

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

A TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE
RUBY BUTLER DEMESME

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to the accomplishments and career of one of North Carolina's daughters, Mrs. Ruby Butler DeMesme. Mrs. DeMesme, a public servant of the highest order, recently retired from her post as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, Installations and Environment after 32 years of service.

Mrs. DeMesme earned her bachelor of arts degree in English from Saint Augustine's College in Raleigh in 1969. Ten years later she earned a master's degree in social work from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Before beginning her civil service career, Mrs. DeMesme was a highly recognized and respected expert on child and spousal abuse and adolescent programs for the Cumberland County Department of Social Services in Fayetteville.

Mrs. DeMesme's career in the federal work force began in 1980 as an Army adjutant and diversion chief in Mainz, West Germany, where she led the effort to improve family support and quality of life programs. In 1989, she left the Department of the Army and served as a senior aide to former Senator John Glenn. After leaving Capitol Hill, Mrs. DeMesme returned to the Army for a brief time until her move to the Department of the Air Force in 1991, where she would work until her retirement. She was appointed and confirmed to her current post on August 13, 1998.

Over her ten years with the Air Force, Mrs. DeMesme was responsible for increasing housing and station funding policies, establishing the military Transition Assistance Program, and working to ensure that the Air Force had the highest quality child development programs. She was also the catalyst behind the effort to revitalize communities affected by base closures and realignments, overhauled the military commissary and base exchange system, established policies regarding harassment and discrimination, and led the Department of Defense in military family housing privatization.

Mrs. DeMesme has touched the lives of thousands of people during her distinguished career and it is fitting that we honor her today. Ruby Butler DeMesme is a true patriot who has helped maintain the best military force in the world. Today, I thank her for her years of dedicated service to our brave men and women in uniform and wish the very best for her and her family in the years to come.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following article printed on the front page of the January 28, 2001 Washington Post. The article demonstrates a fundamental aspect of the growing human rights emergency in Colombia. It also details the role of paramilitary organizations in human rights violations taking place in Colombia and the complicity of the Colombian military and government in allowing human rights abuse, such as the Chengue massacre, to continue.

Despite the thousands of civilian deaths and millions of displaced people in Colombia, the United States has moved forward with a misguided policy of massive military aid and close involvement in Colombia's conflict. I strongly believe that our current policy under Plan Colombia is the wrong approach for our nation in dealing with Colombia and is certainly the most ineffective and insincere way to deal with our domestic drug problem.

CHRONICLE OF A MASSACRE FORETOLD

(By Scott Wilson)

CHENGUE, COLOMBIA.—In the cool hours before sunrise on Jan. 17, 50 members of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia marched into this village of avocado farmers. Only the barking of dogs, unaccustomed to the blackness brought by a rare power outage, disturbed the mountain silence.

For an hour, under the direction of a woman known as Comandante Beatriz, the paramilitary troops pulled men from their homes, starting with 37-year-old Jaime Merino and his three field workers. They assembled them into two groups above the main square and across from the rudimentary health center. Then, one by one, they killed the men by crushing their heads with heavy stones and a sledgehammer. When it was over, 24 men lay dead in pools of blood. Two more were found later in shallow graves. As the troops left, they set fire to the village.

The growing power and brutality of Colombia's paramilitary forces have become the chief concern of international human rights groups and, increasingly, Colombian and U.S. officials who say that 8,000-member private army pose the biggest obstacle to peace in the country's decades-old civil conflict.

This massacre, the largest of 23 mass killings attributed to the paramilitaries this month, comes as international human rights groups push for the suspension of U.S. aid to the Colombian armed forces until the military shows progress on human rights. The armed forces, the chief beneficiary of the \$1.3 billion U.S. anti-drug assistance package known as Plan Colombia, deny using the paramilitaries as a shadow army against leftist guerrillas, turning a blind eye to their crimes or supporting them with equipment, intelligence and troops.

But in Chengue, more than two dozen residents interviewed in their burned-out homes and temporary shelters said they believe the Colombian military helped carry out the massacre.

In dozens of interviews, conducted in small groups and individually over three days, survivors said military aircraft undertook surveillance of the village in the days preceding the massacre and in the hour immediately following it. The military, according to these accounts, provided safe passage to the paramilitary column and effectively sealed off the area by conducting what villagers described as a mock daylong battle with leftist guerrillas who dominate the area.

