

Anti-War Alert

the newsletter of the Twin Cities CISPES Anti-War Committee ----- SPRING 2000

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A CALL TO ACTION: U.S. OUT OF COLOMBIA NOW!

Nation-wide emergency protests planned for the Monday after the Senate vote

from the Colombia Action Network

In the coming weeks, the House and Senate are expected to pass a \$1.7 BILLION military aid package for Colombia! This is the biggest package ever proposed for Colombia, and will put massive military weaponry, equipment and training into the hands of Colombia's corrupt army and brutal death squads. People of conscience around the country must stand up and speak out against this disaster.

Colombia is already the world's third-ranking recipient of U.S. military aid. Hundreds of U.S. military personnel, stationed in Colombia, work with and train Colombian soldiers, who are armed with U.S. weapons, and who fly U.S. spy planes and attack helicopters.

Stop the Push into Southern Colombia!

Most of this aid package, almost one billion dollars, is aimed at backing a Colombian Army offensive into the southern portion of Colombia. This is the area controlled by the guerrillas of the Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). A few years ago, to open a door to peace talks, Colombia's government agreed to withdraw all forces from this area. Sending in Colombian Army personnel, or North American soldiers, will destroy the peace process and is a plan for defeat at the hands of guerrillas who view this proposed aggression as a declaration of war. Even members of Congress argue that a push into southern Colombia will drag the United States into a terrible counter-insurgency war.

No Aid to Human Rights Abusers!

Recent reports by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the U.S. State Department all prove that the Colombian Army uses financial and material backing from the United States, to work hand-in-hand with the paramilitary death squads. Military and paramilitary forces commit 70% of the human rights abuses in Colombia; they massacre and terrorize tens of thousands of human rights workers, labor union members, indigenous activists, and other Colombian civilians.

Paramilitaries and the military plan and carry out joint operations. The Colombian Army provides weapons and munitions, helicopter support and medical aid to death squad activities. Some death squad members are off-duty or retired military officers, many are trained at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia.

The Drug War is a Lie!

As the U.S. War on Drugs has escalated, pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into weapons and equipment for the Colombian military, drug use in the United States has continued to rise. As Clinton and Congress have increased the size of U.S. police forces, empowered police to use more force, and mandated that judges jail North American drug users for years, drug use has continued to rise. In fact, the only countries that effectively combat drug abuse, use a strategy of treating drug addiction. Clinton's so-called War on Drugs is a flimsy excuse to wage a massive intervention in Colombia.

Build an anti-war movement, protest the Monday after Congress approves aid to Colombia

Clinton's proposal, if passed, is the beginning of a long war against the people of Colombia. In opposing today's aid package, we are starting to build a movement to stop U.S. intervention in Colombia. We must speak out against this attack, expose the truth about U.S. involvement in Colombia, and use this opportunity to bring more people into a movement that will continue to challenge the U.S. role in Colombia's Dirty War against its own people.

In cities across the country, activists are watching Congress closely. If the House and Senate both vote for the proposed aid package, of one and a half billion dollars, to Colombia, we need to organize an immediate and visible response. Together, we can have a major impact. We may not force Clinton to veto this package, but we can raise the stakes on sending this military aid or more in the future.

Minneapolis plans protest

The Anti-War Committee is joining forces with Women Against Military Madness, Veterans for Peace and other local peace and justice to stop U.S. aid to Colombia. Hundreds of Minnesotans have already called and written our Senators and Representatives [see *House Passes \$1.7 Billion* on pagexxx]. The Twin Cities response plan includes an *emergency organizing meeting* the day after the Senate vote. This meeting will be at 5:30pm at Mayday Books, 301 Cedar Avenue South, in the Minneapolis West Bank area. All are welcome to attend this meeting, where we will organize an *emergency protest* for the Monday after the Senate vote, at 4:30pm at the Federal Courts Building, 4th Street and 3rd Avenue, in downtown Minneapolis.

Rogue State Round Up

by Alan Dale

IRAQ

Since the beginning of the year, the U.S. and Britain have continued their bombing campaign against targets in Iraq.

These attacks are being carried out to enforce the so-called "no fly zones" over northern and southern Iraq. These zones were imposed by the U.S. at the end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991 and have no basis in international law. Since the end of 1998, over 170 civilians have been killed and 500 have been injured as a result of these attacks.

From January 1 to April 13 of this year, U.S. and British jets attacked targets in Iraq on 24 separate days, or on average of once every 4.5 days. On April 6, 14 Iraqis were killed during a U.S. air strike in southern Iraq.

