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The construction of the Colombian territory: Images of the Colombian Armed Conflict 2002-2010

by

Claudia Liliana Salamanca

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Rhetoric
and Designated Emphasis in New Media
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Samera Esmeir, Co-Chair
Professor David Bates, Co-Chair
Professor Linda Williams
Professor Greg Niemeyer

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Abstract

The construction of the Colombian territory: Images of the Colombian Armed Conflict 2002-2010

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Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric

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University of California, Berkeley
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Professor David Bates, Co-Chair

My dissertation, *The construction of the Colombian territory: Images of the Colombian Armed Conflict 2002-2010*, critically analyzes the Colombian internal conflict and its relationship with the narrative of the nation in a global theater of operations of war in its different forms of visualization. Through a detail textual analysis of documentaries, films, recorded military operations, media military operations, and proof of life videos, I examine the effect moving images have had as part of configuring the battlefield. My research proceeds from the premise that there is a visual culture of warfare - grammars, imaginaries, and technologies – that has organized the global space of security and has brought new forms of territory that paradoxically exceed the idea of the sovereign nation and at the same time confirm it. In other words, I examine the creation and exercise of national security in a globalized world and its effects on the concept of the nation and national territory through the concept of politics of the visual. Colombia is considered a successful example for nation building, counterinsurgency tactics and U.S. intervention. As my case of study, I analyze the epistemological assumptions that emerge in the global war on terror, specifically how they reflect in the construction of the idea of Colombia as a unified image, one sovereign nation, and one territory through the production of different visual narratives.

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To my mother,
to my home,
and Uma, the star

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Introduction

In *first decade of the twenty-first century,* Colombia moved from being a failed state to a sovereign nation. Some media outlets call this turnaround "the Colombian miracle" (Forero 2012; Ghitis 2008; Boot and Bennet 2009). For the United States, Colombia is a successful case of nation building and counterinsurgency tactics, a paradigmatic example of a new type of U.S. intervention in regional conflicts, and therefore a model to implement in other unstable areas around the world (Haddick 2010). For Colombia, the success has been the result of "an uncompromising "hard hand" against the insurgents," through the implementation of the Democratic Security and Defense policy (2002-2010) committed to consolidate state control throughout the Colombian territory by enhancing the technological capacity of attack and defense, intelligence and equipment of the Colombian Armed Forces (Forero 2002).[1] This dissertation examines how this story of success has been constructed. Specifically I analyze how the relationship between sovereignty and territory has emerged in a country that still has not control over all its national territory, faces violence and trafficking of illegal drugs and yet it has successfully crafted a national identity in the age of globalization. Arjun Appadurai underscores the crisis of locality as the result of the challenges and transnational pressures nation-states face in the age of globalization (Appadurai 1996). However, I argue that the importance of the Colombian case is that it has succeeded in creating a strong narrative of the Colombian nation, a local construction of Colombianness, and at the same time, it has inscribed itself successfully in transnational flows of people and things, using security and war as forms of incorporation into global markets and international policy.[2] Thanks to this story of success, Colombia has become an exporter of security consulting other countries in the region in matters of counterinsurgency tactics and counter drug strategies; oil and mining corporations are recruiting ex-policemen and helicopters pilots and private security companies in places like Kyrgyzstan and the United Arab Emirates are hiring Colombian ex-armed forces personnel (Tomaselli 2014).

In order to examine how success is created, I analyze the modes in which the conflict over the territory takes place. These modes go beyond national boundaries and take culture as their front. The dissertation contemplates an array of security and cultural materials in which the configuration of the territory is at stake during the years of the Democratic Security and Defense Policy (2002-2010): security policies, state-sponsored tourism campaigns, hostages' memoirs, presidential speeches, guerrilla music videos, media and psychological military operations, United Nations reports, proof of life videos, documentation of military operations and guerilla kidnappings.

Nicholas Mirzoeff in his work *The Right to Look* argues that after the Cold War, Revolution of military affairs (RMA) and Global counterinsurgency, as war strategies, have reached culture as their field of operations. In the former, information warfare came into

[1] After 2001, Colombia's unstable situation entered to the global regime of the global war on terror. After 911 and with the U.S. intervention in Colombia, there was a new rhetoric in place: in Colombia there were not insurgency groups but terrorists even if the military tactics used to fight them were called counterinsurgency.

[2] In Colombia, global economic policies have taken a toll on local communities, the environment, territorial rights, and local governance (Cordaid 2014). However, within the international market economy, Colombia has re-established investor confidence by improving the security conditions and creating very attractive legislative framework becoming a promising emerging market ("Foreign Investment in Colombia" 2015; Bremmer 2015).

existence as the four dimension of war in which culture is the field of exploration and management; and in the latter, population control puts members of armed forces to work within communities, learning their language, habits, traditions as part of war strategies. By considering how in the regime of the global war on terror, the enemy has lost its stable identity, and war has spread everywhere and with no end in sight, Mirzoeff writes "cultural war, with visuality playing a central role, takes "culture" to be the means, location, and object of warfare" (2011b, 285).

The conflict for the territory is a contestation for its definition and configuration, where the parties involved in this struggle exceed the binary of enemy and friends, or the insurgents and the state. In the struggle to configure a new geopolical geography, the territory becomes a field of all kind of investments, a competing narrative in which the geography of a new country emerges. This narrative is constructed as a dramatic story of overcoming obstacles, with a united and resilience country rising from its ruins. In this storyline there are actors that have been crafted in the years of Democratic Security and Defense policy (2002-2010). This dissertation analyzes how the image and identity of different actors of the Colombian war conflict have been configured as they traverse or inhabit the Colombian territory and as they participate of a narrative of the nation, security and development. Under examination are the configuration of the insurgent, hostage victims, and humanitarian organizations, among others, as they claim, inhabit and traverse the Colombian territory.

A short story

At the end of the 1990's, Colombia appeared as the biggest threat in the region. In 1999 Gabriel Marcella, professor at the U.S. Army War College, wrote, "the very weakness of Colombia as a nation-state threatens international order in the region and the well-being of any number of countries" (1999, 6). On August 22, 2000, President Bill Clinton announced the first 1.3 billion dollars in aid to Colombia from the 7.5 billion envisaged by 2006 under the U.S./Colombia initiative called Plan Colombia. Under this Plan, originally conceived by Colombian President Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002), was the premise that any war on drugs in Colombia must entail a strong counterinsurgency strategy due to the nexus between insurgency groups and the narcotrafficking industry. This broader strategy in turn would help the Andean country to diminish violence and stanch the flow of cocaine entering the United States by gaining sovereignty and control over the southern region of the country, in provinces like Cauca, Nariño, Guaviare, Caquetá, Amazonas and Putumayo where the FARC-EP developed an economy based on coca growth, and waged a war to keep control of the exit corridors to smuggle the cocaine produced inland to Mexico, Central America and the United States.

