cause swelling, itching, and a temporary queasy feeling that will last for ten or fifteen minutes. While not deadly, the poisonous bite is definitely annoying—the operative suffers a 5-point all-body impairment for the rest of the assignment. Any operative succeeding in either a Medicine roll at -30, or a Survival/Equatorial roll, can identify that the bite isn't deadly. Otherwise, the operatives will be left to draw their own conclusions.

Dense Vegetation: If the operatives are having yet more difficulties, they might follow a section of dense woods into a natural dead end. While it's possible for them to carve their way through thick brush, doing so would require a great deal of time, make a lot of noise, and allow the FARC patrol a chance to shrink the distance between themselves and the operatives. If they backtrack, it'll take them at least ten minutes to get around the dense brush. Require a Navigation/Land roll at +10 if the operatives are using a GPS receiver, or -20 if they're using a compass. If they fail, they'll end up spending over a half an hour trying to find their way around the dense vegetation. Either way, they'll end up moving toward the FARC patrol in order to get around this obstacle. They may even have to either lay low and allow let the patrol pass, or engage them, depending upon how much time they spend backtracking.

The FARC patrol

After landing at the insertion point, the operatives attract the attention of a nearby FARC patrol. The patrol consists of eight FARC soldiers—use the Guerilla Stereotype (page 126 in the *Terror/CounterTerror Sourcebook*) or a combination of Cheap Thug and High-End Grunt Stereotypes (see pages 156-157 in *Millennium's End v2.0*). Each of these soldier is armed with an AKM.

The patrol suspects that they're following an elite group of Federales Lanceros sent from the GMN base, but they aren't certain. They'll move quickly, but it is unlikely that they'll catch up to the operatives before the attack on the radar site unless the operatives become bogged down in the troublesome terrain of the Colombian jungles.

Even if the operatives are moving at a fast pace, the FARC soldiers will most likely be able to keep within a kilometer or two of them. If the operatives choose to set up an ambush, they'll have to be quick and clever in order to catch the alert FARC soldiers by surprise (require a Military Science/Tactics roll from the operatives—make a Perception roll for the FARC patrol, penalized by the number that the operatives succeed the Tactics roll by).

However the patrol and the operatives come into contact, the FARC guerrillas will react efficiently and professionally, attempting to pin down and outflank the operatives. If the conflict goes poorly for the FARC patrol, they'll disengage in an orderly withdraw. A few minutes later, artillery rounds start landing in the area of the engagement. Operatives must take cover quickly if they want to avoid being struck by shrapnel. Ten or fifteen minutes after the artillery bombardment begins, a FARC helicopter will arrive on the scene. If they aren't on their way out of the area by then, the operatives should begin to worry about surviving, rather than completing, this assignment.

Sonora river, will provide the operatives with an interesting challenge. At its thinnest points, the river is eight to ten meters across and about three meters deep. The water is cold, and flows very quickly, but it is possible for an operative to swim across it. Require a Swim roll. Failure indicates that the operative has been caught by the current and will be carried twenty or thirty meters downstream. For those who are carried downstream, require a second Swim roll. If this second roll is failed, the operative will be carried an additional two or three hundred meters downstream and end up on a randomly determined side of the river.

If the operatives would rather not risk swimming, an extended search along the riverbank might bring them to a fallen log or an old makeshift bridge that stretches across the river. Searching for this bridge, however, will lead them roughly twenty minutes off their planned path, cutting into their travel time.

If the operatives are being followed by the FARC patrol, crossing the river quickly will help put some distance between them. If they spend too much time at the river, the FARC patrol will have the chance to close the distance between themselves and the operatives.

The Radar Site

The thick, active jungle makes it difficult to see far, and as a result the operatives may have trouble finding the radar site even if they're close to it. Require a Navigation/Land roll at +10 if they are using a GPS receiver, or -20 if they're just using a compass. A successful roll indicates that they've managed to pinpoint the location of the radar site accurately enough to approach it by whatever means they choose. Failure could have several results, depending upon their angle of approach. They could end up traveling along the road leading to the abandoned La Merced; inadvertently locating the radar site by approaching it from a highly visible position; or wandering through the dense jungle until they accidentally stumble into the site in the dark, either by setting off a noisemaker trap, encountering a sentry, or unexpectedly wandering into the clearing containing the radar unit.

The Raid

The site, which sits on a hilltop surrounded by dense lush jungle, isn't as heavily guarded as the OpOrder predicted. There are a total of eleven FARC soldiers present there. Three of them are technicians, specialized in operating the radar equipment. The other eight are soldiers are each well trained and experienced in jungle warfare. For the FARC soldiers and technicians use eleven Guerilla Stereotypes (see page 126 in the *Terror/CounterTerror Sourcebook*). Each of them are armed with AKMs, which they carry with them at all times.

The site is actively guarded by four sentries, who have taken up concealed positions in the vegetation (Perception roll at -20). A large, camouflaged tarp is set up just outside of the clearing. Two technicians and two guards are sound asleep in cots beneath the tarp. An observation point, positioned to the northwest of the radar site, has been dug into the ground and well camouflaged. It contains two soldiers. One is very alert, scanning the jungle and listening for any sign of intruders. The other guard is sleeping. And finally, one technician is on duty in the trailer, monitoring the readings from the radar equipment.

The thick jungle that surrounds the site makes it fairly easy for the operatives to approach surreptitiously. Wildlife, including insects, frogs, and other nocturnal creatures, fills the jungle with noise and energy. As a result, the soldiers won't react to small noises, such as a crunch of leaves or the snapping of a small twig, unless they are repeated enough to warrant attention (allow a bonus of +20 to any Hiding/Creeping rolls made as the operatives approach the FARC position). The sentries that are on duty may notice the operatives approaching (allow a Perception roll with a penalty equal to the amount the operatives made their Hiding/Creep roll by).

Unless the compound has been alerted to the operative's presence, the sentry stationed at the junction of the two roads will be smoking a cigarette. The red embers betray his hidden position, making him easy to spot from a distance (Perception roll at +30).

Tripwire noisemakers have been placed in the surrounding jungle. If the operatives approach from the west, they may notice (allow a Perception roll at -30, or at -10 if they're actively looking for traps and tripwires) a tripwire seconds before they stumble into it. If any of them fail to notice the trap, there's a 75% chance that they'll set off a noisemaker, rattling tin cups filled with gravel or knocking over piles of precariously placed stones.

If the alert soldier stationed at the observation point spots anyone or anything suspicious, he'll quietly wake his partner and contact his companions under the tarp via a field telephone. The four soldiers sleeping under the tarp will wake quickly to gunfire or shouts, but it'll

The Radar Site

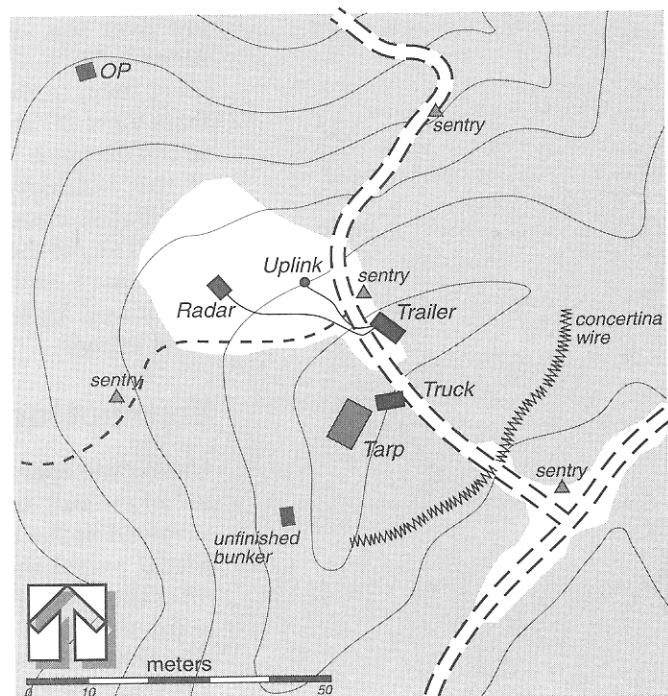
The FARC radar site sits on high ground near the top of a major ridgeline. As the OpOrder states, the encampment consists of a radar unit and control trailer, along with a satellite uplink. A well-maintained dirt road runs behind the site, while a more rugged, overgrown logging trail passes through the site's clearing to wind down the slope below. A footpath (the dashed line on the map), similarly overgrown, runs through the clearing and down the slope in a different direction.

The trailer sits on a hilltop, twenty meters away from the radar equipment, which has been set up in a the clearing. Both the trailer and the radar unit are covered with cammo netting. Concertina wire stretches through the jungle, near the dirt road. A gap in the wire allows access to the site from the road. Twenty meters south of the clearing, vegetation has been cut away to allow space for a bunker, which is in the early stages of construction.

Four FARC soldiers are on watch during the night, positioned along the approaching trails as marked on the map. These sentries sit quietly off to the side, watching for anything suspicious. Roughly twenty meters northwest of the clearing, the FARC soldiers have constructed an observation point. This well-camouflaged hole in the ground is always occupied by at least one soldier, whose job is to observe and report anything strange back to the camp by a land-line field telephone.

A large, camouflaged tarp is set up on the hilltop, near a truck. Several folding chairs and cots are arranged hap-

hazardly underneath the tarp. Usually, one or two soldiers will be resting underneath the tarp, either sleeping on the cots or eating and relaxing in one of the chairs.



take them three or four rounds for the ringing of the field phone to wake them. Either way, after they wake, they'll take two rounds to orient themselves, ready their weapons, and/or answer the field phone. Once armed and alert, they immediately react to an ongoing conflict, or move to reinforce the site's perimeter.

If the technician stationed in the trailer becomes aware of the operatives' presence, his first action will be to radio a warning to his headquarters and request additional support. Then, he'll grab his AKM, exit the trailer, and monitor a small perimeter around the trailer.

Once alerted to the operatives' presence, the FARC personnel with react quickly and professionally. They fight tenaciously—shooting to kill without hesitation. Their main objective is to protect the radar site, and they'll fight until they are incapacitated or killed to prevent the operatives from damaging it.

