

IS THIS WHY DOJ IS SHELTERING COLOMBIAN TERRORISTS?

Karen DeYoung has an important article reporting that the Colombian intelligence agency implicated in political crimes, Department of Administrative Security, had support from the CIA.

American cash, equipment and training, supplied to elite units of the Colombian intelligence service over the past decade to help smash cocaine-trafficking rings, were used to carry out spying operations and smear campaigns against Supreme Court justices, Uribe's political opponents and civil society groups, according to law enforcement documents obtained by The Washington Post and interviews with prosecutors and former Colombian intelligence officials.

[snip]

Some of those charged or under investigation have described the importance of U.S. intelligence resources and guidance, and say they regularly briefed embassy "liaison" officials on their intelligence-gathering activities. "We were organized through the American Embassy," said William Romero, who ran the DAS's network of informants and oversaw infiltration of the Supreme Court. Like many of the top DAS officials in jail or facing charges, he received CIA training. Some were given scholarships to complete coursework on intelligence-gathering at American universities.

Romero, who has accepted a plea agreement from prosecutors in exchange for his cooperation, said in an interview that DAS units depended on U.S.-supplied computers,

wiretapping devices, cameras and mobile phone interception systems, as well as rent for safe houses and petty cash for gasoline. "We could have operated" without U.S. assistance, he said, "but not with the same effectiveness."

One unit dependent on CIA aid, according to the testimony of former DAS officials in depositions, was the National and International Observations Group.

Set up to root out ties between foreign operatives and Colombian guerrillas, it turned its attention to the Supreme Court after magistrates began investigating the president's cousin, then-Sen. Mario Uribe, said a former director, German Ospina, in a deposition to prosecutors. The orders came "from the presidency; they wanted immediate results," Ospina told prosecutors.

Of particular note—given the impending trade deal with Colombia—these CIA-supported spies also infiltrated union activists.

Another unit that operated for eight months in 2005, the Group to Analyze Terrorist Organization Media, assembled dossiers on labor leaders, broke into their offices and videotaped union activists. The United States provided equipment and tens of thousands of dollars, according to an internal DAS report, and the unit's members regularly met with an embassy official they remembered as "Chris Sullivan."

The thoroughly unsurprising report that CIA was assisting DAS in its persecution of the political opposition is more troubling given that, in the same period, DAS had close ties to the right wing terrorist group, AUC. And DOJ actions taken since 2008 have effectively made key AUC terrorists from Colombia unavailable to testify about government officials who worked with the AUC as laid out in this report (I posted on it here; ProPublica wrote an important story as well). The US extradited a bunch of top

AUC figures on drug charges (but not terrorism charges, in spite of the fact that their actions took place while on the State Department's terrorist list). In spite of promises that these figures would continue to cooperate with Colombian investigations, such cooperation was for the most part ceased.

However, since their extraditions, the paramilitary leaders' cooperation with Colombian investigators effectively has ceased. Logistical difficulties have been compounded by the absence of a written agreement between the U.S. and Colombia to coordinate judicial cooperation. Colombian prosecutors and judges face limited access to Defendants in U.S. custody. U.S. prosecutors also have rejected the efforts of Colombian victims to intervene in U.S. prosecutions to compel AUC Defendants to divulge information about their crimes.⁴⁰

Among key AUC leaders extradited to the US on drug—but not terrorism—charges is Rodrigo Tovar Pupo (AKA Jorge 40), who commanded AUC's Bloque Norte until he accepted amnesty in 2006.

The head of DAS from 2002 to 2005, Jorge Noguera Cotes, had ties to Tovar going back to the period when Noguera managed Álvaro Uribe's campaign in a department largely controlled by Tovar. There are allegations that AUC carried out assassinations for DAS (including of trade union leaders).

Tovar was extradited to the US on May 13, 2008. Roughly a month later, Noguera was released from prison on a technicality (though he was rearrested in December of that year). Since that time, Tovar has avoided testifying about his ties with Noguera and other Colombian officials, most recently citing threats to his family members in Colombia.

Extradited paramilitary Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, alias "Jorge 40," refuses to testify in the parapolitics trials against former Magdalena Governor Jose Domingo Davila, and former

director of government security agency DAS,
Jorge Noguera Cotes.

Jorge 40 claims that there is a letter
threatening to kill the families of ex-
paramilitaries who testify before the
Supreme Court.

Now, given US efforts to avoid treating the AUC
like the terrorists they are, given the way the
US relies on Colombia to counteract populist
politics in Latin America, it is unsurprising
that it used drug cases to remove top AUC
figures from Colombia, thereby protecting the
ruling party.

But the whole thing makes a lot more sense if
the CIA was involved in Noguera's collaboration
with the AUC to target opposition in Colombia.