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COLOMBIA-MILITARY FORCE IN COMBATTING INSURGENCY

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25 January 1971

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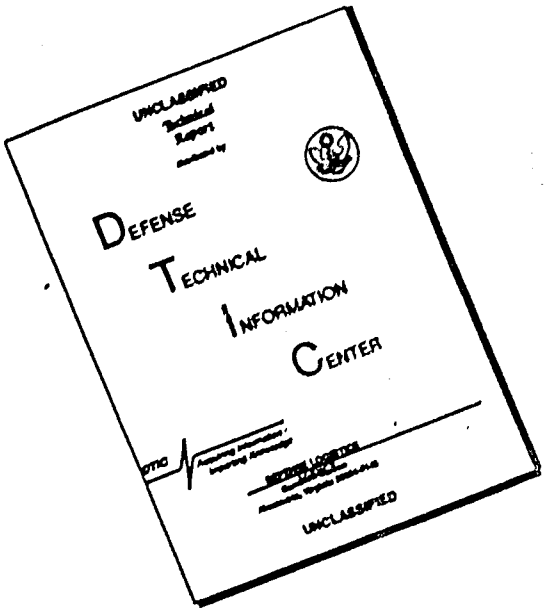

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USAWC RESEARCH PAPER

COLOMBIA - MILITARY FORCE IN COMBATING INSURGENCY

AN INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT

by

Colonel John B. Blount
Infantry

US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania
25 January 1971

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ABSTRACT

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This paper attempts to analyze the techniques used by the Armed Forces of Colombia in countering decades of violence which have turned into an insurgent situation. A review of existing literature established the basis for the endemic violence. The measures utilized by the government of Colombia to overcome this situation were reviewed and analyzed based upon data acquired in library research and from personal knowledge of the problem. The primary basis for violence was political. When this political factor was removed by a political compromise, the Armed Forces moved rapidly, with the help of US Military Assistance, to stamp out violence and eliminate guerrilla bands. The political compromise and the continued rise of communism in the Western Hemisphere triggered the formation of militant Communist groups in Colombia. The Armed Forces have managed to thwart the military activities of these groups and will probably be able to contain them with continued assistance from the United States.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

Violence in Colombia has almost become a way of life during the 20th Century. During the 70 years of this century, more than 200,000 people have lost their lives to this violent behavior, allegedly politically inspired.

During the latter portion of this period, the violence became organized and an element of insurgency, spearheaded by Communist influence, was introduced.

The mission of countering this violence and insurgency fell in significant degree to the Colombian Armed Forces.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to examine the historical and environmental setting within which this violence began and to analyze the military strategy conceived and employed by the armed forces to accomplish their mission. In conducting the above analysis, the assistance provided by the United States Military Assistance Program will be reviewed.

SIGNIFICANCE AND NEED

Colombia is of strategic significance to the United States because it lies astride the southern land, sea, and air approaches

to the Panama Canal. Accordingly, it is important for the United States to monitor closely the insurgent situation in Colombia and to assess the effectiveness of their counter-insurgency operations.

CHAPTER II

THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

GEOGRAPHY

The Republic of Colombia comprises some 444,000 square miles on the northwestern corner of South America. Its location, bordering on both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, and its proximity to the strategically important Panama Canal, combined with its economic potential, have given it a position of international importance disproportionate to its size and population.

In addition to its frontier with Panama on the northwest, it shares frontiers with Ecuador and Peru on the south, with Brazil on the east, and with Venezuela on the north. The country's size is roughly comparable to the combined states of Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico.

The great mountain chain of the Andes running northwest along the western coast of the continent dominates the western two-fifths of Colombia and gives it a markedly different character than the remaining three-fifths in the east.

The country occupies a segment of the great earthquake belt that lies along the areas bordering the Pacific Ocean from Southeast Asia to the southern tip of South America. Occasional eruptions of volcanoes on land and off the coast, especially in

the Caribbean Sea between the mouths of the Atrato and Magdalena Rivers have been recorded.[1]

Roughly 90 per cent of the population lives in the western third of the country, which is intersected by three ranges of the Andes. Between these ranges at varying altitudes are valleys and valley basins. The eastern two-thirds of the country, most of it unpopulated, is made up of the Guiana Highlands, a part of the Orinoco Plains, and a small part of the Amazon Plain. Although the sparsely settled llanos or plains of this eastern two-thirds are relevant to the problem of violence in Colombia, of much greater interest is the highland area of the west, in which most of the insurgency has been concentrated.[2]

The geography of Colombia makes it an ideal location for guerrilla type warfare. The endless variety of its geography seems not only to please the traveller, but also to hide and protect the insurgent bands. For example, four of the six major regions of concentrated settlement have been scenes of conflict or areas of violence. The first of these, the high basins of the

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[1]US Department of the Army, Pamphlet 550-26: US Army Handbook for Colombia. Second Edition,(22 June 1964), p. 41. (Hereafter called DA Pamphlet 550-26).

[2]Center for Research in Social Systems, Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict, (1968), p. 411.

eastern range of the Andes, includes the basin of Cundinamacra, at the southeastern margin of which is the capital city of Bogota. The density of rural population in this region is between 25-60 persons per square mile.[3]

The steeply sloping valleys of the eastern range, all below 7,000 feet, form a second important region of settlement in Colombia. The principal economic activity in this region, which includes the departments of Santander, Norte de Santander and Huila as well as a portion of Cundinamacra, is the production of coffee on the mountain slopes and cacao, tobacco, and cotton at lower altitudes.[4]

A third region includes the departments of Antioquia, Caldos, and Tolima all situated in the central range of the Andes. Coffee, the principal agricultural product of the region, is generally grown on small holdings.[5]

The Cauca Valley, a structural depression lying between the central and western ranges, forms a fourth region. Sugar cane is the leading crop in this region.[6]

The two other settled regions-Pasto in the south and the Caribbean coastal lowlands-have not experienced much violence.[7]

Colombia is a land of varying regions. It is this very regionalism which causes problems of national identity and unity.

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[3] Ibid., p. 412.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

Thus a man is an Antioqueno or Costeno or Tolimense rather than a Colombian. However, as a counter to this obvious disadvantage is the fact that many large urban centers have developed. There are fifteen cities with populations over 100,000 in Colombia. Accordingly, the stresses of urbanization are not concentrated in only one or two cities as is the case in many Latin American republics.[8]

CLIMATE

The climate varies from extreme tropical heat to steady biting cold. Temperatures are determined largely by altitudes. The lowlands along the coast are hot and humid, while the high plateaus have frequent, light rains and springlike weather. In the highlands there are generally two dry seasons, from December to February and from June to August.[9]

POPULATION

The geography of Colombia has served to perpetuate and possibly intensify the regionalism of the original conquerors, for each region was settled by persons from different areas of Spain.[10]

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[8]James M. Daniel, Rural Violence in Colombia Since 1946, (1965), p. 2.

[9]DA Pamphlet 550-26, p. 46.