For the radar site to be inoperative, either the radar unit or the trailer must be destroyed—both of which are well fortified. Using a C-4 charge is the most reliable and effective way for the operatives to insure that enough damage is done to destroy their target. Several well-placed white phosphorous grenades could also inflict a sufficient amount of damage to destroy the trailer or the radar installation. A man-portable anti-tank rocket could destroy the trailer—but because of very dense vegetation around the edge of the clearing, a rocket cannot be fired from within the jungle. Most man-portable rockets require at least twenty meters to arm (require a Military Science/Hardware roll at -20 for the operatives to know this), but there isn't that much room in the clearing. A rocket fired from the exact opposite side of the clearing, or from down the road to the south, might have just enough space to arm, but it would be a tricky shot. Small arms and hand grenades cannot cause enough damage to seriously impair the trailer or the radar unit unless employed in excessively large volumes.

Within ten minutes after the technician radios for help, two FARC helicopters arrive at the radar site. Searching for the operatives, they fly low over the site and the surrounding areas. If the operatives have managed to make it away from the site, the sounds of helicopters should alert them to their predicament, allowing enough time for them to hide from view. If the operatives are still at the site, the sounds of helicopters in the distance will allow them a few rounds to find a quick hiding place. If the technician was unable to radio for assistance, it'll take the helicopters close to an hour to show up.

If any of the operatives become cornered, they will be taken prisoner, questioned, and eventually be taken to Cali and brought up on trail for espionage. Unless rescued, they will more than likely be executed for their crimes.

Extraction—or Not

Unless the operatives have dealt with the FARC patrol earlier, they'll be in hot pursuit once the raid against the radar site is completed. The time involved in the raid and any noise from the engagement have given the FARC patrol the opportunity to catch up with the operatives. Shortly after the operatives raid the base, as they're on their way to the extraction point, the FARC patrol will close the distance and assault the operatives. Alert characters have a good chance of noticing (allow a Perception roll at +10) that they are still being followed, and that their pursuers are getting closer. How they deal with the FARC patrol is entirely up to them. They

may decide to plan an ambush, try to outrun their pursuers, or attempt to misdirect them.

The walk to the extraction point can take anywhere from four eight hours, depending upon the operatives' degree of caution and the route they choose—see the sidebar on jungle travel.

When they arrive at the clearing, they'll find it littered with the bodies of half a dozen Federale troops. FARC guerrillas have hidden themselves around the edge of the clearing. They allow the operatives to enter the area before exposing themselves (allow a Perception roll at -40 for every operative that studies the clearing's perimeter carefully before entering). After at least one of the operatives enters the clearing, a white flag appears at the far side, lifted high on the end of a stick. If the operatives respond, three of the guerrillas reveal themselves and approach. Any operatives who have seen him before immediately recognize one of them as the man who followed them in Miami—Chicua.

THE ASSIGNMENT (PART 2)

"My name is Lieutenant Colonel Chicua of Colombian Army Intelligence," the familiar man introduces himself in accented English. The two soldiers with him appear to be security, and they keep a wary eye on the operatives. "I am here to tell you a few things about your mission that Mr. Delacuarda failed to mention. Let me start by saying that the Colombian government did not sanction this operation. Delacuarda is a criminal. He has been using his military authority to conduct illegal drug operations. Please, sit down. We must discuss your actions in this matter. I have a platoon of Special Forces troops stationed around this clearing. For the moment, we are safe from attack by the insurgents." If any of the operatives have not come forward, Chicua asks that they do.

"I see you have noticed the carnage here. Delacuarda commands an elite unit called the GMN. The entire unit, and many of the American advisors working with them, belong to a drug ring. They hired you to destroy the radar installation because it interfered with their smuggling flights. The GMN sent their extraction team early, probably to silence you rather than pick you up. We ambushed them. They will assume it was a FARC attack and that you are no longer alive. That is fine—your work for them is finished. I have a new assignment for you."

Chicua goes on to explain that Colombian military intelligence has been able to gather little hard evidence of the GMN's activities. The unit is stationed in an isolated forward patrol base, impossible to visit without giving the GMN enough time and warning to hide their activities. The Army cannot simply storm it because that would put the half-dozen U.S. advisors at the base in danger. Any scandal involving American forces will put critical international support at risk. Chicua emphasizes the fact that Colombia cannot afford to lose U.S. support at this stage in the game.

"That is where you come in," Chicua says. "We need your specialized skills now that the GMN operation is in full swing. We want to hire you to penetrate the base and destroy the operation with minimal loss of life."

Chicua indicates the location of the base on the operatives' map—on the high ground in the southeasternmost grid square (see the map on page 101). He also gives them a rough sketch of the base's layout (handout D). He tells them that an infantry company normally mans the base, but that half the personnel are out on patrol at any given time, leaving only about fifty soldiers there. The large bunkers on his map contain the drugs, hidden in containers labeled "Agent Medellín."

The operatives are to infiltrate the base and destroy the containers, then proceed to the landing zone where an Army helicopter will meet them at 21:00. Immediately, a Colombian Special Forces unit will move in by helicopter to arrest the GMN and ship the Americans home. Depending upon their route, how careful they are, and what obstacles they must circumvent, the trip could take anywhere from ten to eighteen hours to complete. A moderately careful team, taking a fairly direct route, shouldn't need more than fifteen hours to complete the trip.

Chicua offers \$40,000 for the assignment, though he cannot guarantee payment for the balance of the previous job. If the operatives take the assignment, he supplies them with any additional demolitions material, food or ammunition they need (within reason), then sends them on their way.

If the cell refuses, Chicua stares at them for a moment without speaking, giving them a few seconds to realize the danger of their current situation. Then he steps forward and reminds them that they've just completed an illegal assignment and made themselves accessories to the GMN's activities. "I do not think you understand—I am not really giving you a choice. At best, you could lie to me and try to leave the country—you won't succeed. At worst, you can refuse the mission to my face..." Chicua waves his hand and figures rustle forward from the bushes, guns drawn and pointed at the operatives. With a wry smile, he adds, "Amigos, Colombian jails are not pleasant.

"So do we have an understanding?"

THE REAL SCOOP (PART 2)

Chicua has lied to the operatives about his affiliation with Federal Army Intelligence. He works for FARC. The GMN has no interest in drug-smuggling, but does pose a serious threat to FARC. The GMN's plan involves opening an air corridor into FARC territory for a massive defoliation campaign. The Federales, desperate to stem the flow of expensive, high-tech weaponry to FARC, have decided to cut off their income at its source: the coca and poppy farms.

FARC has learned only some of the GMN's plan. They believe that the Federales intend to bombard FARC-held regions with a powerful chemical weapon—known to FARC as the mysterious "Medellín Agent." FARC has recently discovered that the Federales have obtained and deployed the agent, and intend to use it in an attack that will occur soon. Chicua's determination to motivate the operatives stems from the fear that should the GMN's plans succeed he, many of his friends and fellow soldiers—and tens of thousands of civilians—will probably die.

FARC did not uncover any specifics of the plan until just about the time of the raid on the radar site;

thus, they were not prepared to defend against that attack on the air defense site. The Colombian diversions succeeded in drawing FARC air defense assets out of the area, and although FARC knows that an attack is coming, it cannot reposition its defense net in time. Its only hope of preventing the operation requires the destruction of the "Medellín Agent" on the ground.

In a region where combat has remained relatively light, FARC doesn't have the forces for an all-out assault, so they need the specialized talents of the cell. Unfortunately, because they tried to kill the operatives just a day before, and because BlackEagle generally works for the Federales, they do not feel they can ask directly—and even if they did,

Chicua suspects the operatives wouldn't care about the Federales use of chemical weapons. To add to the lies, Chicua invented the promised raid by Colombian Special Forces. He has no intention of extracting the operatives once they have finished the assignment. He's just hoping that the operatives' actions will delay the attack by a few days—or even hours—long enough to allow FARC to reposition its air defenses. Chicua's information isn't accurate, of course—the Medellín Agent is not a chemical weapon, but a defoliant. Although it may adversely affect the health of some coca farmers, it's targeted at their crops, not at them or FARC.

Jungle surrounds the small GMN outpost. Used as a staging area for patrols in the low-conflict no-man's-land, it is connected to more securely-held Federal territory by a fifteen-kilometer stretch of unpaved road, although most contact with the outside world is by helicopter. The patrol base will serve as the jumping-off point for the defoliation campaign. Here, away from the prying eyes of journalists and FARC spies, the Federales prepare the "Medellín Agent" for use against the coca fields that fuel the narco-terrorist insurgency. In actuality, no American personnel reside at the base.

THE ACTION (PART 2)

Moving to the GMN base under the cover of darkness is the most sensible plan, but time doesn't allow for it. The hike could take anywhere from seven to twelve hours, depending upon the route they choose and how quickly they are willing to travel (again, see the sidebar).

The GMN base has sent over a hundred of their Lanceros soldiers on patrol in squad- and platoon-sized elements, scouting deep into the jungles to insure that no insurgent units bring mortars or artillery within range of the base while their planes are vulnerably resting in the landing zone. The operatives will need to be cautious in order to avoid these patrols when approaching the base.

Blackhawk and Osprey helicopters pass regularly overhead, audible from several kilometers away as they fly in and out of the base from the federal-held territory to the south. Observation of the base indicates Chicua's sketched map to be largely accurate, with a few exceptions. The base is being enlarged—a section of the kill zone appears to have been freshly cut, and a new stretch of perimeter wire has been erected. A few engineering vehicles are parked near the LZ. The operatives have no trouble distinguishing the LZ and the perimeter trenches, surrounded by two different layers of concertina wire, twenty meters apart, within a seventy-five meter kill zone. Four fortified mortar pits and a handful of large bunkers rest within the center of the base.



The GMN Base

The GMN base is surrounded by lush jungle vegetation. Most of the kill zone is littered with small bushes and weeds that have grown high enough to make a concealed approach at least conceivable—if one is willing to risk the deadly mines and other traps spread throughout the area. In order to enlarge the landing zone, a section of the southeastern kill zone has been freshly cleared, and the concertina wire fence has been moved.

