9-12-1989

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Category/Department: General
Published: Tuesday, September 12, 1989

Sept. 4: On Monday evening, eight bombs exploded in Medellin destroying two small police stations, two branches of the state-owned Caja de Credito Agrario, and offices of the Banco Occidente. No injuries were reported. Sept. 5: Police reported the murder of Angela Piedad de Guerrero, wife of army Col. Carlos Guerrero. She was shot three times by assailants on a motorcycle while sitting in a car outside a grocery store, said the Defense Ministry. Col. Guerrero is a deputy logistics chief for the military general command. As of Sept. 5, Colombia's 46 state-run airports were under military and national police guard. The local media reported that under new security measures, passengers' armed escorts have been banned from airport waiting rooms and airline offices. Sept. 6: Police announced that Stela Torrado de Otalora, wife of Major Jairo Otalora, commander of Risaralda department's third police district, was murdered Sept. 4, together with her driver. The killing occurred on a road between Pereira and Belen de Umbria, 200 km. west of Bogota. On Aug. 24, the drug mafia announced they would wage "total war" on government officials, judges, journalists, the nation's "oligarchy" and their families. However, police say they have as yet no clues on the motive for the murders of Angela Piedad de Guerrero and Stela Torrado de Otalora. Defense Ministry sources reported that in the past two weeks, 10,768 persons were arrested; 4,789 kilos of narcotics seized; and, 881 estates, 449 vehicles and 358 aircraft confiscated. The ministry said 535 detainees will appear before military courts for alleged participation in drug trafficking and other criminal activities. Most arrests took place in Bogota, Cali, Medellin, Barranquilla and rural areas of Cundinamarca, Valle and Antioquia departments. Next, the ministry reported that judges had sufficient evidence to keep about 7% of arrested persons behind bars. Five US helicopters and several aircraft, including A-37 combat planes, were delivered to Colombia during the previous week. In a letter to President Barco published by L'Elysee, French President Francois Mitterand offered technical and legal assistance to help in the anti-drug crackdown. The National Security Council issued a ban on public demonstrations in Bogota, effective Sept. 6, in an attempt to prevent terrorist attacks. Mayor Andres Pastrana said the curfew and prohibition on the sale of alcohol were temporary. Eduardo Martinez Romero, wanted in Atlanta, Ga. on charges in connection with the laundering of $1.2 billion worth of drug profits, was extradited to the US. [Martinez arrived in Atlanta on Sept. 7.] The Colombian government offered a $250,000 reward for information leading to the capture of each of two drug ring leaders, publicized in 30-second commercials on state-run television channels. The two are Pablo Escobar Gaviria and Jose Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha. Sept. 6: President Barco used state of emergency powers late Wednesday to indefinitely replace elected mayors of Puerto Boyaca and Pacho with military officers. Replacement of mayors, said Barco, would take place in the country's most threatened and violence-prone cities. Both towns are located in the Magdalena Medio, reportedly infested with cocaine processing laboratories and training grounds for drug traffickers' death squads. Puerto Boyaca is located 95 miles north of Bogota, and Pacho, 40 miles northeast of the capital. On Wednesday night, two men on a motorcycle tossed a dynamite bomb at the Banco Central Hipotecario in Medellin, causing $45,000 in damage. Sept. 7: The opposition Conservative Party issued a communique condemning Barco's decision to replace
elected mayors with military officers. Bogota Mayor Andres Pastrana said the measure "is openly unconstitutional and a clear attempt against democratic principles." Medellin Mayor Juan Gomez Martinez, who acknowledged that his city was the most violent in Colombia, also condemned the emergency action. In a radio broadcast, Gomez Martinez said that any military officer sent to replace him would have to remove him forcibly from the mayor's office. The mayor asserted that the executive decree was aimed at ousting him from office because he had openly called for a dialogue with the drug traffickers. Barco has refused to talk with the drug ring leaders. Army Major Alvaro Matallana to take over the mayor's office in the town of Puerto Boyaca, replacing Marino Estrada as mayor. On Thursday evening, in response to the public outcry, Interior Minister Orlando Velasquez announced that the mayor substitution decrees had been rescinded. The Caracol radio network reported that telephoned warnings of bombs placed in buildings in Barranquilla forced evacuation of several government offices and banks, including the Venezuelan Embassy. No bombs were found. In Bogota, about 500 students at the National University, shouting "Gringos, go home!," burned a US flag and threw stones at reporters. University administrators evacuated the campus and suspended classes for the day. They said two students were slightly injured. In Bogota, gunmen killed cattle rancher Jaime Castillo Franco and wounded his driver. Police said it was not known if Castillo's death was related to the drug war. Two bombs exploded in a pedestrian mall in Medellin, injuring two policemen. Late Thursday, a group of assailants burned a Medellin restaurant before the curfew went into effect. Sept. 8: Early Friday, a three kg. bomb exploded in Itagui, south of Medellin, causing damage to the state-run Caja Agraria bank. The blast marked the first bombing to occur