

The Guatemalan president's connections to the drug cartel

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Editor's note: In the run up to Guatemala's most recent presidential election, Hugo Arce published numerous articles criticizing prominent figures of Guatemala's political class, in particular President Alvaro Colom. Here are excerpts of the article, with editorial explanations in brackets exposing the ties between Colom and the crime syndicate in the country. It was published on February 28, 2006 in La Opinion.

Majestic volcanoes of cocaine, vast fields sown with poppy, ferocious ex-kaibiles [Guatemalan special forces trained in anti-guerrilla tactics] contracted by the Cartel of Petén and Izabal, [one of the major cartels in the north of Guatemala] rivers of amphetamines, beautiful lakes of heroin, absolute corruption and the country's fall into the hands not only those of narco-trafficking but also those of smugglers and organized crime, including the ex-military figures that direct it such as Otto-Perez Molina, Francisco Ortega Menaldo and General Callejas [former Guatemalan military figures all involved in the civil war atrocities]. This is what is behind the figure of Alvaro Colom whose

party should call itself Criminal Organization SA-COSA.

Colom promised to oppose the government of GANA and to do this he devised a method called "interpellation," which he turned into a political weapon to defend the interests of UNE of the Partido Patriota and of the Guatemalan Republican Front [these are all political parties in Guatemala: the UNE is center-left, the others are far-right]. Interpellation does not signify persecution, much less political opposition as Colom has interpreted it. This third-rate politician has converted the legislative branch into a congressional circus from where he pretends to increase his meager 10 percent popularity, but what he is doing with the aid of Molina and Efraín Ríos Montt [former Guatemalan dictator] is deteriorating even further the awful image of the legislators that the public holds.

The crass error of these legislators was to organize a protest in their favor in the Plaza de la Constitución [in Guatemala City], where they provided a forum for hundreds of ex-PAC [members of civil patrols which were responsible for civil war death squads.] Also sacrificed were the prostituted "leaders" of the magisterio, Joviel Acevedo and Nery Barrios, and the Unidad de Acción Sindical y Popular (UASP) [Union of Labor and popular Action], who are at the service of Colom and Sandra Torres. Colom stated the following: "We have an excellent relationship with UASP and with the Asamblea Nacional del Magisterio. We want to be partners, not bosses. They will work on their actions or agendas, but ... I go to the bases" (Diario La Hora, 25/02/06, p.4).

These were the exact words said by Evo Morales [the president of Bolivia] in Spain: "We want partners not bosses." This phrase was literally stolen by Colom, highlighting that in his fantasy, or in his delirium tremens and opiate dreams, he thinks that Guatemala could be so much like

Bolivia that he gives himself the luxury of using the same rhetoric and the same form of financing: cocaine. The difference is that Morales, aside from being an authentic leader, defends the cultivation of the coca plant in his country, but has been very clear when he says that "growing coca is not the same as drug-trafficking."

In Guatemala there aren't traditional growers of coca, but there are plenty of drug lords, and from them comes the money to buy legislators. From them comes the money so that Sandra Torres de Colom [now the first lady of Guatemala] can drive a new armor-plated Land Cruiser Prado and that Carlos Quintanilla, Colom's chief of security, drives a Mercedes Benz G500, also armor plated. Each one of these cars is worth far more than a million Quetzales [\$120,000]. Where did Colom get this money? On what has he lived these last 10 years if he has neither worked nor invested in anything? From where did he get the money to buy the corrupt legislators who sold their vote against Education Minister Aceña? The response is simple: more so than Arturo Gutiérrez, more than Luna Del Pinal, than Alvarado McDonald, or even Red Moreno, [these are all criminal networks in Guatemala] his money comes from drug trafficking.

Colom had no qualms about publicly meeting with the principal leaders of the drug trade in Zacapa including the Lorenzana familia which has been identified as the head of the Cartel de Zacapa. This is neither a rumor nor a speculation. [Members of the Lorenzana family were designated in April 2010 by the US Treasury Department as "narcotic traffickers" with whom US citizens are forbidden to engage in any business].

It is a fact that Guatemalans should have already begun to consider if we want the candidate of the cartels as Samper was in his time in Colombia.

Guatemalans can't nor should end up led by politicians who have been smugglers and chiefs of the G-2 [Guatemalan Military Intelligence] like Otto Pérez Molina, and third-rate politicians supported by drug trafficking, like Álvaro Colom. With our already weak economy, they kill the few hopes of increasing jobs in Guatemala. They frighten off foreign investment in our country; they deteriorate our international image, they scare away tourism, they foment chaos and confrontation, they promote and finance street clashes, all for their power ambitions. Guatemalans should be clear on this: Colom is openly financed by the drug trade and Molina is a delinquent criminal who enriched himself by placing his brother-in-law in key positions during the government of Ramiro De León Carpio.

[Former Guatemalan President] Johnson had it right when he said "patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels."

They have long since known it – and we won't sit around with our arms crossed