

The Brunswickan International

While it may not be the next Vietnam ...

Critics compare Columbia to El Salvador

WASHINGTON (AP) - When President Clinton said last week that the \$1.3 billion aid package to Colombia will not lead to another Vietnam, some of the plan's main critics agreed. A better comparison, they say, is El Salvador.

In the 1980s, the United States helped the El Salvadoran military, despite its human rights abuses, to fight leftist guerrillas. In Colombia, where the "proxy war" is against drug traffickers and the leftist forces helping them, Clinton waived human rights rules to deliver the military aid package.

Even without a Vietnam-style buildup of U.S. combat troops in Colombia, the United States could aggravate and prolong the three-decade old Colombian civil war, critics argue.

"No, it's not another Vietnam, but it's still the wrong thing to do," said Lisa Haugaard, legislative coordinator of the Latin American Working Group, a coalition of more than 60 organizations including many that opposed the aid to El Salvador.

Visiting Cartagena, Colombia, last Wednesday Clinton delivered the aid and said the United States will not get into "a shooting war" in Colombia. "This is not Vietnam," he said.

Administration officials have long stressed that the United States won't get dragged into Colombia's civil war. They say U.S. military aid is intended solely to help Colombia battle drug traffickers, who account for an estimated 90 percent of the cocaine in the United States.

In Colombia, however, the distinction between fighting drugs and waging war is murky. Colombian guerrillas finance their insurgency in part by protecting drug laboratories and fields of coca and poppy, the raw materials for cocaine and heroin.

Much of the U.S. aid will pay for helicopters and other equipment for two Colombian army anti-narcotics battalions to fight those guerrillas, allowing laboratories to be dismantled and coca fields to be eradicated.

The U.S. military equipment is generally restricted to counternarcotics operations. But those operations still involve Colombian soldiers fighting guerrillas, albeit guerrillas protecting coca and poppy fields.

And the United States also allows Colombia to use its U.S. counternarcotics equipment to help friendly forces under attack and endangered by guerrillas.

"I think there is a very great danger that this kind of thing can increase little by little, and all of a sudden you will be in far more deeply than you ever wished to be," said Robert White, a former ambassador to El Salvador and now president of the Center for International Policy.

White said this could lead to a situation such as that in El Salvador, where U.S. involvement "postponed peace in Central America and divided and angered a lot of people at home." About 76,000 people were killed in El Salvador before a January 1992

agreement ended the 12-year war.

However, even those who compare Colombia to El Salvador acknowledge the analogy has its limits. Colombia has a democratically elected government; El Salvador was under military rule when the guerrilla war began, and successive governments had strong military ties.

And while Salvadoran death squads operated directly from military and police units, most of Colombia's massacres are committed by paramilitary forces linked to, but more independent of, the armed forces.

Moreover, most of the Salvadoran conflict occurred during the Cold War years, when the United States worried about Soviet encroachment in Central America.

Cynthia Arnsen, a Latin America specialist in the Washington's Woodrow Wilson Center, said she sees similarities in how U.S. security concerns — then the Cold War, now the drug war — have been used by U.S. government

to subordinate human rights problems.

A week before he visited Colombia, Clinton cited national security grounds in waiving human rights conditions that could have blocked the aid package.

"The message that they (the Colombian Army) receive is the same one that the Salvadoran army received for a decade," she said, "which is that we will support no matter what because your fight is our fight and what you're doing is in the national security interest of the United States."

Colombian President Andres Pastrana last Friday tried to allay the concern of South American countries that his U.S.-backed anti-drug offensive could engulf them, saying that Colombia "will not be another Vietnam."

Speaking at the first ever South American summit was convened by Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso to discuss integrating the region's economies,

strengthening its democratic institutions and improving education and technology, Pastrana said "Vietnam was a civil war, while what we have in Colombia is an internal conflict, which has lasted 40 years and which we are trying to solve in the best way possible."

But the consequences of drug war, launched only two weeks ago, became a major focus of the meeting for Colombia's neighbors, drawing criticism from such figures as Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez who said it could lead to a Vietnam-like war in the region.

