

COLOMBIA SUPPORT NETWORK
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THE COLOMBIAN ARMY: TERRORISM, THIEVERY, BUNGLING AND MASSACRES

Colombian President Alvaro Uribe's policy of democratic security is based on building confidence in public institutions. That is as it should be, and many millions in U.S. taxpayer dollars are supporting the policy. Unfortunately, the Colombian institution that has received most of the U.S. millions, the Colombian Army, has demonstrated repeatedly that it is not worthy of public confidence. It is not worthy of U.S. taxpayer funding.

The following is a brief outline of events reported officially or in the U.S. and Colombian media, describing terrorism, thievery, bungling and massacres by the armed forces of the government of Colombia. Individuals and nongovernmental organizations report many more such examples. This outline was compiled by the Colombia Support Network, a nongovernmental organization headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. For updated information, see the Colombia Support Network website <http://www.colombiasupport.net>.

* May 18, 2007. Two soldiers from the 7th Mobile Brigade, out on patrol came upon a farmer with a mule loaded with bundles of coca. Instead of turning the farmer over to the police, the soldiers decided to divide up their find. They found 90 packages of cocaine and decided to hide 70 of them in the weeds near a local airstrip. They distributed a few packages to neighbors nearby, asking them to keep it a secret. Then they went back to headquarters and turned in the remaining 12 packages, receiving congratulations. But the farmer filed a complaint and both the farmer and the soldiers were arrested, charged, found guilty and sent to prison.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, May 18, 2007.

* May 15, 2007. A local politician (a retired police official) and a Police Inspector have been charged with "rebellion" and criminal conspiracy. They are accused of being part of a network of guerrilla supporters.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, May 15, 2007.

* May 15, 2007. All of Colombia's major newspapers report that the Minister of Defense has fired the general who heads the Colombian police (a branch of the Army) along with several subordinate generals. The weekly news magazine *Semana* revealed that police intelligence officers have been illegally listening to and recording telephone

conversations of cabinet ministers, opposition politicians, news reporters and others. The Attorney General states that recording telephone conversations of others without a court order is a crime under the Colombian penal code.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, *El Colombiano*, Medellin, *El Espectador*, Bogota, May 15, 2007.

* May 14, 2007. The Public Ombudsman (Procurador) has charged 1 officer and 13 soldiers of the Colombian Army with illegally arresting, torturing and killing five civilians on May 25, 2005. They are alleged to have killed the five men and presented them as paramilitaries they had killed in combat. In fact, according to the charges, there was no combat.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, May 14, 2007.

* May 12, 2007. *El Espectador* reports that the Colombian Attorney General's office is studying "an explosive document" that details the 2002 takeover by paramilitaries of the regional Attorney General's office in Cucuta (Boyaca Province). (The Attorney General at that time is now the Ambassador to Mexico.) The document points to high officials of the Colombian Army, the DAS (Colombian FBI) and the police (part of the army) who collaborated with the paramilitaries in Cucuta.

Source: *El Espectador*, Bogota, May 12, 2007.

* May 10, 2007. A Colombian Army soldier was shot by a fellow soldier who was on guard duty. The Colonel in command of the 6th Brigade, headquartered in Ibague (Tolima Province), explained that the victim was leaving by the back way in order to go into town. He was shot by the sentinel when he failed to answer to the command to halt.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, May 10, 2007.

* May 10, 2007. A Colombian Army soldier fired on news reporters who were attempting to cover a guerrilla attack that killed ten soldiers. No reporters were injured.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, May 10, 2007.

* May 8, 2007. Two noncommissioned officers of the Colombian Army were detained after being caught prowling near the residence of relatives of Colombian opposition Senator Gustavo Petro. Senator Petro has received numerous threats on his life and the Colombian government is protecting him and his family. When the security force stopped the two soldiers, they claimed that they were members of the DAS (Colombian FBI). Later they admitted that they were really with the Army. The Commander in Chief of the Army has said that they were performing a counterintelligence activity related to three other soldiers who were not part of the security force.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, *El Colombiano*, Medellin, *El Pais*, Cali, May 8, 2007.

* May 7, 2007. Three Colombian Army soldiers were arrested and charged with murder. They are alleged to have killed a farmer in April 2004 and then claimed to have killed a guerrilla. Two of the soldiers admitted that they committed the murder in order to receive the several days' leave that was offered to any soldier who killed a guerrilla.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, May 7, 2007.

* May 5, 2007. The Colombian Attorney General has re-opened 890 cases that had been closed without any action. Based on the evidence in the files, he issued 20 arrest warrants, including several for members of the Colombian military. Three former soldiers were arrested for the murder of five labor union leaders and five more members of the military were arrested for the murder of three union leaders in August 2004.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, May 5, 2007.