[10]Vernon L. Fluharty, Dance of the Millions: Military Rule and Social Revolution in Colombia, 1930-1956, (1957),p. 23-26, (hereafter referred to as Dance of the Millions).

The variation of the degree of mixing Spanish stock with other races is pronounced. For example, the mixing of the Castilian and Andalusian settlers with the Indians in the Boyaca and Cundinamacra areas has resulted in virtual disappearance of the pure Indian and caused great segments of mestizos.[11]

The following is an estimate of the racial composition of the people of Colombia from 1852 to 1962:[12]

	1852	1962
	%	%
Indians	13.8	1.0
Mestizos	44.5	58.0
Negroes	3.5	4.0
Mulattoes	17.6	14.0
Whites	20.6	20.0
Zambos (Indian/Negro)		3.0

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[11]James M. Daniel, Rural Violence in Colombia Since 1946, (1965), p. 2.

[12]W. O. Galbraith, Colombia, A General Survey, (1966), p. 17.

CHAPTER III

THE SEEDS OF VIOLENCE

SOCIAL

> The phenomenon of violence in Colombia can be defined as a social conflict that manifests itself through armed actions of groups, especially in peasant neighborhoods (those with rural inhabitants, ranging from the most deprived coca-chewing peon to the more highly developed small farmer), which are geographically widespread in Colombia. This situation has become endemic, inasmuch as it has continued for several years without solution.[1]

It is generally agreed that the existence of violence in Colombia has triggered an era of social change, the total impact of which has yet to be analyzed.[2] Accordingly, there is still much anthropological and sociological research which should be accomplished before a reasonable judgment can be made as to the roots of the phenomenon. It certainly appears that the tremendous violence of the period from 1946 to 1965 is not in keeping with the relatively stable period from 1902 to 1946. However, to many observers this tranquility was not substantiated by the facts.

What then is the basis for the violence? Kathleen Romoli states, "at the root of Colombia's easy violence is an extraordinary indifference towards death." She goes on to contemplate

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[1]Camilo Torres Restrepo, Social Changes and Rural Violence in Colombia, (1969), p. 282.

[2]Ibid.

where the Roman Catholic Church failed to instill in its members a feeling of "the sanctity of life and the majesty of death."[3]

There is some concensus that this "easy violence" is a culmination of the Indian's natural violent nature and the sadistic cruelness of the conquering Spanish. Of course, this may be true, but it leaves unanswered the question of why the present day campesino has inherited the worst of both races. Perhaps a review of the nature of violence would provide some insights into the problem? Warfare among the aboriginal chiefdoms in Colombia was highly developed and included cannibalism, head trophies, and captives for slaves or sacrifice. The more aggressive people were those who lived in areas of little rainfall with one harvest yearly. They tended to invade tribes with two or three harvests each year. The objective was to maintain a surplus of food. It is significant to note that the areas of greatest violence in recent years have been the worst centers of violence in pre-Colombian times.[4]

The advent of the Spanish Conquerors brought with it a degree of cruelty which certainly played a role in later violence. There was the inevitable conflict and animosity between the slave and his owner. This led to bloodshed and runaway slaves; but on balance the colonial society in New Grenada was not violent.

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[3]Kathleen Romoli, COLOMBIA: Gateway to South America. (1941), p. 37.

[4]James M. Daniel, Rural Violence in Colombia since 1946, (1965), p. 12.

James M. Daniel writing about rural violence states,

> The outbreak of the War for Independence in 1810 signaled the start of a period of civil strife which was to last almost a century and which may have been crucial in establishing the habit of violence in the countryside. The war was, to a great degree, one of guerrilla action against the Spanish forces.[5]

By 1819, victory for Colombia in the War for Independence was assured, but the remaining years of the 19th Century were filled with unrelenting civil wars. It was during this period that the rise of the fanatical partisanship of Liberals and Conservatives began.

In the final analysis it is the struggle between the haves and the have nots which is the significant factor in understanding the sociological basis for Colombia's violence. From the earliest moment of contact with the Spanish there developed this split between the small have group and a large have not group. From the roots of the Spaniards and the Indians followed the large land owners and the landless peasants. As industrialization began, management and labor entered the scene. Inequities of income distribution when coupled with a history of violence and an ideal geographical setting for guerrilla warfare set the stage for continued insurgency.[6]

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[5] Ibid., p. 13.

[6] Robert J. Carle, The Origin and Development of Insurgency in Colombia, Thesis (Maxwell AFB, April 1970), p. 9.

POLITICAL

The two chief political forces in Colombia today are--as they have been for the past one hundred years--conservatism and liberalism.[7] The parties representing these forces were formally established in 1848 when the dominant party decided, after considerable debate, to call itself the Conservative Party; whereupon the opposition understandably chose the Liberal label.[8]

The Liberals urge separation of church and state, religious toleration, popular suffrage, response to the social and economic demands of the masses, and the assumption of responsibility by the central government to provide for the political consciousness of the ordinary citizen. Federalism is supported in theory but is abandoned in practice. By way of contrast, the Conservatives advocate close association with the church, a generally narrow view of "alien" religious beliefs, limited suffrage defined commonly by heads of family, the maintenance of class privileges, management of politics by a small privileged elite, and a highly centralized governmental structure with local authority strictly subservient to national rule.[9]

Historically, the isolation of the politicians from the people has characterized Colombian politics. There appear to be a few links between the national leadership of the party and the

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[7] Harry Bernstein, Venezuela and Colombia, (1964), p. 71.

[8] Jesus Maria Henao and Gerardo Arrubla, History of Colombia (1938), p. 453.

[9] John D. Martz, Colombia: A Contemporary Political Survey, (1962), p. 19.

electorate. In fact there is little formal political activity in the countryside between elections. The tempo increases as voting day nears.

In view of the inactivity at times, it is logical to wonder how the peasants developed the tremendous party loyalty which has been so significant as a cause of violence. There is an interesting theory that the peasants developed their party loyalty from the local boss. Of course, the boss was concerned not so much with party platforms or concepts as he was with insuring the election of his favorite legislator. Thus the concept or system of "bossism" tended to establish local and regional groups of Liberals or Conservatives. Their loyalty was intense and kept localized because of the poor communications. It is interesting to note that with the coming of the radio, particularly the cheap pocket radio, bossism seems to be on the wane.

Given the emotional makeup of the Latin American, it is fair to say that the charismatic leader, who appeals personally to the electorate, is a tremendously motivating force. Colombia has had its share of charismatic leaders, who with their flaming oratory, added fuel to an already smoldering fire.

Out of Colombia's political experience over the past one hundred and fifty years, a number of factors have emerged which contribute to the rise and continuation of rural violence. The most important is the intense and highly emotional party loyalties among the peasants. To this may be added the "boss" loyalty, national party isolation, and charismatic leadership.

CHAPTER IV

THE PATH OF VIOLENCE

There is much controversy when it comes to setting an exact date for the beginning of violence in Colombia. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, there are many who say that Colombian violence is endemic, that Colombia has always had violence. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to solve that dilemma. In this chapter the path of violence will be traced from 1930 to the present time. It was during this time frame that violence emerged as a destructive force which almost cost Colombia its life.