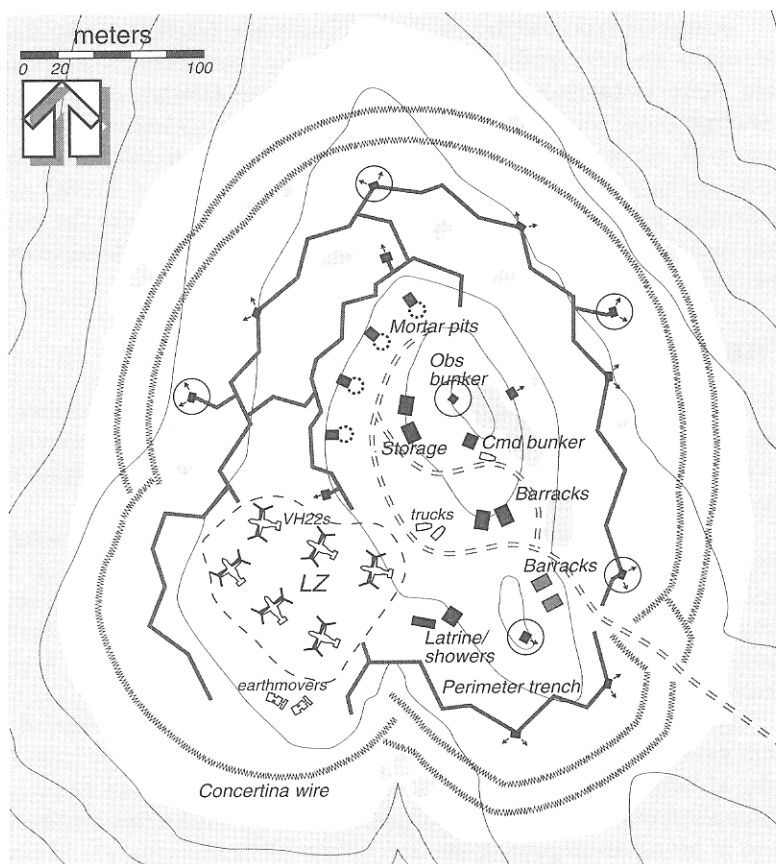
Past the fences, a fortified trench surrounds the main encampment. Nine well-placed trench bunkers insure that a stealthy approach would be difficult at best. Four machinegun bunkers are positioned above the trenches to cover each side of the base. In the southeast corner of the base, a road runs through the main gate, which is guarded by a machinegun position, two trench bunkers, and three sentries.

Within the base, there are four large above-ground bunkers used as barracks. The two marked "storage" on the map have been appropriated to store the Medellín Agent—the troops have been temporarily quartered in tents near the base entrance.

Four mortar pits, positioned northwest of the command bunker, have been dug into the earth, each roughly five meters in diameter and one-and-a-half meters deep. Attached to each pit is a small bunker that the mortar crews use for protection and storage. Each of these pits contains a 4.2" mortar.

At the southern end of the base, a ravine cuts into the kill zone. Though it's not deep, a prone individual could crawl through it and remain out of the trenches' field of vision all the way up to the concertina wire. There are, however, several flare traps placed within the ravine.

The observation bunker, four of the trench bunkers, and one MG position are each manned by two soldiers (these are circled on the map). Since most of the bases' Lanceros are out on patrol, these positions are manned by combat engineers who are capable infantrymen, but not elite soldiers.



There's a total of eighty-six personnel on the base. Six are members of the command staff, and can be found within the command bunker. The mortar crews consist of sixteen soldiers. They work in the mortar pits, and won't be expected to man other posts. The recent influx of aircraft has brought with it eighteen members of various flight and support crews. They aren't regular soldiers, carrying only handguns, and they aren't very familiar with the base. Thirty combat engineers have also recently arrived at the base, to expand the landing zone by enlarging the base itself. They have been called to man some of the trench outposts because the large majority of the regular Lanceros have been sent on patrols, leaving only sixteen of them at the base.

The base remains active throughout the afternoon. Helicopters and Ospreys arrive every twenty or thirty minutes to off-load fifty-five gallon drums and pieces of spindly machinery (chemical sprayers). Soldiers move the drums into the complex's two largest bunkers, and work to attach the machinery to the sides of the three VH-22 Ospreys parked at the southern end of the landing zone. As darkness falls, the deliveries

taper off and three more VH-22s land to be outfitted with sprayers. Well after nightfall, flight crew technicians remain busy working in the landing zone installing chemical sprayers, under the glow of large floodlights.

Attentive operatives may notice (Perception roll at -20) an unusual sight. Everyone on the base carries a gas mask—even when they don't have any other gear. While gas masks are part of the normal U.S. Army combat kit, the Colombian civil war has yet to see the threat of chemical warfare, and Colombian soldiers usually don't carry masks.

The kill zone is fairly clear, though occasional clumps of tall grasses and shrubs, as well as a shallow ravine at the southern end of the base, suggest that an approach is possible. However, careful observation (Perception roll at -10 with binoculars or a scope) indicates that mines and other obstacles have been deployed throughout the kill zone.

The operatives may attempt to enter the base by sneaking in through the perimeter wire. Covertly approaching the perimeter requires a Hiding/Creeping roll (unmodified at night, -40 during the day). Only four trench stations, one machinegun position, and the observation post are manned (these posts are circled on the map on page 110)—but it's next to impossible to tell which are full and which are empty from the outside. Each of these active posts contains two alert soldiers, watching for anything out of the ordinary. Make a Perception roll for each Colombian soldier that might see the operatives, modifying it by the amount the Hiding roll was made or missed. Infiltrating operatives might be visible from the observation bunker as well as one or more perimeter and machinegun position. Cutting or otherwise breaching the wire quietly requires an additional Creeping roll at -10.

Sneaking around the GMN base

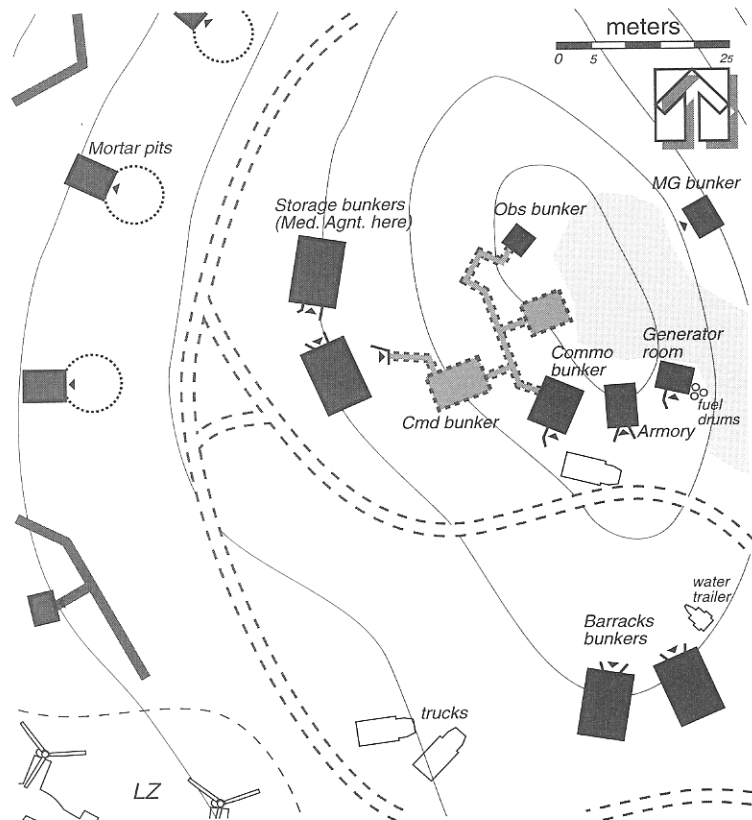
Stretching a over a hundred meters, the center of the GMN base sits to the northwest of the landing zone. The command bunker has been constructed underground, providing a greater level of security against artillery and air raids. The two underground rooms are connected to the observation post and the commo bunker by tunnels reinforced with wooden planks.

A generator room has been nestled along the hillside, using thick vegetation as additional cover from bombardment. Three fuel drums sit on the eastern side of the generator room. Between the generator room and the commo bunker sits an ammunition storage bunker.

The observation bunker sits on the high point of the base, allowing anyone inside a good view of the facility. It can only be entered from the underground tunnel. Patches of vegetation cover the slope east of the observation bunker.

The storage bunkers that contain the Medellín Agent are made of reinforced concrete, with thick, durable walls designed to survive artillery bombardments. Several transport trucks are parked alongside a dirt road near the landing zone.

Triangles pointing into the buildings indicate their entrances.



An operative low-crawling through the ravine—located at the southern end of the base—would be able to approach the recently cleared kill zone without being visible from the bunkers. There is a catch, however, as the ravine has been heavily trapped, especially at its base in the tree line. Any operative crawling through the ravine has a chance to notice a tripwire (Perception roll at +10 if looking for traps, otherwise at -20). If the operatives fail to notice any tripwires, there's a 75% chance that they'll set one off, causing a flare to be launched. This will alert the base, as well as one or more of the patrols within two or three kilometers of it.

An alert sounds as soon as the Federales discover the operatives' presence. The soldiers fire upon any operatives spotted outside the perimeter. Within half a minute or so, another twelve Colombian soldiers emerge from the barrack bunkers in the middle of the compound, with about half heading in the direction of the gunfire and the balance reinforcing the remainder of the perimeter.

At this point, the operatives will be hard-pressed to complete their mission, but there will still be a few options available to them. If they surrender, they might be able to use the password to convince the soldiers that they were sent to the base (Acting/Con or Diplomacy/Lying at -10—or -50 if they don't speak Spanish). If they choose to flee, they'll have to dodge several Federales patrols before getting to a safe resting place. If they attempt to fight, the odds are overwhelmingly against them.

If the operatives choose to approach the base openly rather than sneak in, they will be greeted by a group of Colombian sentries. The guards will be very wary of the operatives and keep firearms trained on them. Despite their suspicion, however, they give the operatives a chance to speak before they decide what to do with them. If the operatives present the password, the guards will relax a little. Insisting that the operatives leave any weapons larger than a pistol with them, they escort the operatives into the base. In general, the Colombians at the GMN base treat the operatives as reluctant allies.

Upon entry, the operatives are led to the underground meeting room adjacent to the command center. A large, burly Colombian sergeant speaks briefly before leaving. "Take it easy. Delacuarda is not here, but we will hear from him soon. Then we will get transportation for you. Do not move around the base." The operatives are left alone.

The underground bunker is damp, smelling of mold and rotting wood. The corridors are lined with wooden planks and illuminated by painfully-bright uncovered light bulbs. The meeting room contains a large table, with numerous wooden chairs surrounding it. Storage cabinets line the south wall, full of various medical supplies and spare ammunition. A large vent, covered with an old metal grate, is set into the west wall. It leads to the surface, and could be used by an operative with a smaller build to escape the room after a torturous shimmy. Directly across from the meeting room is the command center. From the command center, a set of makeshift stairs leads to a back exit.

One Colombian guard has been stationed outside of the room to make sure the operatives don't get into too much trouble. The observation bunker, only accessible via the underground tunnels, is manned by two soldiers. One additional soldier mans the commo bunker, which is between the ops and the entrance.