On Saturday, the \$4 million, U.S.-made Colombian warplane, which was used extensively by U.S. forces during the Vietnam War and was known as "Puff the Magic Dragon," was brought down in the Andes amid heavy fighting between leftist rebels and government forces, killing seven airmen. Up to 50 rebels may have been killed in the fighting.

The Brunswickan's man in Kosovo

Bob Lockhart

The Brunswickan
On a steep and rocky hillside in the Kosovar village of Janjevo, a Roman Catholic priest leads the remnants of a once-prosperous Croatian community in a fight for survival. It is here that Pat FitzPatrick, a UNB graduate student majoring in Balkan history, has come seeking primary sources. His interview subject is Father Matej Palic, a moderate spokesman for rapprochement between Serbia and Croatia and parish priest to 370 stubborn parishioners who refuse to leave.

The meeting takes place in the dining area of the rectory. As the youthful looking "Father Mateo" enters the room, his clear, blue eyes search the visitors' faces with a frank curiosity and he acknowledges English greetings with a friendly nod.

Finally, his eyes settle on the young civilian whose shaved head, and red whiskers are complemented by a gentle smile. "Faljen issue" (Greetings in Christ!), says FitzPatrick. The response is instantaneous: the priest laughs out loud and the two begin a spirited exchange in Serbo-Croatian. It is a unique event: Pat finished his Serbo-Croatian language course at Zagreb University only ten days previously. His mark for the course? A+.

With Pat translating, the priest

describes the systematic repression of Croats in Kosovo by the Serbian government and the steady flow of refugees into Albania. They will never come back to Janjevo, he says, because there is no employment. In Janjevo, most survive with the help of overseas relatives and by selling a few vegetables and livestock at the weekly market.

With pictures taken and farewell hugs performed, the military caravan rattles down a narrow trail into the village and back up the highway to Pristina.

Ten days later, Pat accompanies a British army detachment into

Devet Jugovica, a northern enclave of Kosovar Serbians who have lived there for almost seven hundred years. The patrol is welcomed by the Serbs who, away from the influence of both Belgrade and Pristina, reject all politics. Despite Pat's Croatian pronunciation the Serbs welcome him with cheek-kisses, homemade vodka, and too many toasts. Equally sincere is their welcome for the British soldiers: constant patrolling keeps the Kosovar Albanians from wreaking revenge for atrocities suffered in 1999. In the Balkans, it is said, memories are long.

Back in Pristina, Pat talks about the support provided by UNB that allowed him to acquire language skills for his studies abroad. "I was able to combine a Celanese Fellowship with a grant from the Military and Strategic Studies Program. I also have a new part-time job as the Chief Editor for MediaScan, a daily analysis of regional media and politics with a particular focus on Croatian links.

The company is also studying the feasibility of opening the first English-language newspaper in the Balkans." This fall, Pat is scheduling more courses at Zagreb University and "a lot more thesis writing" to complete his MA at UNB. "To Messrs Milner and Charters my thanks for



Pat FitzPatrick chats with Serbs, in Metrovicia, Kosova, in August, 2000.

Myanmar military restrains the National League for Democracy

Nobel Peace Prize-winner under house arrest

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) - Although sealed off from visitors, the Myanmar opposition leader who spent nine days in a Toyota during a standoff with the government is in good health, a party member said Monday.

Aung San Suu Kyi, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her nonviolent pro-democracy work, was at her home in Yangon, said a party official who spoke on condition of anonymity. She was sheltering a dozen members of her National League for Democracy party's youth wing, who had accompanied her during the roadside standoff.

Authorities have barred access to Suu Kyi, 55, and other NLD officials since early Saturday, when she and her companions were forced back to the capital by police. The government on Monday asked foreign diplomats in Yangon not to try to meet with her.

Deputy Foreign Minister Khin Maung Win told a meeting of Asian diplomats the government crackdown on Suu Kyi's party was "temporary," but gave no details of future actions.

The United States and Britain, the harshest critics of Myanmar's military regime, were not invited to the meetings Monday at the foreign ministry.

U.S. Charge d'Affaires Priscilla Clapp said in a telephone interview that police had barred diplomats from even approaching the homes of the NLD party leaders.

