7-27-1989

Colombia: Cabinet Reshuffle

John Neagle

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

Recommended Citation


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.
Colombia: Cabinet Reshuffle

by John Neagle

Category/Department: General
Published: Thursday, July 27, 1989

On July 16, President Virgilio Barco announced four changes to his cabinet. Orlando Vazquez was named Interior Minister, replacing Raul Orejuela who became involved in a scandal when two months ago police discovered his name among documents linked to a mafia-run network within the country's security service. Gen. Oscar Botero Restrepo replaced retiring Gen. Manuel Guerrero Paz as minister of defense. Monica de Greiff de Linda and Margarita Mena were appointed ministers of justice, and energy and mines, respectively. All but Botero are members of President Barco's Liberal Party. Barco's new cabinet appointments have reportedly evoked a firestorm of criticism. In an editorial appearing July 18, the respected daily newspaper El Tiempo said "the country expected something better, above all in light of current difficult circumstances." Members of the Liberal Party described the appointments of Vazquez and Mena, in particular, as concessions to the guerrillas. The National Liberation Army (ELN) has called for the resignations of the energy and mines minister and the manager of the Colombian Petroleum Enterprise (Ecopetrol) in exchange for suspending attacks on oil pipelines and other facilities during a national forum to discuss national oil policy. A new guerrilla group, known as JEGA (Jorge Eliecer Gaitan), has applied pressure on Barco himself to resign after abducting one of his relatives. Political observers in Colombia were surprised by Barco's decision to replace Guerrero Paz only seven months after his appointment to head the defense ministry. Rumors of military involvement in drug trafficking had reportedly suggested Guerrero's complicity. Botero was selected to head the ministry by top-ranking members of Colombia's officer corps. The new ministers of justice and energy and mines were also described by unidentified local observers to Notimex as lacking the experience and leadership capacity required under current crisis conditions. The latter refer to the well-known undermining and disarray of the court system by drug traffickers, and certain guerrilla groups' unrelenting sabotage of Colombia's oil facilities, and periodic kidnappings of foreign and national officials, engineers, and others linked to the oil production and distribution. (Basic data from DPA, 07/16/89; Notimex, 07/18/89)

-- End --