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Narco-Terrorism

"While there does not currently appear to be linkages between narcotics traffickers and terrorist groups in the United States, such a development is possible."

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Narco-terrorism, the involvement of terrorist organizations and insurgent groups in the trafficking of narcotics, has become a problem with international implications. In Third World countries, narcotics traffickers, terrorist organizations, and insurgent groups are alleged to use the wealth they obtain from the sale of illegal drugs to exert economic, political, and military pressure on the governments of the countries in which they operate. The activities of these groups, particularly in Latin America, can threaten the stability of the various countries' governments, thus affecting U.S. foreign policy formulation and implementation.

While there are distinct differences between the goals of narcotics traffickers, insurgent organizations, and terrorist groups, there is generally a limited degree of contact and cooperation between groups active within specific regions. This is because insurgent and terrorist groups have some base camps and infiltration routes in remote rural areas where narcotics traffickers cultivate their crops. Relatively free movement is possible in these areas because of the limited central government presence. While insurgent groups and terrorist organizations do not always participate directly in the cultivation of narcotics, some have obtained money from the narcotics traffickers through extortion, typically by charging fees for protection of growing areas, processing facilities, or distribution routes.

Activities of drug traffickers and terrorist organizations in remote areas of Latin America and other Third World countries often have a direct impact on the United States. For example, during March 1984, Colombia's Special Anti-Narcotics Unit under the direction of Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla stepped up its disruption and interdiction efforts against drug traffickers by raiding cocaine-processing laboratories in the southeastern plains region of Colombia. Approximately 10 metric tons of cocaine were seized and a number of workers were arrested. In retaliation for this action and his outspoken position on the corrupting influences of narcotics traffickers on Colombian politics and society, Lara Bonilla was assassinated by drug traffickers on April 30, 1984.

In order to enhance their image and demonstrate their commitment to fight narcotics trafficking, the Government of Colombia began to extradite Colombian nationals to the United States to stand trial on U.S. drug charges. The traffickers responded to the extraditions by accelerating their campaign of violence. In November 1984, a car bomb was detonated outside the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, killing one Colombian woman. The narcotics traffickers also threatened to kill 5 Americans for every Colombian extradited to the United States and 10 employees of a U.S.-based multinational corporation for every Colombian sen-



Mr. Boyce

tenced in the United States. Threats against the lives of the U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia and the former U.S. Ambassador to Colombia were also made. Then, in November 1985, the 19th of April Movement (M-19), one of the largest insurgent/terrorist groups in Colombia, made a raid on the Colombian Palace of Justice. During the raid, in which over 50 M-19 members and 11 Colombian Supreme Court Justices, including Supreme Court President Alfonso Reyes, were killed, a large number of extradition documents were destroyed. Although it has not been confirmed, there is speculation that the M-19 raid on the Palace of Justice may have been financed by Colombian narcotics traffickers in order to destroy extradition documents.

Thus, it appears that in Colombia there may exist a narcotics trafficker/insurgent group relationship. The terrorist-type activities of the narcotics traffickers and the suspected activities by an insurgent group at the direction of narcotics traffickers suggest a narco-terrorism relationship. Furthermore, it appears that at least on one occasion, the terrorist activities of a Colombian insurgent group were orchestrated to achieve a specific political objective, that being to stop the extraditions of Colombian narcotics traffickers to the United States. In this instance, the in-

surgent group may have supported the narcotics traffickers on the nationalistic grounds that Colombian citizens should not be forced to face judicial proceedings in the United States.

Activity In The United States

The FBI views terrorism as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. Terrorist groups in the United States generally use violence to focus public attention on their political objectives or to secure money to continue operations. Narcotics traffickers, on the other hand, most often use violence to protect their areas of criminal enterprise and interest independent of the concerns or objectives of terrorist organizations. For instance, on February 22, 1986, Barry Seal, a narcotics trafficker turned government informant, was killed by Colombian narcotics traffickers in Baton Rouge, LA, before he could testify against Jorge Ochoa Vasques, a leading Colombian narcotics trafficker. Seal's murder was carried out to prevent him from testifying against Ochoa, not for ideological reasons. Consequently, this homicide is viewed as a criminal rather than terrorist act.

In the United States, contacts between terrorist groups and narcotics traffickers appear to be the result of the clandestine nature and criminal activities of both types of groups. Affiliation between narcotics traffickers and terrorist elements, such as is believed to exist in drug source countries like Colombia, are not known to currently exist in the United States. This may be because the United States is primarily a drug-consuming rather than a drug-producing country. Additionally, in the

United States, there is a law enforcement presence throughout the Nation. In countries such as Colombia, law enforcement officials may have only limited access to remote regions.