In the year 2000, President Clinton was the first U.S. President to visit Colombia after John F. Kennedy in 1961, as his endorsement of Plan Colombia. During this visit, President Clinton vehemently defended this bilateral agenda and responded to his critics by assuring that, "A condition of this aid is that we are not going to get into a shooting war. This is not Vietnam, neither is it Yankee imperialism" (2000, 1732). As it was designed in 2002, Plan Colombia sought to strengthen the global war on drugs with a nation-building program, in a country whose war has mainly taken place in the jungle against the longest-running insurgency in Latin America, with peasant roots that predate the Cuban revolution but has deep involvement in the taxation of drug producers and smugglers, as well as in the production and trafficking of illegal

drugs, as it is the FARC's main source of income.[3] Back in 2000, Bill Clinton's statement was not only an attempt to set Plan Colombia apart from what Vietnam represents for the United States but also to proclaim a different type of intervention. Arlene B. Tickner calls the U.S. and Colombia cooperation program an "intervention by invitation" by which the internationalization of the Colombian armed conflict was achieved at the request of Colombian Presidents Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) and Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002 – 2010) for U.S. involvement in domestic affairs related to counternarcotics and counterinsurgency (2007).

After more than ten years of Plan Colombia with its subsequent phases: Plan Patriota (2003), Plan Victoria (2006), and Plan Consolidation (2007) and with its domestic umbrella, the Democratic Security and Defense Policy (2002-2010), Colombia has emerged as a successful case of nation building and U.S. intervention. In 2008, the Council on Foreign Relations reported on this success:

> The state is now present in many regions previously controlled by illegal armed groups, reestablishing elected governments, building and rebuilding public infrastructure, and affirming the rule of law [...]. These substantial improvements are due to concerted efforts by the Colombian government, with assistance from the United States through Plan Colombia. Colombia still has very serious security problems [...] but important progress has been made ("U.S.-Latin America Relations: A New Direction for a New Reality" 2008, 27).

Today Colombia is seen as a regional partner in matters of security, international markets, and a place for foreign investment. But only twelve years ago Colombia was known for its ungoverned national territory. The nature of the Colombian geography was considered one of the reasons for its weak sovereignty; former president Álvaro Uribe Vélez writes in his memoirs:

> Geography has always been Colombia's biggest blessing and our biggest curse: a blessing because our country is endowed with stunning natural beauty and resources. […] Yet the same extraordinary terrain that yielded these bounties has also made aspects of governing Colombia extraordinarily difficult—politically, economically, and militarily. Throughout our history, this has almost always been the case. "A guerrilla's delight," was how a *Time* magazine reporter described it in 1956. Indeed, our geography was one of the main reasons why, in two centuries of history, no government in Bogotá had ever been able to extend full control over our territory. Three distinct chains of mountains cut through the country from south to north, separated by deep valleys. Half of the country was virtually unpopulated—much of it in the south and east Amazon, the Orinoco River basin and its savannas, and also in vast areas such as the Pacific coast. This mix of terrain made Colombia a perfect place for armed groups to operate—and to hold hostages for years at a time. (2012, 23).

This description of the Colombian territory exhibits a conjuncture that the U.S. wanted to prevent through its intervention: ungoverned spaces as potential havens for terrorist activity where illegal actors are able to operate while avoiding detection and capture. In this statement, former President Álvaro Uribe argues that the rugged geography of the country has provided cover to illegal organizations and their activities. Evidently the Colombian geography is

[3] At the *Colombia – U.S. Forum* organized by the Colombian – American Chamber of Commerce and the Center for Hemispheric Policy of the University of Miami (2012), Defense Minister Juan Carlos Pinzón (2011-2015) asserted that the FARC's annual drug related income is between 2.4 and 3.5 billion dollars (Joey 2012).

complex; however such a statement obscures the historical transformations of this territory, and the political, economic and military struggles around its colonization, thus naturalizing the Colombian geography. This geography has not changed; Colombia still has the "three distinct chains of mountains [cutting] through the country from south to north, separated by deep valleys" and despite that, in first decade of the twenty-first century, Colombia has emerged as sovereign country that appears to have control over the Colombian territory, whereas before only nominal sovereignty was held.

The narrative of the new nation constantly invokes the shift of the Colombian geography from being the biggest course as former president Álvaro Uribe Vélez writes in his memoirs, to become Colombia's biggest blessing. For example, in 2007, Álvaro Uribe Vélez speaking at the United Nations World Tourism Organization gathered in Cartagena for their General Assembly said, "this country has moved from terrorism to tourism" (Berger, Herrera, and Roberts 2012). The Colombian tropical rainforests and jungle have been incorporated into the idea of a national territory as exotic tourist destinations, advertising Colombia "as one of the 17 megadiverse countries of the world" ("Country Profiles: Colombia" 2015; Marca Colombia 2015). Tourism in this once deemed cursed geography establishes a form of gaze that does not penetrate the territory but rather remains contemplating these wild, rich and exotic landscape and yet potentially dangerous but for different reasons (anacondas, venomous frogs, jaguars, etc.) (Colombia Travel 2013; Colombia Travel 2013). Tourism is a form of transitory presence based on seasons and flows of visitors. Tourism became one form of incorporation of the territory into the narrative of one new nation, a secured one, as one of the slogans of a state sponsored tourism commercials says, "the only risk is wanting to stay" (See Chapter One) (Colombia Travel 2012).

This dissertation takes as its point of departure the idea of a territory that is defined as a "natural" obstacle for sovereignty, and examines how multiple tactics, for instance, of population control and securitization of the territory work through and with such naturalization, crafting a different geopolitical geography. I argue that the claimed success, after more than ten years of PC (Plan Colombia) and DSD (Democratic Security and Defense) policies, involves the creation of a different state space. Rather than gaining control over the enemy's territory by military presence and governance through institutional presence throughout the territory, the Colombian state has put into motion multiple techniques and tactics that use fragmentation, decentralization and penetration as forms of territorial control and along the way, reconfiguration. In this dissertation, I explore these set of tactics through which a new space has been created, simultaneously becoming "the site, medium, and outcome of statecraft" within global distributions of power (Brenner and Elden 2009, 365).

A Visuality of success

One of the sites for state power articulation is the imagination as it is constructed by images. In it, the transformation from territory to space occurs. I argue that these images have created a space distinct from the natural territory creating a new imagined geography and yet, the Colombian territory continues to be murky even for Colombians; nonetheless a national experience has been crafted to own and reclaim this territory, even if only symbolically.