1930-1948

In 1930 the Liberals, after forty years of being the "out" party, defeated the Conservatives. The defeat of the Conservatives triggered a bloody outbreak of persecution against the Conservatives and their sympathizers in the rural areas. It appeared that the victorious Liberals had long memories and their persecution at the hands of Conservatives during the War of the Thousand Days remained bitterly in their minds.

The conflict between the victorious Liberals and the defeated Conservatives was particularly evident in the departments of Santander and Boyaca.[1]

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[1]Center for Research in Social Systems, Challange and Response in Internal Conflict (1968), p. 414.

The violence moved swiftly to other areas and appeared only partly political. Old family feuds emerged and as passions became inflamed vengeance was on the minds of both sides. It is important to point out that the killings and other manifestations of violence had severe repercussions in 1946 when the Conservatives again regained complete power.

Fortunately, however, the violence at this time was short-lived because of the war between Colombia and Peru in 1932. This war, brief as it was, created national pride in the Colombians and subdued at least temporarily their political irritants. Without this interruption, it is conceivable that the violence would have lasted longer.

Between 1930 and 1946, the Liberals sought to guide Colombia through economic recovery, reorganization of national education, a border war with Peru, a new settlement with the Church, reorganization of the constitution, World War II, and increased economic nationalization and industrialization. The Conservatives provided the opposition; but more importantly, a divergence of views developed within the Liberal Party itself.[2]

Between the administrations of Liberal President Olaya Herrera (1930-1934) and Alfonso Lopez (1942-1946) a slow, but

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[2]Harry Bernstein, Venezuela and Colombia (1964), p. 126.

perceptible split began to divide the traditional, political-minded Liberals from the contemporary, more social-minded Liberals.[3] The newer Liberals proposed a "new deal" for the citizens of Colombia. They visualized national control over the economy, social security, labor unions, and the development of private and public capital. The depression years moved Colombia into an era which saw Socialists, Communists, and Radicals all operating actively. Harry Bernstein states,

> Agitation on behalf of conservation of human and national resources rather than the conservation of private property and private religious belief was another way of putting the chief issue of the 1930's.[4]

Thus, with the election of President Matiano Ospina Perez, the very symbol of extreme conservatism, the stage was set for possible renewed violence. President Ospina, with only 42 per cent of the vote won a plurality because of the split in the Liberal Party between Gabriel Turbay, a Moderate, and Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, a Liberal Reformist. Ospina, a wealthy and respected engineer, brilliant, courteous, and a gentleman with great courage sought a period of tranquility. He offered half the cabinet posts and departmental governorships to Liberals, but made a serio mistake by not consulting Gaitan before making the appointments. A charismatic leader who used

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[3] Ibid., p. 126.
[4] Ibid.

inflammatory oratory to sway the masses, Gaitan was biding his time, certain that he could win the Presidency in 1950.

Meanwhile, the political maneuvers, inflammatory speeches, and irresponsible reporting of the Bogota papers was accompanied by a slowly rising tide of violence.[5]

FROM BOGOTAZO TO NATIONAL FRONT 1948-1958

On Friday, April 9, 1948, Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, the charismatic leader of the Liberal Party left his law office in the Nieto Building in Bogota to have lunch with four friends who accompanied him. A poorly dressed man with a heavy build and two days' growth of beard brushed by Gaitan. As Gaitan turned to walk away, the man fired four shots into Gaitan's neck and shoulders. Gaitan collapsed, mortally wounded on the sidewalk. As his colleagues stood shocked, the assassin was beaten to death by a mob. The thin veneer of civilization had cracked open; Colombia would never again be quite the same.[6]

The people were outraged. They reacted as an uncontrollable mob and Bogota became a shambles. The National Police could not control the rioting and shortly after the destruction started, the police joined the ranks of the inflamed mob. It remained for the

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[5] James M. Daniel, Rural Violence in Colombia Since 1946 (1965), p. 36.

[6] John D. Martz, Colombia: A Contemporary Political Survey (1962), pp. 53-54.

Army to quell the disturbance and before nightfall several thousand people had died, many with a bullet through the forehead.[7]

As was to be expected, the rioting and killing spread quickly throughout the countryside, particularly to other cities. Reports had filtered into the Presidential Palace informing President Ospina Perez, who courageously remained there during the bloody night, that several towns including Cali, Puerto Tejada, and almost all of the Cauca Valley had defected.[8]

Gradually the situation returned to normal. The President worked out an arrangement with the Liberal leadership which called for appointments of Liberals to cabinet positions and a return to National Union government. It is interesting to note that President Ospina rejected an offer of a military junta to restore control to the country. The generals involved were sincere in their proposal, feeling that only by the application of military force, including complete control of the government could order be restored. However, it is to their credit and in testimony to their characteristic apolitical position that they accepted the President's decision to retain the constitutionally elected government.

The Armed Forces subdued the rebellion and the political coalition attempted to pick up the pieces of a confused and angry society. As one author summarized the fateful days of April, 1949:

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[7] Martz, p. 56.
[8] Ibid., p. 60.

> The tragedy of the "Bogotazo" lay beyond the destruction of life and property, the profanation of churches, the atrocities towards priests, or even the bestial violation of defenseless young girls. Beyond consideration of basic humanitarianism, the loss of Gaitan was not of the greatest consequence either, although contemporary Colombia would have been quite different had he lived. The saddest element of the affair was the deliberate refusal of responsible officials to recognize the true meaning of the insurrection. A socially and economically oppressed people were begging for new policies and for a basic understanding of their plight. The common rejection of national reality was a philosophical and temperamental crime for which the political leaders, including many of those still active today, cannot with any justice be exonerated.[9]

On the day Gaitan was assassinated, a criminal called Tirofijo or "Sure Shot" escaped from the prison in Ibague, capital of Tolima. He fled to rural Huila where he established himself as a bandit leader and became well known during the subsequent years of violence. "Sure Shot" recruited peasants and promised revolution to avenge the death of Gaitan. He said that the country would soon be at war and demanded financial support from the people. He set a pattern for lawlessness and banditry which was to characterize most of Colombia during the next fifteen years.[10]

In addition to the criminals who moved quickly to take advantage of the chaos, certain police defectors turned to a guerrilla

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[9] Bernstein, p. 68.

[10] Center for Research in Social Systems, Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict (1968), p. 415.

or bandit type existence. The most famous of these was the former commandant of police of San Vicento, Santander, Rafael Rangel Gomez. In time he and his followers came to control the entire region along the Magdelena River Valley from Puerto Wilches to La Dorada. His fame grew so, that fugitives from violence from all over Colombia came to join his group.[11]

Subsequent events in the years immediately following the "Bogotazo" increased the difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives and contributed to rural unrest. The election of another Conservative in 1950 brought charges that the election was fraudulent. Attempting to thwart the spreading violence, the government applied harsh, repressive measures in the countryside. For example, the Minister of War announced a "Warning to All Citizens." All who opposed the military forces were to be considered bandits. All persons over sixteen who hid or fled from government troops were to be treated as outside the law, and summary executions were authorized at the discretion of officers.[12] The decree shocked the guerrillas, who thought themselves as revolutionaries and not bandits. This caused more serious violence than had already occurred.