during the 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. curfew imposed Aug. 30. A powerful bomb exploded late Friday outside a telephone company's office in Medellin, reportedly wounding four people and causing serious damage, witnesses said. The two explosions marked the 35th and 36th blasts in Medellin and environs since Aug. 18. In Medellin, gunmen seized and burned 10 city-owned vehicles in various parts of Medellin. The city's remaining 800 municipal vehicles were taken out of circulation and locked up in garages to prevent further attacks. An unidentified US official in Colombia told AP that the crackdown on drugs had reduced the cocaine trade by up to 50%. He said much of the $65 million worth of military airplanes and hardware donated by the US was not suited to the job. In response to a question, the official said the eight A-37 warplanes cannot be used to bomb cocaine labs and the only way to employ them may be to help force down suspected drug flights. Police in Medellin said they rescued the owner of a transport company from kidnappers, after raiding their hideout in the nearby town of Santa Elena. The five kidnappers were shot to death. Bernardo Marulanda was rescued unharmed 13 days after the gunmen seized him and demanded a $1 million ransom. It was unclear whether the kidnappers were connected with drug traffickers. The Medellin-based 4th Army Brigade announced that it had captured Nicolas Gonzalez Cardona, the personal pilot of Pablo Escobar Gaviria. Escobar is one of the alleged Medellin drug ring leaders. Many Medellin businesses closed after receiving telephoned death threats. Colombian officials said Luis Fernando Galeano, a key aide of Escobar's and a suspected trafficker, was released from custody because there was no legal Colombian warrant for holding him and also no extradition request from the US. The Drug Enforcement Administration in Washington said Galeano was not wanted in the US. In a telephone interview with AP, police Col. Oscar Pelaez Carmona said Galeano was released because police holding him lacked the required legal papers. [On Sept. 9, Colombian newspapers reported that Galeano was a financial administrator for the Medellin drug ring. They said he was linked to a political assassination earlier this year in Monteria and a failed murder plot against a man with ties to the rival Cali drug ring.] A poll conducted by daily newspaper El Tiempo and the Caracol radio network showed that 62% of Colombians favor extradition, and 36% oppose it.
Last year in the same poll, 65% opposed it. The 612 respondents were residents of Colombia's four largest cities: Bogota, Medellin, Cali and Barranquilla. The margin of error was not available, and it was unclear how representative the results were of all Colombian adults. Sept. 9: Colombian daily newspaper El Tiempo reported that the army raided 30 sites in Bogota and the rural town of Pacho, and seized 49 vehicles. Some of the vehicles were believed to belong to drug ring leader Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha. In a communiqué, the 4th Army Brigade in Medellin said soldiers had captured the four leading members of a death squad controlled by drug traffickers in Medellin. The four also served as bodyguards for the wife of Pablo Escobar. The death squad, called "Love for Medellin," took its name from a local charity organization, and operated as a vigilante group committed to "cleaning up" the city. The death squad killed suspected prostitutes, homosexuals and drug addicts. In Medellin, bombs knocked out telephone lines and damaged two factories and a restaurant, police said. No serious injuries were reported. Sept. 10: In Medellin, a bomb damaged a liquor factory, hooded assailants set a city garbage truck on fire, and police defused a bomb at a branch of a government-run savings bank. No injuries were reported. In western Colombia, assailants killed a foreman and set fire to the ranch of a government official who wanted the confiscated rural property of drug traffickers distributed to peasants. A National Drug Council official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AP the government has signed extradition orders for three imprisoned Colombians. The three were identified as Ana Helena Rodriguez, 37, jailed in Bogota and accused of drug trafficking; Bernardo Londono Quintana, 47, jailed in Bogota for allegedly laundering money; and Alberto Orlandez Gamboa, 37, jailed in Medellin, also for alleged laundering. According to AP, the Supreme Court is still debating whether Barco's emergency powers are constitutional. If the judges decide they are not, the government may have to return confiscated property. Sept. 11: Colombian Justice Minister Monica de Greiff returned from the US. Former mayor of Medellin, Pablo Pelaye Gonzalez was assassinated by at least two attackers with automatic weapons on his way to Hojalata Holasa, a plywood company he headed. His driver was also killed. Colombia radio stations reported that the killers, apparently on foot, fired 9mm automatic pistols at Pelaye's sedan, shed their black outer garments and fled. Pelaye was mayor of the city from 1985 to 1986. At that time, he had reportedly supported entering into negotiations with the drug traffickers to end the "cocaine war." According to AP, over the weekend at least five properties were seized, along with 600 head of cattle, and an assortment of luxury life-style appurtenances. The properties were said to belong to the top two drug mafia leaders Pablo Escobar and Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha. (Basic data from AP, 09/07-11/89; AFP, 09/06-08/89, 09/11/89; Xinhua, 09/06-08/89; Notimex, 09/05/89, 09/08/89, 09/11/89)

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