Implications for the United States of the Colombian Drug Trade

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VOLUME II—ANNEX E

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THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS,
EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and the Treasury.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army
The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy
The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force
The Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps

Intelligence units in the Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice, and in the United States Customs Service, Department of the Treasury, also contributed heavily in the preparation of this Estimate.
ANNEX E

LINKS BETWEEN THE NARCOTICS TRADE, GUERRILLA GROUPS, AND THE MILITARY

Insurgent Groups

1. Colombia has long been plagued by armed insurgent groups, guerrillas, and bandits. Terrorism has been endemic in certain rural areas since at least the mid-1950s. The security forces have been able to contain these groups, but have not succeeded in ending their activities. In the early 1970s an urban-based group, the 19th of April Movement (M-19), was founded by several dissident radicals. In general, these groups are vaguely or explicitly leftist.

2. These groups occasionally carry out spectacular actions that embarrass government forces and attract international attention, but they do not threaten the existence of the Colombian Government. Of the half dozen groups now active (see table 11), two are clearly much larger and of more concern to Colombian security officials—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and M-19.

Insurgents and Drugs

3. These guerrilla groups initially avoided all connections with narcotics growers and traffickers, except to condemn the corrupting influence of drugs on Colombian society. Now, however, several have developed active links with the drug trade, others extort protection money from traffickers, and some apparently use profits from drugs to buy arms.

The FARC

4. The FARC, the oldest, largest, and currently the most dangerous subversive organization in Colombia, at first stayed away from the illicit drug business to avoid any corrupting influence on the moral principles of the revolutionary ideal. In fact, the FARC even resolved to killing the traffickers and burning their fields in parts of the Llanos. After 1977, various FARC "fronts" entered the drug business as a way of supplementing their original reliance on extortion, kidnapping, and robbery for funds.

5. At first the FARC permitted the cultivation of marijuana and provided protection to the farmers for a price. Activity centered primarily in Meta and Caqueta Departments, but there are reports of FARC protection of marijuana grown in the northwestern part of Antioquia Department as recently as 1981. The FARC was reportedly using this protection money to buy arms, mostly Portuguese-manufactured rifles, that entered the country through the Gulf of Uraba from Panama. The FARC, like the drug traffickers, quickly learned that coca was a highly lucrative crop, and post was easy to transport and profitable. In the last three years the FARC has become involved in the cultivation, production, and shipping of coca paste from the Llanos. There are reports of planes from Panama bringing in arms and leaving with coca paste (possibly shipped to cities within or outside Colombia for refining) from clandestine airstrips guarded by FARC troops in Caqueta and the Llanos. A new FARC front, the XIV, was organized with the express and only mission of controlling production of coca in
the Llanos. In fact, the FARC in some areas established quotas, taxes, wages, and rules for workers, producers, and owners of coca fields. Some of this coca money is clearly being used to buy arms.

6. The Army views the FARC move into the drug business as destabilizing to the guerrilla organization. For example, a senior FARC leader has been accused of misuse of funds, and some FARC fronts have ignored orders from higher quarters in order to pursue their own greed. At least one FARC front has been removed from the drug-growing area for political reformation by the movement's leaders.

7. The M-19 is probably the most widely known of the various insurgent groups because of its sensational posture by the Dominican Embassy in Bogota in February 1980, which held the US ambassador and others hostage for 61 days. Under Jaime Bateman Cayon, its leader, a former officer of the Colombian Communist Party youth wing and of the FARC, it appealed for social justice, honest elections, and an end to corruption. It attracted mainly left-wing youths and concentrated on spectacular acts in the cities to attract media attention. In 1981 it enlarged its scope to include rural action in a few areas—a move which took it into an area of drug activity. Nearly 200 M-19 members, including a few Panamanians, who had had training in Cuba, were infiltrated back into Colombia via Panama (with the aid of some members of the Panamanian National Guard). Within weeks, most were killed or captured and the Panamanian and Cuban connection exposed. This led Colombia to suspend diplomatic relations with Cuba and strained its relations with Panama.

8. The Guillot Lara case, discussed on pages 3 and 4, demonstrates that the M-19 received arms through a Colombian drug-trafficking link facilitated by Cuban officials. We do not know whether this mechanism is still in use.

9. The "Cuban Connection"

10. Cuban involvement with and support for Colombian insurgents has consisted primarily of training M-19 members.

Nicaragua may also have provided training for small numbers of M-19 members en route to El Salvador.

11. The Guillot Lara case (see inset) is proof that Cuba has used Colombian drug smuggling networks to move arms to Colombian insurgents. In this case Cuban officials and Colombian drug traffickers were clearly associated in facilitating narcotics shipments to the United States. Guillot paid the Cubans in hard currency and used his vessels and smuggling network to move arms to Colombia for the insurgents. On the other hand, Cuba rather routinely searches some drug-smuggling ships found in Cuban waters, confiscates drugs found, and often imprisons the crews.

12. We do not know the extent to which Cuba has continued to facilitate drug trafficking, either for money or arms, but these efficient trafficking networks offer that potential whenever Cuba chooses to exploit it. The same mechanisms are available to the Colombian insurgents, with or without Cuban help. Thus far, at least, they do not seem to be depending on drug money to buy arms or support themselves.
The Guillot Lara Case

The first concrete evidence of Cuban involvement in narcotics trafficking, and of a Cuban narcotics-terrorism-gunrunning nexus, resulted from the arrests of Colombian narcotics trafficker Jaime Guillot Lara in Mexico City (November 1981) and of another well-known trafficker, Juan Lazaro "Johnny" Grump, in Miami (January 1982).