Thus rural violence plagued the country during 1949 through 1953. Most of Colombia was torn by civil war, reflecting

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[11]Daniel, p. 51.
[12]Martz, p. 116.

a continuing battle between Liberal and Conservative peasants, under a rationale that was "monstrous, but with a macabre simplicity."[13] In the Liberal view, the Conservatives supported the government which had caused the violence and this meant that they must be destroyed; the Conservatives however, saw it differently. In their view, the Liberals had rebelled against the constitutionally elected Conservative government and accordingly must be annihilated.[14]

Colombia enjoyed a relative calm period during the last months of 1953 as a result of an amnesty declared by General Rojas Pinilla, who had unwillingly assumed power in June 1953 to save the country from an increasingly restrictive and oppressive regime.

The lull in the violence was of short duration and by early 1955 almost full scale warfare was taking place in Villarrica in eastern Tolima. Reasons for the renewal of fighting are obscure; however, it appears that the recurring problem of Liberals and Conservatives living in close proximity to each other may have been the cause. Also, it seems that Communists had been active in the area in 1954 and had organized the peasants into groups and unions.[15] The violence escalated until

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[13]Center for Research in Social Systems, Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict (1968), p. 416.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Fluharty, p. 272.

the Army undertook a massive operation against the guerrillas. Aircraft, armored cars, and tanks were used by the government forces and success was limited relative to the effort expanded by the military units.

As the Rojas administration continued to stumble, the violence continued. All the bright prospects of the 1953 take-over had vanished. The regime had not solved the problem of violence. But, the almost four years of trying had not been a total loss. The rural violence, still a very serious problem, had been confined to Tolima, Caldas, and some adjacent areas.

As the military junta prepared to leave office in 1958, violence seemed to have reached its peak. However, the political foundation was being laid for a solution which would reduce the political causes of this madness.

THE NATIONAL FRONT

In 1958 a national plebiscite was held. This resulted in a political truce which has held forth until the present day. The agreement has been extended once and is now due to expire in 1974. The embodiment of this truce is the National Front which establishes a parity system whereby all appointive and elective government positions are shared equally by members of the two major parties; or, as an alternative, are occupied alternately in successive terms of office.[16]

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[16] US DA Pamphlet 550-26, p. 355.

Accordingly, in 1958 a Liberal, Alberto LLeras Camarzo was inaugurated in August thus setting the National Front in motion. Within three weeks of his inauguration, President LLeras removed the state of seige which had been imposed on the country since 1949. The intent was clear. Violence or insurgency no longer had partisan political basis or support. Violence was now outright banditry. It has been dealt with accordingly ever since, for it still continues.

VIOLENCE CONTINUED
1958-

It became apparent during 1959 that violence had become more than a political problem. A situation of lawlessness existed which would not only tax existing and require new social programs, but also dictate continued military operations.

In 1959, a new element, one which was to grow increasingly significant was added. Fidel Castro's adherents, some Cuban trained, began working in earnest with guerrilla bands. This new factor will be dealt with in more detail in succeeding chapters.

Despite renewed government efforts to control the violence, none of these measures, singly or in combination, had been sufficient to eliminate the violence entirely. In 1962 there were some 161 bandit groups with 2,760 armed men operating throughout Colombia. However, by 1966 only 35 groups remained with only five bands identical with the 1962 groups. Thus

between 1962 and 1966, 156 bands were eliminated or disbanded and 30 new bands were created.[17]

A further indicator of the declining trend is in the number of civilian victims. Between 1958 and 1959, victims declined by almost a third, with the rate stabilizing at about 200 a month through 1962. 1963 saw a marked reduction to about 100 a month and by 1965 the yearly figure was 544 deaths.[18]

by 1966 most of what remained of the violence was attributable to the genuinely revolutionary action guerrilla groups inspired by the far Left.[19]

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[17]Dolores Martin, Principal Guerrilla Movements in Latin America (1967), p. 21.

[18]Robert H. Dix, COLOMBIA: The Political Dimensions of Change (1967), p. 379.

[19]Ibid., p. 382.

CHAPTER V

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNISM

The influence wielded by the Colombian Communists in support of violence and insurgency is important to the overall understanding of the problem. The extent of Communist activity among the guerrillas is difficult to assess.[1] The purpose of this chapter is to trace the development of the Communist Party in Colombia and to discuss how it has influenced the course of violence and insurgency particularly since 1948.

PARTY HISTORY

The Partido Communista Colombiano (PCC) was founded in 1920.[2] It initially attracted leftist leaning people who subsequently changed their party affiliation and joined the Liberal Party. The party has had a history of dichotomy with the 1945-1946 split being a good example. At this time one wing supported the Liberal Gaitan and the other wing opted for political independence. As late as 1964 the party was experiencing ideological problems. In that year, a radical group split from the PCC to form their own party called the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Colombia (PCC-ML). This constant dissention has undoubtedly weakened the overall party apparatus in Colombia.

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[1] Center for Research in Social Systems, Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict (1968), p. 418.

[2] US DA Pamphlet 550-26, p. 377.

ORGANIZATION

The PCC has a Secretary General, a party press, a newspaper "Voz de la Democracia," and holds official gatherings and conventions. It conducts official relations with the USSR and the Chinese Peoples' Republic. Quite naturally it does not support the National Front and advocates the formation of a Popular Front, a political alliance with other Leftist groups.[3]

OPERATIONS

The first moves of the PCC were slow. However, by 1928 a group of Trotskyite supporters had successfully moved into the coffee producing areas around Viota and began to sew their seeds of unrest. Viota is a mountainous region, difficult to maneuver in and ideal for guerrilla activities. History has shown that Viota, the first of the Communist enclaves, has remained isolated and untouched by government forces.

Though not of great importance when considered in isolation, the Viota experience started a web of other Communist enclaves in similar rugged terrain in the years following. After the "Bogotazo" Viota became a training center for Communist indoctrination and guerrilla training. The other Communist enclaves or "independent republics" as the Communists preferred to call them were located at Sumapaz, Marquetalia, and Riochiquito.

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[3] Ibid., p. 378.

The establishment of the "enclaves" or "self-defense zones" as Regis DeBray sometimes calls them, was not the result of a centrally organized Communist conspiracy.[4] Rather it emerged from local Communists exploiting a local situation. The PCC leadership is generally oriented to the urban areas and its efforts to project the Moscow-oriented party activities to the countryside have met with only meager success.