Derek Gregory signals the existence of a highly imagined geography of wars in the wild zones of the global south. In this imaginary geography of the borderlands, the rhetoric of our wars –waged by metropolis–, and their wars, –wage in the periphery by factions, insurgents, tribes, or so–, brings a distinction between clean surgical wars and their wars: wars were civilians are killed, humanitarian aid is abused and all social fabric is destroyed (Gregory 2011,

239). The periphery, Gregory says is highly imagined as it is barely known. And although Gregory is speaking of the metropolis imagining the colonies or the periphery, in Colombia there is a distinction that different humanitarian organizations, theorists, economic analysts, have used and that replicates the relationship between the metropolis and the periphery and it is the one of the two Colombias (Romero 2008; Velasco 2014; Americas Watch Committee (U.S.) 1982). The distinction between the two Colombias has played an important role in the definition of the Colombian war. Under this distinction, Colombia could still be recognized as the longest and most stable democracy in Latin America in spite of a civil war with a large number of civilian casualties, illegal drug trafficking, political assassinations, and the largest guerrilla force in the continent (Rice 2010, 208). The division between here and there, a cosmopolitan Colombia and a rural one, have sustained the idea of a war conflict happening in the periphery, and not in the prosperous and democratic Colombia. The division also has had a highly visual component. The majority of Colombians have known the conflict against the insurgency forces, happening over there, in the other Colombia, through the media. Images of the conflict happening in the other side came through television, news outlets, and newspapers. The Colombian war conflict appeared to Colombians mediated, first by actual distance and second by the media. However, in the 1990's under the leadership of Mono Jojoy as the FARC-EP military strategist, this insurgency group reached and attacked urban centers. These attacks became a sign that in fact the guerrillas could win the war and that the distinction between here and there could collapse (See Chapter 3 on Mono Jojoy).

To imagine a new nation, one in which a division between the two Colombias did not exist, a work of the imagination needed to be done. Images are not just a form of representation that illustrate a new configuration of the national geography, but rather they in fact contribute to the creation of this new space. They travel between the two Colombias. During the 1990's the FARC-EP recorded its insurgent actions (ambushes, kidnappings, and urban incursions) and the media broadcasted those images as part of keeping the Colombian public informed (*TOMA DE LAS FARC A MITU COORDINADA Y PLANEADA POR EL MONO JOJOY* 2012; *TOMA GUERRILLERA A LA BASE DE MIRAFLORES* 2010; *Toma Coreguaje* 2010; *Diputados Del Valle Lo Nunca Visto* 2012; *Secuestro Diputados Cali 2002 FARC* 2007). With the DSD policy (2002-2010), the Colombian government restricted the images broadcasted calling news outlets to collaborate in the war effort, "to fulfill their constitutional duty by being both responsible and prudent when releasing information" (Republic of Colombia 2003, 60). After the control imposed by the DSD policy, the images broadcasted by the media of apparently current events were either archival footage or images recorded by the state. Under the DSD policy, the state have become a producer of images that by appealing to the codes of entertainment, advertisement, action movies, and technological know-how, insert this geography --once deemed "cursed" by Álvaro Uribe-- within a global imagination which in turn has placed it under the gaze of global capitalism. The state as image producer has created for the camera its version of a war happening in the other Colombia. In this sense, the state not only documents a war happening in the other side, but it has crafted itself and its military performance for the camera. It produced a new war, a surgical and technological war for the screen. In this dissertation, I analyze this new war, one that is highly visual, broadcasted as the war of the state (See Chapter Three).

As images travel, creating a spatial distribution of culture, market logics, enemies and friends, they perform a spatial imagination. The insertion of Colombia into the global imagination is not the work of dissolving borders in order to integrate the country into this

apparently broad, limitless global space. What I see instead is the manufacturing of the local: Colombia had to first be configured as a nation-state by creating an image of unity between its citizens and its territory, with peace and prosperity that could counter the phantasmagorical image of Colombia in the shadowlands –spaces on the extremes of geopolitical reason– with mafias, drug cartels, guerillas, kidnapping, corruption and political assassinations. The local had to be constructed, specifically the idea of a Colombian territory with strong national borders and its inhabitants. Accordingly, this analysis takes into account various social scales, forms of governmentality operating in the securitization of daily life, as well as the work of the imagination in the narration of the Colombian nation. In a moment where the end of the nation-state is constantly invoked, Colombia has emerged as a singularity, an abstract and homogenous space, a unity, an image required to entering the global front of security, and markets.

The production of this homogenous space, however, has never been complete. As I show, the construction of Colombia as a unity has been challenged by different actors resisting the crafting of this space. There are counter-images that play against the homogenization of the Colombian territory. These counter-images are produced by insurgents, indigenous people, filmmakers, victims, hostages, human rights advocates or even the military; they exhibit a multiplicity that is difficult to be reduced. For instance, the first chapter of this dissertation examines proof of life videos of hostages held in the Colombian jungle by the FARC-EP. These images come from the other side and yet they cannot be censored; they are proof that a hostage is still alive somewhere. The family of the hostage is waiting for these images; they request the images' broadcasting as they are building solidarity around their ordeal. However, for the state these images are messages coming from the other side, showing a war that is waged by insurgents. These images show that the insurgents still have power over Colombians lives and Colombian territory. They make visible a space that the state cannot reach: the space where the hostage is and that is unreachable by the state.

The first chapter of this dissertation explores what kidnapping can reveal about vulnerability, sovereignty and the space of war in Colombia as the state strives for full territorial control. In 2001 the BBC reported, "Colombia's notorious kidnap trade is second only in profitability to drug trafficking, with over 3,000 people snatched a year." By 2003, with Plan Colombia and the Democratic and Security Policy in place, fighting kidnapping became one of the most important priorities of the Colombian government. In the letter written by President Álvaro Uribe Vélez presenting the document outlining the principles of the DSD policy, he wrote, "rule of law also guarantees development and economic prosperity. Every time a kidnapping occurs, investors' confidence is deeply affected, capital dispersed and employment lost. When Democratic Security develops a policy to eliminate kidnapping, it is defending the citizens and their basic social rights" (Republic of Colombia 2003, 7). In this statement kidnapping goes beyond the definition of a crime committed against an individual, his family and close community, pointing to a larger sphere of influence in which kidnapping undermines the economic structure of the country. In his statement, President Uribe argues that kidnapping discourages international investment and also finances terrorist activities.[4] Therefore the

[4] "Kidnapping and extortion each bring in between US$200 and 350 million annually. In 2002, more than 2,000 Colombians from all walks of life were kidnapped by these
organizations (943 by the FARC, 777 by the ELN, 183 by the illegal self-defense groups and 116 by dissident groups). The ransoms paid for these individuals, especially for foreigners for whom particularly large sums are demanded, finance terrorism
and undermine democracy" (Republic of Colombia 2003, 29).

connection between state and territory is not only threatened by kidnapping as such but also by legal and illegal economies competing within the same space (Moor and Zumpolle 2002, 33).