"There were no guerrillas," said one resident, who has also told his story to two investigators from the Colombian prosecutor general's human rights office. "There motive was to keep us from leaving and anyone else from coming in until it was all clear. We hadn't seen guerrillas for weeks."

A "DIRTY WAR"

The rutted mountain track to Chengue provides a vivid passage into the conflict consuming Colombia. Chengue and hundreds of villages like it are the neglected and forgotten arenas where illegal armed forces of the right and left, driven by a national tradition of settling political differences with violence, conduct what Colombians call their "dirty war."

Despite peace talks between the government and the country's largest guerrilla insurgency, more than 25,600 Colombians died violently last year. Of those, 1,226 civilians—a third more than the previous year—died in 205 mass killings that have come to define the war. Leftist guerrillas killed 164 civilians last year in mass killings, according to government figures, compared with 507 civilians killed in paramilitary massacres. More than 2 million Colombians have fled their homes to escape the violence.

In this northern coastal mountain range, strategic for its proximity to major transportation routes, all of Colombia's armed actors are present. Two fronts of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's oldest and largest leftist guerrilla insurgency with about 17,000 armed members, control the lush hills they use to hide stolen cattle and victims of kidnappings-for-profit.

The privately funded United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, known by the initials AUC in Spanish, patrols the rolling pastures and menaces the villages that provide the FARC with supplies. Paramilitary groups across Colombia have grown in political popularity and military strength in recent years as a counterweight to the guerrillas, and obtain much of their funding from relations with drug traffickers. Here in Sucre province, ranchers who are the targets of the kidnappings and cattle theft allegedly finance the paramilitary operations. AUC commander Carlos Castano, who has condemned the massacre here and plans his own investigation, lives a few hours away in neighboring Cordoba province.

The armed forces, who are outnumbered by the leftist guerrillas in a security zone that covers 9,000 square miles and includes more than 200 villages, are responsible for confronting both armed groups. Col. Alejandro Parra, head of the navy's 1st Brigade, with responsibility for much of Colombia's northern coast, said the military would need at least 1,000 more troops to effectively control the zones.

The military has prepared its own account of the events surrounding the massacre at

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

Chengue, which emptied this village of all but 100 of its 1,200 residents. Parra confirmed elements of survivor accounts, but denied that military aircraft were in the area before or immediately after the killings. He said his troops' quick response may have averted a broader massacre involving neighboring villages.

"They must have been confused about the time" the first helicopters arrived, Parra said. "If there were any helicopters there that soon after the massacre, they weren't ours."

STRATEGIC LOCATION

Three families have flourished in Chengue for generations, tending small orchards of avocados renowned for their size and sweetness. The only residents not related to the Oviedo, Lopez or Merino families are the farm workers who travel the lone dirt road that dips through town. The longest trip most inhabitants ever make is the two-hour drive by jeep to Ovejas, the local government seat.

But in recent years the village, set in the Montes de Maria range, has become a target on battle maps because of its strategic perch between the Caribbean Sea and the Magdalena River. Whoever controls the mountains also threatens the most important transportation routes in the north.

Villagers say FARC guerrillas frequently pass through seeking supplies. Any support, many villagers say, is given mostly out of fear. As one 34-year-old farmer who survived the massacre by scrambling out his back window said, "When a man with a gun knocks on our door at 11 at night wanting food and a place to sleep, he becomes your landlord."

The AUC's Heroes of the Montes de Maria Front announced its arrival in Chengue last spring with pamphlets and word-of-mouth warnings of a pending strike. The paramilitaries apparently identified Chengue as a guerrilla stronghold—a town to be emptied. The AUC's local commander, Beatriz, was one a member of the FARC's 35th Front, which operates in the zone, military officials said. Ten months ago she quarreled with the FARC leadership for allegedly mishandling the group's finances and defected to the AUC for protection and perhaps a measure of revenge.

In April, community leaders in Chengue and 20 other villages sent President Andres Pastrana and the regional military command a letter outlining the threat. "We have nothing to do with this conflict," they wrote in asking for protection.

The letter was sent two months after the massacre of 36 civilians in El Salado, a village about 30 miles southeast of here in Bolivar province that is patrolled by the same military command and paramilitary forces. But according to villagers and municipal officials in Ovejas, the request for help brought no response from the central government or the navy's 1st Brigade, which is based in the city of Sincelejo 25 miles south of here.

