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Honduras Claims Colombian Threat To President Ricardo Maduro

by LADB Staff

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Honduran security officials have claimed that the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) is out to assassinate President Ricardo Maduro. Security Minister Oscar Alvarez said the FARC has "several fronts charged with destabilizing countries," and Maduro is being targeted because his government is investigating whether the Colombian rebel force is operating in Honduras.

Alvarez acknowledged his accusation is uncorroborated. Honduras has made uncorroborated charges in the past that have turned out to be without foundation. The most recent involved the sighting of an al-Qaeda agent sought by the US (see NotiCen, 2004-10-14). Alvarez also said that an arms and drug-trafficking operation had been uncovered in Honduras, involving the FARC and Nicaragua.

He said the ring sends AK-47 rifles to Colombia in exchange for drugs. "The drugs were presumably then destined for the United States, although some of it stayed here," said ministry spokesman Leonel Saucedo. Alvarez said, "The arms were packed up and transported by boat or by plane to Colombia and would return the same way bearing drugs to our country." He said the arms came from Nicaragua, leftovers from the contra war in the 1980s.

Several arrests have been made in connection with these charges, two in San Pedro Sula and two in Tegucigalpa. Another suspect, already in prison, was said to be directing the operation from his cell.

A different story from Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, Government Minister Julio Vega denied the Honduran allegations, saying, "It cannot be affirmed that there are elements of the FARC within Nicaragua. Neither can the expansion of the Colombian guerrillas be denied, but to say that there are elements here, no." Vega said events quite the opposite of the Honduran charges occurred in 2003 and 2004 when Nicaraguan police arrested a member of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), a right-wing paramilitary group linked to the Colombian army.

In April 2004, Nicaraguan police arrested Jorge Eliezer Hernandez Gonzalez of the AUC with US \$746,300 in his possession. Nicaraguan army spokesman Col. Adolfo Zepeda said that he knew nothing about the Honduran charges but that "Nicaragua is on the bridge between the countries producing drugs and the countries consuming them, therefore we consider narcoactivity one of the emerging threats in Central America."

Proof elusive, conviction abundant

Back in Honduras, Alvarez was adamant. He freely acknowledged a lack of corroboration but was unwavering in the certainty that FARC is there in force. "Yes, there are other cells, which we continue to monitor. We received this information from Colombia from special sources and from our own. There are more people. At this moment we don't want to mention names or places to avoid ruining the investigations. We have been in contact and working with the Direccion de Inteligencia Policial (Dipol) of Colombia and with other entities from countries that have given us this information."

He said the uncorroborated information is that there are several fronts of the FARC whose mission is to destabilize countries, and his forces are investigating to see if they are doing that in Honduras. He said that Maduro had gotten threats from these FARC fronts and that they planned to make an attempt on his life.

On March 29, an organized-crime prosecutor announced that three Colombian police officials would arrive in Honduras the following day. Prosecutor Doris Aguilar told the media, "We have detected that many Hondurans are doing illegal business with Colombians who could be involved with the FARC, and it is necessary to investigate. We maintain permanent communication with the Unidad Antiterrorismo y Antidrogas in Bogota to exchange information as well as with the police in Central America to avoid the entrance here of Colombian guerrillas."

-- End --