Once the operatives get into the base—whether they talked or snuck their way in—they'll have to find the Medellín Agent without attracting attention—and that won't be easy. They'll have to remain out of sight from not only the two soldiers stationed in the observation bunker, but from the

many others at work, walking between buildings to relay information, relaxing around the barracks and the tents, as well as inspecting the aircraft one last time.

Operatives spotted inside the perimeter will be challenged in Spanish, but they may be able to fast talk their way out of trouble (Acting/Con or Diplomacy/Lying—at -40 if they don't speak Spanish). If they don't explain their presence quickly, the operatives will be detained by force and taken to the meeting room under heavy guard. If the operatives persist in attempting to escape at this point, the Federales will bind and gag them.

To destroy the Medellín Agent, the operatives will first have to get inside the storage bunkers—which are guarded by two combat engineers. Attacking the bunker itself, made of reinforced concrete and designed to survive artillery attacks, won't get the job done. If two or three white phosphorus grenades, a rocket, or a C-4 charge detonate inside the bunker walls, the storage cans will be destroyed, and the Medellín Agent released. It's not volatile, but it will burn.

If the Medellín Agent is released, Colombian soldiers drop everything but the most desperate emergency to don their gas masks. Those within thirty meters of the loose defoliant back off fearfully. Others stick to their posts, however, and continue to fight. As it burns or evaporates, the Agent fills the air with a sticky, acrid humidity that stings unprotected eyes, but has no other immediate effect.

At 21:00, FARC troops in the area begin a mortar attack on the base. While generally ineffective, the attack adds to the confusion of the situation, and if the Medellín Agent has been breached, any semblance of Colombian cohesion will dissolve. Faced with a dangerous chemical hazard and incoming rounds, the remaining Colombian soldiers seek shelter in the bunkers or cut and run. The operatives still come under fire if they move in the open, but determined resistance fades away.

Closure

The operatives have a number of options for evacuating the scene. The base has helicopters and trucks that could be borrowed, or they can leave on foot. If they return to Federale-controlled territory, they'll have some explaining to do, and they may well end up facing criminal prosecution. If they manage to rendezvous with the FARC troops, they will be paid and allowed to leave—that is, if they don't make trouble. Attempting to exit the country without contacting either side is an adventure in itself. Operatives exposed to large amounts of the "Agent" will fall ill within a day or two. With decent medical assistance, they will recover within weeks, although the threat to future health remains uncertain.

FARC will pay Chicua's bill in full, via a wire transfer from a numbered Panamanian account, providing the operatives destroyed the "Medellín Agent." The Federales, on the other hand, will not pay if they have evidence that the operatives were involved in the assault on the GMN base.

If the operatives choose not to destroy the Medellín Agent (or fail in doing so), they'll be paid in full and sent back to Miami via Socorro. As sporadic news accounts pit Colombian propaganda about the raid against FARC stories of hundreds of civilian deaths, they'll be left to wonder which sides' version of the Medellín Agent's purpose is true...

APPENDIX ONE

THE JUNGLE ▼▼

It may be no coincidence that the world's hot spots often reside in the tropics—that's certainly the case with Colombia. Setting assignments in the backwoods and wilderness theatres of Colombia's mountainous jungles and lowland rain forests presents a *Millennium's End* GM with an unusual set of challenges and opportunities. The jungle provides a unique tactical environment, which if handled correctly, can add a great deal of interest and atmosphere to any assignment.

TYPES OF JUNGLE

The thick tropical forests of Colombia come in two basic types: the jungle highlands typified by Colombia's Cordillera Central region, and the lowland rain forest of eastern and northwest Colombia. The dense, hot and humid lowland rain forest tends to be the most unpleasant. The flat ground (elevations in the Amazon basin vary by less than a meter over scores of kilometers) produces marshy conditions criss-crossed by small murky streams that meander aimlessly and often shift location every season. Somewhat more temperate, the highland forests still fit the stereotypical image of the jungle. Many regions of the Colombian highlands have rugged, sharply inclining terrain punctuated by deep ravines, jagged moss-covered cliffs, and rushing rivers.

In addition to the two regionally-differentiated forest types, two distinct growth patterns occur in both: primary and secondary forest. Primary forest—the jungle's natural, mature state—offers the least resistance. Trees grow up to seventy-five meters in height with three distinct layers to the overhead canopy of foliage. Smaller trees spread their leaves at about ten meters, medium-sized trees and the lower branches of larger trees form a second layer at about twenty-five meters,

and the tallest varieties of trees arch over the others, creating the roof of the forest at approximately sixty meters or so. On the jungle floor, the vegetation, sheltered from the sun by the trees overhead, remains relatively sparse and easy to navigate, though its lushness does limit visibility to ten or fifteen meters.

Secondary forest, on the other hand, occurs in areas that have been cleared in the past, and along the edges of fields, roads and other exposed areas. In these places the sunlight makes it all the way to the ground, encouraging the quick and abundant growth of the vegetation. Visibility sometimes drops to only two or three meters. Navigation through these areas can prove impossible without hacking through the underbrush.

Tropical forests have only two seasons: the aptly-named rainy season and the not-so-accurately-named dry season. Weather in the lowlands tends toward the predictable. It rains nearly every day during the rainy season, pouring down in heavy torrents, sometimes for hours at a time. Thunderstorms occur relatively commonly, however they aren't particularly violent. When it is not raining, the clouds break to reveal blue skies and blazing sun. The rain generally follows a noticeable pattern—in one area, for example, it may usually rain in the late afternoons, while in another it rains in the mornings and evenings. This predictability can serve a clever cell.

The same weather patterns hold during the dry season as well, except that it rains only three or four days a week, instead of six or seven. Temperatures and humidity ease up a bit as well. Most of Colombia experiences two dry seasons: December through February and June to August. Well outside the normal hurricane track, Colombia rarely has violent or unusual weather. Because of this, local TV and radio rarely even broadcast weather reports.

The highland jungles are a bit more temperate, with slightly cooler temperatures, slightly lower humidity, and slightly less rainfall. But in many areas—especially the valleys and lower elevations—this difference is marginal, and the jungle is hot, humid, and rainy by any standard.

Heat in both the highland and lowland forests, accompanied by extremely high humidity, can prove annoying at best and hazardous at worst. Aside from general fatigue and rashes caused by the high temperatures, heat exhaustion, dehydration and epidermal damage followed by infection due to the humidity have been known to cause severe illness and even death. At these times, a water supply becomes crucial to survival. A variety of bacteria in these forests makes it impractical and hazardous to drink from natural water supplies without first administering some form of purification process to it, especially in the slow-moving waters of the lowland jungles.

THE JUNGLE EXPERIENCE

A day in the tropical rain forest is an experience like no other. Two words sum it up: hot and wet. When it rains, the water comes down in torrents broken only by the densest areas of primary vegetation. Even once the rain has stopped, the vegetation drips and brushes wetness against one's clothing. When the forest finally dries out, perspiration and humidity take over to keep things wet. In the rainy season, nothing is ever dry in the jungle.

This moisture does more than just make travelers uncomfortable. It seeps into everything. Dry food dampens and mildews within just a few

Boa Constrictor

Common in the jungles of Latin America, the boa constrictor lives in the trees and sometimes burrows into the ground. Non-venomous, it uses its powerful muscles to enwrap and squeeze its victim until it suffocates it; at which point, the snake eats it. Boas come in several varieties, including the Anaconda, recorded at lengths of up to six meters, and the Emerald Tree Boa, which can reach lengths of up to two meters and has bright green skin. Constrictors tend to feed on birds and small mammals, though they have been known to attack larger animals and even humans, if disturbed. Despite their size, they move with surprising speed and agility, especially on the ground where they can slide into the underbrush and disappear.

Once a constrictor has managed to wrap itself around its victim, it becomes increasingly difficult to get free. Constrictors have been known to fracture a man's ribs within a few short minutes (Damage Rating equals length in meters times two; Unarmed/Grapple equals length in meters times twelve). If a constrictor manages to get itself wrapped around its victim's neck, then time becomes a critical factor in the rescue of the victim. Anyone who knows anything about jungle survival (Survival/Equatorial roll at -10) will know that the only way to remove a constrictor involves unwrapping it, starting with the tail. Even once the animal has been killed, it will continue to constrict for as long as three minutes before finally relaxing.

Mygale Spider

Among the largest spiders in the world, the Mygale lives in the jungles of Latin America. Their bodies can grow to as large as six to nine centimeters long, with a leg span of up to thirty cm. They weave sticky webs between the trees, strong enough to catch small birds, which they eat. The venom of these spiders can produce temporary, localized paralysis and/or heart failure in those sensitive to it, although for the most part, they will not bite something which they cannot eat—unless threatened. The Mygale tend to stay in the foliage of trees. Travelers in the jungle run into their webs more often than they do the spiders themselves, although climbing in trees can often produce a surprise encounter with one. The Mygale vary in color from light brown to black. Because of their size, they are visible from a distance, often seen hanging on their webs overhead. Finding oneself surrounded by these webs is disturbing, though not necessarily dangerous.

days. Leather in boots and shoes rots, often after just a few weeks of wear. Cigarette lighters sputter and non-water-proofed matches cease working at all.

The other defining element is the insect population. Swarms of mosquitos and other biting insects descend upon the unwary traveler, leaving welts, burning bites and itchy rashes. Bugs quickly become the most annoying aspect of the jungle, sticking to cammo paint, flying up noses and into mouths, landing in food, and crawling across any stretch of exposed flesh. Day and night, the noise made by tree insects often seems close to deafening. And walking into a large spiderweb in the hot and humid jungle is a unique experience that can test anyone's self-control with a maximum dose of the heeby-jeebies.

Navigation in the jungles of Colombia holds many challenges. Spotting landmarks becomes impossible among the dense trees—a traveler may pass within several meters of known landmark and not see it through heavy foliage. This is especially true in secondary forest where low vegetation grows thick and abundant. For this same reason, area maps become relatively useless, other than as a compass reference.

Few roads cut through the remote jungle, though in the central highlands there are few stretches of forest unbroken by villages, plantations, or scattered subsistence farms (active and abandoned) for more than a few tens of kilometers. Both FARC and the Federales use helicopters as the main form of military transportation into and out of the dense jungles. Even they, however, cannot always find open areas to set down in some of the wilder regions.

