

The FARC Files

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S. America's links and wishes to buy 50 kilo's uranium and missiles from Lebanon.

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Colombia's precision air strike 10 days ago, on a guerrilla camp across the border in Ecuador, killed rebel leader Raúl Reyes. That was big. But the capture of his computer may turn out to be a far more important development in Colombia's struggle to preserve its democracy.

Reyes was the No. 2 leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, which has been at war with the Colombian government for more than four decades. His violent demise is a fitting end to a life devoted to masterminding atrocities against civilians. But the computer records expose new details of the terrorist strategy to bring down the government of Colombian President Álvaro Uribe, including a far greater degree of collaboration between the FARC and four Latin heads of government than had been previously known. In addition to Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, they are President Rafael Correa of Ecuador, Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega and Bolivian President Evo Morales.

Mr. Chávez is said to have been visibly distressed when told of the death of Reyes, a man he clearly admired. He also may have realized that he played a role in his hero's death, since it was later reported that the Colombian military had located the camp by intercepting a phone call to Reyes from the Venezuelan president.

Mr. Chávez rapidly ordered 10 battalions to the Colombian border. Should the Colombian military cross into Venezuela in search of FARC, he warned, it would mean war. That may have seemed like an unnecessary act of machismo. But the Colombia military has long claimed that the FARC uses both Ecuador and Venezuela as safe havens. Now it had shown that it wasn't afraid to act on that information.

There is a third explanation for Mr. Chávez's panic when he learned of the strike: He was alarmed about the possibility that his links with Reyes would be exposed. Sure enough, when the Colombian national police retrieved Reyes's body from Ecuador, it also brought back several computers from the camp. Documents on those laptops show that Mr. Chávez and Reyes were not only ideological comrades, but also business partners and political allies in the effort to wrest power from Mr. Uribe.

The tactical discussions found in the documents are hair-raising enough. They show that the FARC busies itself with securing arms and explosives, selling cocaine, and otherwise financing its terrorism operations through crime. In a memo last month, for example, a rebel leader discussed the FARC's efforts to secure 50 kilos of uranium, which it hoped to sell to generate income. In the same note, there is a reference to "a man who supplies me material for the explosive we are preparing, his name is Belisario and he lives in Bogotá . . ."

Though it is far from clear, Colombian national police speculated from this that a dirty bomb could be in the making. An April 2007 letter to the FARC secretariat lays out the terrorists' effort to acquire missiles from Lebanon. When Viktor Bout, allegedly one of the world's most notorious arms traffickers, was arrested in Thailand on Thursday, the Spanish-language press reported that he was located thanks to the Reyes computer files.

The maneuvers of thugs seeking power are no surprise. The more significant revelation is the relationship between the FARC and Mr. Chávez, Mr. Correa, Mr. Morales and Mr. Ortega. All four, it turns out, support FARC violence and treachery against Mr. Uribe.

According to the documents, Mr. Chávez's friendship with the FARC dates back at least as far as 1992, when he was in jail for an attempted coup d'etat in Venezuela and the FARC sent him \$150,000. Now he is returning the favor, by financing the terrorist group with perhaps as much as \$300 million. But money is the least important of the Chávez gifts. He is also using his presidential credentials on behalf of the FARC.

The FARC puts a lot of effort toward discrediting Mr. Uribe in the court of world opinion. A September letter from a rebel commander to "secretariat comrades" reads: "As to the manifesto, I suggest adding the border policy and making it public by all means possible to see if we can stop all the world from supporting uribismo [the agenda of Mr. Uribe] in the

October elections." He then proposes a "clandestine" meeting between one rebel and Mr. Chávez in Caracas to discuss "our political-military project." Mr. Chávez, the rebels say in a later document, suggested that the FARC videotape any Colombian military strikes in the jungle for propaganda purposes.

In January, FARC leader Manuel Marulanda (aka "Sureshot") wrote to Mr. Chávez: "You can imagine the happiness that you have awoken in all the leaders, guerrillas, the Bolivarian Movement of New Colombia [and] the Clandestine Communist Party with the plan you put forth . . . to ask for the analysis and approval of recognizing the FARC as a belligerent [therefore legitimate] force."

The documents also show why it was a good idea for Colombia not to ask Ecuador for permission before moving against the FARC camp -- even though in the past it had done so when tangling with the rebels at the border. A January memo reports on a FARC meeting with the Ecuadorean minister of security, who said that Mr. Correa is "interested in official relations with the FARC" and has decided not to aid Colombia against the rebels. "For [Ecuador] the FARC is an insurgent organization of the people, with social and political proposals that it understands," the memo reads.

It also says Mr. Correa plans to increase commercial and political relations with North Korea, and that he requests that one of the FARC's hostages be released to him next time, so as to "boost his political efforts." A Feb. 28 letter from Reyes summarizes a meeting with an emissary of Mr. Correa: "He explained the proposal of Plan Ecuador, which seeks to counteract the damaging effects of Plan Colombia [the joint U.S.-Colombian effort against terrorism]."

Where do Bolivia and Nicaragua fit into this collaborative effort? An Oct. 4 letter from a rebel to FARC leader Marulanda reports that a Venezuelan minister has agreed that if there is a FARC summit, "Chávez would come with Ortega, Evo and Correa." All three, the letter said, are with Chávez to the death.

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