The Communist movement in Colombia has had trouble organizing a central thrust since its inception. The urban versus rural considerations as well as the central committee versus the powerful guerrilla chiefs make for factors of significant divergence. The Communist leaders made numerous attempts to unify the overall movement. In 1952, an attempt was made to unify the various guerrilla groups into a revolutionary army. Party policy was officially announced, "to coordinate and orient the dispersed and unequal guerrilla movements."[5] All the unifying efforts failed because the party lacked the strength, discipline, following, and appeal needed to bring together the diverse elements that spawned the violence.

IDEOLOGICAL FACTORS

From 1949 to 1960 the party split over the ideological issue of active support for armed revolution as a means to an end.

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[4]Regis DeBray, Revolution in the Revolution (1967), p. 27.
[5]Carle, p. 26.

Beginning in 1955 the Soviet policy has been the peaceful approach to revolution, not only in Colombia, but for all of Latin America. The Soviets sought the establishment of diplomatic ties and increased opportunities for trade.

In Colombia, the party strained under this policy and many members refused to follow the Soviet line, preferring instead the militant Peking-Havana approach.

PRESENT SITUATION

There are three elements associated with the Communist movement which are active in the pattern of Colombian insurgency today. There are the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Peoples' Liberation Army (EPL), and the Army of National Liberation (ELN). The FARC is the military arm of the PCC, the EPL is the military force of the PCC-ML, and the ELN is an independent pro-Castro group. Of these three groups, the EPL is the newest, smallest, and weakest. It remains to be seen if it can sustain itself as a viable force and will be dismissed here. Such is not the case with the FARC and ELN.

In May 1966, the active Communists in southwestern Colombia merged and formed the FARC. Their chief is Pedro Antonio Marin, alias Manuel Marulanda, Colombia's most aggressive guerrilla leader.[6] The FARC's beginnings are far different from the ELN.

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[6]Martin, p. 21.

FARC was formed from the old rural peasant nucleus put together during the decade of violence following the "Bogotazo." The members are peasants, mostly illiterate and with unsophisticated political views. The FARC operates in six regions all in southwestern Colombia. The total area is almost 40,000 square miles.[7] The two most important leaders of the FARC are of course the leader Marin and Ciro Castano Trujillo. These tough, delinquent chiefs are Communists, peasant insurgents and descendents of Colombians who have rebelled off and on since 1780, long before Marx and Lenin.[8]

Marin, or Marulanda as he is more often called, is a member of the Central Committee of the PCC; but how much of his communism is due to ideology as opposed to outright pragmatism is open to debate. It is probably a marriage of convenience.

Ciro Castano Trujillo is a capable, although illiterate, Zone Commander. He is a clever politician and a shrewd guerrilla tactician. He has said that,

> . . . by attacking us the Army transforms our movement of self-defense into guerrilla. We will apply the most combative tactics and strategy because we know that the military forces . . . are incapable of destroying us. More than fifteen years of struggle have made the guerrilla movement more dynamic, stronger, more capable of struggling effectively against the government forces. . . .[9]

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[7] Ibid., p. 23.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Orlando Fals-Borda, Subversion and Social Change in Colombia (1969), p. 24.

The Colombian Army and other sources estimate that the FARC has an effective force of 200-300 men.[10]

The ELN or Army of National Liberation was formed in December 1964. It operates in midnorthern Colombia in Santander and is made up of young students who have taken to the hills and jungles. The ELN, therefore, contains an intellectual and ideological element never before found in Colombia guerrilla bands. The existence of the ELN was announced after they had attacked the town of Simacota and killed the local police. The ELN maintains it is not Communist and there is no proof that it receives help from abroad.

The area of operations is in extremely rugged terrain and the Colombian Army calls it a well chosen strategic position.[11]

Leadership in the ELN is vested in Fabio Vasquez Castano. He attended the University of Bogota and then studied law for a year. He was active in militant youth movements and became dissatisfied with the limited possibilities of those groups. He founded the ELN and announced its formation to the world.

The prestige of the ELN was greatly bolstered when Father Camilo Torres Restrepo joined its ranks. Father Torres came from an aristocratic family and was in his own right an intellectual and scholar. The 37 year old priest was killed by the Army in February 1966.[12]

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[10] Martin, p. 25.
[11] Ibid., p. 27.
[12] Ibid., p. 28.

The ELN operates in 15 man fronts. They say their supply and information systems are maintained by the peasants of the area. Additionally, the ELN claims the Colombian Army is the sole source for arms, ammunition, and military supplies. They attack many times just to capture arms and supplies from the Army troops.

On balance it appears thatthe Communists have played a role in the overall insurgency situation in Colombia. While it is difficult to assess the exact importance of that role, it seems fair to say that it has not been dominant. The Communist influence appears to have increased in recent years particularly since the origin of the National Front.

Communist participation in insurgency and related violence has, in recent years, contributed:

> Political direction and cohesion above the boss level of old.
>
> Outside financial support, making base area support more secure for the guerrilla.
>
> More sophisticated training (Cuba).
>
> Inroads into Army and Police structures, making espionage and counterespionage more effective, thereby increasing the security of the bands, and assisting in strike planning.
>
> Access to voice in public press and radio.
>
> Source of recruits heretofore not available.
>
> Fraternal ties across borders when pursuit is hot.[13]

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[13] Interview with Thomas W. Flatley, COL, Staff and Faculty, USAWC, Carlisle Barracks, 22 December 1970.

CHAPTER VI

COUNTERING THE VIOLENCE

This chapter will examine the measures employed by the government to counter the violence which had become a way of life in Colombia. These measures will be grouped into two broad functional areas: political and security. In reading this analysis, one should keep in mind the ever-present overlapping in these functional areas. For example, a political program to improve the socioeconomic future for rural peasants may fall in part to the military for implementation in the form of civic action.

POLITICAL MEASURES

> On June 13, 1953, a palace military coup, led by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, unseated the dictatorial Conservative President of Colombia, Dr. Laureano Gomez. This act terminated a bloody, five-year period of civil strife. With it, too, there ended the old political order in which two parties competed for power in a system which had caused many to look upon Colombia as the most stable democracy in Latin America.[1]

It is generally agreed that the coup of 1953 reversed the course of the violence. As Rojas assumed power he had the support of the people who were exhausted and frightened after the blood bath. They wanted peace and Rojas tried to give it to them.

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[1]Fluharty, p. 1.

As an initial move he removed the state of seige and offered amnesty to everyone who considered himself to be involved in acts subversive to public order. These people only had to present themselves to military authorities and surrender their arms. The decree of amnesty was an instant success. A few bands of criminals and outlaws remained, but large-scale violence had subsided.

In addition to the amnesty, the government organized the Office of Rehabilitation and Assistance, the Institute of Colonization and Immigration, and other institutions which sought to assist the rural peasants and displaced persons. Although mismanaged, these were important steps toward helping the peasants to achieve a better standard of living.[2]

The success of the pacification program makes the subsequent resurgence of violence in Tolima seem all the more strange. The rise of this violence can probably be attributed to the unrealistic policy of retaining in the same areas and positions, local police, officials, and Army units which had been responsible for the repression and persecution of the Liberals before the amnesty.[3]

As the violence and dissatisfaction with his political moves increased, Rojas used the tactic of his Conservative predecessors - repression. He ordered the military to conduct campaigns which

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[2]Daniel, p. 213.
[3]Ibid., p. 214.

often resulted in scorched-earth tactics. These campaigns were generally unsuccessful and created ill-will toward the Army. Conversely, in areas where pacification policies were continued there was no significant resurgence of violence.