* May 5, 2007. The Inter-American Court for Human Rights will take up the issue of damages against the Colombian government for the massacre at La Rochela in January 1989. A group of paramilitaries, with the cooperation of government agents, murdered 15 court officers while they were carrying out an investigation. The Colombian government has admitted its responsibility in a document submitted to the court on September 11, 2006. The Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, prosecuting the case, alleges that the Colombian government agents responsible for the massacre, both civilian and military, have not been investigated or punished by the Colombian authorities.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, May 5, 2007.

* May 3, 2007. The Inter-American Court for Human Rights has ordered the Colombian government to pay 1,421 million pesos (more than \$700,000) in compensatory damages and 281 million pesos (roughly \$150,000) in punitive damages to the survivors of a human rights lawyer who was murdered in 1998. Jesus Maria Valle Jaramillo was killed after he complained publicly about the relationship between the Colombian Army and paramilitary groups. The Court ordered the Army, the Police, the DAS (Colombia's FBI) and the Interior Ministry each to pay 25 percent of the damages. All of the agencies had been informed of the threats on Valle's life, but refused to take any action to protect him.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, May 3, 2007.

* May 1, 2007. The Attorney General of Colombia, visiting Washington D.C. to request financial support for his office to investigate and prosecute criminal connections between a terrorist group (paramilitaries) and public officials, admitted that in the past, members of the Colombian Armed Forces had participated in the murders of labor activists. In 2006, 72 labor leaders were murdered in Colombia, two more than in 2005, according to Human Rights Watch.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, *El Heraldo*, Barranquilla, May 1, 2007.

* April 30, 2007. A nongovernmental organization in Medellin has completed a study reporting the methods used by the Colombian police between 2003 and 2006, working together with “demobilized” paramilitaries, to violate the human rights of Medellin residents in a community consisting mostly of displaced persons. The paramilitaries would decide who could live in a neighborhood and who could not, and the police enforced their decision. Community leaders were arrested without warrants, and on false charges and some were “disappeared” or murdered.

Source: *El Espectador*, Bogotá, April 30, 2007.

* April 30, 2007. An agent of the Administrative Department of Security (Colombian FBI) and a Judicial Police official, both working as security officers at the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, were caught charging Colombian citizens up to ten million pesos (roughly \$5,000) to obtain U.S. visas. One has been sentenced to six and one-half years in prison and the other is awaiting sentencing.

Source: *El Heraldo*, Barranquilla, April 30, 2007

* April 29, 2007. A sergeant in the Colombian Rapid Deployment Force has been arrested for trafficking weapons to the guerrillas. Another sergeant has fled and is believed to have joined with paramilitary forces. The trafficking ring was discovered when a missing weapon was found in the possession of the guerrillas. In the last several months, the Colombian Army has found several caches of weapons believed to belong to the guerrillas. The Army is attempting to determine whether some of these stored weapons were being trafficked to the guerrillas by members of the Rapid Deployment Force. As of this date, 35 members of the Colombian Armed Forces are in prison, either convicted or awaiting trial, for trafficking weapons to the guerrillas and/or the paramilitaries.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, April 29, 2007.

* April 28, 2007. The weekly news magazine *Semana* reports that the most senior paramilitary chieftain, Ramon Isaza, is expected to make his confession in the coming week. He is expected to identify the Army generals he worked with. *Semana* reports that Isaza founded the first group of paramilitaries in 1978, and since that time has directed narcotics trafficking and at least 600 murders. The Colombian Armed Forces supported them unreservedly, in particular the Barbuja Battalion and the 14th Brigade.

Isaza has already testified before a judge that his son carried out a massacre ordered by a general who at that time commanded the 4th Brigade and a major who was known as “the commander of the paramilitaries.”

Source: *Semana*, Bogotá, April 28, 2007.

* April 26, 2007. A demobilized paramilitary has confessed that he served as a guide for the 17th Brigade of the Colombian Army. He testified that the Army furnished him with a uniform and weapons so that he could take part in operations. This happened near the same time as the massacre of eight persons near San Jose de Apartado in February 2005. The Colombian Prosecutor's Office is investigating the participation of 69 members of the 17th Brigade in the killings.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, April 26, 2007.

* April 19, 2007. One of the highest-ranking demobilized paramilitary commanders, Ernesto Baez, testified in court that he had helped plan the murder of presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan in 1989. He testified that agents of DAS, (Colombia's FBI), of Colombian military intelligence and of the Army's 13th Brigade helped by providing the killers with false identification so that they could approach the platform where Galan was speaking at a political rally. Baez testified that another paramilitary leader continued to remain in contact with the director of the DAS agency.

Source: *El Pais*, Cali, April 19, 2007.

* April 18, 2007. Demobilized paramilitary commander Ernesto Baez testified in court that Colombian military intelligence officers planned and carried out the kidnapping of Senator Piedad Cordoba. She was later released.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, April 18, 2007.

* April 18, 2007. The International Labor Federation (Spanish acronym CSI) reported to the International Labor Organization that members of Colombia's DAS collaborated with paramilitaries in the deaths of Colombian labor leaders. CSI reports that for a long time the DAS has maintained lists of Colombian labor leaders. They were stalked and a number of them were murdered. CSI appeared before the European Parliament in Brussels to urge the international community to pressure Colombia to investigate the deaths of some 2000 labor leaders between 1991 and 2006.

