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## Colombia: Drug War Violence Continues

by John Neagle

Category/Department: General

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Dec. 5: Director of Colombian Civil Aeronautics, Jezid Castano, said the Nov. 27 crash of an Avianca Boeing 727 causing the deaths of over 100 persons, was caused by a bomb which exploded in the passenger cabin. Experts investigating the accident have been unable to determine what type of explosive device was used. Castano said the device apparently was placed under one of the seats. In-flight recordings on the jet's black box showed "no alarm whatsoever among the crew" which would have indicated they had detected a malfunction before the explosion, he said. Judge Bernardo Jaramillo Uribe was shot to death by gunmen in two cars while he was leaving his office in Medellin. Jaramillo was the fourth magistrate murdered in Medellin since late July. The judge had been in charge of investigating the August murder of the Antioquia province police chief, and has ordered the destruction of cocaine processing laboratories operated by the Medellin drug ring. Colombia's House of Representatives passed a bill that would allow the national electorate to decide in a plebiscite whether the extradition policy should continue. (See Chronicle 12/05/89.) Dec. 6: A truck rigged with dynamite exploded at 7:30 a.m. in downtown Bogota outside the headquarters of the Department of Administrative Security (DAS), Colombia's federal investigations police. By Wednesday evening, the list of casualties had increased to at least 40 dead and 1,000 injured. According to AP, the explosion left a crater about 15 feet deep and 30 feet across, while an AFP report said the crater was twice those dimensions. The explosion was heard throughout the city. Police estimated the bomb contained at least 200 kg. of dynamite. The plaza in front of the building is often filled with fruit and candy vendors in metal stalls and scores of passersby on their way to work. The police said the bomb exploded as some 200 people were waiting to renew identity papers at the DAS. The explosion wrecked the nine-story headquarters, damaged or destroyed 60 cars, and caused heavy damage to 45 nearby businesses and less serious damage to another 450 businesses and buildings. Also damaged were a building containing offices of federal judges and the headquarters of the Bogota Transportation Department (transit police). In a live broadcast interview with Caracol, Health Minister Eduardo Diaz said all hospitals in Bogota were filled beyond capacity with the wounded. He said 250 were seriously injured, and over 700 sustained minor wounds from the blast. DAS chief Miguel Maza Marquez, who escaped a similar attack May 30 when a truck-bomb exploded in a street as he was on his way to work, was in his ninth-floor office Wednesday. He was reportedly unharmed. According to the AP, since the government declared its "war" against the drug mafia in August, more than 200 bombings nationwide have killed 29 people and wounded 238. DPA reported that some 260 attacks have been carried out by suspected drug traffickers. Late Wednesday, Colombian officials said the explosion caused \$23 million worth of damage to about 1,500 houses and buildings. From Medellin, The Extraditables issued a communique claiming responsibility for the bombing at the DAS headquarters. In their message, The Extraditables said they would continue the bombing campaign until the Colombian Senate approves the national referendum on extradition policy. The Senate is expected to vote on the measure within the next week. In Lugano, Switzerland, officials said Colombian drug trafficker Severo Escobar IV, listed as the world's sixth biggest cocaine smuggler, was arrested in a hotel there with four other Colombians. The Tribune newspaper in Geneva said Escobar's father, Severo Escobar III, was arrested in New York in 1984 and sentenced the following year to 30 years in prison. On Wednesday evening in

a nationally televised broadcast, President Virgilio Barco blamed the truck bombing on drug traffickers. He said, "In the last few days, the criminal organization of drug traffickers has begun a vile assault that has cost the lives of many innocent Colombians. "We are fighting and will continue to fight. The war is against all Colombia, against democracy. We will not allow ourselves to fall to the bloody tyranny of the narcoterrorists." Just before Barco's speech was transmitted from Tokyo, where the president was engaged in an official visit, three more bombs exploded in Medellin. The explosions at a Mormon temple, an evangelical church and an electronics shop, caused minor damage and no injuries, police said. Dec. 7: The casualty toll from the truck bombing in front of DAS headquarters had risen to 42 dead, and 350 seriously injured. (Basic data from AFP, Notimex, 12/05/89, 12/06/89; DPA, 12/06/89; AP, Xinhua, 12/06/89, 12/07/89)

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