By 1957, Rojas was in deep political trouble and was replaced by a military junta which again sought to achieve peace by means of an amnesty. However, because of the political turmoil in the country, the amnesty this time had little impact on the violence.

The violence actually seemed to reach a peak in 1958. It is at this point that the National Front came into being. This action which provided for parity in the government is given credit for returning peace to Colombia. By removing the major basis for partisan political action violence should have been lessened if not eliminated.

But, again such was not the case. The violence of the previous decade had spawned a generation of new children of violence to whom antisocial behavior had become natural.[4]

As President Alberto Lleras Camargo assumed office in 1958, he represented the first leader elected under the National Front concept. He seemed determined to do away with the repressive actions of his predecessors and to concentrate on his policy of appeasing the violators of law and order. After two years of appeasement, it became apparent to him that the situation required

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[4] Ibid., p. 216.

more positive military action. He was convinced that the traditional political causes had been removed and that bandits and Communist insurgents were causing the violence to continue. Accordingly, he looked to the security forces to get the violence and insurgency under control.

SECURITY MEASURES

Organization

The President, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces has as his foremost military advisor the Minister of War. The Minister has supervision over the Army, Navy, and Air Force as well as the National Police. While no specific mission statement is available, it can be interpreted from a study of the organization that the normal supporting ministerial offices exist. In addition, there are two high level councils which provide advice to the President: the Superior Council of National Defense and the High Military Council.[5]

The Commanding General of the Armed Forces is charged with command over the three military forces, the National police, and the Directorate-General of Services. To assist him, he has a normal staff organization.[6]

All four services under the Commanding General have full command in their appropriate area. The Director-General of

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[5]US DA Pamphlet 550-26, p. 603.
[6]Ibid., p. 604.

Services has administrative responsibility for the service echelons, which operate in accordance with plans prepared by higher headquarters.[7]

The Army has its own commander, headquarters, and staff. Its major units, the Brigades, are called Operative Units and are composed of a mix of combined arms forces. Also under Army control are service units of transport, communication, engineering, and supply. Schools and branch centers are under centralized control as exercised through the Military Institutes Brigade (BIM).[8]

The Navy is headquartered in Bogota and is organized to contend with a 1,500-mile, two-ocean coastline and 2,000 miles of navigable rivers. Cartegena houses a naval base with some ship repair facilities. The Navy also has a Corps of Marine Infantry.[9]

The Air Force controls tactical fighter bomber and light bomber units as well as transports. It has a flying school near Cali.

Forces

The strength and composition of the Armed forces and the National Police are as shown at Table 1.

Strategy

With the establishment of the National Front in 1958, the major political factor in the violence was removed. This did not

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

mean, however, that all violence was ended or that the disorder in the countryside was entirely devoid of political considerations. Several strongholds of insurgents remained and all administrations since 1958 had been concerned with isolating and eliminating these pockets of insurgents.[10] Political groups, particularly the Communists, opposing the National Front have attempted to exploit the remaining pockets of violence. It is in this context that the military strategy designed to counter and eventually eliminate the insurgency should be considered.

For many years, up until the time the National Front came into being, many politically powerful leaders and even many military commanders did not have a positive attitude about resolving the problem of violence. As in any civil war type engagement, it is always difficult to fight one's own countrymen. Further, the Army had had no special training in this guerrilla-type warfare.

While it is true that many Army leaders had been in combat in Korea, that conventional war did little to prepare them for this different and difficult fighting. Also, in the absence of guidance from higher headquarters and specific plans for conducting a long-term, far-reaching counterinsurgency campaign, many local

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[10]Center for Research in Social Systems, Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict (1968), p. 424.

commanders took it upon themselves to try out locally devised tactics which were not necessarily in consonance with sound military doctrine.

In 1959, the military initiated some short-range measures which would hopefully provide a quick fix until more comprehensive long-range plans could be developed. Rural garrisons were reinforced with personnel and equipment. Troop airlift by helicopter was provided on short notice as a reinforcing measure.

In 1962, a long-range plan called LAZO (snare) was developed and implementation began. This plan was the basis for the anti-violence campaign conducted in Colombia throughout the 1960's. The first part of the plan called for the creation of a tougher, battle trained, combat ready Army. To accomplish this, Lanceros or Rangers were trained at Tolima Department in Melgar. When Lanceros emerged they were ready to fight guerrillas anywhere, anytime, with any weapon. The Program of Instruction for this training borrows heavily from the combat experience provided by US advisors.

The counterinsurgency activities involved in Plan Lazo had three basic functions: offensive operations, civic action, and psychological operations. Success was achieved in each of the functional areas. The following examples demonstrate the effectiveness of each of these programs in achieving overall accomplishment of the counterinsurgency mission.

An offensive operation called Action Marquetalia began on 27 June 1964. The mission was to restore law and order to Marquetalia by killing, capturing, or driving the guerrilla band of Manuel Marulanda, alias Tiro Fijo or Sure Shot, from its operating base. Tiro Fijo was the military leader of the local Communist cell and Isauro Yosa, the political chief.[11]

The valley of Marquetalia is protected from the outside world by mountains of gray rock. The 17,000 foot Mt. Huila dominates the valley and provided an ideal setting for an independent Communist republic. Marquetalia is only 50 square miles in size and lies about 175 miles southeast of Bogota. Tiro Fijo fled to this area in 1960 after attacking an Army unit and killing nine soldiers. The rugged terrain and the absence of Federal authority made it easy for the Communists to take over. By 1964 there were 3,000 people in the valley. The guerrillas were housed in the town. Orders, money, and arms came from the Colombian Communist Party in Bogota.[12]

The Army deployed three infantry battalions and moved slowly into the Marquetalia Valley. It took over two months walking up the canyons and cutting new mountain paths for the soldiers to penetrate the formidable terrain. In one instance, as the

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[11]Georgie Anne Geyer, "Colombia's Republic of Reds," Washington Post, 25 July 1965, p. E1.

[12]Ibid., p. E1.

soldiers appeared near Gaitana, a town just outside Marquetalia which Tiro Fijo used as an outpost, the bandits fled the town with a warning to the Army that they would fight at the narrow Juntas Gorge. The Army units moved up the canyon toward the gorge expecting a fight. As the lead patrols made contact, a flight of Air Force helicopters with Army troops aboard landed on the high ground above the guerrilla positions. Seeing the hopelessness of the situation, the guerrillas abandoned their positions and retreated out of Marquetalia.