Source: *El Espectador*, Bogotá, April 18, 2007.

* April 16, 2007. The Colombian Inspector General has charged that in 2004, in El Limon, in the municipality of Chaparral (Tolima province) a noncommissioned officer and four soldiers of the 17th Infantry Battalion of Montana, part of the 6th Brigade of the Colombian Army, killed an unarmed civilian. They threw his body in a truck and left the scene, later reporting him as killed in combat.

Source: *Vanguardia Liberal*, Bucaramanga, April 16, 2007.

* April 14, 2007. A witness who has fled Colombia told an *El Tiempo* reporter how in 2002 the paramilitaries "cleaned out" a neighborhood in Medellin, with the help of the Colombian Army and Police. The operation was known as "Orion". He witnessed

several killings and saw the paramilitaries cut up a body. He was shot several times but escaped.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, April 14, 2007.

*April 14, 2007. A spokesman for the Inter-American Human Rights Commission stated that all the armed groups in Colombia, including the Armed Forces, are carrying out sexual abuse and torture. He noted that the Commission had established that the paramilitaries work together with the Armed Forces.

Source: *El Pais*, Cali, April 14, 2007.

* April 8, 2007. A Colombian Army colonel and a captain, currently a commander of Special Forces, were ordered arrested and charged with crimes after they detained 11 civilians. Nine had no arrest warrants but were arrested anyway. After two days of detention, the nine were released at a location that paramilitaries controlled. Only one hour later, four of them were taken away, presumably by paramilitaries. They have never been seen again. The Prosecutor pointed out that the officers were well aware that the paramilitaries controlled the area.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, April 8, 2007.

* March 30, 2007. Seven investigators attached to the CTI (Colombia's CSI) were arrested and charged with arson. They are alleged to have set fire to a storage unit that contained evidence related to homicides in the last four years. Computers, desks and documents were destroyed.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, March 30, 2007.

* March 26, 2007. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the CIA has obtained new intelligence alleging that the head of Colombia's army, Gen. Mario Montoya, collaborated extensively with the paramilitaries, including a group headed by one of Colombia's leading drug traffickers. A CIA report says that Montoya and a paramilitary group jointly planned and conducted the "clean-up" of neighborhoods in Medellin. At least 14 people were killed during the operation. It has been alleged that up to 46 people "disappeared" during the operation, but there have been no prosecutions. The Colombian government denied the *Times* report.

Source: *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 2007.

* March 19, 2007. One Colombian soldier was killed by Colombian police fire when units of both agencies were searching for an illegal armed group. An Army driver was injured by the "friendly fire."

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, March 19, 2007.

* March 19, 2007. The latest United Nations report on the situation of the Colombian Armed Forces in connection with human rights is one of the harshest in recent history, reports the Colombian weekly news magazine *CAMBIO*. The report suggests that some units of the Army are presenting innocent civilians as guerrillas killed in combat, just to give the impression that their operational results have improved. The report also points to an increase in the number of complaints of sexual assault and other injuries to civilians.

Source: *CAMBIO*, March 19-25, 2007.

* March 16, 2007. *El Tiempo* also reported on the issuance of the United Nations document reporting killings by the Colombian Army. The report stats that the majority of the victims were indigenous and African-Colombian people, social leaders, defenders of human rights, farmers, women, children, labor leaders, news reporters and displaced people.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, March 16, 2007.

* March 16, 2007. A judge in Medellin found two Colombian Army officers, a captain and a lieutenant, and 2 soldiers guilty in the disappearance of a merchant on June 1, 2006. No trace of the merchant has been found.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, March 16, 2007.

* March 14, 2007. Three police officers from the traffic section in Medellin were discharged “for the illegal arrest and subsequent murder of a man apparently involved in the theft of a vehicle.”

Source: *El Mundo*, Medellin, March 14, 2007.

* March 6, 2007. The Colombian Government accepted its responsibility before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for the August 9, 1994 murder of Manuel Cepeda, at that time a Colombian Senator. The Government announced that it will seek an amicable settlement of the case. Two members of the military were sent to prison for the murder, but the members of the Senator’s family are urging further investigation to determine who planned and ordered the assassination.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, and *El Pais*, Cali, March 6, 2007.

* February 23, 2007. Colombian newspapers report a corrected figure for the number of Colombian Army troops alleged to have been involved in the massacre of eight persons at San Jose de Apartado in February 2005. Sixty-nine soldiers, including 2 officers, 9 non-commissioned officers, and 58 soldiers will be called to an investigating court in connection with the massacre.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá and *El Espectador*, Bogotá.