On foot, traveling in a straight line can prove difficult. Dense vegetation, especially in secondary forest, forces travellers off of their bearing in tiny increments, until the original course is completely lost. Navigation in broad daylight is equivalent to travel at night in more forgiving climes, as visibility through the vegetation is virtually nil. Most jungle conflict occurs at close range when enemy troops suddenly come upon one another.

Animals

The jungles of Latin America hold a myriad of birds, mammals, and reptiles. The number of different bird species alone numbers in the thousands, including parrots, macaws, and other tropical birds. Their squawking rivals the constant hum of insects and although they are not inherently dangerous, the bite of some of the larger birds can remove a finger. Monkeys as well, can pose a danger to travelers in the jungle. Innately territorial, they will protect themselves with a fury, if threatened. Their bite can cause serious damage by itself, not to mention the threat of disease which follows such an occurrence. Although monkeys will rarely attack unless they feel cornered, they do often toss things, including snakes, down from the branches overhead and can put up quite a noisy fuss if disturbed.

Bright colors abound in the jungle: flowers, birds and even frogs. Many species of South American frogs excrete poisons through their skin (alkaloids) with which they deter predators. These frogs tend to be the most colorful and anyone with some knowledge of jungle survival (Survival/Equatorial roll at -10) will know to avoid touching these creatures. The poisons can cause a variety of symptoms from boils and open sores where the alkaloid eats away at the flesh, to shortness of breath and

dizziness if extended contact with the poison allows it to enter the bloodstream. Cases of death from contact with poisonous frogs are rare, though many of the native indians of South America use a concentrated form of the excretions to tip darts and arrows.

Lizards abound in Colombia, including the colorfully-striped gecko, with its short, stout body and large head. Most species of Latin American lizards have toe pads which allow them to climb vertically and walk upside down on smooth surfaces in their search for flies, spiders and other prey. Although tropical lizards come in many sizes, from only a few millimeters on up, the iguana rivals all others and can reach lengths of up to two meters. Vegetarian iguanas present no threat to humans and will flee at the first sign of trouble.

Piranha

Freshwater fish, piranha live in the waters of some of Colombia's rivers, especially in the Amazonian south. They avoid faster-running waters and most often school where rivers widen and slow. Carnivores, piranha have razor-sharp teeth and can devour their prey in a matter of minutes. Like sharks, piranha are attracted to blood and will attack an animal of any size by the hundreds. The threat of the piranha lies in its numbers. They can grow to sixty cm long and have round, flat bodies which range in color from muted browns to grays, sometimes brightly inflected with oranges and blues. Merely getting in the water with these fish does not usually pose a danger, although doing so with exposed flesh or an open wound can cause them to frenzy and attack. Despite popular myth, it takes more than a few minutes for piranha to completely devour a human being and they often leave large portions of the body untouched, having been sated long before finishing. Nevertheless, piranha can cripple a man for life in a matter of minutes. The most horrifying aspect of a piranha attack is that, if a victim cannot escape, he or she will bleed to death while being eaten—a slow and agonizing way to die. The lucky victim drowns quickly.

APPENDIX Two

Non-PLAYER

CHARACTERS ▼ ▼

The following section covers a half-dozen non-player characters who are involved, in one way or another, with Colombia and the civil war. Some are mentioned elsewhere in this book; others are associated with events or institutions covered before; while others are completely independent. Although the following characters are assigned fairly specific roles, with a few minor adjustments, new characters could easily be generated from their skeletons or basic personalities to fit almost any kind of adventure or campaign. Alter these characters as needed to fit your game.

Most of the characters detailed in this appendix have several layers of interests, goals, and concerns, and each could appear multiple times in a single campaign, in different adventures and in alternate capacities. Depending on how the player characters' goals and methods mesh with those of the NPCs, any of these characters could appear as an ally, opponent, or interested observer—or all three, at different times.

Following these non-player characters are several pages of handouts for the adventure included in this book. These may be photocopied for use with the assignment.

ESTEBÁN MAMOSO *Federale Lanceros Officer*

Estebán Mamosa is a veteran Federale guerilla and a soldier of the old school. Having already served in the army for ten years prior to the outbreak of the open war—as a lancero for most of that time—Mamoso was a veteran of the conflict with FARC well before the rest of the world had even heard of the insurgency.

Mamoso grew up in the streets of Bogotá, running with a gang of ruffians all through primary and secondary school. With his parents working long shifts in the factories, he was left to his own resources more often than not. Mamoso did not have the option of going to college, so when he completed his course at the public school, he found himself faced with two choices: work in the factories or join the Army.

Mamoso chose the latter, enlisting in the Colombian Army in the mid 80s at the age of seventeen. His superiors immediately recognized his intelligence and unshakable courage, and within three years of joining up Mamoso was sent to lanceros training. The lanceros were the most active of Colombian military units before the second Violencia, spearheading anti-guerilla sweeps and assaults against drug operations, and by the early 90s Mamoso had considerable combat experience. That would come to serve him well, as Mamoso's lanceros unit faced some of the most difficult missions of the war's early days. Mamoso himself earned the Colombian Congressional Medal of Valor for his role in the rescue of a politician captured during the raids on Medellín, and was shortly thereafter raised from the enlisted ranks to become an officer. He was recently promoted to the rank of *Capitán* and was put in command of the 3rd Roja Lanceros Company. 3rd Roja has earned a reputation as top-notch guerillas, capable of operating almost anywhere behind FARC lines, and even as company commander Mamoso still spends a great deal of time out in the field with his unit.

Mamoso's success isn't limited to the battlefield. The country's president seems to have taken a liking to Mamoso, whose name always appears on the guest list of the President's social functions. Rumors have begun to circulate that Maria Carreño, the President's daughter, has something to do with this. Many Bogotanos expect to see the two become engaged in the near future.

Like many of his countrymen, Mamoso has thick, dark hair, cropped short. His bushy eyebrows accentuate the sharp sobriety of his black-walnut eyes. Clean-shaven as per Army orders, Mamoso's long, somewhat sculpted features betray his Spanish heritage. Average in height, his physique tends toward the thin side, with lean muscles and long, agile movement. Mamoso's outward callous machismo is more a reflection of the rough streets of his upbringing than of his wartime experience, and he can temper it when appropriate. But he is always assertive and confident, and never afraid to bully or intimidate when necessary.

Mamoso speaks Spanish with only a smattering of basic English.



Estebán Mamoso

23 year-old white male.

175cm, 71kg.

dk brown hair, brown eyes, tan skin

Int	66	Sen	45
Agl	56	Cor	52
Con	60	Str	55
Per	30	App	35
Bra	48	Wil	42

Perception	35
Base Speed	15
Dam. Rating	5
Mass Factor	1.0

Aim	40	45
Small Arm	10	55
Long Arm	10	55
Auto Fire	15	60
Armed H-to-H	35	40
Thrust	10	50
Swing	10	50
Military Science	30	36
Hardware	20	56
Survival	30	34
Equatorial	10	44
Tracking	20	24
Hunting Equat.	10	34
Unarmed H-to-H	54	59
Punch	10	69

weapon	speed	roll	DF/DD
Colt M1911A1	1	55	16
HK G3A3	10	60	14
Punch	15	69	5



Enrique Goncalves

20 year-old white male.
175cm, 79kg.
dk brown hair, brown eyes, tan skin.

Int	73	Sen	56
AgI	62	Cor	57
Con	70	Str	68
Per	39	App	35
Bra	55	Wil	61
Perception	44		
Base Speed	16		
Dam. Rating	6		
Mass Factor	1.0		
Aim	35	40	
Small Arm	10	50	
Auto Fire	10	50	
Armed H-to-H	40	46	
Thrust	10	56	
Swing	10	56	
Hiding	38	43	
Concealment	10	53	
Military Science	40	47	
Hardware	10	57	
Tactics	20	67	
Survival	45	50	
Equatorial	20	70	
Tracking	35	40	
Hunting Equat.	10	50	
Unarmed H-to-H	40	46	
Punch	10	56	
weapon	speed	roll	DF/DD
RSA Drug. SVD	10	50	14
Punch	16	56	6

ENRIQUE "EL PADRE" GONCALVES *Guerrilla Leader*

Goncalves, the youngest of eight siblings, grew up on a farm near Miraflores in the Vaupés Department. Throughout his teens, he watched his brothers and sisters move away to relieve the burden on his parents and to seek their meagre fortunes in the cities, while his father worked from dawn until dusk to coax what little he could from the tired fields. The government never aided the families of his village in their struggles against poverty, poor health, and occasional banditry, appearing only at tax time.

At fifteen, faced with little future at home or in the cities, Goncalves dedicated his life to God. For several years he served as a layman at the cathedral in Miraflores, studying for the priesthood. The injustices he saw against God's people opened a deep wound inside him. One hot afternoon, he stood in the doorway to the church and watched as Federales soldiers dragged a shopkeeper from his home and beat him in the street for sympathizing with insurgents. Goncalves, in that moment, chose sides. He could not, would not, allow his people to be terrorized and subjugated by an immoral government.

At first, Goncalves did his work from Miraflores, hiding FARC guerrillas in his home and smuggling weapons through the countryside to bands of insurgents waiting there. It wasn't long before the Federales discovered his crimes, but Goncalves fled before his arrest, hidden by the guerrillas he had aided in the past. He relinquished his name and became known only as "El Padre," joining the guerillas in their fight against the government. A thoughtful man, it didn't take him long to ascend to a position of leadership among them.

El Padre now leads a group of approximately twenty men and five women, all experienced guerrillas. They aren't part of FARC, although they've been asked by both that group and M-19 to join them. They do, however, often coordinate their attacks with FARC's Second Front, which operates in the same general area. They remain constantly on the move to avoid capture.

Federales intelligence indicates that El Padre's guerrillas have been responsible for more bombings, kidnappings and assassinations than any other independent guerrilla group. El Padre has achieved legendary status, especially among federal troops who can never seem to catch him. His followers would rather die than betray El Padre. Multitudes of possible descriptions of El Padre grace the walls of Colombian police stations, but the authorities don't really know who he is or what he looks like.

Goncalves is a driven young man, compassionate towards most but ruthless towards those he sees as the enemies of Colombia's downtrodden poor. He is quick-witted and thoughtful in person, but tends to be dismissive towards those he sees as the enemy. He is surprisingly youthful, looking much younger even than his twenty-three years. He speaks Spanish only, with a heavy regional accent.

