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Update On Colombia's "drug War": Extradition To Be Included In National Referendum, Drug Mafia Declares Unilateral Truce

by John Neagle

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Nov. 30: Brazil's Justice Ministry announced that Brazilian medical doctor Guillermo Ignacio Zambrano Pampuja, arrested on drug trafficking charges, and linked to the Medellin drug ring, will be extradited to the US. Police said they arrested Zambrano in Manaus, capital of Amazonas state, on Nov. 28. According to federal police commissioner Romeu Tuma, Brazilian law does not permit extradition to countries which can later re-extradite the prisoner. The US Department of Justice reported that Jorge Mario de la Cuesta was extradited from Colombia on Thursday morning. US prosecutors in Jacksonville, Fla., say de la Cuesta is a member of the Medellin drug ring, and that he has smuggled more than 16 tons of cocaine into the US. Since mid-August, nine persons charged with drug trafficking offenses have been extradited from Colombia to the US. On Thursday night, a Chamber of Deputies committee voted to include the extradition issue in an upcoming plebiscite. In a surprise move, congressperson Carlos Pineda Chillan proposed including extradition in the referendum planned for Jan. 21 on behalf of 23 members of the 33-member committee. The full chamber must approve the committee's decision. Dec. 2: President of the chamber, Norberto Morales Ballesteros, announced that in a letter addressed to the Colombian legislature, drug ring leaders said they had decided to implement a unilateral truce beginning Dec. 4. At this time, it is not clear whether extradition will be included in the national vote. In the referendum, Colombians will also vote on creating a vice presidential post and a plan to rearrange electoral districts. Legislative elections are scheduled for March, and presidential balloting in May. (Basic data from Notimex, 12/01/89; AFP, 11/30/89, 12/02/89; DPA, 11/30/89; Xinhua, 12/01/89, 12/02/89)

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