* February 22, 2007. The Colombian Prosecutor's office has opened an official investigation of 56 Colombian Army soldiers suspected of having taken part in the massacre of eight persons, including three children, on February 21, 2005. The victims were members of the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado (Antioquia Province). At the time, neighbors of the victims stated that the Army had carried out the killings, but Army and other Colombian government officials insisted that guerrillas were responsible. Continuing investigation has revealed evidence that demonstrates the Army's responsibility for the massacre.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, *El Pais*, Cali, *El Espectador*, Bogotá, February 22, 2007.

* February 20, 2007. A Colombian soldier has been arrested in Venezuela, after he shot and killed a woman who was traveling in a vehicle with her husband. The soldier was part a squad of six Colombian soldiers stationed at the frontier with Venezuela. The Venezuelan Interior Minister announced the arrest, pending an investigation. The shooting is alleged to have been a mistake.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, February 20, 2007.

* February 9, 2007. A captured paramilitary commander, who has confessed to two homicides, testified that he had paid two Colombian Army officers for information about military operations in his area.

Source: *El Heraldo*, Barranquilla, February 9, 2007

* February 6, 2007. The Prosecutor's office has issued warrants for the arrest of a retired Colombian Army colonel and two majors on active duty. The three are charged with multiple aggravated homicides, forced displacement, aggravated kidnapping, forced "disappearances", terrorism and aggravated conspiracy.

The Prosecutor alleges that between February and March of 2003, in Viota, (Cundinamarca Province) they tortured, murdered, "disappeared", and forced the displacement of peasant farmers in the community, in concert with paramilitary groups. The two officers on active duty are in custody, and the retired colonel is a fugitive.

Source: *El Espectador*, Bogotá, February 6, 2007.

* February 6, 2007. In connection with the foregoing charges, and with other reports of wrongdoing by the military, the Prosecutor's office conducted a search of its records and concludes that there are charges to be brought against some eighty (80) members of the Colombian military, some active and some retired. The charges range from support of the paramilitaries to kidnappings, "disappearances", forced displacement and murders over the past four years. There is another group of about eighty (80) whose cases have been partially investigated, but charges have yet to be brought. The records search also

uncovered unfilled charges against police, detectives and officers in the DAS (Colombian FBI).

In October of last year a judge sentenced an Army captain and another officer to 34 years in prison for the murder of a peasant farmer in the community of Viota (Cundinamarca Province). According to the evidence, the officers asked the paramilitaries for help in “cleaning up” guerrillas in the community, so that they could demonstrate success to their superiors. They then kidnapped and murdered the farmer, claiming that he was a guerrilla.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, February 6, 2007.

* February 2, 2007. A high school girl who was working at a military base as part of her studies was killed when a soldier was handling another soldier’s gun and the gun discharged accidentally.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, February 2, 2007

* January 26, 2007. For the first time in history, the Colombian Minister of Defense announced at a press conference that a much-decorated Army colonel had been relieved of his command and would be turned over to civilian prosecutors for investigation of claims that he worked closely with the Colombian paramilitaries. The Colombian paramilitaries have killed thousands of Colombian civilians and have been designated by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist organization. Witnesses claim that the colonel met with paramilitary commanders regularly and furnished them with Army weapons, and that they paid him 30 million pesos (about \$20,000) monthly for his assistance.

According to witnesses, the colonel regularly presented dead civilians as guerrillas killed in combat, whether they had been killed by soldiers or by the paramilitaries. He is also accused of torturing and killing two soldiers under his command and of killing a paramilitary leader who fell out of favor with a more powerful paramilitary commander.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, January 26, 2007; *Semana*, Bogotá, January 28, 2007.

* January 24, 2007. A driver was killed and three children were injured when Colombian Army soldiers mistook the noise of the vehicle for an armed attack.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá; *El Colombiano*, Medellin; *El Pais*, Cali; *El Espectador*, Bogotá, January 24, 2007.

* January 21, 2007. A Colombian Army soldier shot and killed a 23-year-old laborer who started to run when he was asked to show his identity documents.

Source: *Vanguardia Liberal*, Bucaramanga (Santander Province) January 21, 2007

* January 19, 2007. A police lieutenant and eight police officers in Neiva (Huila Province) are accused of trying to steal part of a large store of cocaine base that had been discovered by police officials.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, and *El Pais*, Cali, January 19, 2007.

* January 16, 2007. All of Colombia's largest daily papers today carry reports of paramilitary leader Salvador Mancuso's confession to an investigating court. He stated that he had planned the massacre at El Aro in 1997 with 4th Brigade General Alfonso Manosalva in the General's office. The General is now dead. Mancuso told the court that General Manosalva had furnished routes, maps and battle plans to the paramilitaries. Fifteen civilians were tortured and killed at El Aro (Antioquia Province).

Mancuso said that in 1997 he relied on a Colombian Army Colonel and the Colombian Air Force to help carry out the massacre at Mapiripan (Meta Province). Some 50 civilians were killed there. Mancuso also testified that he and other paramilitaries paid a billion pesos monthly (about \$4.5 million) to the Colombian police for "information and intelligence" and to "guarantee their cooperation."

