



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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28 May 2003

### ECU41375.E

Ecuador: Treatment of suspected Ecuadorian supporters of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) by the military (May 2003)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Although Freedom House stated that "the military is responsible for a significant percentage of abuses, particularly when it is deployed during states of emergency" (17 July 2002), information about the treatment of suspected Ecuadorian supporters of FARC by the military could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

However, according to an 8 April 2003 report by the International Crisis Group,

Currently, no Ecuadorian radical group supports armed actors in Colombia. However, there are unconfirmed reports that in 2000 the authorities discovered the existence of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Ecuador (FARE). Allegedly, this group is 400-men strong and has been trained and equipped by the FARC. It is held responsible for a recent bomb attack in Guayaquil. While the ministry of defence believes that the FARE does not pose a security threat, the police view it as a problem.

In addition, Freedom House stated that Colombian right-wing paramilitary groups had "infiltrated northern Ecuador" in order to "target locals there who they believed might be cooperating with the guerrillas" (22 July 2002). The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) claimed that Colombian paramilitary officers in Lago Agrio, Sucumbios province, have been known to have local taxi drivers and citizens "working for them as informants regarding [FARC] guerrilla movements in the area" (WOLA June 2002). The *Christian Science Monitor* (CSM) reported that in some cases, taxi drivers are forced to smuggle propane cylinders-that are used as bombs by the FARC-to the Colombian border, and if they refuse, they can be shot (11 July 2002). Moreover, the "Ecuadorean police estimate that 60 per cent of the population of Lago Agrio is involved with commerce with irregular Colombian forces" (CSM 11 July 2002). Please see ECU41530.E of 28 May 2003 for information about crimes perpetrated against civilians by guerrillas and paramilitaries from Colombia.

In a December 2002 article from *Weekly Update on the Americas*, sources reported on a scandal in which the Colombian military had "traced a number of weapons confiscated from the FARC to the Ecuadorian army" (15 Dec. 2002). Moreover, allegations were made that a 20 November 2002 explosion of a military munitions store in Riobamba city was an effort to "cover up missing inventory" (*Weekly Update on the Americas* 15 Dec. 2002). Consequently, Defence Minister Hugo Unda was to meet in a "secret session" with Congress on 19 December 2002 to "testify about the cause of the explosion and the apparent arms sales to the FARC..." (ibid.).

Two recent articles found in *El Comercio* reported on Ecuadorian members of FARC captured in Colombia (7 May 2003; 14 May 2003). In the first article, two Ecuadorians were arrested in Pasto, Colombia with more than one thousand rounds of rifle ammunition intended for the 29th Front of the FARC (*El Comercio* 7 May 2003). The second article noted the capture of Carlos Manuel Varela, a 21 year-old Ecuadorian FARC guerrilla by the Colombian army in the Putamayo department who was armed with pistols, Ecuadorian-made grenades and missiles, and was returning from an "extortion" mission (ibid. 14 May 2003). Varela, also known as "Roberto Salazar," stated that he had seen eight to ten FARC camps in Ecuador along the banks of the San Miguel River; however, he claimed that they had been abandoned by order of FARC commanders (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

*Christian Science Monitor* [Boston]. 11 July 2002. Arie Farnam. "Colombia's Civil War Drifts South into Ecuador." <<http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0711/p07s01-woam.htm>> [Accessed 27 May 2003]

*El Comercio* [Quito]. 14 May 2003. "Las FARC tienen campamentos en Ecuador, según rebelde capturado." <<http://www.elcomercio.com/noticias.asp?noid=60998&hl=true>> [Accessed 26 May 2003]

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International Crisis Group (ICG). 8 April 2003. *Colombia and its Neighbours: The Tentacles of Instability*. <[http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/latinamerica/colombia\\_andes/reports/A400939\\_08042003.pdf](http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/latinamerica/colombia_andes/reports/A400939_08042003.pdf)> [Accessed 21 May 2003]

Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). June 2002. Sandra G. Edwards. "Colombian Conflict Impacts Ecuador." <[http://www.wola.org/publications/ddhr\\_ecuador\\_update\\_1.htm](http://www.wola.org/publications/ddhr_ecuador_update_1.htm)> [Accessed 22 May 2003]

*Weekly Update on the Americas* [New York]. 15 December 2002. Issue No. 672. "Ecuador: Arsenal Explosion a Coverup?" (NEXIS).

#### Additional Sources Consulted

IRB databases

World News Connection (WNC)

#### **Internet sites:**

Amnesty International

Comision Andina de Juristas (CAJ)

Comision Ecumenica de Derechos Humanos (CEDHU)

*Country Reports 2002*

Defensoria del Pueblo del Ecuador

Ecuador, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Human Rights Watch

Relief Web

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