

# Opinion

## Drug War In Colombia: Government Free To Take Strong Action Against Medellin

by Rob Farnham  
Collegian Staff Writer

Recently, the strife between the Colombian government and that country's immensely powerful Medellin drug cartel escalated dramatically. In the wake of a tough government crackdown on traffickers, the drug lords issued a rambling, arrogant "declaration of war" against the legitimate government and society of Colombia. This outright defiance and expression of contempt was accompanied by the bombing of government agencies and police facilities, especially in the Medellin province from which the largest of the drug clans operate.

In their manifesto, the drug lords attempted to turn leftist ideology to the justification of their terroristic actions, claiming that their campaign is intended to bring down a corrupt government and police system that exploits and steals from the poor peasants in rural areas and the urban proletariat.

Such statements are laughable in light of the cocaine producers' immense wealth and resources, and considering their distinctly capitalistic interest in the accumulation of material goods such as vast estates, private aircraft, and heavily armed platoons of bodyguards and enforcers. But ridiculous as it is, such "power to the people" sloganeering may appeal to the resentments of the disenfranchised and sway many Colombians, especially in remote rural areas, to support this war on the establishment.

The situation indeed looks bleak for Colombia, so much so that the nation's leaders appealed directly to President Bush for emergency military aid, which he immediately granted in the form of \$65 million from a special discretionary fund, promising that more assistance will follow. C-130s loaded with machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, ammunition, jeeps, and other supplies have already been sent to help fight this "war," though the Colombians have declined offers of American troop support to this point. The assaults on legitimate authority have continued, though casualties have not been as high as might have been feared, with

most of the damage occurring to government buildings. However, there are fears that mass bloodshed may yet occur as the cartel continues its efforts to destabilize the authorities which have interfered with its operations.

Despite the ugliness of the current circumstances, this "war" offers a potential benefit for the government against which it is directed. Aside from the additional resources which have been placed at their disposal, the "declaration of war" gives the Colombians an opportunity to substantially alter the rules in their favor. The policies of a country fighting a war against a vicious aggressor, whether it is a foreign nation or a hostile internal faction, can be far different from those of its police agencies when dealing with domestic criminals in a non-totalitarian society.

The advantage is this: In a "war," the military need not concern itself with due process, with rules of evidence, or almost any restrictions on its actions against the enemy. With military aid from the U.S. and the full, unfettered force of the Colombian military turned against it, the drug cartel may finally have overreached itself. The possibilities for action are multitudinous and formidable: Paratroop raids on drug producers; saturation bombings of the estates of cartel leaders; ground assaults on suspected distribution centers; the use of anti-aircraft missiles against planes carrying drugs out of the country. Military strength might succeed where police action has not.

There is, of course, a great danger of the military becoming intoxicated with power and abusing such immense freedom of action. The civilian government will have to keep a close watch on their forces until the crisis is over. But despite such dangers, this "war" is a great opportunity to strike a mortal blow to Colombia's drug empire. And if that proves the case, they will have brought disaster upon themselves, for by declaring war on legitimate Colombian society, they have forfeited the protections and rights that this same society normally affords its members.

# LOVE ROB

## Butch's Freshman Assessment

by Rob Prindle

I'm back. The powers that be have decided to let me expel my words of wisdom for yet another semester. Oh, don't get me wrong, Joe Paterno wasn't too happy about it, but Joe lost a bunch of his pull at Penn State after last year's traumatic season.

Coming back to campus was as enjoyable as a good talk with an old friend, and, speaking of old friends, I was glad to see that my pal Butch made it back for another year.

I was happy to see him, that is, until I saw that his pupils were dilated and his face was pale white and his lips were blue. When Butch is in one of those moods, it's best to avoid him for a while. I hurried to the closest door, but after that woman threw me out of the ladie's room, Butch grabbed me by the bookbag and screamed:

"Punks. Damn wimps. Freshmen make me want to puke-up my Lucky Charms breakfast cereal, Rob."

"Those lazy no-goods come to our campus, take all the parking spaces, and then they have the nerve to walk around like they're all innocent."

"Freshwomen are the worst, though," he continued. They walk around, or rather, they prance around like little puppies acting like they own the place. Rob, do you realize that when we were in first grade these people were eating strained carrots and spitting up? Who do they think they are? Do you know that I actually heard a couple of these young ladies giggling as they exchanged middle names? That's very strange, Rob. And I mean that."

"Oh yeah, here's something else that ticks me off. Most freshpeople do their homework. What are those kiss-ups trying to prove anyway?"

"Rob, I'm going to tell you something that you don't know about me: I'm a great judge of character. That's right, I can spot a freshman a mile away. It's all in the eyes. It's that innocent look. Do you know that most of those geeks have never slept through a class, never lived for weeks at a time on Tic-Tacs and Combos and never wrote a complete research paper in just under 20 minutes. I bet that the closest most of them have come to an all-nighter was watching David Letterman before they looked at their test notes for half an hour."

"And don't even get me started about their juvenile drinking habits. They think they're hot stuff because they went to a few keg parties or threw-up some Jack Daniels. Throwing-up is easy. Holding it in through a 75 minute biology lecture, now that's tough. And they've never experienced the guilt of eating 2-for-1 wings and drinking quarter drafts when their Hemingway paper is due in 15 hours."

I had to stop my friend for a minute to explain that being a freshman is a very difficult thing. I asked him to show compassion and to remember when he himself was a lowly first-year student. I asked him to put himself in their shoes for just a minute.

Freshmen start college with almost nothing (and if they came from a high school around Erie they probably start with even less). They don't realize that just coming to school is the least of their worries. In the next year they will have to deal with an unintelligible financial aid system (this year I got a letter that told me I was eligible for a certain type of financial aid but they didn't have any money to give me...thanks a lot guys), unreliable scheduling, and non-uniform grading systems that are actually harder to understand than the course material.



Rob Prindle

"Yeah, but," interrupted Butch, "your getting off the mark a little, aren't you Rob? I'm talking about those chunks of eyeball slime that invade our campus every year, I mean I'm still not over last years freshmen and here they are again."

And if all that weren't enough, how about the billing and advance registration schedules. During the last month of this semester, just as everyone is swamped with tons of class work, the Bursar will mail his bills and around that same time the new scheduling packets come out. It becomes hard to make a new schedule when you don't know if you are going to be able to pay for next semester, much less pass for your current classes.

Fortunately, there are some really good things about Behrend. It would be hard to ask for a better looking campus. It would also be hard to find a better group of profs. I appreciate that the professors and not teaching assistants teach the class.

"Yeah, but," interrupted Butch, "your getting off the mark a little, aren't you Rob? I'm talking about those chunks of eyeball slime that invade our campus every year, I mean I'm still not over last years freshmen and here they are again."

"Hey Rob, I'll tell you what. If you like those dinks then you field the question the next time one of them walks up to me and asks me where the RUB desk is because I can't take it anymore. In fact, the next time a freshman asks me, I'm pointing towards the gorge and telling them 'It might be a little hard to find, but its down there.'"