The Commander of the Armed Forces, General Freddy Padilla, told *El Colombiano* that as of now he is not aware of any case in which any man in uniform is connected to the paramilitaries.

Sources: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá; *El Espectador*, Bogotá; *El Colombiano*, Medellin; *El Pais*, Cali.

* January 15, 2007. An opinion columnist insists that the tradition of brutality in the Colombian military has to change. He cites the recent burning deaths of two soldiers in the Third Brigade and the insistence of the Third Brigade general that he had no idea this was going on. He urges the Commander of the Armed Forces, General Freddy Padilla, to "take the bull by the horns."

Source: *El Pais*, Cali, January 15, 2007.

* January 14, 2007. A Colombian news service, *Colprensa*, prepared a long article detailing the hazing that has been a way of life in the Colombian Army. Soldiers with seniority impose torture and punishment on the new recruits as "initiation". Then, when the recruits achieve seniority, they repeat the conduct. For example, a recruit may be hung by his feet and hit with a board, one blow for each year of seniority owned by the person dealing the blows. This is a long article and there are many other examples of brutality. Responsible officials are quoted as denying any knowledge of this custom, although soldiers claim that it is a "tradition".

Source: *El Pais*, Cali, January 14, 2007 and *El Colombiano*, Medellin, January 15, 2007.

* January 8, 2007. In a New Year's column, *El Tiempo* columnist Natalia Springer writes: "My first wish for this year is that the Army undertake a profound institutional purification. Paramilitaries, guerrillas, mafias and organized crime have managed to infiltrate and weaken the Armed Forces, and that's why today a good part of the enemy is within the ranks . . ."

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, January 8, 2007.

* January 6, 2007. As a "joke", soldiers put papers between the toes of a recruit who was sleeping. Then they set fire to the papers. In the ensuing fire, two soldiers were killed and three more were badly injured. The story in *El Tiempo* reports last year's episode when recruits were tortured as part of their training, that noncommissioned officers beat and burned 18 recruits for missing an exercise, that two soldiers from the Presidential Guard were badly burned by muriatic acid poured on them by a sergeant, that a soldier committed suicide after being mistreated by another noncom, and that a soldier drowned when made to take "the alligator test" (staying under the water)..

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, January 13, 2007.

* January 5, 2007. Bogotá newspaper *El Espectador* reports that 30 soldiers belonging to the Alta Montana de Fundacion battalion (Magdalena Province) complained they were made to continue working under difficult conditions, with poor food and housing, even when they were sick.

Source: *El Espectador*, Bogotá, January 5, 2007.

* January 5, 2007. An Army captain was filmed hitting a corporal with a board from a folding cot. One of the other soldiers filmed the scene with his cell phone and furnished the video to a TV station. Army officials insisted that the blows were part of a bet, all in fun, but the soldier who was hit claimed that it was punishment for a mistake made while he was on watch.

Source: *El Pais*, Cali, January 5, 2007.

* January 3, 2007. Thirteen soldiers from the Third Brigade (Cauca Province) deserted on December 22, claiming that they had worked under difficult conditions for six days without any food and that they had been denied promised leave. Their commandant denied their charges and placed them under arrest. They face an Army disciplinary procedure and, depending on the results, may face incarceration.

Source: *El Pais*, Cali, January 3, 2007.

* December 30, 2006. Nineteen Colombians were extradited to the United States to be tried for drug trafficking and money laundering. One of them was a police major who is accused of using his access to Bogotá's main airport to facilitate the shipment of cocaine

to Mexico and from there to the United States. It is alleged that he helped ship 409 kilos of cocaine, worth some \$10 million.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, December 30, 2006.

* December 30, 2006. Two Colombian newspapers printed end-of-year, month-by-month rundowns of Colombian armed forces scandals. They mentioned the 30 soldiers who were tortured as part of their training, the accusation that high officials of the DAS (Colombian FBI) assisted the paramilitaries, the massacre of ten police officers at Jamundi, and a series of events in which soldiers killed civilians and dressed them as guerrillas killed in combat. Details are provided below.

Source: *El Espectador*, Bogotá, December 20, 2006 and *El Pais*, Cali, December 29, 2006.

* December 26, 2006. A rancher who helped found the paramilitary organization (designated by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist organization) in the 1980's was interviewed by *El Meridiano de Cordoba* (Cordoba Province). The rancher told reporter William Acero that, after a meeting with military commanders in Medellin, he and other cattlemen met with Fidel Castano, an early organizer of the paramilitaries. He said that when the Colombian Army formed a Mobile Brigade to fight the guerrillas, the paramilitaries worked closely with the armed forces. "We had a common enemy," he said, "so it was inevitable that they would work together."

"The Army covered the backs of the paramilitaries," he continued, "and the paramilitaries did the same for the Army."

Source: *El Meridiano de Cordoba*, Monteria, December 26, 2006

* December 18, 2006. The Chief of Police of the town of San Alberto (Cesar Province) is under arrest for his part in planning the murder by paramilitaries of a mayoral candidate and her 13-year-old daughter on June 21, 2000. A former mayor and the winning candidate, as well as alleged killers, are also under arrest. The murder victim was the leader of the Women's Network in San Alberto.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, December 18, 2006.

