

# Defense Intelligence Report

28 August 1992  
DITSUM 168-92

## Terrorism Summary

### *Executive Highlights*

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### *Regional Developments*

■ **Colombia:**

(U) The threat of kidnaping for ransom has dramatically increased in the past few years.

■ **Colombia:**

(U) The occupation of the Costa Rican Embassy by former M-19 members is not a hostage-barricade situation but more likely a peaceful sit-in designed to gain political action.

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*Classified by multiple sources; declassify on OADR*

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**WORLDWIDE**



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## Regional Developments

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### **Colombia:**

#### ***Kidnaping Trends (U)***

(U) According to the newly created Colombian lobby group, Fundacion Pais Libre (Free Country Foundation-FCF), the number of reported kidnapings in Colombia jumped from 44 in 1980 to 1,717 in 1991. The FCF claims that the real number is probably much greater since many families of kidnap victims are reluctant to report kidnapings to authorities out of fear for the safety of their relatives. Colombian intelligence police officer, Fernando Brito, reportedly believes there are now 2,000 people held captive in his country. According to Jorge Visbal Martelo, president of the Colombian Ranchers Federation, 600 ranchers were kidnaped in 1991, and 450 in the first half of 1992.

(U) The most frequent perpetrators are apparently the two leftist guerrilla groups, the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Colombian authorities believe that these two groups carried out 43% of the known 1991 kidnapings. Magdalena Pabon de Trujillo, FCF Director, stated that most kidnap victims she had talked to were held in guerrilla camps. During peace talks last February in Mexico City, Colombia's guerrilla leaders denied carrying out kidnapings for ransom. However, the peace talks were briefly suspended in March after Argelino Duran Quintero, a former Public Works Minister, died of a heart attack while being held as a hostage by the ELN.

(U) The increase in kidnapings has had a serious economic impact on Colombia. Insecurity in the countryside, where most of the kidnapings occur, has depressed economic development in coal and oil exploration, and has contributed to power rationing throughout Colombia in 1991. Food prices have risen as kidnapings of ranchers and farmers contributed to reduced cattle herds and a 40% drop in crop cultivation thus far in 1992. Colombian police also reported that in 1991, criminals and guerrillas netted \$500 million in ransom payments. Guerrilla kidnap victims are required to present tax returns, bank statements, and deposit statements in order to determine the size of the ransom demand. Victims are released on the condition that they pay their ransom in installments or that they sign over property to associates of the kidnapers.

(U) In an apparent futile effort to counter the upsurge in kidnapings, the Colombian government in 1990 established the Special Anti-Kidnaping Unit which reportedly now numbers about 1,000 policemen with squads in 17 cities throughout the country.

The civilian frustration with the government's inability to stem the tide of kidnappings is probably the primary reason for the FCF creation. The FCF claims it has gathered one million signatures in a drive for a national plebiscite on a package of new tough anti-kidnaping laws. The laws, if enacted, include the doubling of prison terms to 25 years for convicted kidnapers and the confiscation of all property used in kidnappings. The FCF also advocates adoption of a law, similar to one in Italy, that authorizes the freezing of property belonging to the family of kidnap victims. The group is running television advertisements and glossy press packets in order to raise the public's conscience and participation in a reward program for providing information on kidnapers. It is also offering legal and psychological counseling services to kidnap victims and their families.

■ COMMENT ...

~~(C)~~ The dramatic rise in kidnappings in Colombia is most likely a result of hard economic times and the collapse of communism which has deprived the two leftist guerrilla groups with financial backing that used to cover their operating costs. If intelligence estimates are correct, 56% of all kidnappings are criminal acts. Another related cost to kidnaping prevention is the extortion money paid to the ELN and FARC by multi-national corporations and indigenous businesses to preclude their workers from being snatched.

~~(C)~~ Four U.S. citizens were kidnaped in 1991, and released unharmed in Colombia. All four were mining or petroleum engineers who were working in rural remote areas. So far in 1992, three U.S. citizens have been kidnaped. All were connected to either mining or oil exploration companies. One of these hostages has been released and one is still being held by the ELN. The death of the third U.S. kidnap victim, who was kidnaped by the ELN on 8 January, is still being investigated to determine the cause of death. (DECL OADR)

**Colombia:**

*Costa Rican Embassy  
Occupied (U)*

~~(C)~~ Nineteen individuals including children identifying themselves as members of the former 19 April Movement (M-19) terrorist group occupied the Costa Rican Embassy in Bogota on 26 August. The Embassy compound is now surrounded by the Colombian National Police. The Costa Rican Ambassador to Colombia reportedly has stated that no Costa Rican diplomats have been taken hostage and all except him have left the Embassy. There are no indications that these individuals are armed and no violence is anticipated.

~~(C)~~ The M-19 group occupying the Embassy is asking for an immediate solution to Marcos Chalita's legal status. Chalita is an M-19 Democratic Alliance (AD/M-19) leader who was arrested in June. They also want a suspension of all legal proceedings against the AD/M-19 leadership regarding the November 1985 Justice Palace takeover case. They claim their lives have been threatened and demand compliance with promises made by President Gaviria to those guerrillas who rejoined civilian life. The group also demands the creation of a negotiating commission composed of representatives of the Chamber of Deputies; delegates from the Defense and

government ministries; and Costa Rican Nobel Prize winner Oscar Arias. AD/M-19 leader Otty Patino reportedly has been talking with group members.

■ COMMENT ...

~~(C)~~ This is the third embassy occupation by the M-19. In February 1980, they occupied the Dominican Republic Embassy taking 80 hostages, including the ambassadors from the U.S. and 13 Latin American, European, and Middle Eastern countries. In this incident, after 61 days, the terrorists were flown to Cuba but their demands for a ransom and prisoner release were not met. On 26 February, they presented demands to the Spanish Embassy. The February takeover lasted for a short time and ended peacefully. It is expected that this recent incident will end just as peacefully but may take longer to resolve. (DECL OADR)

**Venezuela:**

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