The deaths on April 6 caused the governments of France and China to issue statements questioning the continued air campaign against Iraq. A French Foreign Ministry spokesperson said, "We reaffirm our incomprehension, our profound unease in relation to the pursuit and intensification of the air strikes against Iraq, in which the people are the principal victims."

The almost constant bombing campaign against Iraq has received little attention in the U.S. press. The New York Times typically runs one paragraph announcing a new bombing. The Minneapolis Star Tribune seldom bothers to pay even that much attention.

The continued air campaign against Iraq is the longest continuous air campaign carried out by the U.S. since the end of the Vietnam War.

OIL, SANCTIONS & AFGHANISTAN

Over the last several months, there has been an increase in rhetoric from Washington against Afghanistan.

Washington claims that Afghanistan, 90% of which is controlled by the Taliban movement, is a haven for terrorists, especially Osama bin Laden. The U.S. has indicted bin Laden for the bombings of two U.S. embassies in East Africa in 1998. The U.S. has also tried to link bin Laden to virtually every explosion occurring near a U.S. citizen or soldier since the early 1990s.

In 1998 the U.S. bombed targets in Afghanistan as well as in Sudan in retaliation for the embassy attacks. It later turned out that the targets in Sudan had nothing to do with terrorism and everything to do with producing medicine.

In December, when the press was full of stories of the "millennial terror" scare, the U.S. warned Afghanistan that any "act of terror" against the U.S. would be blamed on Afghanistan and would result in U.S. military action.

Since then, the United Nations Security Council has issued a statement demanding that Afghanistan arrest bin Laden or face new economic sanctions. U.N. sanctions were first imposed last October.

The U.S. is urging Pakistan to impose a complete trade embargo against Afghanistan. The UPI reported on April 11 that the U.S. wants Pakistan to "cut off the much needed" supply of food to Afghanistan.

What is the source of this campaign against Afghanistan? To sum it up: oil.

Afghanistan is located close to the newly found oil and gas deposits of Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region. In fact, just a few years ago the U.S. maintained friendly relations with the Taliban government when it first came to power. At that time, the Afghan government was negotiating an agreement with UNOCAL to build an oil pipeline across the country. That project collapsed and, in the U.S. view, the Taliban are no longer the best partner in the region.

Many U.S. officials have visited Central Asia in the past few weeks including Secretary of State Madeline Albright as well as the Directors of both the CIA and the FBI.

As the Denver Rocky Mountain News reported in early April that the real reason for all these official trips is "gas and oil. Central Asia has more of it than the Persian Gulf."

The paper went on to say, "What makes the Caspian oil particularly attractive is that it is not controlled by" OPEC, the organization of oil exporting countries heavily dominated by the Arab states. The Rocky Mountain News said, "Unlike the Arabs, the Central Asian republics have no reservations about allowing foreigners to develop their energy sector."

How convenient.

Although there are political campaigns directed against the Taliban-dominated Afghan government on a range of issues, particularly the status of women, we should not be misled. History has taught us that U.S. policy is driven not by humanitarian concerns but, rather, by the drive to profit from natural resources inconveniently found under other people's land.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan may be the next candidate to join the rogue state club.

Criminal Pinochet returns to Chile

By Mark Abendroth

Lifetime Senator Augusto Pinochet returned to Chile in March, after being detained in Britain for a year and a half. He was deemed unfit, due to health reasons, to stand trial in Spain for deaths resulting from his reign of terror as dictator of Chile from 1973 to 1990. Thousands of dissenters were killed or were disappeared after the 1973 coup that placed Pinochet in power and left Salvador Allende, the democratically elected socialist president, dead.

The CIA assisted Pinochet in engineering the coup; therefore, it was no surprise that the United States government stayed silent about Pinochet's arrest. The fact that he was arrested and detained sent the world a message that criminal dictators who enjoy impunity within their own borders are not necessarily immune from prosecution when they step beyond those borders.

Moreover, Pinochet's impunity in Chile is no longer going unquestioned. The Santiago Times (April 14, 2000) reports that attorneys representing the family of former Chilean Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier, who was killed in a 1976 car-bomb explosion in Washington, D.C., have prepared to file a criminal complaint against Pinochet for his responsibility in the assassination. The world will watch to see how the Chilean courts respond to emboldened charges against the former dictator.