* December 18, 2006. The Colombian weekly newsmagazine *Semana* states that 2006 was a "black year" for the Colombian Army. It identifies as the worst events the episode last February where recruits were tortured as part of their training; the incident at Jamundi (Valle Province) on May 22 when soldiers annihilated an elite group of ten U.S.-trained drug police, on orders from drug traffickers; the reports that soldiers from the 4th Brigade regularly killed innocent civilians and presented them to their superiors as guerrillas killed in combat; and the events in August where soldiers set off car bombs, killing one civilian, so that they could claim that they were fighting guerrillas. There

were other incidents. *Semana* suggests that the bad year was caused by too-rapid growth in the Army and a shortage of trained officers.

Source: *Semana*, Bogotá, December 18, 2006.

* December 7, 2006. Two Colombian Army soldiers were sentenced to 13 years in prison for the killing of two civilians on April 2, 2006 in the town of Los Gorros (La Guajira Province). The soldiers lured a young couple to Los Gorros by promising them jobs. Instead they killed them and presented them to their superiors as guerrillas killed in combat.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, December 8, 2006.

* December 5, 2006. A corporal in the Colombian Army was sentenced to 20 years in prison for the rape of a young girl.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, December 5, 2006.

* December 4, 2006. A group of Colombian police officers in Alban (Cundinamarca Province) rented their uniforms and equipment to a criminal gang. The gang used them to set up roadblocks and rob trucks and cars that passed through the roadblocks. The proceeds of the robberies were shared with the police officers. One of the victims told authorities that truck drivers had reported the robberies to the authorities but that nothing had been done. The police officers have been charged with robbery, illegal use of weapons, and illegal use of uniforms and insignia.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, December 4, 2006.

* December 2, 2006. Three farmers were working on their farm near the town of Maracaibo (Santander Province) when there was a firefight between soldiers of the Colombian Army and FARC guerrillas. The three farmers were killed and their bodies were removed by the soldiers to the Battalion Headquarters without the usual investigation required by law. Local residents are suspicious because they have recently filed a complaint about the disappearance of another farmer, apparently killed by soldiers from the Eighth Mobile Brigade.

Source: *Vanguardia Liberal*, Bucaramanga (Santander Province) December 2, 2006

* December 1, 2006. Headline: "Seventeen soldiers are killed near Ocana in the fourth major military blunder of this year". *El Tiempo* reports that, because of the commanders' overconfidence, a troop of some 80 soldiers was operating in a mountainous area at night when they were ambushed by FARC guerrillas near Villacaro (Santander Province). Seventeen soldiers were killed, two injured and one is missing. The newspaper identified two previous military blunders:

-April 20, 2006. Apparently because of a strategic error, ten detectives and seven soldiers died when they entered a minefield near Hacari.

-July 31, 2006. Fifteen soldiers were killed when they attempted to de-activate a car bomb on the road between Tibu and La Gabarra. The Army was unaware that the guerrillas controlled the area.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, December 1, 2006.

* November 27, 2006. A noncommissioned officer was killed and two soldiers were injured in a “friendly fire” incident in Venadilio (Tolima province). Two Colombian Army units confronted each other in an operation directed at guerrilla forces.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, November 28, 2006.

* November 19, 2006. *El Tiempo*, a Bogotá daily paper, reports that Colombian soldiers killed a young family by mistake. The father, mother, and 3-year-old daughter had traveled by motorcycle to the town of Garzon (Huila province). They made arrangements with the priest for the child’s baptism and purchased her white dress and shoes. On their way home, soldiers of the 9th Brigade of the Colombian Army killed them. The autopsy disclosed that the father had been hit by 18 bullets, the mother by six and the child by two. They had five other children, now orphans.

The newspaper detailed three other fatal errors by the Colombian Army:

(1) On December 13, 1998, a Colombian Air Force helicopter dropped a bomb on the village of Santo Domingo (Arauca province). Seventeen civilians were killed.

(2) On August 15, 2000, six children who were walking down the road in Pueblo Rico (Antioquia province) were killed by soldiers who mistook them for guerrillas.

(3) On April 10, 2004, soldiers mistakenly shot and killed four farmers and a 6-month-old baby in Potosi (Cajamarca province).

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, November 21, 2006.

* November 19, 2006. SEMANA, a weekly news magazine published in Bogotá, reports that investigators have received evidence that in Barranquilla and Soledad, the paramilitary chieftain had a bribe payroll for Colombian police and members of the Army. The payroll was between 32 and 40 million pesos (about \$20,000) monthly.

The evidence shows that the paramilitaries would receive from the DAS (Colombian version of FBI) a list of names of people who ought to be killed. The lists were detailed, including name, address, telephone, physical description, location of family, etc. The paramilitaries would take the list to police who would carry out the murders. Investigators have found detailed “operations reports” maintained by the paramilitaries. The reports included references to government officials who aided in the killings.