Kidnapping is indeed an important form of income for illegal armed groups in Colombia, but I argue that kidnapping incisively reveals the weak ties between the state and its territory, the control of capital and by whom, and where it is produced. This connection is not random. French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre argued that the state mode of production (SMP) is mediated through strategic political projects including infrastructure and transnational capital investments within its claimed territory. The territory necessary for the existence of the nation-state is produced by infrastructure, flows of capital through which the space is homogenized. This homogenization creates an abstract space that "permits continuous, rational economic calculation in the spheres of production and exchange, as well as comprehensive, encompassing control in the realm of statecraft" (Brenner and Elden 2009, 358). These competing economies --the illegal one deriving from drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortion-- speak of a territory in which the state is incapable of producing economic growth. However, there is more at work than its mere incapacity to formulate such policies or to establish such territory as productive in the framework of a global economy. The unevenness of the terrain becomes the biggest obstacle. President Uribe, describing the location of two high-profile kidnapping victims, writes:

> The fact that this camp [where the hostages were held] was a short helicopter flight from one of Colombia's biggest cities spoke volumes. In many other countries, an army or police patrol based in a city of Medellín's size would surely have detected them already. Yet in Colombia, with our crazy quilt of mountains, valleys, and jungles, plus our legacy of uneven economic and social development, the camp might as well have been a thousand miles away (2012, 14)

Kidnapping entails an illegal capture through space strategies of penetration, seizure and transfer, in which the victim is relocated outside the reach of family and the state. The victim of kidnapping is inside the national territory and yet outside the reach of the state, making visible other forms of authority acting in parallel to those of the Colombian state. As we see in the passage quoted above, it is not a problem of distance but of the coexistence of such forces, which exist in parallel with the state, very close yet still out of reach. Despite this rupture, kidnapping reaches back to the space of the state through photographs, letters, kidnap victims' memoirs, and proof of life videos. In order to understand kidnapping, we need to look at these objects as they bridge two competing spaces. I therefore argue that kidnapping threatens the Colombian state's already contested space of authority through the circulation of images like proof of life videos, international humanitarian missions and victims' memoirs. This is reflected in how hostages and their families are the subject of violent investments as the state attempts to construct one idea of Colombianness, with a national identity and a uniform and continuous territory. In Chapter One I examine the images and texts of this other space, located beyond Colombian authority, amid the state's struggles to close the gap between national discourse and the idea of one state, one type of citizenship and one territory.

In Chapter Two, I turn again to crime in order question the relationship between illegal and legal forms of authority in the creation of an experience of a united national territory. Specifically, I examine a case of illegal state violence known as False Positives. False Positives are extrajudicial executions of civilians, whose corpses are made to look like guerrillas or members of illegal groups killed in combat, which were carried out by the Colombian Army

during the years of the Democratic Security and Defense Policy (DSD policy 2002-2010). The victims of false positives were young men who were tricked into leaving their homes with promises of employment in the countryside. These young men would be transported 300 to 400 miles away, handed over to a military unit and executed. Their corpses would be dressed in fatigues, and weapons would be placed next to their bodies in order to take a photograph as a proof of their success.

Colombian military mentality has been denounced as a culture of body count in which success is evaluated in terms of enemy casualties (M. Evans 2009). During the years to the DSD policy, the ministry of Defense set out secret guidelines in which to kill a guerrilla could mean a weekend off for the unit responsible for such success, or in the case of killing a high-ranking member of an insurgency group, the unit could benefit from a large monetary reward. As a consequence, the explanation for the extrajudicial executions known as False Positives that have been given by international organizations (such as the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation for Human Rights, among others) is that they are the result of formal and informal benefits (including monetary rewards) that the DSD policy set out in a series of classified directives, issued by the Ministry of Defense, in exchange for successful military operations. However I see that a broader analysis is needed. We need to look at the prevailing neoliberal conditions that allow for such a perverse economy, the logic of the transaction, and the type of relationship established between the state and its citizens as this economic exchange happens.

Furthermore, these False Positives are an attempt to show the face of faceless enemy whose identity had to be fabricated. These fabrications allow both legal and illegal organizations to benefit from hiding behind this contrived other. Arjun Appadurai, speaking on the war in Afghanistan, argues that the war on terrorism is a kind of diagnostic war in which the identity of the enemy becomes one of the main goals, precisely because it is a war of discovery (2006, 20). Find the enemy's location, discovering his hideouts in order to capture or kill him, also means discovering his face. In Colombia, the face of the enemy is presented every time a high-ranking member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is killed under the "High Value Target" (HVT) assassination program (CIA Office of Transnational Issues; Conflict, Governance, and Society Group 2009)[5]. When high-ranking commanders of the FARC-EP are killed, it has become customary to show their dead bodies to the press. The image of the corpse is compared to the last photograph available alive, generating all kind of speculations about body weight, lifestyle, diet, and possible illnesses. However, compared to the image of high-ranking commanders, the cadavers of regular guerrilla fighters are not subjected to such visual analysis; their corpses do not appear in the media; they are either statistics in a body count war, a pile of black bags or indiscriminate bodies in a field. Therefore, in order to explain how False Positives are an attempt to show the face of faceless enemy whose identity had to be fabricated, we need to inquire about the notion of representation of the enemy.

[5] "President Alvaro Uribe, following his 2001 inauguration, made targeting senior and midlevel FARC leaders a major element of Bogota's counterinsurgency campaign. After several years of failures and near misses, Bogota began a series of successful HVT strikes in 2007, following improvements in intelligence, strike accuracy, mission planning and deployment, operational security, and interservice coordination, according to US Embassy in Bogota reporting. Colombia has effectively integrated the HVT effort into its broader counterinsurgency strategy and has capitalized on the psychological impact produced by the strikes to boost the government's legitimacy and to erode insurgent morale, according to a body of clandestine, Colombian National Police, and US Embassy in Bogota reporting." (CIA Office of Transnational Issues; Conflict, Governance, and Society Group 2009, 9)

To this end, I look at four images of False Positives. These are photographs taken by the Colombian army and filed as proof of their success in combat by showing casualties, apparently from an illegal organization. These images were required as part of the process of claiming monetary rewards given, under the DSD policy, to those who have killed a member of an illegal group. Currently, these four photographs are evidence against those who took part in the extrajudicial executions. I examine these images to find what is being represented in them.

