

# Anti-Imperialist News Service

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## Human Rights Report on Afghanistan

On July 29, “Human Rights Watch” released a report which details the human rights abuses carried out by the U.S.-installed government in Afghanistan.

According to the report, a “climate of fear” exists throughout much of the country due to the “terrorizing” activities of soldiers, police, and warlords backed by the United States. The abuses — arbitrary arrests, torture, kidnapping, rape and extortion carried out by army troops, police, and intelligence agents — are common, especially in the southeast, the report says.

A sampling of the report details some of these abuses:

“Troops and police in many parts of the region, and parts of Kabul itself, are invading private homes, usually at night, and robbing and assaulting civilians. By force or by ruse, soldiers and police gain entry into homes and hold people hostage for hours, terrorizing them with weapons, stealing their valuables, and sometimes raping women and girls. On the roads and at proliferating official and unofficial checkpoints, local soldiers and police extort money from civilians under the threat of beating or arrest. Troops and police also ex-

tort money from shopkeepers and arbitrarily arrest and hold people for ransom, possibly torturing some. Rape of women, girls, and boys, often in connection with the above-described abuses, is common and almost never reported....People in Jalalabad are being arbitrarily arrested by police or soldiers, accused of bogus crimes or ‘being a member of the Taliban,’ and freed only after they or their family pay a ransom.”

The report underscores the role of the U.S. in these atrocities, pointing out not only that the U.S. has installed the present government but that it directly supports some of the worst human rights offenders with “continued funding, joint operations and fraternizing.” The current situation in Afghanistan, the report summarizes “is the result of decisions, acts, and omissions of the United States (U.S.) government...The United States in particular bears much responsibility for the actions of those they have propelled to power.

This report is another exposure of just what kind of “democracy” the U.S. government is exporting — through force of arms — to Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries.

## U.S. Casualties on the Rise in Colombia

*By Maria Engqvist (reprinted from New Colombia News Agency)*

As in Iraq, the number of US military personnel killed in Colombia is on the rise. The US military has lost at least 8 soldiers and pilots since February, including three CIA intelligence experts who were taken prisoners after leftist guerrillas shot down their spy plane. A total of three US airplanes have been shot down this year.

17 US military and mercenary contract employees have been killed in Colombia since 1998, according to a June 16th. Washington Post editorial. But nobody outside of the US government is sure of the true figure of US casualties

due the secrecy surrounding Washington’s increasing military involvement in Colombia.

The total number of US soldiers and mercenaries fighting in Colombia is not known either. According to US government, the number does not exceed 1,000, but a spokesman for the leftist FARC guerrilla force, Javier Cifuentes, has stated to the Chilean e-journal El Mostrador that the real figure is more likely the double of that.

The FARC rebel movement is Latin America’s oldest and strongest guerrilla insur-

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## Colombia (from page 1)

gency. The rebels are fighting for social reforms and an end to privatisations and neoliberal policies. The United States has listed the FARC as an international terrorist organization and is providing the Bogotá government with a daily average of 2 million dollars, in mostly military aid, to fight the guerrillas.

### 5 Months in Captivity

Since February 13th, when three CIA agents surrendered to a FARC guerrilla unit after a fire-fight that killed a fourth CIA agent and a Colombian soldier who had been aboard a downed US spy plane, thousands of Colombian troops, assisted by US intelligence and operations planners, have been searching the jungles and mountains of southern Colombia without success.

The FARC has offered to release the three captured US agents together with a number of captured Colombian military officers and high-profile politicians also held by the insurgents, in exchange for the release of captured guerrillas. The government of right-wing extremist Alvaro Uribe has so far rejected the proposal. Instead Uribe has called for increased US military intervention to assist the government's besieged forces.

On several occasions, FARC spokespersons have stated that the guerrillas are not enemies of the people of the United States. However, the high-ranking FARC commander Andrés París has previously also told ANNCOL in an interview that "all Colombian or foreign military personnel who are in combat zones will be military targets."

### Latin American Mercenaries

US mercenary companies such as DynCorp employ numerous foreigners for their missions in Colombia in an effort

to circumvent US Congressional restrictions on the numbers of US citizens allowed to directly participate in the Colombian civil war. The DynCorp mercenaries frequently come under fire from guerrilla forces, and pilots of El Salvadorian and Peruvian nationality have been reported killed in combat on several occasions in the last two years.

At least 17 US mercenary companies are paid by the US State Department to perform different tasks in Colombia's war, according to a fact-sheet published last month by the government-friendly Bogotá daily El Tiempo. The activities range from providing bodyguards for Colombian top officials to directing air strikes.

The mercenary companies include Lockheed-Martin, DynCorp, Northrop-Grumman, California Microwave Systems, Matcom and Arinc.

### British Involvement Increasing

Also British troops — including members of the elite SAS unit — participate in the brutal counterinsurgency war in Colombia. A recent investigation by the British daily Guardian identified an increasing British military assistance to Colombia in key areas such as SAS training of Colombian jungle commandos, a surge in the supply of military hardware and intelligence equipment, and military advice to the Colombian army's new counter-guerrilla mountain units.

The report also said that the UK is now the second biggest donor of military aid to Colombia, lacking behind only the US.

No British casualties have however been confirmed since June 1989, when former SAS-instructor Peter McAleese — who had been contracted by Colombian army officers and the Gacha drug cartel to attack a FARC guerrilla headquarter — was fatally wounded in a helicopter crash.

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