The evidence also indicates that members of the Army alerted the paramilitaries to raids that were planned, and that both the Army and the police collected “debts” for the narcotraffickers.

Source: *Semana*, Bogotá, November 19, 2006

* November 2, 2006. The Free Press Foundation (FLIP is the Spanish acronym.) complained that two police officers forced reporters from the newspaper “El Diario del Otun” (Pereira province) to delete the photos they had taken of the police evicting a vendor from his stand. On October 31, the police were clearing out vendors from a public square when the photos were taken. According to witnesses, several people took photos with their cell phones and they were all forced to delete the photos.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, November 2, 2006.

* October 12, 2006. A judge found three Colombian customs officials guilty of permitting the illegal entry of 3000 machine guns and 5000 packages of ammunition for the paramilitaries.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, October 29, 2006.

* October 22, 2006. Soldiers of the 4th Brigade killed a driver and wounded his passenger, a nun, near Chorritos (Antioquia province). The Army reports that the killing was a mistake.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, October 22, 2006.

* October 21, 2006: Ten police officers in the Uraba region (Antioquia province) were discharged and arrested. They are accused of drug trafficking.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, October 21, 2006.

* October 10, 2006: *El Tiempo*, Colombia’s largest newspaper, expresses concern in an editorial that the Colombian Army and Police may be out of the civilian government’s control.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, October 10, 2006.

* October 8, 2006: A judge has ordered the arrest of 31 police officers for bribery, falsification of documents and destruction of evidence in a case involving some 400,000 pirated movies. In Colombia, the police are not a local agency as in the United States, but are a branch of the Army.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, October 8, 2006.

* October 5, 2006: The Attorney General of Colombia filed charges of murder and obstruction of justice against four soldiers who killed three labor leaders on August 5, 2005 in the province of Arauca. The Army claimed that the three had opened fire on the soldiers but forensic evidence demonstrated that the dead men had no weapons.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, October 5, 2006.

* October 5, 2006: A representative of a Norwegian NGO told *El Tiempo* that indigenous people in the province of Guaviare are being displaced by the armed conflict and that teenage girls in the indigenous community are being raped and sexually abused by paramilitaries, by guerrillas, and by soldiers of the Colombian Army. The U.S. State Department has declared Colombia's paramilitaries a terrorist group.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, October 5, 2006

* October 4, 2006: The Observers of Peace and Reconciliation of Eastern Antioquia, a Colombian NGO, complained to the Antioquia representative of Colombia's Interior Ministry that there is still a very close relationship between the Army and the paramilitaries. The spokesman for the organization stated that citizens don't like to see demobilized paramilitaries patrolling right alongside Army soldiers. His organization reported twelve cases of sexual abuse of civilians by Army soldiers.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, October 4, 2006

* October 2, 2006: The bishop of the diocese of Magangué (Bolívar province), along with other members of the community, complains that on September 19, 2006, a young man who was a community leader and a member of the miners union was murdered by soldiers of the Colombian Army, on orders by their commanders.

Source: Communication from the Diocese to Colombia Support Network and Radio Nizkor, October 2, 2006.

* September 28, 2006: U.S. columnist Robert Novak's column criticizes U.S. policymakers for soft-pedaling the Colombian Army's acts of terrorism and murder. He identifies the massacre on May 22 at Jamundi where Colombian soldiers, allegedly paid by a drug lord, murdered 11 of Colombia's anti-drug police.

Novak also identifies the arrest on September 15 of a Colombian Army major for the killing of six innocent people in a fake rescue operation.

Finally, he cited several car bombings in Bogota in August, then alleged to be attacks by the FARC guerrillas. One civilian was killed and ten civilians were wounded. In September it was disclosed that the Army was responsible for the bombings. Each of these three events was reported extensively in the Colombian news media.

Source: *Chicago Sun-Times* and other US newspapers carrying Novak's column, September 28, 2006.

* September 26, 2006: The Army ignores a court order to dismantle trenches it had dug around the town of Toribio (Cauca Province). The citizens dismantle the trenches after a stray explosive kills a 10-year-old child. A citizen told *El Tiempo* that the residents of the community were tired of the soldiers raping women, blocking roads, and stealing food.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, September 28, 2006,

*September 20, 2006: The Public Prosecutor issued warrants for the arrest of two Colombian Army officers, three noncommissioned officers and nine soldiers for the murder of three persons. The murders took place on October 12, 2005 and February 6, 2004. In each case, civilians were murdered by soldiers who later claimed that the bodies were those of guerrillas killed in combat.

The same news story also refers to another situation where one Army officer, one noncommissioned officer and five soldiers have been arrested for the kidnapping and murder of a civilian and then claiming that he had been fighting as a guerrilla. This occurred on August 29, 2003.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, September 21, 2006

* August 10, 2006: Three Army officers, fifteen noncommissioned officers and 126 Colombian soldiers were convicted of stealing a large cache of money that had been hidden by the FARC in 2003. They claimed that General Reynaldo Castellano had approved their action. (Castellano was removed in February, 2006 after 21 soldiers were tortured as part of their training. See below.)