The question of representation and media-related objects in counterinsurgency has been addressed by David Kilcullen, a counter-terrorism chief strategist and consultant for several governments who was one of the designers of the Regional Strategic Initiative, the policy that drives U.S. counter-terrorism diplomacy worldwide. Kilcullen has described how terrorist groups all over the world, like al-Qaeda, have developed a very complex system of propaganda that flows along local, regional and global networks. In an interview for the New Yorker, Kilcullen asserts the importance of information warfare: "It's now fundamentally an information fight," he said. "The enemy gets that, and we don't yet get that, and I think that's why we're losing" (Packer 2006). Interestingly, Kilcullen develops this difference (getting it or not) in epistemological terms. He explains that for the West, the event is always prior to its representation. Representation is always an afterthought (2007, 44). Kilcullen sees that for the West military operations are defined and planned in advance, and the information related to them is an effort to further account for them. The representation of an event is part of a process of accountability, explanations that come after the military operation in the field. He asserts that for groups like al-Qaeda informational warfare has a totally different temporality. It is the simultaneity between the event and its representation that allows for a different theater of violence. He writes, "They [the terrorists] use physical operations (bombings, insurgent activity, beheadings) as supporting material for an integrated 'armed propaganda' campaign." An armed propaganda campaign is the most important objective for al-Qaeda. Kilcullen suggests that an attack on a Humvee in Afghanistan is not planned in terms of military strategy; al-Qaeda is not interested in reducing the number of Humvees. Rather, an information strategy seems to be driving the agenda of every radical Islamist movement: "They're doing it because they want spectacular media footage of a burning Humvee." In so arguing, Kilcullen points out a strategy that has no actual goals in terms of classical warfare, in which assessing the enemy's territory and supplies were signs of victory. The physical operation of destroying a Humvee is developed in terms of making weakness visible, revealing the enemy's vulnerability.

The strategy that Kilcullen sees being implemented by the antagonistic East elucidates how the production of the images of False Positives works. I argue that the image of the corpse, as the embodiment of a neutralized Other, is not a side effect of the extrajudicial executions known as False Positives. The uniforms, boots, grenades, rifles, carbines, machine guns, and corpses were props used to fabricate an image; they were bought and prepared before the execution. Those young men were recruited and executed in order to construct images of dead enemy combatants, an enemy fabricated out of young unemployed males in need of money who lived on the outskirts of big cities. Those young men were fashioned into guerrillas, gang members, or paramilitary forces; identities outside the discourse of legality were inscribed on their bodies. The fabricated image of the enemy was not an afterthought but the paradigmatic image of terror. The killers of these young men knew beforehand that they were going to create an image with dead bodies; they collapsed the killing of these men –the event- and its representation. They did precisely what David Kilkullen states the East has mastered, but with the intent of inscribing these images back into a system of explanation and accountability which

Kilcullen attributes to the West. These images were created by collapsing violence and representation. They contribute to the dissemination of a narrative of an enemy that is anywhere and everywhere. The False Positives are a form of protracting the Colombian armed conflict by collapsing market logics and the construction of an enemy from which profit is derived.

My contention is that in order to understand the operational logic behind the False Positives necessary is a consideration of how Colombia, in its struggle to gain control over its entire territory, has used violence to symbolically connect otherwise discontinuous territories under the rule of different forms of authority. Each extrajudicial execution brought fear of the outside into the area where the fake operation took place. Each dead enemy was seen as coming from somewhere else; the recruiters brought in each one of the False Positive victims from an area different from where they were killed. These killings enacted a permanent threat of the unknown, mobilized by a perverse economy of dead bodies. In turn, these crimes consolidated policies of mutual surveillance as well as different arrangements of illegal authority that were disguised behind the apparent control of the security apparatus of the state. These forms of control enact a form of governmentality that advances a social project traversed by security and market logics.

The first two chapters combined are devoted to the analysis of crimes committed by different actors in the Colombian armed conflict and how they create arrangements between legal and illegal authorities while a national experience of the territory is created. In both chapters I undertake to understand how illegality, territory and sovereignty converge. From this analysis, I argue that in Colombia the securitization of daily life has emerged, producing and magnifying the fear of the outsider and fragmenting any network and community while, at the same time, creating this idea of a nation, Colombia. The category of enemy/outsider is a discursive construction as well as one produced through violence. For example, in the first chapter I show how hostages become outsiders --almost enemies of the state-- the longer they spend in captivity. In the case of False Positives, extrajudicial executions allow for the coexistence of illegal and legal forms of authority, protracting the Colombian armed conflict by the securitization and paranoia of daily life.

In Chapter Three, I turn to the documentation of military operations, specifically inquiring about how they represent military success, and how the national territory is constructed as a new political and war space. The Colombian state deploys sophisticated forms of military operations. I analyse traditional military operations, psychological military operations and media operations. In traditional military operations, documentation is part of a system of accountability, whereas in media operations the goal is to create images that are delivered as weapons into the enemy's territory. I examine what this transformation can tell us about the Colombian territory, the creation of the idea of the Colombian nation, and the new political space. The first two military operations I analyse in this chapter were part of Plan Bubble, a military strategy whose main purpose was to kill important targets in the FARC-EP. Both operations achieved their goal. In 2010, Victor Julio Suárez Rojas, a.k.a. Jorge Briceño, a.k.a. Mono Jojoy, the military strategist of the FARC-EP, was killed in Operation Sodom through an airstrike and, in 2008, Luis Edgar Devia Silva , a.k.a. Raul Reyes, the spokesperson and de facto treasurer of the group was killed by a bombardment into Ecuadorian territory, 1.1 miles from the Colombian border, in Operation Phoenix. I analyse the documentation of these two successful military operations –Sodom and Phoenix– by looking at the videos released by the Colombian state. Even with the same strategic goal, killing a high-ranking commander in the FARC-EP, the documentation of Sodom and

Phoenix differ greatly. Each video exhibits a different relationship between its target, military power and dimension of war.

I examine these moving images in order to see what they reveal about force, its deployment and the state as it exerts the monopoly of violence. These images reveal different modes of statecraft. Just ten years ago, Colombia was considered a failed state, and very quickly shifted to become a regional exporter of security, an "emerging global player" or, as the British newspaper *The Telegraph* put it, a "Latin American powerhouse" (Rathbone 2012; Chan 2015). With the analysis of these two military successes, so similar and so different at the same time, I bring out what is constructed as state strength, force and authority, in terms of content and form within the images.

But images are vectors as well; they point to other images and discourses. As I stated above, Kilcullen describes how images in the West are an afterthought inscribed in a system of accountability; their function is to explain what happened in the field. But as I show, the videos of these two military operations are very complex; they belong to a specialized system of knowledge, which is why they are always shown to the Colombian public accompanied by a specialist commentator. Thus the image itself cannot account for what happened; it requires further explanation. To meet this requirement, other visual documents were developed around the initial military documentation. My analysis also takes into account documentaries, eye-witness accounts and gossip around operations Sodom and Phoenix in order to track the discursive networks woven into this system of accountability.