The Army remained in Marquetalia. A detachment was stationed on the 9,000 foot high flat top of Mt. San Pedro de Alta Mira. They built sod and twig huts and ran patrols looking for the guerrillas who might still have been in the area. The Air Force, utilizing the helicopters provided by the US Military Assistance Program supplied the isolated detachments with food and ammunition every two weeks.

The example of Marquetalia points up the aggressiveness of the offensive operations. The heart of the program was the extensive patrolling, house inspection, and investigations based upon improved intelligence. Once a patrol picked up the trail of a guerrilla band, it notified higher headquarters and continued to track the band without regard to time or distance. Patrols had to live like the bandits or guerrillas in order to track them. The patrols had to be better trained than the guerrillas in order to capture them. When needed, the patrol could call for

reinforcement. When possible, the plan called for the band to be surrounded and every effort was made to capture them alive.[13]

Thus by moving forward with aggressive offensive operations, the Colombian Armed Forces gradually reduced the guerrilla influence with the people. The guerrillas for the first time became vulnerable to swift-striking, well-trained combat units. Former guerrilla supporters among the people became reluctant to stick their neck out.

The second program of Plan Lazo was called Civic Action. This program,when linked with the overall government effort to modernize the national economy and to improve the living standards of the people, showed great promise. The Civic Action Program was considered the other edge of the military sword. Many refer to it as the other war.

With the military forces concentrating on their primary mission of pursuing an aggressive offensive campaign, it was recognized that such powerful military maneuvers could prove counterproductive unless balanced with a comprehensive nation-building program.

Again, the action in and around Marquetalia provides a good example of a Civic Action Program at work. When the three infantry battalions secured the 3,000-man Communist Republic of Marquetalia

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[13]Keith C. Nusbaum, "Bandidos," Military Review, (July 1963), p. 22.

in the summer of 1964, they found the people of the valley not friendly. However, as constructive acts began to take place, there was a noticeable change in attitude.[14] The Army, working with the local people, constructed four schools, five health posts, ten bridges, and twelve electric plants. A road was built into the area by Army engineers.[15]

As the Army and the bulldozers moved in, the influence of the guerrillas seemed to be reduced.[16] As an ancillary factor, stores reopened, schools began to operate again, and farmers moved their goods to market. Priests, sponsored and secured by the local military commander began to serve areas which had been totally cut off from them for years. Since civic action is designed to improve the lot of the people and to improve the image of the military in the eyes of the people, it is not surprising that the Colombian Civic Action Program has done just that. The military operations receive benefit from the improved relations in the form of current information about the movement of guerrilla bands in and around the area.

The Colombian Civic Action Program is well summarized in this quote from the former Colombian War Minister, General Alberto Ruiz Novoa:

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[14]Center for Research in Social Systems, Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict (April 1968), p. 425.

[15]Georgie Anne Geyer, Colombia's Republic of Reds, Washington Post, 25 July 1965, p. E1.

[16]Nusbaum, p. 23.

> Military civic action requires coordination among the different government levels and is carried out by committees composed of military and civilian authorities; ecclesiastic authorities are also invited to participate, as well as all those individuals and groups who desire to collaborate. The task of the committees is to get the cooperation of the civilian population through campaigns of social, educational, and communal action for the betterment of the people.
>
> The Colombian experience has shown the excellent results that are obtained through the establishment of these committees and which are evident in the cooperation that all the citizens have offered in the actions accomplished.[17]

In addition to the civic action projects of the Army, the Air Force, Navy, and National Police have made significant contributions to the overall success of the program. The Air Force has supported the Army projects by providing air transport of heavy equipment into remote areas. They have also provided medical assistance to remote areas and have scheduled flights to and from isolated parts of the country. The Navy, taking advantage of its patrolling activities along the many miles of rivers, provides medical assistance and passenger and cargo service. The National Police have also provided a network of communications by radio throughout the countryside, including walkie talkie sets to individual farms so that families can notify the authorities when they are under attack.

The third program of Plan Lazo deals with psychological operations. The Marquetalia campaign was characterized by

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[17]Edward B. Glick, Peaceful Conflict; The Non-Military Use of the Military (1967), p. 104.

intensive psychological operations. When the government forces entered Marquetalia, they found extensive Communist propaganda. In little houses, almost at the end of the world, they found Communist literature and copies of books and articles by Marx and Lenin. The military launched a campaign to counter this propaganda. They attempted to convince these rural peasants that the bandits and Communists were not their true and lasting friends. The Army was there to stay and the Army would protect them. The Army was the symbol of national government and could be relied on to bring peace to the area. With the civic action projects as supporting evidence, the effort to win the hearts and minds of the people continued. Military successes were given wide coverage in the press and radio, while guerrilla and bandit attacks broadly advertised and covered in gory detail. Posters appeared asking for the return to a peaceful life. Rewards were offered for information leading to the capture of guerrilla leaders.

The operations of the National Police were of extreme importance to the success of not only Plan Lazo, but the long-range aspects of the entire counter violence program. Control of the National Police by the Minister of War has resulted in the effective planning and coordination of various activities. For example, the flow of intelligence from the village police to the nearest Army putpost is facilitated by this organizational arrangement.

Effectiveness

While the violence and insurgency has not been completely solved, the overall trend is downward. Official estimates of the victims of violence indicate that banditry has declined sharply. These estimates show 2,909 deaths in 1962 - the year Plan Lazo was first implemented - but only 824 in 1963.[18] The number of bandit gangs was reduced from the 120 thought to exist prior to Plan Lazo to about 15. The security forces continue to pursue and eliminate prestigious insurgent leaders such as Father Torres and Capitan Dumar Aljure.[19]

In summary, the operations of security forces have proven successful over almost a decade of action. The programs as set forth in Plan Lazo were sound and provided the framework for a workable counterinsurgency campaign. The integration of the three programs of military offensive, civic action, and psychological operations was essential to the accomplishment of the mission.

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[18]Center for Research in Social Systems, Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict (April 1968), p. 426.

[19]Richard L. Maullin, "The Private War of a Guerrilla," Transaction (March 1970), p. 45.

CHAPTER VII

IMPACT OF UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE

GENERAL

Any attempt to discuss the impact of United States Military Assistance on the overall problem of insurgency and violence in Colombia should be viewed in light of the following difficulties and restrictions involved in the analysis of any military assistance program.

The first and most obvious problem is that of restricted or incomplete information. Military assistance is by its very nature the most sensitive area of foreign policy and fraught with serious pitfalls for both the donor and recipient.

Secondly, and of far greater complexity, is the precise definition of what constitutes military assistance. There seems to be little doubt about the direct provision of military equipment and services; but there are cases when such aid can have both an economic and military cast. For example, the United States has emphasized in most of its military assistance programs the importance of civic action projects. The economic and social contributions made by military units using military equipment provided under military assistance programs has been considerable.

Perhaps the most difficult problem of all is to evaluate the effect of military aid upon the recipient nation. Quantitative analysis has limitations in that it orients on the value of

the assistance from the donor's point of view and that such analysis requires data of a nature and extent not appropriate or available.