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, August 10, 2006.

* July 1, 2006: The Inter-American Court for Human Rights issued a decision finding that Colombian soldiers had taken part in the massacres by paramilitaries of some 19 people at La Granja and El Aro near Ituango (Antioquia). The paramilitaries destroyed homes and businesses and stole a large number of cattle, besides killing men, women and

children. The Court found that the army did nothing to deter the killing and, in fact, took part in it.

Source: Decision Series C. No. 148, Case of *Massacres of Ituango v. Colombia*, dated July 1, 2006, Inter-American Court for Human Rights. This court decision is cited in an article that appeared in *Semana*, a Colombian weekly news magazine on January 14, 2007. The article states that on October 27, 1997, the Colombian Army sent a helicopter to supply the paramilitaries with weapons and ammunition.

* May 16, 2006. Headline: “They led him away in his undershorts and his body was found dressed as a guerrilla”. The news story recounts that on February 14, 2006 at 2 AM, one Victor Molina, a campesino in the province of Antioquia, was dragged out of his house in his undershorts, protesting that there was no warrant for his arrest and he was not guilty of anything. On February 20, his body was found in a grave where members of the 11th Brigade of the Colombian Army had buried him as a guerrilla. He was dressed in camouflage and his bridgework and gold fillings had been removed. He had no bullet wounds and appeared to have been strangled.

This news story contained five other similar examples of civilians being carried off by the Army and later found dead and dressed as guerrillas. Approximately 40 such cases have been discovered this year in the province of Antioquia.

The news story also states that the Minister of Defense will investigate all similar allegations and issue a report no later than July 5, 2006. As far as can be ascertained, no such report has been issued.

Source: *El Colombiano*, Medellin, May 16, 2006

* May 10, 2006. A member of the 4th Brigade of the Colombian Army, headquartered in Medellin, admitted that, while there was no official incentive for soldiers who kill or capture a guerrilla, commanders are allowed to give such incentives. He was quoted as saying that some soldiers receive 5 days off for each killing or that they sometimes are rewarded with paid trips. This creates an incentive for soldiers to kill civilians and dress up their bodies as guerrillas killed in combat.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, May 10, 2006.

* May 5, 2006. Headline: “Twenty-four ‘disappeared’ were presented by the Army as guerrillas killed in combat.” The office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the government of the province of Antioquia, the Attorney General, and the government of the City of Medellin complained to the Vice President of Colombia about the number of killings of ordinary citizens by soldiers who later claimed that the victims were guerrillas killed in combat.

Source: *El Tiempo*, Bogota, May 6, 2006.

* March 8, 2006: The U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Colombia finds that there has been “insubordinate military collaboration with paramilitary groups”, arbitrary arrests, and that security forces were responsible for unlawful killings. Some of these are detailed in the State Department Report. The Report notes that the Colombian Army is accused of killing and dismembering eight people at San Jose de Apartado. This massacre included one teenager and two young children.

Source: U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights, issued March 8, 2006.

* February 21, 2006: The chief of the Colombian army, Gen. Reynaldo Castellano, was removed by President Uribe after press reports that 21 soldiers had been tortured as part of their “training”.

Source: *El Pais*, Coli February 21, 2006.

* January 31, 2006: The Inter-American Court for Human Rights, in the case of the Pueblo Bello (Cordoba Province) Massacre, issued a decision finding that the Colombian Army was guilty of omission, acquiescence, and collaboration in a massacre by paramilitaries that resulted in 6 deaths and 37 “disappearances”. The massacre took place in January 1990.

Source: Decision in *Case of the Massacre at Pueblo Bello v Colombia*, dated January 31, 2006.

* September 15, 2005: The Inter-American Court for Human Rights issued a decision in the case of *Massacre at Mapiripan v Colombia*. The Court found the Colombian Army guilty of aiding paramilitaries who massacred 49 people at Mapiripan (Meta province). The paramilitaries tortured and killed them, dismembered the bodies and threw them in the river. The Army’s assistance included allowing the paramilitaries to use a military airport to land troops, transporting paramilitary troops in Army trucks, furnishing supplies, equipment and communications, and ordering Army troops away from the location so that the massacre could be carried out. The Court also found that the Colombian Army failed to cooperate with authorities by obstructing the investigation.

Source: Inter-American Court for Human Rights decision, *Case of Massacre at Mapiripan v Colombia*, Serie C, No. 122, dated September 15, 2005.

* The 1997 Human Rights Report by the U.S. State Department stated “. . . Government and military officials give credence to reports of isolated killings during the year conducted by at least one army unit, the 20th Intelligence Brigade.” ***General Nelson Freddy Padilla, who headed the 20th Brigade at that time, was appointed chief of Colombia’s armed forces in August 2006.***