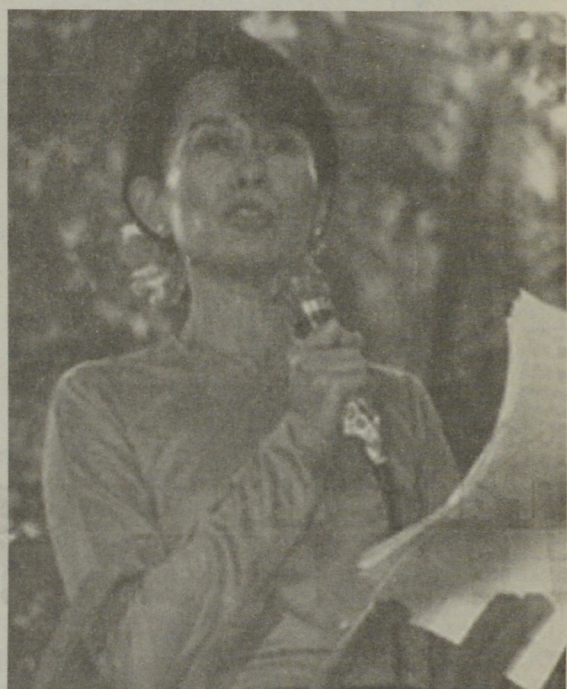
The gate to Suu Kyi's compound was bolted shut and padlocked from outside, Clapp said. No one seems to be allowed to enter or leave the party leaders' homes, and their telephone lines were cut, she said.

"The government says it's not house arrest, but to us it looks like house arrest," she said. The United States has condemned the government's crackdown on the NLD.

Britain's ambassador, John Jenkins, was "physically restrained and jostled" Saturday when he attempted to visit NLD headquarters and the home of party deputy chairman Tin Oo, said an embassy spokesman, on condition of anonymity.

The party's headquarters, raided by police early Saturday, was shut Monday. Teashops nearby also were ordered to close, a shop owner said.

Security forces stopped Suu Kyi and her companions



Aug. 24, in the Yangon suburb of Dala, as they headed into the countryside to conduct party business. She refused to return to the capital, in defiance of the government, and camped out by the road for nine days.

Oo said the group was returned "forcibly" to the capital on Saturday. Police sealed his home later that day.

The standoff in Dala was triggered by Suu Kyi's first attempt to leave the capital city in two years. The government blocked four previous attempts, most recently in 1998, when she spent 13 days in her car.

Suu Kyi, the daughter of the country's late independence leader, Gen. Aung San, has led the opposition movement in Myanmar, also known as Burma, since 1988, when the military crushed mass pro-democracy demonstrations and asserted its authoritarian rule.

The government held a general election in 1990 but refused to allow parliament to convene after the NLD won a landslide victory.

HEALTHSTYLES FITNESS

"Building Better Bodies"

Affordable Fitness

Fantastic 8 month Student Special

\$224+HST

Sept.-May

Offer expires Sept 31/00

Be one of the first 75 to join and receive:

2 Free Executive Protein Shakes
2 Free Turbo Tans

Valid at both locations

527 Queen Street and 1115 Regent Street
452-2900...450-2125

WHOLESALE FURNITURE DEPOT

BACK-TO-SCHOOL Savings

RED HOT STUDENT SPECIALS
Free Student Delivery

39" Bed Complete
Reg. \$329
Only \$199.99
NO TAX

Futon with 7" Mattress
Reg. \$549
Only \$299.99
NO TAX

Computer Desk
Keyboard Tray
Oak Finish
Reg. \$159
Only \$99.99
NO TAX

24"-30" Corkscrew Barstools
Available in White or Black
Reg. \$79
Only \$19.99
NO TAX

4 Dr Chest
Oak Finish
Brass handles
Reg. \$199
Only \$99.99
NO TAX

YOUR CHOICE 39" 48" 54" SPRING MATTRESS 312 COIL
Only \$138.88
NO TAX

Quality Furniture & Appliances
M-T-W-S 9-6PM T-F 9-9PM 50 Saunders St. Ft. on Exhibition Grounds 472-3399

Guaranteed No Tax Prices