Past Linkages

It is possible that current allegations of narco-terrorist activity in the United States are based upon the activities of the now dormant Cuban anti-Castro group, Omega 7. During the early 1980's, members of Omega 7 collected money for a known narcotics trafficker. The agreement between Eduardo Arocena, leader of Omega 7, and the narcotics trafficker stipulated that Omega 7 should receive approximately 35 percent of the money they collected. After Arocena's arrest, in Miami, FL, during July 1983, a document found among his possessions indicated that the trafficker was owed more than \$6,000,000 by various individuals. Also found with the list were surveillance notes and photographs indicating that Arocena and other members of Omega 7 had collected information on individuals identified by the narcotics trafficker. In subsequent testimony, the narcotics trafficker stated that Omega 7 received \$150,000 for their services, although Arocena never turned over any collection money.

Since the narcotics-related activities of Omega 7 during the early 1980's, there have been no documented cases of a formal relationship existing between a known narcotics trafficker and terrorist group in the United States. Instead, there appears to be a blending of the common criminal activity of the two types of groups. Both narcotics traffickers and terrorist groups, because of their criminal activity and enterprises, operate in common criminal circles. Consequently, contacts that have occurred between some terrorist groups and some nar-

“... narcotics trafficking was being used as a method to finance a criminal enterprise;...the overthrow of the Government of Honduras.”

cotics traffickers appear to be largely coincidental, resulting from the criminal activity and clandestine nature of both groups.

Recent Activity

Two recent cases, one involving the activities of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and a known narcotics trafficker and the other involving the sale of narcotics to finance an assassination attempt against the President of Honduras, illustrate the criminal relationship which can develop between narcotics traffickers and terrorists. These two cases also illustrate that each group used the criminal networks of the other in order to fulfill their specific objective. The affiliation between the groups apparently was strictly that of a criminal enterprise with no ideological motives involved.

During September 1984, the PIRA, a militant Marxist organization composed primarily of residents of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland who are committed to forcing British withdrawal from Northern Ireland and establishing a united 32-county democratic socialist republic in Ireland, used a loose-knit criminal group based in Charlestown, MA, to attempt to acquire weapons and munitions. The group, lead by Joseph P. Murray, Jr., was involved in a variety of criminal activity.

During April 1986, Murray and six other men were indicted in Federal district court in Boston on charges of illegally exporting munitions to the Republic of Ireland. Murray was also indicted on charges of importing marijuana into the United States, although this activity was unrelated to the arms trafficking charges. During September 1984, Murray's group allegedly had 7 tons of munitions, valued at approxi-

mately \$1.7 million, loaded onto the merchant vessel Valhalla at Gloucester, MA. The weapons, including rifles, rockets, hand grenades, and 71,000 rounds of ammunition, were later transferred to the fishing trawler Marita Ann off the coast of County Kerry, Ireland. The Marita Ann, which was being used by the PIRA, was seized along with the munitions by Irish authorities on September 29, 1984.

Analysis suggests that Murray was not involved with the PIRA for ideological reasons. Rather, it appears that he was using his criminal contacts to secure the weapons in order to make a profit for himself. Furthermore, it appears that the only reason Murray was used by the PIRA was because of his established criminal contacts. These contacts provided the PIRA with access to individuals who had weapons for sale and were considered less likely to be controlled by U.S. Government authorities.

The PIRA and other Irish terrorist groups operating in the United States have had their arms acquisition networks penetrated and stopped by the FBI and other U.S. Government agencies a number of times in recent years. Usually, when attempting to acquire weapons, Irish terrorists will use sources, both reliable and unreliable, of trusted PIRA members. In a number of recent cases, the FBI, after receiving information that known Irish terrorists were attempting to purchase weapons, has been able to introduce an undercover agent as an arms broker to the middleman and foil the operation. Consequently, it appears that Irish terrorists, in an effort to prevent penetration by U.S. Government agencies, may be beginning to use established U.S. criminal networks, such as the Murray gang,

to acquire weapons. By using established, operating criminal groups, the PIRA probably believes it is reducing the likelihood of having an undercover agent involved.

In another investigation, it initially appeared that a narcotics trafficker-terrorist connection may have existed; however, subsequent analysis suggests that the activity was primarily that of a criminal enterprise being financed by narcotics trafficking. Investigation indicated that Faiz J. Sikaffy, a Honduran citizen living in Miami, FL, and several other individuals, including a Honduran general assigned to the Honduran Embassy in Santiago, Chile, were conspiring to assassinate Honduran President Roberto Suazo Cordova and take over the Government of Honduras. The conspirators were planning on selling 760 pounds of cocaine, valued at more than \$10 million, in the United States and then use the proceeds from the sale to purchase explosives and weapons to be used in assassinating President Suazo and overthrowing the Honduran Government.