JUAN-CARLOS BONITEZ *PNC Inspector*

Bonitez is a Deputy Director of the Special Investigations Unit (U.S.I.) of the Colombian National Police (P.N.C.). Based in Bogotá, this unit handles everything from internal affairs investigations to the interrogation of important FARC prisoners—but it specializes in counter-espionage efforts against Cartel and FARC activities in federal Colombia and abroad. The U.S.I. emulates the American F.B.I. in its methods and responsibilities; however it has much more leeway to approach investigations as it sees fit. Colombian law does not protect its citizens the way the United States does—the P.N.C. is the law and has few limitations on poking into private homes, businesses and affairs.

Bonitez entered his profession with every advantage. Born to a wealthy, connected Bogotá family, as a youth Bonitez travelled extensively. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia, and a law degree from the Universidad de Bogotá.

But his position is hardly based on advantage alone. A man of near-genius, Bonitez follows his intuitions and more often than not, his hunches prove correct. He has also cultivated a wealth of information sources and a clear understanding of Colombian politics, international trends, advancing technology, and insurgent tactics.

For nearly ten years, Bonitez has overseen the most important investigations related to Colombian security. He has established a solid network of informants who send tid-bits of information his way—often in exchange for leniency or even protection of their illegal acts. Bonitez feels that the small criminals are not his affair, and that letting them sell their drugs is a small price to pay for capturing more deadly and influential criminals. That attitude has led to criticism and more than one formal corruption charge, but Bonitez's success rate has protected his position. Unfortunately, these controversies have sullied his reputation, and though he is at heart an entirely honest cop, he is viewed with distrust from some agencies—including the U.S. D.E.A.—that are reluctant to cooperate and share information with his office.

In the past, Bonitez has worked with BlackEagle on missions involving national security and investigations into narco-criminals. He has proven to be a reliable source of information (when he chooses to share it), though he often tries to micromanage BlackEagle operatives. He treats everyone with whom he works as subordinates, even those working for different agency within the government (indeed, even, sometimes, his superiors). He can be irascible and arrogant, but his focus never leaves his mission.

Bonitez appears much younger than his forty-four years, with short brown hair and hazel eyes that carry a stern alertness. Out of doors, he wears a dark suit and mirrored glasses, and takes care to maintain an intimidating, seamless exterior. In his office, he is often quite a bit more disheveled.

Bonitez is a native Spanish speaker, of course, but is also fluent in English (which he speaks with virtually no accent) and speaks some French and Russian as well.



Juan-Carlos Bonitez

44 year-old white male.
172cm, 70kg.
brown hair, brown eyes, tan skin.

Int	72	Sen	76
Agl	45	Cor	40
Con	49	Str	52
Per	36	App	35
Bra	60	Wil	38

Perception	44
Base Speed	14
Dam. Rating	5
Mass Factor	1.0

Aim	38	43
Small Arm	20	63
Long Arm	10	53
Auto Fire	10	53
Armed H-to-H	52	56
Diplomacy	42	46
Coercion	20	66
Drive	35	40
Auto	20	60
Law	58	62
Colombian	29	91
Perception	65	
Police Science	56	61
Unarmed H-to-H	52	56
Grapple	20	76
Punch	10	66

weapon	speed	roll	DF/DD
Browning HPM3	0	63	14
Punch	14	66	5



Manuél Delgado

38 year-old white male.
170cm, 66kg.
black hair, brown eyes, tan skin.

Int	68	Sen	58
Agl	45	Cor	40
Con	51	Str	48
Per	35	App	32
Bra	56	Wil	35
Perception	44		
Base Speed	14		
Dam. Rating	5		
Mass Factor	1.0		
Aim	38	43	
Small Arm	10	53	
Auto Fire	10	53	
Armed H-to-H	32	36	
Diplomacy	26	30	
Coercion	20	50	
Prying	25	55	
Electrics	20	25	
Electronics	20	45	
Law	35	40	
Colombian	20	60	
Perception	65		
Police Science	40	46	
Unarmed H-to-H	40	44	
Grapple	20	64	
Punch	10	54	
weapon	speed	roll	DF/DD
Colt M1911A1	1	53	16
IMI Mini-Uzi	6	53	17
(auto)	6	53	17
Punch	14	54	5

MANUÉL DELGADO *Corrupt Security Chief*

Manuél Delgado is the Head of Security at Bogotá International Airport. Innocuous enough at a glance, Delgado is a harsh and thoroughly corrupt man who covets his position and wields his authority like a weapon.

Though corrupt, Delgado by no means works for FARC or the Cartel. He doesn't have to—his job provides plenty of money-making opportunities without any direct ties to the insurgency. In particular, Delgado runs a tight customs inspection station, complete with strip searches and intense interrogations for those pulled aside by Customs officials. Theoretically, only the most suspicious of targets receive such treatment, but on Delgado's watch Italian shoes, heavy rings, expensive suits, and any of a other trillion signs of affluence are what catches the eyes of Customs. Veteran travelers know that a few quick bucks can pass them through customs unaccosted.

Delgado grew up in Bucaramanga, where he was orphaned at a very young age by the first Violencia. He lived with his grandparents most of his life, working odd jobs until he was old enough to join the National Police. He served on the P.N.C. for fifteen years, rising among the ranks to Capitán due as much to his reputation for fair play (the fact that he never tried to cheat a superior out of his share of Delgado's under-the-table income) as to his efficiency. In 1992, Delgado headed a raid on a black market warehouse in Tunja that caught two high-level government officials red-handed. Delgado covered up the involvement of the officials and, in exchange, received the position of Head of Security at Bogotá International. Although he has not had to, Delgado would not hesitate to milk his hold over the officials if he ever needed their assistance.

The Colombian government has purged much of its corruption since the outbreak of the war, seeking out and prosecuting dirty officials at all levels. Delgado, however, has survived, due largely to the autonomy of his position and what he has on other officials, who may have gone clean but have dirty pasts. Some of his victims have tried to report him, but no action has yet been taken against him.

Operatives passing through Bogotá International Airport may well run into Delgado. Although Customs officers tend to avoid targeting Americans, anyone who appears affluent—or anyone at all who strikes the whim of agents on duty—can be asked to step into *La Sala*, the room where suspected smugglers are searched and questioned. Delgado himself does none of the dirty work, his position freeing him from mundane duties such as filling out paperwork and going through people's underwear. But often, with sadistic pleasure, Delgado interrogates and oversees the strip-searches of "suspected smugglers"—especially those women unlucky enough to catch his eye.

Delgado's corrupt nature doesn't prevent him from doing his job, at least some of the time. If innocent travelers are treated with cruelty, real smuggling suspects face even more horrendous treatment.

Delgado has the kind of piercing eyes that make even the most innocent of travelers nervous. Dark and cold, they regard the world with either impersonal detachment or lewd scrutiny. Once handsome, age and stress have marked Delgado with their scars, his sagging skin producing a jowl beneath his chin and bags under his eyes. His tight mouth rarely smiles except with a crudeness that betrays his less-than-saintly thoughts. His black crew-cut stands up abrasively from his head and he has a nervous habit of patting his hand on it, barely brushing the top as if to make sure it still pricks when touched.

RICO RAMIREZ *Cartel Enforcer*

Growing up in the shadow of the cartels, Ramirez sees them as his family. He has worked for Eduardo Benedetti, of the Medellín Cartel, since he was a boy. His own father worked as a Benedetti chemist until heart failure took him, likely the result of his long-term exposure to coca oils. The Cartel pays Ramirez's mother a small monthly stipend in honor of her late husband's service and drew Ramirez into the fold.

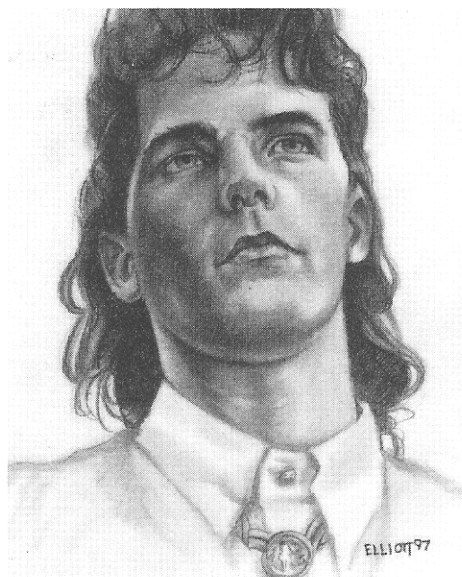
A literate and mannered young man with a middle-class upbringing, Ramirez's first job was as a driver. But the Cartel began immediately grooming him for better things. Before long, he was working as a bodyguard for the Benedetti family, and as an enforcer, the strong-arm of Cartel law.

When Ramirez was eighteen, Benedetti sent him to the U.S. to attend college. Ramirez came away with a Bachelor's degree in Business Principles, and this, combined with his previous job experience and natural charm, made him a unique employee. He returned to Colombia just in time for the outbreak of the Violencia, and was quickly promoted to a minor position of authority. Benedetti has since further increased Ramirez's responsibilities, sending him out as a front man for negotiations with business partners—especially those in the legitimate corporate world. His business savvy allows him to communicate easily with them, and he has worked out agreements with some of the largest companies doing business in Colombia, including Air Tiberius, Granería Shipping, and Precipia Drilling. Ramirez fosters positive relations between the Cartel and international companies as well, presenting a professional business image to the corporate world.

Handsome and muscular, Ramirez has blue eyes passed down through the generations from his Spanish ancestors. These factors, in conjunction with his tanned skin and shoulder-length, sun-lightened hair, give him a Mediterranean appeal, as if he should be lounging on a beach along the Côte d'Azur rather than living in the mountains of Colombia. Equally comfortable in either a business suit or casual attire, Ramirez always appears neat and fashionable. Around his neck he wears a St. Christopher medal on a thick gold chain. His disarming, rakish grin completes the look.

Ramirez's loyalty to the Benedettis is genuine and passionate—and backed up by the fact that his life, and that of his mother, depend on it. With the undying determination of a well-trained dog, Ramirez will endanger himself without hesitation to protect his master. He kills without remorse and tortures with a calculated lack of sympathy, all the while playing the role of charming contract negotiator.

Somewhat sheltered from the harsh realities of the war by the fact that he remains so close to the protected Cartel family and the posh business world in which he works, Ramirez just doesn't give a damn about what's going on in the rest of the country. He knows his current events, but to him they are just negotiating tools. If he can place a fear of bombings and betrayal by the Federales into the hearts of the business partners with whom he deals, then they are more likely to accept him as a customer or contractor.