House votes for \$1.7 billion aid to Colombia, Senate to vote in a month

by Thistle "I didn't do it" Parker-Hartog

President Clinton's original proposal to send \$1.3 billion to Colombia, ostensibly to further the cause of protecting our youth from drugs, was increased to \$1.7 billion in the House Appropriations Committee. Though the bill did pass on March 30, 2000, 263 to 146, we should congratulate each other on the work we did to help cause 2/5 of the House to oppose this lethal money. Much to the surprise of many, all of the Minnesota Representatives opposed the bill, with the exception of Representative Vento, who abstained. Representative Ramstad even proposed an amendment which would cut all of the funding for Colombia out of the emergency spending bill, an amendment which failed by similar margins.

This does not mean that we can relax our vigilance, however. Colombian President Pastrana recently met with Congress, and elicited a promise from Senate Leader Trent Lott that Congress would indeed be forwarding Colombia a \$1.7 billion check. It is now crucial that we contact our Senators, to let them know how important it is to keep this money out of the hands of Colombian death squads, and remind them that we, the US taxpayers, direct Congressional funds, not Pastrana. In addition, we must be aware that many who opposed the bill, did so for isolationist, bureaucratic, or political reasons, and still may need to be convinced of the blood it would place on U.S. hands should money be proposed for Colombia in the future under a different format.

Human Suffering Follows Corporate Oil Interests

by Joe Kirchof

Oil companies and the immense profit from controlling fossil fuel supplies are major forces behind many government actions. When corporations and governments exploit a country's resources, those living where fossil fuels are found or in the path of a planned pipeline, almost always fall victim to corporate greed. This desire for profit over even the most pressing needs of people also manifests itself indirectly through foreign policy. Several current examples of worldwide trends of oppression following oil money involve the situations in Burma, Chad and Cameroon, and Colombia. While each of these situations may be a worst-case scenario, they are typical situations faced somewhere in the world at almost any given time. Wherever cheap oil and other fossil fuels are found, oppression is likely to be close behind.

Burma

In 1962, the military regime in Burma solidified their political and economic hold on the former British colony. The regime's motivation is almost exclusively profit-based. Its authority is mostly only over those areas with economic potential and cities. One of the potentially most profitable economic projects in Burma is the Yadana natural gas pipeline which was built to bring offshore natural gas through Burma into Thailand.

The Yadana pipeline was built by the French oil company Total and is managed by Unocal and Total. Though it was recently completed, natural gas has yet to flow through it due to increased international pressure and problems with ensuring the security of the pipeline.

The pipeline was built without respect for the villages it destroyed, the villagers forced into refugee camps in Thailand where they are subject to harassment and persecution, or the many people forced to work on the pipeline and the destruction of their homes.

The military regime's single-minded focus on profit has led to numerous atrocities. In 1988, there were widespread student uprisings and general strikes. The government threatened to shoot protestors if protests did not stop. Peaceful protestors, often sitting in the street, were shot to death by soldiers who would trace lines of protestors with machine gun fire. It is estimated that 10,000 people were killed in about one week.

It is common for the government to build through a small village. The village is usually given a few days notice that everyone must leave. Men who stay behind are typically either shot or forced into the army.

Women and children are sometimes killed but more often forced to work on the project. Women are often forced into "double duty." Through the day, they carry heavy loads, often over 100 pounds, and are forced to labor in other ways as needed; at night, they are gang-raped by soldiers. The physical and emotional trauma coupled with extreme lack of sleep and rest, kill many of those who are not directly murdered.

In 1996, the United States passed unilateral sanctions against Burma, banning any company not currently investing in Burma from beginning to do so. However, any company with current business in the country is free to continue or begin any activities they wish to have there; cheap labor and easy access to resources make Burma especially attractive to companies looking to save money in any way possible.

Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel peace prize laureate who was elected soon after the government massacres in 1988, when the government expected terror to prevent votes against the regime, is kept under house arrest. Most political dissenters, those without significant international profiles, are tortured and killed at the first signs of potentially threatening government power.

Ka Hsaw Wa, a student involved in the 1988 uprising who escaped from torture at the hands of state police, founded the organization EarthRights International (ERI). Under his leadership, ERI is currently suing California-based Unocal in a state court, in attempt to revoke its charter based on human rights abuses related to the Yadana pipeline.

Additionally, there is a growing movement in the United States for localities and states to pass selective purchasing laws, regulations which would prevent governments passing the laws from buying from corporations which invest in Burma. Though similar practises were used without a successful challenge in opposing South African Apartheid, the 1996 selective purchasing law

Massachusetts passed, is currently being reviewed by the national Supreme Court.