These military operations appear to be milestones that have placed Colombia in a network of prosperity and security within a global economy. Sodom and Phoenix are instances from which a discourse of market insertion, new market territories, and international market cooperation have been created beyond individual sovereignties, in a global alliance against terrorism that is also a global market of security. Each operation outlines a specific set of economic coordinates that have made Colombia a key security player in the region. In Sodom, we see the display of a *made in Colombia* weapons system. In Phoenix, the Colombian Army fired on the top leader's encampment located 1.1 miles within Ecuadorian territory, violating its sovereignty. This operation produced a diplomatic crisis, which Colombia responded to with a new configuration of sovereignty: democracy, capitalism and security. Colombia argued that it did not violate Ecuador's sovereignty but was in fact protecting Ecuadorian interests, since Colombia's actions were necessary to protect democracy against terrorism in the region. The argument suggests that, in the war against terrorism, new alliances are created between democratic countries and market partners, while national borders are deemed irrelevant. When faced with the hostile response of Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa, and Hugo Chavez –who deployed army battalions to the Venezuelan border with Colombia– the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez released documents found in the computers belonging to Raul Reyes, the FARC-EP leader killed in the operation. These documents and emails detailed the close relationship between the governments of Ecuador, Venezuela and the FARC-EP. What these documents made evident is the existence of two political fronts in the region: one characterized by the alliance of leftist governments with the FARC-EP and the second one represented by Colombia, which reflects the United States' interests in the region.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, analysed this crisis and concluded, "The presence of immense ungoverned spaces and the continued existence of severe transnational and terrorist threats demonstrate the need to overhaul or transform existing practices of international law" (Walser 2008). The ungoverned spaces that their analysis speaks

of are not in Colombia but in Ecuador, and the transformation of international law that they suggest seeks to redefine sovereignty in terms of cooperation in matters of security and global markets.

Subsequently I analyse psychological and media operations and how they relate to "real" military operations in the frame of global counterinsurgency tactics. They are still military operations but work within the language of advertisement and entertainment. They use the traditional dimensions of war --air, land and sea-- not as fronts in which to deploy weaponry but as media. These media operations look for forms of penetration of the territory in order to communicate and reach an invisible community of rebels living in the Colombian jungle. I inquire into how the traditional dimensions of war are transformed by information warfare that creates different forms of territorial control.

The fourth and last chapter analyses the successful hostage rescue operation, Operation Check as in Checkmate. On July 2nd, 2008, the Colombian army released 15 hostages, including former Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, three American security contractors and 11 Colombian military and police. The FARC-EP were tricked into believing that the hostages were being relocated through the aid of an international humanitarian mission. In reality, they were delivering the kidnap victims to disguised military officials. Operation Check made visible Colombian military intelligence know-how and demonstrated a military capacity different from the use of highly technological weaponry like the precision-guided bombs used in Operation Phoenix. Many critics of the Colombian government have cast doubts on the authorship of Operation Check, claiming that the United States was behind its planning and execution. But, beyond the question of whether or not the Colombian Armed Forces were really capable of such a cinematic operation, what Operation Check revealed for the United States is that their intervention in the country had produced a model of security and stabilization productive of astonishing results. It was a clear indication that this model of intervention could be exported and applied in other countries like Mexico, Afghanistan and West Africa. With military training, enhanced technological equipment, capacity and intelligence, and the professionalization of the Colombian Armed Forces, the United States has a new partner who can develop the United States' interests in the region without their direct involvement.[6]

Operation Check has been a subject of analysis in different military colleges, looking specifically at its innovative use of air power, its light military footprint, and its influence on public opinion, so much so that it has become an obligatory point of reference for hostage rescue missions. To understand the ripple effect of this operation, this chapter examines Colombia's position within two global military strategies: revolution of military affairs (RMA) and global counterinsurgency (GCOIN). I track the relationship between the local and the global, in light of Colombia's portrayal as a successful site of U.S. intervention. This relationship between local and global is not only a matter of hierarchy. My argument is that even in the global hierarchical construction of RMA (in which third-world countries are excluded from the global front on security as they do not have the economic, technological research and corporative apparatus to undertake such strategy), RMA includes a global arrangement of power that produces regional

[6] "The US is relying on Colombia for a growing range of operations, including direct assistance to African countries and helping AFRICOM with peacekeeping and other efforts, and they jointly engage in direct operational support and indirect capacity building efforts. Both countries recently signed an Action Plan on Regional Security Cooperation that seeks to coordinate aid to third countries while deepening the partnership in continued counter-narcotics operations. The use of third parties allows the US to avoid the financial and political risks associated with direct involvement, through a cost-effective strategy that allows for training missions to continue"(González Bustelo 2014).

and peripheral political spaces. Through the lenses of counterinsurgency, I examine how the global configuration of war and security is a network of both disperse and localized strategies. They create in conjunction with RMA different operational levels, in the different dimensions of warfare. Therefore RMA and GCOIN create layered spaces of violence. I argue that, in this global configuration of power, military space is not the national territory but rather a fragmented and uneven distribution of force that goes beyond sovereignty. Operation Check was a very important operation and many military strategists differ as to whether it was the result of a RMA or GCOIN. I have no interest in settling this debate. What I propose is an examination of Operation Check as a layered composition of different military strategies in which a global imagination simultaneously affected both the local and the global.

In GCOIN, I examine what is called the perception management plan and, in RMA, cyberwar and netwar in order to trace how information has become "tactical." I argue that the documentation of Operation Checkmate and its different media recreations (upcoming film, National Geographic series, and books) have created and multiplied a global "influential spectators' gallery of the international community" (Kilcullen 2010, 103). Colombia has tapped into this global imagination with sophisticated strategies of netwar and cyberwar as well as market strategies, whether by becoming an exporter of security and weapons, a haven for foreign investors, or a touristic destination pushed by a national branding campaign where "the only risk is wanting to stay," because "Colombia is Passion," a land full of "magical realism," where you can have adventures in water, in the air, and on the ground, which are paradoxically the three traditional dimensions of war ("Colombia CO: Official Travel Guide" 2015). Operation Check is also a story. From its planning and execution to its documentation, Operation check was conceived as a theatre piece with characters and a script. This fact not only helped in the developing the ruse but it also created a story of a nation in which anything could be overcome and this story took over the global stage. This story was sold to the global market of entertainment. The upcoming Hollywood film, the Spaniard TV series, the National Geographic documentary and more are instances in which the story of a nation is repeated to a global audience.

The issues probed in this dissertation wrestle with the idea of an untamed geography, a constantly invoked determinism that equates the Colombian geography with violence, terrorism, and the narcotrafficking industry but at the same time deems it exotic, full of adventure and magical realism. This geography appears and disappears as a new narration of the Colombian nation has been written with images, stories of success and the fight against crime. I specifically analyse images of crime and military operations in order to discuss instances of legality and illegality competing within the same territory during the years of the DSD policy (2002 -2010). The space of war that I examine in each of the images considered in the following chapters is constructed as part of a new geopolitical geography in which Colombia has inserted itself. Images are ubiquitous; they travel back and forth, from the past to the future, from ungoverned territories to spaces of governance; they link together fragmented territories and provide us with an imagination of the inaccessible.