Guillot appears to have been the key to the connection. He is a native Colombian from Santa Marta, the capital of Magdelena Department on the north coast, a major smuggling region on the Caribbean side of Colombia. He is a career smuggler who has trafficked in cocaine, marijuana, and methaqualone since at least 1978.
of Colombia, where the arms were to be transported, and because of his participation in an
arms purchase for the M-19 during the fall of 1981.

Guillot provided Bassols $1 million in the fall of 1981 to
purchase arms in the United States for the M-19. Guillot
told the Mexican authorities that on
6 October, he traveled to the Colombian port of
Dibulla, where his boat Zar de Honduras had
arrived with part of the arms cargo. The arms
had been transferred to the Zar from the Karina
off the coast of Panama. From Dibulla the arms
were trucked to a clandestine airstrip, where
they were inspected by M-19 members until 21
October. They, the M-19, using a hijacked Aero
Cuba aircraft, transported them to the
Oretega River in the Colombian Department
of Caquetá. The Colombian Navy sank the
Karina, with the remaining arms on board, off
the west coast of Colombia. On 25 November the
Zar was seized.

Crump was arrested in Miami in
January 1982 on immigration charges and is now
participating in the continuing investigations.

Following Guillot’s arrest, Colombian authori-
ties requested that Mexico extradite him to
Colombia. Mexico rejected the request on the
grounds that it did not meet Mexican legal
standards, and subsequently sent him to Spain.

Cuban Policy and Motivations Regarding
Narcotics Trafficking. The Guillot case repres-
ts the first solid evidence we have obtained of
Cuban Government involvement in narcotics
trafficking. The Castro government has tradi-
tionally taken a puritanical stance on narcotics
use, viewing it as symptomatic of moral weak-
ness and capitalist decadence. Domestic enforce-
ment has been vigorous and has stressed repres-
sion rather than rehabilitation. Cuban authorities
have traditionally cracked down hard on smug-
glers who strayed into Cuban territory. Many
aircraft and ships seeking safe haven have been
searched thoroughly, and, in some cases, their
crews have been jailed simply on suspicion of
transporting illegal cargoes.

We do not know who in the Cuban Govern-
ment controlled the Guillot operation or whether
similar arrangements have been made with other
trafficlers. Given the level of Guillot’s Cuban
contacts and the political implications of the
arrangements, the operation was almost certainly
approved at the highest levels of the Havana
government. If the Guillot affair were simply a
case of corruption by local or midlevel security
officials in Cuba, it is unlikely that the Cuban
Embassies in Bogota and Mexico City and offi-
cers from the America Department of the Cuban
Communist Party Central Committee would
have been involved. Moreover, senior Cuban
officials receive ample material benefits from
the state, and Cuba offers few expensive attrac-
tions that would absorb such enormous pro-
ceeds.

Plausible Denial. Use of established contra-
hand facilities to transport arms to insurgent and
terrorist organizations allows the Cubans to sup-
port revolution while maintaining plausible de-
nial. During the Nicaraguan revolution the Cas-
 tro regime used professional arms smugglers to
hide its hand in channeling weapons and sup-
plies to the Sandinista insurgents. The success in
Nicaragua in 1979 led to a similar Cuba-sponsor
ner alliance in supplying Salvadoran guerrillas.
instead, they generally rely on extortion, kidnapping, bank robberies, etc., for funds.

The Military and MAS

13. The group called "Muerte a Secuestradores" (MAS), or "Death to Kidnappers," was formed in November 1981 by Fabio Ochoa Restrepo, head of a major Medellín-based trafficking net, and other wealthy Colombians strongly suspected of being involved in cocaine trafficking. It was set up to secure the release of Ochoa's daughter, who had been kidnapped by the M-19. After several deadly actions, primarily against the M-19, the daughter was released by the M-19 in February 1982. There has been speculation since then that the police and even the military are linked with MAS. Not a single important member of MAS has ever been apprehended. This could indicate that the original vigilante group has disbanded and that common criminals or other right-wing groups use its name to cover their own involvement in violence. More likely, it indicates that there is indeed some connection between MAS and some military or police officers.

14. The M-19 has repeatedly charged that the Colombian Government is involved with MAS; the government has continued to deny it.

In February 1983 the Colombian Attorney General publicly implicated 165 police, including 59 military personnel, allegedly associated with MAS. This brought instant outrage from Minister of Defense Landazabal and other high military officers who accused the Attorney General of ignoring due process. Landazabal demanded that the AG be chastised and submitted his own resignation because he considered this to be an attack against the entire military institution. While the furor has died down somewhat since then, it is clear that the accusations touched some raw nerves.

15. While the Colombian military does not officially assist the MAS, a number of individual military officers have had operational contacts with it and that the MAS is now highly compartmented and organized—employing safehouses and message centers. This compartmentation is said to account for the difficulty the AG has had in his attempts to investigate it. Moreover, many of the killings done in the name of MAS may have been done by military officers who use the name as a convenient cover.

16. It seems probable that some military personnel are both trading on the MAS name and are at least indirectly involved in its activities. At the same time, MAS appears to have expanded into a cluster of vigilante groups (like cattlemen and ranchers) determined to resist the kidnappings and extortion efforts of both insurgent groups and common criminals.

17. Whatever the extent of the ties between MAS and the military, they can only serve to further inhibit forceful action against the major narcotics traffickers associated with MAS. This would be true even if those military officers involved simply work with MAS against their common enemy, the insurgent-extortionist groups. It would be even more worrisome if, over time, the military became more actively involved in the lucrative business.