

4-6-1989

Americas Watch Report: Colombian Drug Traffickers Wage War Against Leftists

John Neagle

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur>

Recommended Citation

Neagle, John. "Americas Watch Report: Colombian Drug Traffickers Wage War Against Leftists." (1989).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur/2960>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiSur by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Americas Watch Report: Colombian Drug Traffickers Wage War Against Leftists

by John Neagle

Category/Department: General

Published: Thursday, April 6, 1989

In a report released April 4, the New York-based Americas Watch asserted that Colombian drug traffickers are waging a "dirty war" against leftist politicians and union leaders. The report contradicts the notion of alliance between leftist guerrillas and drug traffickers "popularized" by statements from US officials, and an assortment of Latin American government officials engaged in struggles with home-grown rebel forces. [Titled "The Killings in Colombia," the report came after field trips by staff members to Colombia in December 1988 and February 1989. A copy may be obtained by sending \$10 to Americas Watch, Room 911, 36 West 44th Street, New York, NY, 10036.] Colombian cocaine dealers, said Americas Watch, financed, trained and directed the paramilitary death squads that committed most of the political killings and massacres in Colombia from 1987 through 1988. The origins of the "dirty war" are found in the drug traffickers' attempt to obtain respectability by investing in rural estates with laundered drug money. The drug-financed landowners were met with movements of landless peasants and farm laborers' unions. The latter are sometimes assisted by Colombian guerrillas, who often enforced higher wage rates or extorted protection money from landowners. Americas Watch said that rather than take on the rebel armies, the death squads linked to the drug traffickers attacked labor union leaders, human rights activists, and leftist politicians. According to the Jesuit-run Center for Popular Education and Research in Bogota, in 1988, 4,000 Colombians died in political violence. In the first 10 months of 1988, about 800 Colombians died in direct combat between guerrillas and soldiers. Americas Watch estimated that most of the rest were killed by drug-financed death squads. The drug traffickers have set up schools for training assassins, financed contract killers and provide refuges on remote farms and ranches, said Americas Watch. Local military authorities often ignore these activities, and in some cases, actively collaborate. (Basic data from New York Times, 04/06/89)

-- End --