Lastly, some of the images included in this dissertation are drawings made by artist and illustrator Luis Morán. These images are copies of actual photographs or video stills. The decision to include these images as drawings complements the method adopted in this dissertation, a method that separates and distances the reality of photography from its supposed referent; the drawings constitute a further measure of distance from the said referent. The inclusion of these drawings also fashions them as part of a story, a fabrication, a narrative that

the following pages tell. By including a drawing of the Minister of Defense Gabriel Silva (2009-2010) posing with the new assault rifle Galil ACE, designed and fabricated in Colombia, I question the said authenticity of the photograph, and suggest that his pose is already a fabrication, thereby generating such questions as: is this picture true? Is he actually posing with the weapon? My objective is to question the real status of these images, which are usually trapped within the discourse of transparency and objective documentation.

Chapter One

Kidnapping and representation: Images of a sovereign-in-the-making

All social and political classes of Colombian society have experienced a degree of vulnerability in regard to kidnapping. Kidnapping has become the main narrative through which the country's vulnerability, governance and security are assessed. Its media coverage has reached the international community inviting the involvement of foreign countries and human rights agencies as mediators. Putting an end to the "inhuman industry" of kidnapping figures prominently in the Democratic Security and Defense policy (DSD policy) (2002-2010). This policy describes kidnapping as a crime that threatens each and every citizen of Colombia and their basic social rights therefore its statistics are used as indicators of good governance or political failure. [1] Despite the fact that Colombia is far from being a kidnap-free country, these statistics claim that eight years of DSD policy have resulted in a decrease in kidnapping.[2]

This chapter puts forward different sets of arguments about kidnapping. Rather than depicting it as merely criminal, I inquire into what kidnapping reveals about the vulnerability, sovereignty and the space of war of the Colombia state. This so-called third world country has been striving to establish full sovereignty against the forces that affect its waning. These forces include insurgency groups within Colombia, flows of legal and illegal capital, global media, and new forms of global and transnational governance in the areas of security, human rights, and civil law. I suggest that kidnapping is another such force. On the one hand, it consists of illegal capture through strategies of penetration, seizure and transfer in which the victim is relocated outside the reach of family and the state. But kidnapping also threatens the already contested space of authority of the Colombian state, by challenging the ideas of Colombian citizenship, national identity and territory.

I pursue this argument by analyzing images derived from political kidnapping. These images are the only link between the space ruled by the Colombian government and the space where the hostage has been taken. They speak of and bring to the public eye an unreachable space, a space that escapes the authority of the Colombian state. Drawing on Paul Virilio's contention that war is not so much about taking territory or material goods but rather the appropriation of the fields of perception, I investigate the relationship between these two spaces of war: the media space and the contested territory of the battlefield (Virilio, 10). Images of political kidnapping are not mere representations of this criminal activity but they themselves constitute sites in which configurations of authority and power are constantly being negotiated.

This chapter focuses on one particular event: the political kidnapping of twelve Colombian assemblymen from the Valle Region state legislature building in the city of Cali, who were in captivity for more than five years. On June 18th, 2007, their captors, the guerrilla group FARC-EP (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia--Ejército del Pueblo [Revolutionary Armed Forces--People's Army]*), claimed that eleven of the twelve lawmakers were killed under crossfire with "an unidentified military group.[3]

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[1] The Democratic Security and Defense (DSD) policy was issued by the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, president of Colombia (2002-2006/2006-2010).

[2] For more information see http://insightcrime.org/insight-latest-news/item/1183-kidnapping-in-colombia-on-the-rise-during-2011 and the report http://fondelibertad.gov.co/web/PrimerTrimestre2011.pdf

[3] On March 1st, 2008, the Colombian government killed Raúl Reyes, the second in command of the FARC-EP. The government seized his laptop computers, where they found a series of emails related to the death of the 11 assemblymen. In one email Alfonso Cano, the top commander of the FARC-EP, wrote "another unit of the FARC mistook them [the unit that was guarding the assemblymen] for members of the ELN and attacked them. The guard thought that the Army was attacking and proceeded to execute 11 of the 12 hostages. This is a big

This political kidnapping by the FARC-EP was deliberately conceived as a media event. The FARC-EP recorded on video both the kidnapping and their planning and training for the operation. The material was released online in two versions. The first consists in a linear narrative, starting with the guerrillas' planning and training and ending with the celebration of their success. The second video addresses the government and the military directly with a list of demands. During the five years the lawmakers were in captivity, their families received seven videos as proof that they were still alive. In them, the assemblymen discussed state policies, FARC-EP demands, international law, humanitarian exchange of prisoners, as well as household matters and personal messages. In addition to the videos proving that the hostages were alive, the images that surround this political kidnapping also include photographs of the lawmakers before they were taken hostage. Their families carried these photographs on signs in public demonstrations to remind Colombians that the kidnapped were still part of the political and social fabric of the country. These photographs, in turn, were incorporated into photographs taken of the families as they marched across Colombia, protested in front of government buildings, or met with state officials and presidents of European countries. Furthermore, the families themselves initiated media campaigns using images of their relatives in captivity, in an effort to give visibility to the drama of their pleas for humanitarian intervention.