Qualitative analysis even at its best provides few conclusive answers. The considerations of assistance are so complex and the range of actions and reactions so significant that most qualitative judgments are highly qualified. Moreover, as was the case with Colombia, the restrictions of incomplete information applicable to internal conditions make definitive evaluation dangerous if not impossible.[1]

AMOUNT OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE

The average number of military assistance personnel authorized in Colombia during the past decade was about 60 with the Army and Air Force having better than two thirds. The mission of these personnel was to advise their military counterpart and to administer the Military Assistance Program in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

From 1950 to 1965, total grant aid for Colombia was about sixty five million dollars with more than thirty seven million of the total applied to the key years of the buildup for implementation of Plan Lazo.[2]

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[1] Edwin Lieuwin, The United States and the Challenge to Security in Latin America (1966), p. 3.

[2] Ibid., p. 14-15.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF ASSISTANCE

Training

Training assistance is provided by mobile training teams working in Colombia and by the attendance of selected officers and noncommissioned officers at US schools in the US and the Panama Canal Zone.[3] The numbers trained in US schools have been relatively small. From 1959 to 1969 an annual average of only 330 military personnel were programmed for training in US schools either in the US or Canal Zone. This constitutes only 62 per cent of the total Armed Forces. Of the 330 personnel, the Army trained 150, the Air Force 90, and the Navy 90.[4]

Equipment

Despite the meager allocation of grant aid, the security forces managed to obtain some equipment which proved to be vital in accomplishing the counterinsurgency mission. In 1962 the first helicopters arrived in Colombia. The impact on the tactics of fighting the guerrillas was immediate. The Army was provided with a quick reinforcing capability not to mention resupply and medical evacuation capabilities. In addition, communication equipment and light ground transport vehicles, both of which were essential to the internal security mission were

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[3]US DA Pamphlet 550-26, p. 606.

[4]Geoffrey Kemp, Some Relationships Between US Military Training in Latin America and Weapons Acquisition Patterns (1970), p. 4.

obtained. The Air Force flew helicopters for the Army and in addition acquired T-33 fighter bomber aircraft to provide close-in tactical support to the Army ground units. Some reconnaisance aircraft were provided and utilized to aid in tracking the guerrilla bands in the mountains and to provide an additional communication link when necessary. The Navy increased its inventory of small patrol boats for its river patrol mission.

Summary

That United States Military Assistance played a vital role in helping the Colombian government meet its internal security responsibilities is undeniable. Whether, with more training and equipment, the security forces could have done a more effective job is debatable. What emerges with crystal clearness, however, is the fact that the United States should continue to assist Colombia where possible.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

The endemic violence in Colombia which has caused the death of hundreds of thousands of people has been brought under control. This has been accomplished by a combination of political, socio-economic and military actions.

The political basis for violence was the hatred built up through the years between the Conservatives and the Liberals. With the advent of the National Front, a political system which provided for parity in political appointments, the major political cause for violence was at least temporarily suspended. There is no assurance however that when the National Front expires in 1974 that the people will resist their tendency toward violent political pressure.

The Communist Party of Colombia (PCC) has had significant impact on continuing the violence since formation of the National Front. The military arm of the PCC is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and numbers about 250-300 personnel. They constitute the most effective insurgent group. The Army of National Liberation (ELN), a Castro-oriented insurgent group is small with about 100 people. The ELN is relatively ineffective at present. These two major Communist groups suffer from a lack of central direction and diverging views. They will probably remain split and only should they resolve their ideological split

and begin to work together in coordinated attacks on the government security forces will they constitute a more serious threat than presently posed.

The armed forces, working in concert with the National Police, have reduced the violence and conducted campaigns to counter the military activities of the insurgent Communists. The military strategy, which proved successful for the Colombians, involved a three-pronged concept of aggressive offensive operations, civic action projects, and intense psychological operations.

The military operations were effective because of improved training throughout the Army, particularly the training of Lanceros or Ranger-type units. Equipment provided under the United States Military Assistance Program, particularly helicopters, light vehicles, and communication sets, were particularly significant in the success of the Armed Forces and the National Police.

The organization of the security forces is sound and the placement of the National Police under the Minister of War facilitates internal security coordination.

The security forces of Colombia should be able to contain the insurgency provided the insurgents remain split. The military will continue to require military assistance from the United States and it is in the interest of the United States to provide such assistance.

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TABLE I

COLOMBIA

General

Population: 21,000,000.
Military service: 1 year.
Total armed forces: 60,000.
Estimated GNP 1969: [illegible] billion.
Estimated defence expenditure 1969: 1,870 million pesos ($114,[illegible]).

16.3 pesos = $1 (up to November 1969).
17.6 pesos = $1 (since December 1969).

Army

Total strength: 50,000 (can be raised to 300,000 on full mobilization).
8 infantry brigades.
Light armour, motorized infantry, artillery and engineer detachments.

Navy

Total strength: 8,000.
8 destroyers
1 destroyer escort.
1 frigate.
8 coastal patrol vessels.
5 river gunboats.
14 patrol motor launches (less than 100 tons).

Air Force

Total strength: 6,000; 22 combat aircraft.
About 8 B-26 light bombers.
6 CL-13B and T-33F *Sabreja* fighters.
8 *Catalina* maritime patrol aircraft.
2 C-130 *Hercules* transports.
About 50 other transport aircraft, including C-54, C-47, DHC-3 *Otter*, *Aero Commander* and DHC-2 *Beaver*.
30 T-41D and 10 T-37C trainers.
Other trainers include T-33A, T-34A and T-6.
About 50 helicopters, including 12 OH-6A, 6 TH-55, 30 Bell 47, 6 Kaman HH-43B, UH-23 and UH-1B.

Para-military forces

A National Police Force of about 35,000 men, adaptable to a para-military role.

FIGURE 1

CARIBBEAN SEA
The Intendencia de San Andrés y Providencia, consisting of several islands in the Archipelago de San Andrés y Providencia (13 00'N, 81 30'W), and the Isla de Malpelo (3 58'N, 85 35'W), are not shown on this map.
The administrative center of the Intendencia is San Andrés.
LA GUAJIRA
ATLANTICO
Maracaibo
MAGDALENA
CARACAS
VENEZUELA
PANAMA
BOLIVAR
CORDOBA
NORTE DE SANTANDER
ANTIOQUIA
SANTANDER
ARAUCA
PACIFIC OCEAN
BOYACA
CALDAS
CHOCO
CUNDINAMARCA
VICHADA
BOGOTA
QUINDIO
VALLE DEL CAUCA
TOLIMA
META
CAUCA
HUILA
GUAINIA
VAUPES
NARIÑO
CAQUETA
QUITO
ECUADOR
BRAZIL
AMAZONAS
PERU
COLOMBIA
ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS
ATLANTICO Departamento
ARAUCA Intendencia
VAUPES Comisaria
BOGOTA Distrito Especial
*Bogota also administrative center for Departamento de Cundinamarca
International boundary
Internal administrative boundary
National capital
Internal administrative center
PERU
53534