

## Lessons From History: Some Background Information On Narco-Funded Terrorism

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The funding link between terrorist groups and narcotics trafficking is well known, and as well documented as any illicit activity can be. The term 'narcoterrorism' was first used to describe a terror campaign waged by traffickers against anti-narcotics police. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service in its October 1991 publication ["Commentary No. 13: Terrorism and the Rule of Law: Dangerous Compromise In Colombia"](#), noted: "Former President Belaunde Terry of Peru coined the term 'narcoterrorism' in 1983 when describing terrorist-type attacks against his nation's anti-narcotics police. Now a subject of definitional controversy, narcoterrorism is understood to mean the attempts of narcotics traffickers to influence the policies of government by the systematic threat or use of violence."

Narcoterrorism became a major issue in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the US fight against the Colombian Medellin cocaine cartel, more particularly in the fight by the cartel against extradition.

Again from the CSIS:

"Various described as 'the Robin Hood of Medellin', 'King Coke', or 'the most wanted man in the world', Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria surrendered to Colombian authorities in mid-June 1991. Accused leader of a major illicit narcotics organization known as the Medellin cartel, and suspected mastermind of a terrorism campaign responsible for the deaths and injuries of hundreds of Colombians, Escobar evaded capture throughout an intensive two-year manhunt. His voluntary capitulation was attributed to the government's introduction of revised counter-terrorism policies, including the promise of no extradition, coupled with arrangements for Escobar's incarceration in a prison located, constructed and staffed according to his personal specifications.

"Colombians generally welcomed the drug kingpin's surrender. The prospect of ending a decade of narcotics-related violence—violence that alone over the previous 24 months cost more than a thousand lives and millions of dollars—was reflected by opinion polls which endorsed the exceptional terms of the agreement with Escobar. The Colombian media and most politicians there largely hailed the outcome as a victory for the government, which in turn, moved quickly to underscore the impression by means of a full-page self-congratulatory advertisement in The New York Times."

Yet, the victory came at great cost. From the CSIS report again:

"Infuriated by government crack-downs, in 1984 the cartel embarked on a brutal reign of narcoterrorism. The assassination of Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla was the initial step in a campaign aimed at intimidating the Colombian political and judicial systems. Almost three years later, the narcoterrorism developed an international character when the cartel attempted the assassination of the Colombian Ambassador to Hungary, Enrique Parejo Gonzales, in Budapest. Parejo had earlier incurred the cartel's wrath when he succeeded the murdered Lara and implemented then-President Betancur's rejuvenated extradition policy. One year later, another proponent of extradition, Attorney-General Carlos Hoyos Jiménez, was killed, along with three body-guards, in a botched kidnapping attempt.

"Despite the cartel's egregiously brutal behaviour, Presidents Julio Turbay Ayala (1978-82), Belisario Betancur (1982-86) and Virgilio Barco (1986-90) remained firmly opposed to the traffickers' demands, especially pressures to rescind the extradition treaty. In August 1989, in what should have ultimately proved to be a disastrous error, the cartel murdered Senator Luis Carlos Galan, a highly popular presidential candidate. Meant as a warning that no one, no matter how prominent or influential, was beyond reach, the incident severely shocked a Colombian public weary of violence, and served to reaffirm the government's determination to defeat the traffickers.

"Designating narcoterrorism a serious threat to national security, President Barco invoked state-of-siege powers and emergency measures. In reply, the cartel 'declared war': over the 10 months which

remained of Barco's term of office the traffickers countered with a horrific spate of assassinations, kidnappings and high-casualty car-bombings, as well as downing an AVIANCA airliner at a cost of 111 lives. Government attempts to apprehend the cartel leadership (recognized as centered on Pablo Escobar) for the most part proved fruitless. The security police, however, did achieve success in a number of ways: i) disrupting the traffickers' operations and infrastructure; ii) keeping the king-pins uncomfortably on the move; and, iii) occasionally eliminating a key individual (i.e. the death of Rodriguez Gacha in a raid)."

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This is a public service advertisement from Common Sense in Fall of 2001 dealing with the question of prohibition's funding of terrorism, ["Is The Funding Of Terrorism Another Unintended Consequence Of Drug Prohibition?"](#).

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