Rico Ramirez

24 year-old white male.
180cm, 90kg.
lt. brown hair, blue eyes, tan skin.

Int	65	Sen	68
Agl	55	Cor	52
Con	70	Str	70
Per	35	App	68
Bra	50	Wil	53

Perception	50
Base Speed	15
Dam. Rating	6
Mass Factor	0.8

Aim	50	56
Small Arm	20	76
Auto Fire	10	66
Armed H-to-H	35	41
Thrust	10	51
Swing	10	51
Athletics	28	34
Body Building	20	54
Drive	30	36
Automobile	20	56
Hiding	30	36
Shadowing	10	46
Perception	40	
Unarmed H-to-H	35	41
Block	20	61
Dodge	15	56
Grapple	30	71
Punch	30	71

weapon	speed	roll	DF/DD
Browning HPM3	0	76	14
IMI Mini-Uzi	6	66	17
(auto)	6	66	17
Punch	15	71	6



Antonio Chicua: FARC Agent

42 year-old white male.
175cm, 68kg.
dk brown hair, brown eyes, tan skin.

Int	72	Sen	50
Agl	52	Cor	48
Con	50	Str	45
Per	53	App	45
Bra	52	Wil	48
Perception	38		
Base Speed	15		
Dam. Rating	5		
Mass Factor	1.0		
Aim	40	45	
Small Arm	10	55	
Auto Fire	15	60	
Armed H-to-H	35	40	
Thrust	10	50	
Swing	10	50	
Drive	30	35	
Automobile	10	45	
Hiding	40	45	
Concealment	10	55	
Shadowing	20	65	
Language (Anglo)	40	46	
English	30	76	
Perception	40		
Unarmed H-to-H	54	59	
Punch	10	69	
weapon	speed	roll	DF/DD
Mini-Uzi	15	69	17
(auto)	15	69	17
Punch	15	69	5

ANTONIO CHICUA *FARC Agent*

Although one would never guess from his quiet, generally dour exterior, Antonio Chicua was one of the main players in the outbreak of the second Violencia. A member of FARC since the age of thirteen, Chicua was instrumental in creating the alliance between FARC and the Medellín Cartel, and he remains an important figure in the former organization.

Chicua was born to a poor family of subsistence farmers in the rural stretches of the upper Cauca valley during the height of the first Violencia. His family, whose only experience with the government—when it entered their lives at all—was with death squads and oppressive federal troops, were supporters of FARC from its very inception. Illiterate and facing no prospects for his future, Chicua joined the organization in the early 70s, serving as a guerilla and fighting federal troops throughout central Colombia. After a few years, and having obtained a basic education and some experience, it became clear to his leaders that Chicua's real talent lay not so much in combat, but in leadership and communication. He was reassigned as a regional political officer, tasked with coordinating FARC's efforts with its supporters in the Cauca valley.

Chicua excelled at this job, making political connections, winning supporters, garnering material support for FARC's combat units and even, eventually, soliciting cash donations and assistance in training and materiel from Cuba and the Soviet Union. As the mid-eighties brought an increase in the drug trade and a decrease in foreign sponsorship, Chicua's connections shifted towards the drug cartels and international black market. It was he (by this time a FARC Colonel, one of the two-dozen or so most senior members of the organization) that first proposed an alliance with the cartels; and, after the Huila uprising, he was given the job of closing the deal. He did so, and the rest is history.

But though Chicua is well known to and trusted by the Cartel (more so, in fact, than probably any other FARC leader), he is decidedly a FARC man. Like most on the War Council, Chicua sees the Cartel as a lawless, irresponsible organization with little genuine concern for the people of Colombia. He quietly believes that when the Federales are beaten, it will be FARC, not the Cartel, that will establish a new government. He plays a role in that outcome, exploiting his contacts within the Medellín Cartel to provide FARC's leadership intelligence on their erstwhile allies.

Chicua is not a member of the War Council, but he is highly respected. He answers only to FARC Chief of Staff Carlito Jacobo Valente, and has ready access to FARC commander Manuel Rivera.

Chicua is an intelligent and reasonable man, hardened by a tough life but not without compassion. He is dedicated to overthrow of the corrupt government, bigoted upper class, careless multinationals, and greedy drug kingpins in Colombia, all of which, in his view, build their prosperity on the suffering of the poor. He laments that state that Colombia has fallen into, but as a man of action isn't afraid to break a few eggs for a better tomorrow.

An average-looking man for his age and ethnicity, Chicua tends to blend into a crowd. He has few remarkable features, no facial hair and a standard, military hair-cut. He wears simple dress—pants, a short-sleeved shirt, and sunglasses when on civilian duty (as in Miami), and a standard FARC uniform on those occasions that find him in the field.

139 Int. Mil. Batt.

Contract 1859 14/7/99

BlackEagle/BlackEagle Security and Investigations Corporation

Major Delacuarda

Operation Order for Contract Operation

Situation

Target facility is located in steep terrain of the Pereira region. Vegetation is heavy in low-lying areas, thinner at higher elevations, occasionally broken by agricultural areas. Weather seasonally hot and humid, with probable afternoon rainstorms. Sunset 14/7/99 at 2021, sunrise 15/7/99 at 0515.

Battalion level Federal forces are based 30km to the southeast of the operating area. Platoon level patrols are limited to the east and south of the Río Corconá Sur. No contact with friendly forces will occur during operation. No fire or air support is available.

Enemy forces are concentrated to the north and west of Cantuara. Squad and platoon-sized patrols through the operating area are likely. Company level enemy forces based in Pereira are air-mobile and can be inserted into the region with 30 minutes notice. Enemy forces can call upon fire support from 105mm and 155mm artillery to all areas north and west of the objective and southeast to the village of La Mercéd. Enemy forces are also supported by Puma and HIND-D helicopter gunships. All enemy units in the region are well supplied and at 90% to 100% strength.

Total force at target facility is estimated at 12 - 24 personnel, including technical operators. Local defenses may include foxholes and earth bunkers, wire obstacles, and anti-personnel mines. Reinforcement by helicopter is likely shortly after attack. Enemy forces in Cantuara are equipped with trucks and armored personnel carriers, but are limited to travel on roads as indicated by map.

Mission

Unit is tasked to destroy air defense detection facility located 6km east of Cantuara at grid reference FT78582832. Facilities at site include TAC-700 air detection radar trailer and control trailer, satellite transmission antenna, and associated cabling and equipment. Destroy all equipment at the site, with priority first on the control trailer, then the radar trailer, then the satellite antenna, then ancillary equipment. The TAC-700 system control trailer is armored against light smallarms fire, but is susceptible to explosives including HE and thermite.

No other units will assist in task.

Execution

Unit will be air-inserted at grid reference FT73852375 approximately 6000 meters from target at 1615 14/7/99. Move directly to target area, avoiding contact with enemy at all cost. Destroy all air defense equipment. Move to extraction point at grid reference FT75803245 for pick-up at 0820 15/7/99.

Administration and Logistics

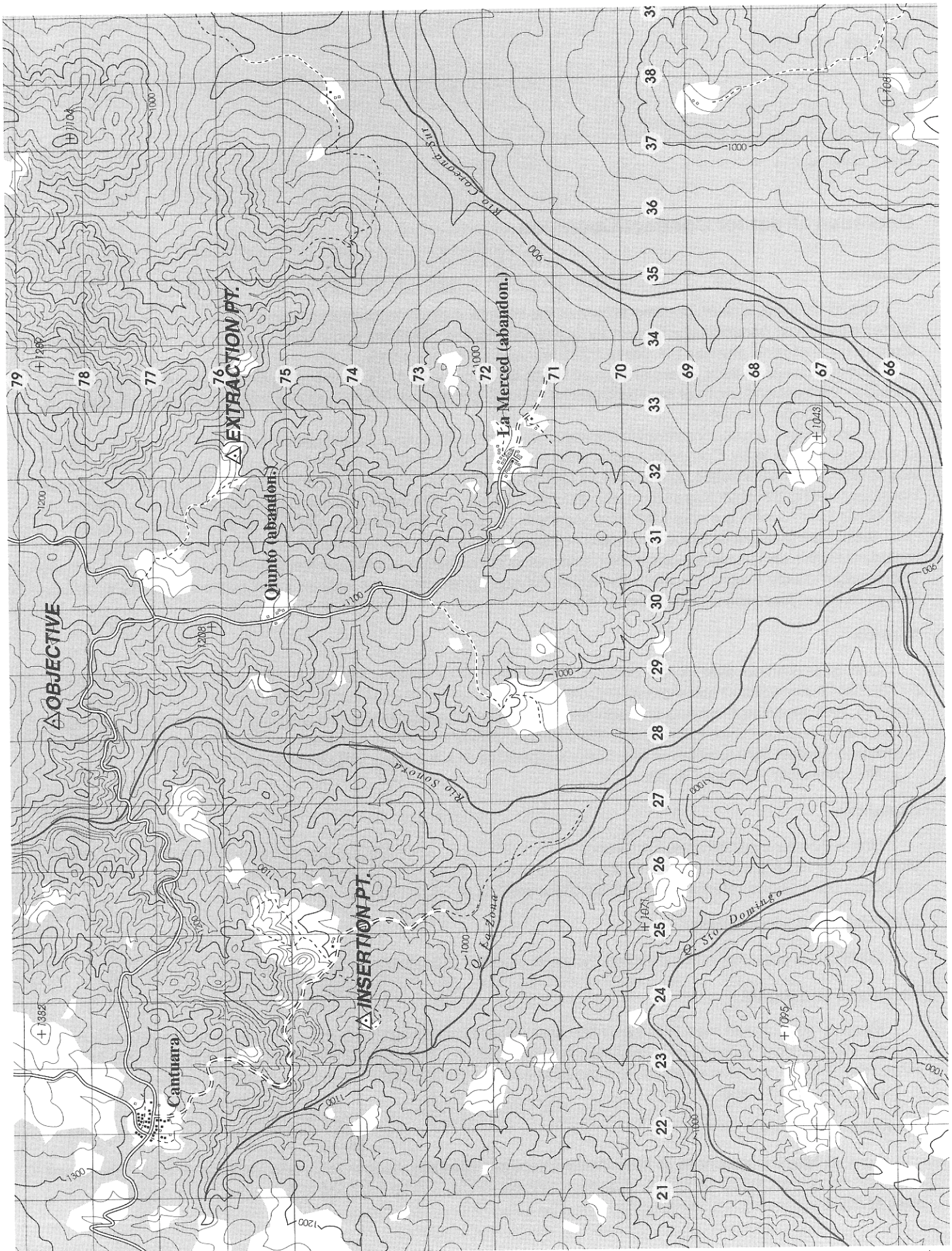
Medevac is provided with extraction. No other support is available.