In October, the villagers repeated their call for help in another letter to Pastrana, regional military leaders, international human rights groups and others. Municipal officials met with members of the 1st Brigade in November, but said no increased military presence materialized. In fact, municipal officials said, the 5th Marine Infantry Battalion seemed to stop patrolling the village.

Six Chengue residents who signed the letter died in the massacre. Col. Parra said the requests for help were among dozens received at brigade headquarters in the past year, but that manpower shortages made it impossible to respond to every one.

"What is clear is that the government and [the military] knew about the evidence of a

possible massacre and did nothing," said a municipal official in Ovejas, who like many interviewed in the aftermath of the slaughter requested anonymity for fear of reprisal. "The military seemed to clear out of the zone."

After weeks of not seeing any sign of the military, villagers said a small, white propeller plane swooped low over the village on Jan. 14, three days before the massacre. They identified the aircraft as the same plane used to drop anti-guerrilla pamphlets three months earlier—a "psychological operation," Parra confirmed, although he denied knowledge of this particular flight. The low-altitude pass left the farmers uneasy.

Over the next two nights, the darkness fell on the village, residents said two green military helicopters passed over in slow circles. "They are the same ones I'd seen pass by before, but just coming and going, not circling," said a young mother. "We didn't know what they were doing."

Seven hours after the helicopters left the second time, the power went out in Chengue, Salitral and a series of neighboring villages that had warned of a pending paramilitary attack. Villagers noted the time somewhere between 1:30 and 2 a.m. because, as one woman remembered, "the dogs started barking when the house lights went out." Some villagers lit candles. Most remained asleep.

In the blackness, the paramilitary column dressed in Colombian army uniforms moved along the dirt road from the west, arriving between 4 and 4:30 a.m., villagers said. The column was led by Beatriz, whom military officials said is a nurse by training; witnesses said the men in her command addressed her as "doctora."

The column stopped at the gray concrete home of Jaime Merino, the first on the road, and kicked in the door. They seized him and three workers, including Luis Miguel Romero, who picked avocados to pay for medical treatment for his infant daughter.

They were led down the steep dirt road into the village, past the church and school, and to a small terrace above the square where they waited. Three brothers from the green house on the square, a father and two sons from the sky blue house across the square, and Nestor Merino, a mentally ill man who hadn't left his home in four months, all joined them in the flickering darkness.

When the men arrived for Rusbel Oviedo Barreto, 23, his father blocked the door.

"They pushed me away," said Enrique al Alberto Oviedo Merino, 68. "I was yelling not to take him, and they were saying 'we'll check the computer.' There was no computer. They were mocking us. They took my identification card and said they would know me the next time."

Cesar Merino awoke on his farm above the village, and peering down, saw the town below lit by candles. His neighbors, 19-year-old Juan Carlos Martinez Oviedo and his younger brother Elkin, were also awake. The three men, who worked the same avocado farm, walked down the hillside into town. Elkin, 15, was the youngest to die.

On the far side of town, where the road bends up and out toward Ovejas, the paramilitaries gathered Cesar Merino's cousin, Andres Merino, and his 18-year-old son, Cristobal. One of them, father or son, watched the other die before his own execution.

Human rights workers and survivors speculated that the paramilitaries, who were armed with automatic rifles, used stones to kill the men to heighten the horror of the message to surrounding villages and to maintain a measure of silence in a guerrilla zone.

The work was over within an hour and a half. As the column prepared to leave, ac-

ording to several witnesses, one militiaman used a portable radio to make a call. No transmission was intercepted that morning by military officials, although their log of the preceding weeks showed numerous intercepts of FARC radio traffic. Then the men smashed the town's only telephone and set the village on fire.

The hillside was full of hiding villagers, many of whom say that between 15 and 30 minutes later two military helicopters arrived overhead and circled for several minutes. The sun was beginning to rise.

"They would have been able to see [the paramilitaries] clearly at that hour," said one survivor, who has fled to Ovejas. "Why didn't they catch anyone?"

Human rights officials say the described events resemble those surrounding the massacre last year in El Salado. Gen. Rodrigo Quinones was the officer in charge of the security zone for Chengue and El Salado at that time, and remained in that post in the months leading up to the Chengue massacre. He left the navy's 1st Brigade last month to run a special investigation at the Atlantic Command in Cartagena, from where military flights in the zone are directed.

In a report issued this month, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Washington Office on Latin America called specifically for Quinones's removal. As a regional head of naval intelligence in the early 1990s, Quinones was linked to the killings of 57 trade unionists, human rights workers and activists. He was acquitted by a military court. According to the human rights report, a civilian judge who reviewed the case was "perplexed" by the verdict, saying he found the evidence of Quinones's guilt "irrefutable."