In this case, narcotics trafficking was being used as a method to finance a criminal enterprise, that being the overthrow of the Government of Honduras. The individuals involved, although conspiring to commit what could be defined as a terrorist act, were not an established terrorist group. They were instead a group of individuals conspiring to commit a criminal act. This sort of activity appears to be the most likely type of narco-terrorism to take place in the United States. That is, a criminal or terrorist group financing their activities through the sale of narcotics, since narcotics trafficking would provide terrorists with the ability to raise large amounts of cash in a relatively short time.

Observations

To define the Suazo investigation as a narco-terrorism case would be misleading because such a definition would not represent a joining of forces of narcotics traffickers and terrorists. This case does, however, represent a continuation of conventional techniques used by criminal elements to raise cash to finance their criminal activities. Both traditional and non-traditional organized crime groups have long been engaged in narcotics trafficking for profit. Although no terrorist group is known to currently be trafficking in narcotics in order to raise money, small-scale narcotics trafficking has been used by various criminal networks to finance their criminal activity.

It is not uncommon for both traditional and non-traditional organized crime groups to engage in narcotics trafficking. Narcotics trafficking provides these groups with a method of raising large amounts of cash in a relatively short time. Terrorist groups, however, may not wish to engage in such activity because of the adverse impact it could have on the public's perception of their cause. For instance, when it became publicly known that members of Omega 7 were working for a narcotics trafficker, much of the support they received from elements within the Cuban exile community in the United States ceased.

While Omega 7 was active, a significant portion of the Cuban exile community viewed their terrorist attacks against Cuban officials and Castro supporters in the United States as a continuation of the patriotic fight against communism. Elements within the exile community provided Omega 7 with support by contributing money for operations or merely denying knowledge of Omega 7 activities.

It appears that a large amount of Omega 7 funding initially was provided by Cuban businessmen in the United States. The businessmen established a network which would collect money, often in the form of "taxes," from segments of the Cuban community. Money would then be allocated to the various active anti-Castro groups, including Omega 7. In other instances, members of the Cuban exile community would support Omega 7 by merely denying knowledge of Omega 7 activities. This type of support usually came about either out of sympathy or fear of reprisal. Often, individuals who were believed to be in contact with Omega 7 members would intentionally supply misleading or incorrect information when interviewed by the FBI. Even when confronted with documentation, such as surveillance logs and photographs placing them in contact with Omega 7 suspects, the individuals being interviewed would disclaim association.

After it became known, however, that members of Omega 7 were collecting funds for a known narcotics trafficker, a significant portion of the support they received from the Cuban exile community was discontinued. The perception of Omega 7 within the exile community changed from one of fighters against Castro and communism to that of a criminal group taking direction from a narcotics trafficker. The exile community, which at one time lauded the activities of Omega 7, began to disassociate themselves from their activities, and some individuals began cooperating with law enforcement authorities against Omega 7.

Conclusion

Narco-terrorism, the linking of narcotics traffickers and terrorists, may be

a problem in drug-source countries but does not appear to exist in the United States at this time. This may be because in drug-producing countries there is often contact between terrorists and narcotics traffickers in rural areas where narcotics traffickers cultivate their crops. However, in the United States, which is primarily a drug-consuming rather than drug-producing country, such avenues of contact and cooperation are not as likely to exist.

Recent cases in the United States involving contacts between established terrorist groups and narcotics traffickers or individuals involved in a criminal enterprise using narcotics trafficking to finance their criminal activity appear to represent a blending of the criminal activities of the two types of groups. Both narcotics traffickers and terrorist groups, because of their common criminal activity and enterprises, operate in criminal circles. Consequently, it appears that contacts between the terrorist groups and narcotics traffickers are coincidental, resulting primarily from the criminal activity and clandestine nature of the groups.

While there does not currently appear to be linkages between narcotics traffickers and terrorist groups in the United States, such a development is possible. Narcotics trafficking represents a way to raise large amounts of cash in a relatively short time. Consequently, terrorist groups might resort to this type of activity in order to finance their operations. This development, while possible, is considered unlikely. Should it become known that the terrorist group is engaged in narcotics trafficking, financial and moral support by community elements sympathetic to the terrorist groups goals would, in all likelihood, be withdrawn.

FBI