Command and Signal

Make no contact with friendly forces in the area. Mark extraction site with green smoke upon arrival of extraction aircraft, mark landing hazards with red smoke or red markers. Panic azimuth for friendly lines is 135° grid. Closest established friendly position is forward fire base located at grid 68873768. Running password for safe entry into base is "ocho"; response "casa".

Amendment 1: Travel

Contact Major Delacuarda at Blue Water Executive Charters hangar (civil aviation gate 9, bldg. 72), Miami International Airport, 0830 14/7/99 for transport in theatre. Unit will be returned to Miami International Airport on or after 15/7/99.



FT78662823

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FT78502841

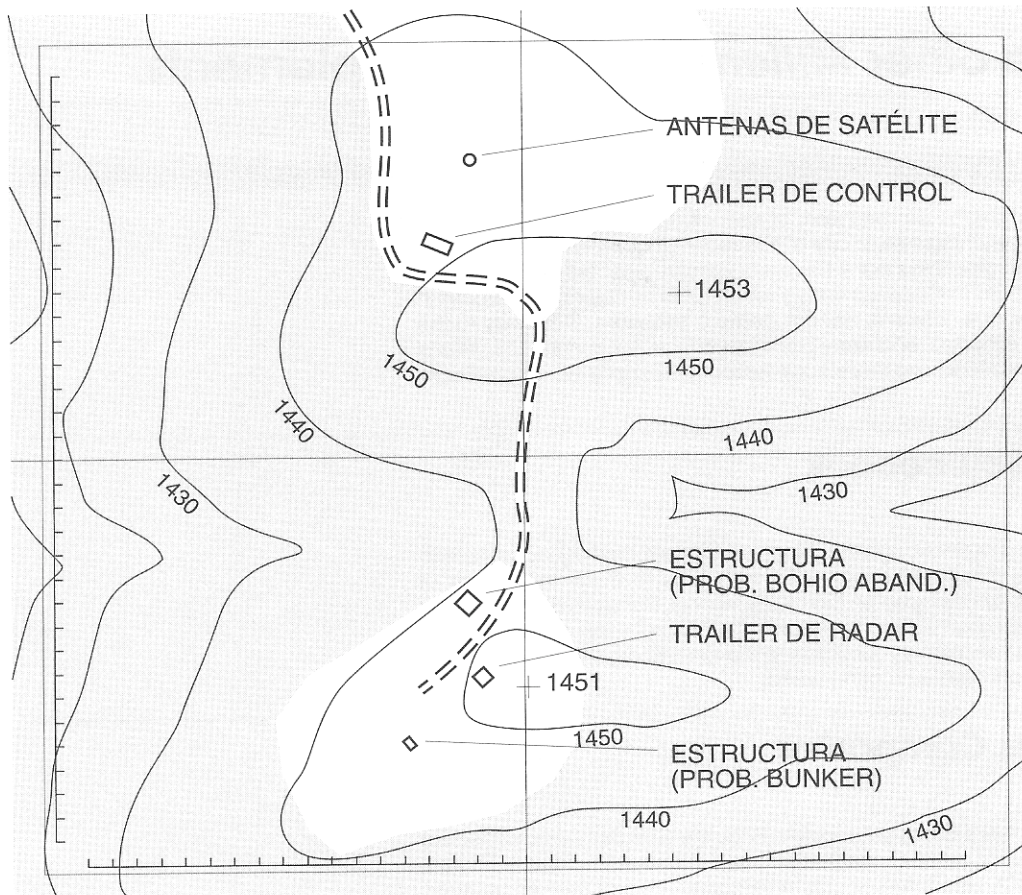
ESCALA 1:1,500

14:11:32 14-6-99
SCOMA NAT. BOGOTA
PROC 21:40 14-6-99
MARCOS, L. AN.

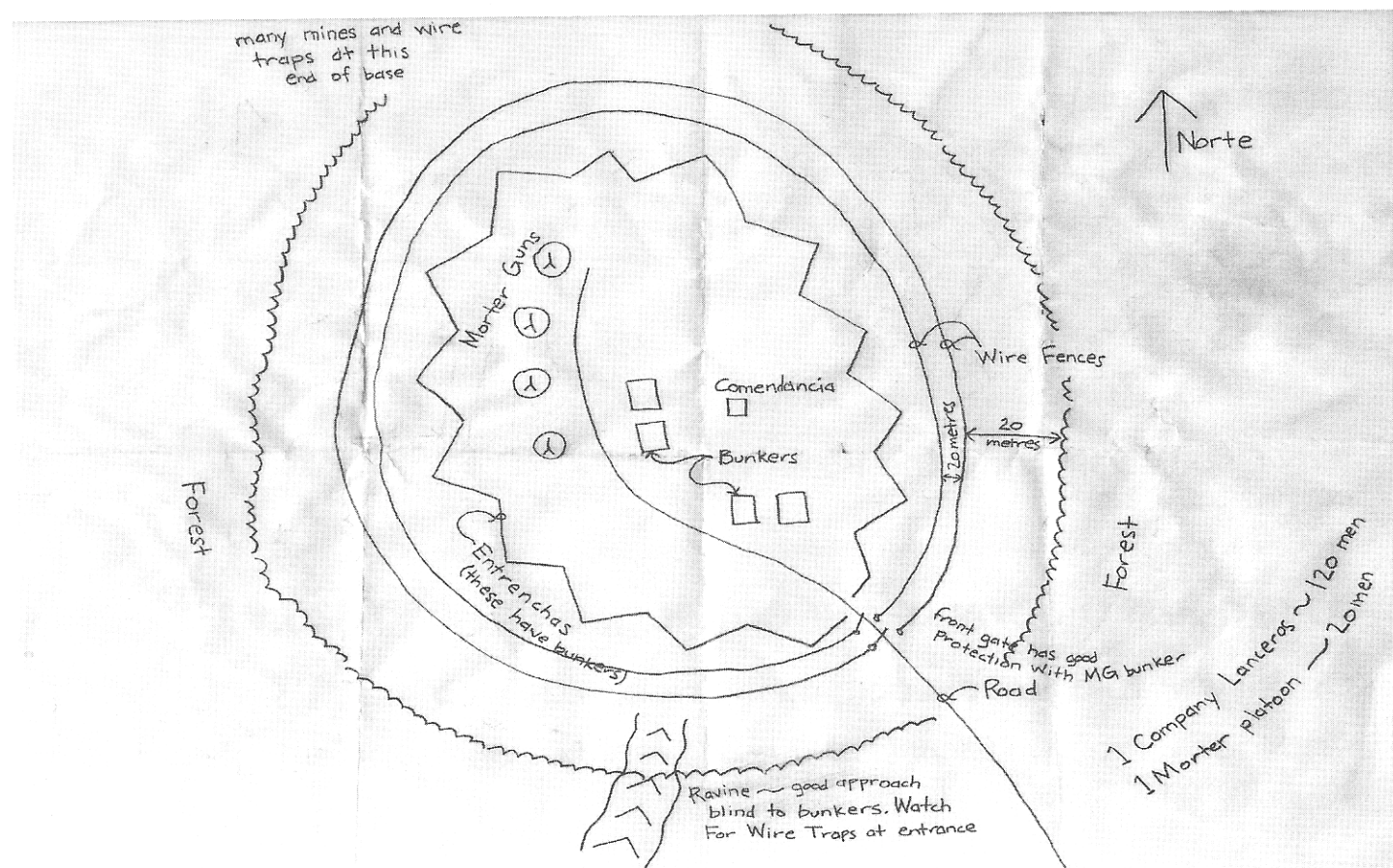
SCE

REQ PAR 139INTMIL
DELACUARDA, J. MAY.
14-5-99

APP PAR 139INTMIL
RENALDO, R. GEN.
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The Medellín Agent HANDOUT C



The Medellín Agent HANDOUT D

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Behind enemy lines...

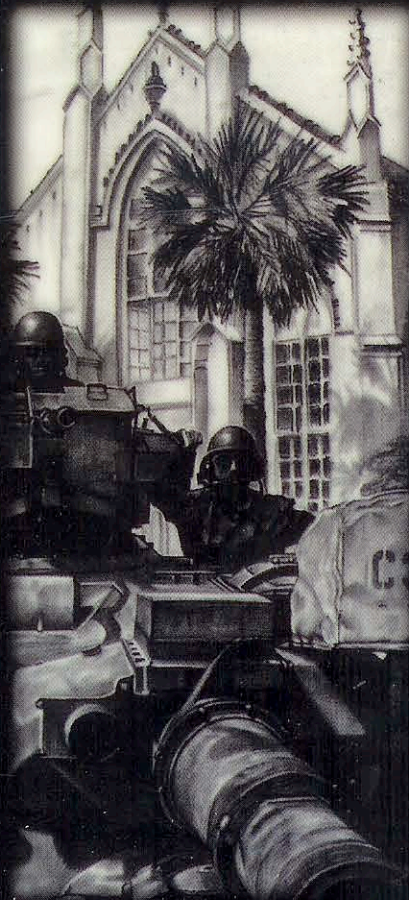
The roar of jet turbines gives way to the din of jungle insects as the Colombian army VH-22 disappears over the trees. We're alone now, on the sweltering slopes of the Cordillera Occidental, fifty clicks behind FARC lines. And ten clicks from the crash site—an F-23 downed over enemy territory. The CIA didn't tell us what it had been up to—probably didn't tell congress either—but whatever it was, we can bet we're not the only one looking for the wreck.

The tenor of the forest noise changes just as Josh's arm snaps into the danger signal. At first there's nothing, just the drip of sweat running off my brow as I crouch, frozen. Then comes the muttered sound of Spanish voices, and Josh slowly signaling "enemy in sight." Damn. Not 200 meters off the LZ and we hit a patrol. It's going to be a long day.

I quietly flick the safety off my AUG...

After decades of struggle against minor guerrilla groups, in 1999 Colombia faces an all-out war against the heavily-armed, insanely aggressive drug lords of the Medellín Cartel. A political agenda is no longer a necessary part of the insurrection—in the dark and brutal world of *Millennium's End*, greed and criminality are just as legitimate reasons to overthrow an government. So as an indifferent world watches, Colombia struggles against increasingly difficult odds of survival—making for plenty of work for a BlackEagle cell.

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