



*Four Decades of  
Unconventional  
Wisdom*

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES DRUG POLICY PROJECT TO  
CONDUCT DISCOVERY IN LAWSUIT AGAINST CIA FOR UNLAWFULLY  
WITHOLDING INFORMATION ABOUT COLOMBIAN “DEATH SQUAD”.**

Tuesday, February 12, 2008, Washington, DC

Since June 1, 2004, the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) Drug Policy Project has been seeking documentation from the CIA under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) regarding the Colombian terrorist organization known as Los Pepes (People Persecuted by Pablo Escobar). After years of legal action, the court has permitted the IPS Drug Policy Project to conduct discovery regarding the adequacy of the CIA's search for such records. The IPS Drug Policy Project has served the CIA with Requests for Admissions, Request for Production of Documents and will notice the deposition of the CIA's National Clandestine Service.

In a climate which has proven difficult for many individuals and organizations seeking information from the CIA under the Freedom of Information Act, the court is upholding the right of the IPS Drug Policy Project to conduct discovery as to the adequacy of the CIA's search for records requested by IPS.

In May 2006, the IPS Drug Policy Project filed suit in United States District Court for the District of Columbia, by and through its counsel the Law Offices of Brian Gaffney, against the CIA for violations of FOIA based on the CIA's failure to release records and failure to conduct an adequate search for records requested by IPS.

The IPS Drug Policy Project began its investigation into the suspect relationship between the United States Government and known paramilitary leaders in Colombia, in June 2004. At that time the IPS Drug Policy Project filed several FOIA requests to various federal agencies including the Department of Defense, the Department of Justice, the Department of State and the CIA.

Los Pepes was a paramilitary group whose sole purpose was to hunt and kill the Medellín drug lord, Pablo Escobar. This death squad was responsible for threats, kidnappings, car bombings, property damage and execution-styled killings of civilians, in their hunt for Escobar between 1992 and 1994. The IPS Drug Policy Project requested information from the CIA as part of its mission to educate the public on the United States' foreign policy with Colombia and the activities of the United States within Colombia.



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In 2001, Mark Bowden published information from confidential sources about the CIA's knowledge of Los Pepes in his book *Killing Pablo*, which details the hunt for Escobar. Bowden writes that "two CIA analysts met with Sheehan, Sheridan, and other [Pentagon] top brass to report that *Los Pepes* were, in fact, Colonel Martinez's Search Bloc. The death squad's tactics matched those taught by Delta [Force], which suggested that members of the Search Bloc were actually committing the Los Pepes murders and bombings, which meant that the United States had bought, trained, and, in part, led the group. 'These guys have gone renegade, and we're behind it,' the analyst told Sheehan." *Killing Pablo* p.218.

Among the documents sought by the IPS Drug Policy Project are those related to two censored CIA documents already released. These documents describe briefings provided by CIA members of a "Blue Ribbon Panel" to members of the congressional intelligence committees and the National Security Council regarding the possibility that U.S. intelligence that had been shared with the Colombian National Police's (CNP) Search Bloc had ended up in the hands of Colombian paramilitaries and drug traffickers.

Other documents uncovered to date indicate that the CIA was a principle source of information related to Los Pepes and to its members' ties to the Search Bloc. A cable sent by the US Ambassador to Colombia, Morris Busby in August of 1993 detailed a series of meetings with senior Colombian officials about Los Pepes. The cable indicates that according to CIA sources, CNP director General Miguel Antonio Gomez Padilla said "that he had directed a senior CNP intelligence officer to maintain contact with Fidel Castaño, paramilitary leader of Los Pepes, for the purposes of intelligence collection."

"The CIA has continued to obstruct justice by refusing to conduct an adequate search of the documents," said Paul Paz y Miño, Associate Fellow at IPS and director of its "Pepes Project" as part of the Drug Policy Project. "More than fourteen years after the activities of these individuals, the CIA has yet to release more than a handful of documents about Los Pepes, a well known group responsible for the murders of hundreds. In the meantime, these same men directed a national paramilitary alliance known as the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), responsible for massive human rights violations and forged ties throughout the Colombian government. Discovering the full extent of the paramilitary scandal which erupted in Colombia in recent years will be impeded without access to information we believe the CIA holds regarding Los Pepes."