El Salado survivors said a military plane and helicopter flew over the village the day of the massacre, and that at least one wounded militiaman was transported from the site by military helicopter. Soldiers under Quinones's command sealed the village for days, barring even Red Cross workers from entering.

"We are very worried and very suspicious about the coincidences," said Anders Kompass, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights representative in Colombia. "This involves the same officer in charge, the same kind of military activity before and after the massacre, and the same lack of military presence while it was going on."

"THERE IS A TERROR HERE"

During the two hours following the killings, survivors emerged from hiding and into the shambles of their village. Eliecer Lopez Oviedo, a 66-year-old Chengue native, said his son arrived at his small farm at 9 a.m.

"He told me they had burned Chengue, killed my brothers, my sister and my niece," he said. "I arrived there to find that they hadn't killed the women. But my three brothers were above the square, dead."

What Oviedo and others found were two piles of bodies—17 on the dirt terrace above the square, seven in front of the health center. Cristobal Merino's Yankees hat, torn and bloody, lay near his body. The rocks used in the killings remained where they were dropped. The bodies of Videncio Quintana Barreto and Pedro Arias Barreto, killed along with fathers and brothers, were found later in shallow graves.

Ash from more than 20 burning houses floated in the hot, still air. Graffiti declaring "Get Out Marxist Communist Guerrillas," "AUC" and "Beatriz" was scrawled across the walls of vacant houses. "The bodies were all right there for us to see, and I knew all of them," said a 56-year Chengue resident whose brother and brother-in-law were

among the dead. "Now there is a terror here."

Officials at the 1st Brigade said they were alerted at 8:45 a.m. when the National Police chief for Sucre reported a possible paramilitary "incursion" in Chengue. According to a military log, Parra dispatched two helicopters to the village at 9:30 a.m. and the Dragon company of 80 infantry soldiers based in nearby Pijiguay five minutes later. Villagers said the troops did not arrive for at least another two hours.

When they did arrive, according to logs and soldiers present that day, a gun battle erupted with guerrillas from the FARC's 35th Front. Parra said he sealed the roads into the zone "to prevent the paramilitaries from escaping." The battle lasted all day—the air force sent in one Arpia and three Black Hawk helicopters at 2:10 p.m., according to the military—and village residents waved homemade white flags urging the military to stop shooting. No casualties were reported on either side. No paramilitary troops were captured.

Three days later, the 1st Brigade announced the arrest of eight people in connection with the killings. They were apprehended in San Onofre, a town 15 miles from Chengue known for a small paramilitary camp that patrols nearby ranches. Villagers say that, though they didn't see faces that morning because of the darkness, these "old names" are scapegoats and not the men who killed their families.

A steady flow of traffic now moves toward Ovejas, jeeps stuffed with everything from refrigerators to pool cues to family pictures. The marines have set up two base camps in Chengue—one under a large shade tree behind the village, the other in the vacant school. The remaining residents do not mix with the soldiers.

"We have taken back this town," said Maj. Alvaro Jimenez, standing in the square two days after the massacre. "We are telling people we are here, that it is time to reclaim their village."

No one plans to. Marlena Lopez, 52, lost three brothers, a nephew, a brother-in-law and her pink house. Her brother, Cesar Lopez, was the town telephone operator. He fled, she said, "with nothing but his pants."

In the ashes of her home, she weeps about the pain she can't manage. "We are humble people," she said. "Why in the world are we paying for this?"

RECOGNIZING THE MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION I STATE CHAMPIONS LUDLOW HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SOCCER TEAM

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize the achievements of the 2000 Ludlow High School girls soccer team. This past season the Ludlow girls team compiled a record of 21–0–0 en route to earning the Coombs Division League Championship, the Western Massachusetts Division I Championship, and the Massachusetts Division I State Championship. Their efforts enabled them to earn a ranking of 3rd in the country.

Each year the Commonwealth of Massachusetts fields many talented high school soccer squads. Every season the Ludlow community looks forward to cheering on their hometown heroes. This year the Lions certainly did not

disappoint. Finishing a season undefeated and untied, as the Ludlow girls did, is a feat well deserving of high praise. The Ludlow girls soccer team rose to the challenge each and every game. They are winners in every sense of the word and are examples of athletic prowess, class, and true sportsmanship.