Chad and Cameroon

The situation regarding a planned \$3.5 billion oil pipeline between Chad and Cameroon is rather similar to that of the Yadana pipeline in Burma. The U.S.-based Exxon oil corporation is currently seeking World Bank loans to fund \$365 of this pipeline, the largest current or proposed economic development project in Africa. It is doing so, not out of economic need, but to give the pipeline international legitimacy and help ensure completion.

Over three-fourths of the planned 547-mile pipeline would be in Cameroon. The pipeline threatens local populations and the environment in the Atlantic Littoral Forest in Cameroon as well as Chad's most productive and important food producing region. It would also cause a massive dislocation of the indigenous Baguéli peoples and severely threaten the habitats of many native plant and animal species. Road construction for the pipeline would encourage devastating illegal logging operations. The Sanaga River would be at risk of an oil spill and other pollution, as it will be crossed seventeen times in Cameroon alone.

Journalists who have resisted the pipeline or publicly questioned it have been subject to harassment and arrest by government authorities who stand to profit personally from the project. Ngarlèjy Yorongar le Moïban, the only opposition member in the Chadian parliament was stripped of his parliamentary immunity by his colleagues for accusing another member of parliament of taking money from oil interests. He was followed by security forces until his arrest and three-year sentence for "defamatory statements" (for which he served 10 months before international pressure and Amnesty International's attention to his case resulted in his release). In Chad, there are reports that military forces have killed approximately 200 people in the Doba oil region where the pipeline would run.

Colombia

The Colombian people also suffer from oil-related interests. Oil ventures in Colombia which result in military and paramilitary "protection" of oil facilities. For example, British Petroleum-Amoco's widespread drilling operations use the Colombian military for security. This is especially dangerous to the people of Colombia because of the military's close, unofficial ties to numerous paramilitary groups which are notorious for terrorizing and murdering members of local populations. They target opponents of destructive oil company practices.

In the last several months, U.S.-based Occidental Petroleum has been working closely with the Colombian government to begin drilling on land that is historically home to the indigenous U'wa people of Colombia. The drilling not only violates promises made in treaties with the U'wa people by the Colombian government but is especially offensive, as the proposed land for drilling is their traditional burial ground. The U'wa believe oil is the blood of the earth and oppose drilling for it in general.

The situation faced by the U'wa has been made worse by recent military moves against U'wa villages including a recent attack on a village which killed several children and injured others. Other attacks have led to "disappearances" of various members of U'wa communities.

Vice President Gore has been attacked politically by activists for his half million dollars in stock in Occidental Petroleum, a legacy from when his father, Al Gore, Sr., was on the board of that company for 27 years. Fidelity Investments also invests heavily in Occidental and has faced similar protests and criticisms.

Amparo Torres: Women are central to the struggle in Colombia

By Ana Lorvick, University of Minnesota student

Recently, Amparo Torres spoke to a cultural women's studies class at the University of Minnesota. Torres is a Colombian activist who recently traveled around the US to gain support and raise awareness for the plight of the people in Colombia. Average Americans are unaware that there is a bill moving through Congress that will fund the killing of not only popular movements in Colombia, but many innocent people as well. This \$1.7 billion package is being project as a weapon in the drug war, but will be used by the Colombian government to eliminate the popular movements.

Torres denounced the US-fueled war on drugs, a cause célèbre for American politics. She stated that most of the people in Colombian jails are leaders of popular groups, not drug traffickers. This aid package from the US would only bring more of the same.

In speaking to this class, Torres put forth that women are central to the situation in Colombia. Women make up the majority of those unemployed in a nation where the unemployment rate is 25%. As health care, welfare, and education have been privatized, women have suffered. These women are made invisible to the world, but their struggle to develop a peaceful and healthy life in the midst of tragedy is an issue worth of mention. Torres stated that women are the only cultural resource left to rebuild Colombia. There is a feminist movement in Colombia, but it is not the same sort of movement that we see in the US. This Colombian feminist movement is a movement for life, for survival, and feminists come from all levels of the social hierarchy.

Torres' discussion was a call to activism to raise awareness of the plight of Colombia. Several students lamented that the media is so silent on this that no one would ever know to respond politically by protesting or by contacting lawmakers. "We are so in the dark about this. No one ever knows the whole story about the US' involvement internationally," one student protested. This statement represents the sort of ignorance forced on the American public by the government and the media. It is this ignorance that Amparo Torres is seeking to combat.