For leading his team to such accomplishments, Head Coach Jim Calheno has been named the Massachusetts Division I Girls' Coach of the Year. Under his leadership, the Lions have remained a perennial powerhouse. His assistants are tireless and deserve praise as well. In addition I would like to note that senior midfielder Liz Dyjak has earned All-American honors while senior forward Stephanie Santos has been named to the All-New England team.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to recognize here the players, coaches, and managers of the 2000 Ludlow High School girls soccer team. The seniors are: Jessica Vital, Lindsay Robillard, Sarah Davis, Lindsay Haluch, Nikky Gebo, Liz Dyjak, Kara Williamson, Stephanie Santos, and Ana Pereira. Kristine Goncalves is a Junior on the squad. The Sophomores are: Darcie Rickson, Beth Cochenour, Natalie Gebo, and Lauren Pereira. Freshmen members include Jessica Luszcz, and Stefiny Knight. The Head Coach is Jim Calheno. Assistant Coaches are Saul Chelo, James Annear, Nuno Pereira, and Tony Vital. The team manager is Katie Romansky.

Mr. Speaker, once again, allow me to send my congratulations to the Ludlow High School girls soccer team on their outstanding season. I wish them the best of luck in the 2001 season.

H.R. 93, THE FIREFIGHTERS RETIREMENT AGE CORRECTION ACT

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I was a cosponsor of H.R. 460, the Federal Firefighters Retirement Age Correction Act in the 106th Congress and would have voted to support H.R. 93 yesterday. Unfortunately, due to an unforeseen family illness, I was absent and not able to vote in support of H.R. 93, the Federal Firefighters Retirement Age Correction Act. I would like the RECORD to reflect my support for H.R. 93.

RECOGNIZING BETTY FITZPATRICK

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to recognize Ms. Betty Fitzpatrick from Evergreen, Colorado, who was selected by the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) as the School Nurse Administrator of the year for 2000. Recently, NASN hosted an event for Ms. Fitzpatrick on Capitol Hill to honor her, and to applaud her for her excellent work on behalf of the public school children in my district.

As a former public school teacher, I had first-hand experience in seeing the hard work of our Nation's school nurses. All teachers know that being a good student require a degree of good health, and I appreciate the work of Ms. Fitzpatrick in organizing health efforts for the children in my district and wish to extend my personal congratulations.

It is important to note that the work of many school nurses, like Ms. Fitzpatrick, goes beyond the assistance they provide directly to students. They serve as mentors to their colleagues, and serve an array of needs ranging from medical ailments to counseling for a student who needs a listening ear. Betty Fitzpatrick, especially, has participated in training for and as a consultant to school nurses, to assist them in developing crisis plans, and in dealing with tragic situations.

Ms. Fitzpatrick has spent her personal and professional life advocating children's physical and mental health while supporting school nursing. For the past 11 years she has served as the Director of Health Services for all 136 Jefferson County Schools in Golden, Colorado. She has been the president and treasurer of her state organization, a prolific author, an advocate for legislation, a grant writer and a national presenter.

The NASN newsletter reported that aside from the day to day challenges of being a school nurse administrator, Ms. Fitzpatrick had the great misfortune of dealing with an incomprehensible tragedy, which took place at one of her high schools—Columbine. Within minutes, she was contacted, and her emergency plan was activated. She and her nurses didn't wait for instructions, they knew what needed to be done, and they got to work. As the newsletter stated, the Columbine tragedy wounded a nation, but Betty continues to meet the unique needs of this school community and the others she serves.

Again, I am delighted by this honor that Ms. Fitzpatrick has brought to the State of Colorado, and I offer my sincere congratulations.

HONORING GAYE LEBARON

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Gaye LeBaron. For 43 years Gaye LeBaron's columns in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat have recorded and enlivened Sonoma County and the Redwood Empire. By personalizing the community's history and sense of place with honesty and good humor, LeBaron captured the respect and the hearts of her readers.

In her 8,000 columns LeBaron demonstrated that quality journalism can be witty, insightful, and compassionate. She worked as an observer and story teller, yet did not hesitate to take a stand—on issues as great as racial discrimination or as mundanely important as street lights—when it was needed. Whether focusing on the quirkiness of every day happenings or wrapping the reader in the sweep of North Coast history, Gaye LeBaron's colorful depictions made life what it is—interesting and personal.

LeBaron has also devoted her time and expertise to community causes through teaching,