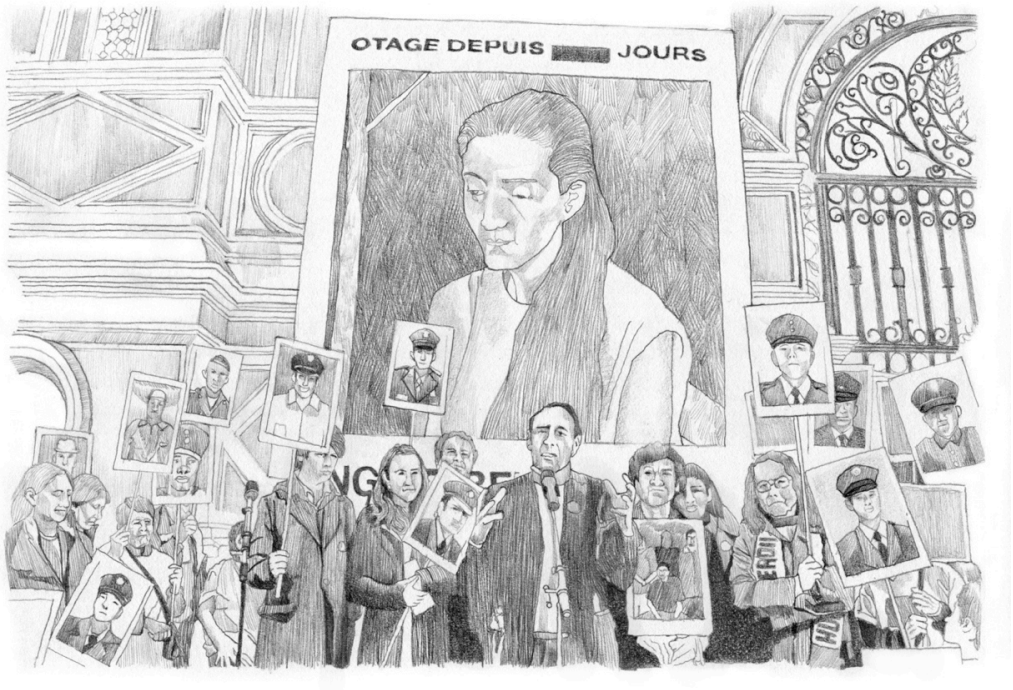

Figure 1: Drawing of Luis Morán, a copy of a photograph taken during the 6th Anniversary of the Kidnapping of Political Hostage Ingrid Betancourt in Paris, France, 2008. Original image taken by photographer Horacio Villalobos (Villalobos 2008).

By examining these images, this chapter probes the relationship between kidnapping, visuality and power. In the case of Colombia, political kidnapping involves the production and public distribution of images. This visual dimension of kidnapping places it in the public eye, and materializes kidnapping. Further, while the purpose of kidnapping is the capture and transfer of individuals to an unknown location, these images maintain a connection between the captives' absent physical bodies and their home environment, also manifesting a tension

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mistake that will cause us a lot of trouble. If there is Army near the area, we might be able to drag them into the camp, and then we can blame the enemy for what happened."

between the areas under FARC authority, from where these images emerged, and the central government. The images, in turn, are the subject of all kind of explorations. In them, the families look for secret messages, health changes, or other variations in the image. The state and its security apparatus, too, scrutinize the image as evidence of crime. From these different explorations, the image emerges as a site in dispute.

The images of the political hostages have become very important due to the long time that they spent in captivity. In addition to the twelve assemblymen, there was also Ingrid Betancourt, a 2002 presidential candidate, who was taken hostage by the FARC-EP in 2002. On July 2nd, 2008, in a military operation called Check as in Checkmate (See Chapter Four), Colombian security forces rescued Betancourt and 14 other political hostages. Betancourt belonged to the group of hostages called the "interchangeables" (Betancourt 2010, 72). This was the term used by the FARC-EP to describe the political hostages who could be exchanged for FARC-EP prisoners held in Colombian jails. One other "interchangeable" was Betancourt's presidential campaign manager Clara Rojas, freed after six years of captivity through a unilateral release negotiated by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and carried out by a humanitarian commission headed by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Her son Emmanuel was born in captivity, and was later found living under the care of the Family Welfare Institution of Colombia. In addition, three Americans were in captivity for five years and rescued as well in Operation Check. On April 2, 2012 the last ten soldiers and policemen who were "interchangeable," were released. Some of them spent fourteen years in captivity (*Semana.com* 2012).

The release of these hostages did not depend on the payment of ransom, but on the FARC-EP's demand for the creation of a demilitarized zone in which negotiations for a prisoners' exchange between the FARC-EP and the Colombian Government could take place. The FARC-EP insisted that only an exchange of prisoners would guarantee the safe release of the political hostages. If the Colombian government attempted military rescue, the FARC-EP threatened to kill all hostages.[4] The government of President Uribe (2002-2006/2006-2010) rejected the proposal, and continued with its strong military offensive. Uribe argued that such an exchange could take place only after the state's military position was strengthened and the FARC-EP weakened. Otherwise, a negotiation of this type would imply the acceptance of the belligerent status of the FARC-EP and the classification of the Colombian conflict as a civil war, categories that the government of Uribe was unwilling to accept because they threatened the realization of unified sovereignty. The DSD policy as a continuation of the global war on terror classified the FARC-EP as another terrorist organization among many around the world. This policy foreclosed any exchange of prisoners and emphasized, instead, a counterinsurgency strategy of attack, weaken and defeat.

In what follows, I argue that kidnapping entails more than to unlawfully seizing a subject. Rather, kidnapping constructs competing spaces of legality and illegality with invisible borders. To develop this argument, I begin by identifying the types of spaces constructed under DSD policy: safe spaces, guarded spaces, recovered spaces and vulnerable spaces. These configurations inform a specific form of political organization based on vulnerability and security in which the idea of the Colombian nation and its citizenship is being wrestled with. In this context kidnapping and its associated images emerge as another force contesting such organization. Kidnapping is a crime that crosses between spaces as it

[4] In fact, the government of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez carried out a military rescue on May 5th, 2003. It failed, resulting in the death of Antioquia Governor Guillermo Gaviria, former Defense Minister Gilberto Echeverri and nine soldiers, all belonging to the group of "interchangeables." The guerrillas killed the hostages when the Army Special Forces entered the camp. On November 27th, 2011 the government of President Juan Manuel Santos carried out a military rescue. The FARC-EP reacted by killing 4 of the soldiers who had been in captivity for 12 years.

relocates its victims into an unreachable space; therefore it questions the correspondence between the type of space and its natural inhabitants, between the "there" and the "them" and the "here" and the "us" as subject positions developed through the allocation of vulnerability. I conclude this chapter with an insight art provides to the realm of our violent quotidian life of visuality, through the photography of the Colombian artist Alejandro Sánchez.

From Here to There: Space demarcations and the construction of vulnerability and security

At 10:30 A.M. on April 11th, 2002, a guerrilla unit disguised as members of the Third counter-guerrilla battalion walked into the Assembly building in Cali, while blocking the surrounding streets, and warned those inside of an alleged bomb threat. They evacuated the assemblymen from the state legislature building and provided them with special transportation arrangements to take them, supposedly, to a military base. Once inside the vehicles, the assemblymen learned that their protectors were the guerrillas of the FARC-EP posing as Army forces in order to kidnap them. Before taking the road leading to the valley, the guerrillas freed those people who were not elected officials, and kept twelve lawmakers in hostage. Once in the countryside, the guerrillas and the assemblymen abandoned the vehicles and a long, painful walk began. It ended with their internment in the land of guerrilla camps. This is a land of disorientation, humidity, of hepatitis B, and leishmaniasis; a land of constant crossfire between paramilitary groups, Colombian Army Forces and guerrillas, but also a land of healing and mystery --horizonless and amazingly beautiful --the Colombian jungle[5].

Those kidnapped included Nacianceno Orozco, Carlos Alberto Charry, Sigifredo López, Rufino Varela, Alberto Quintero, Ramiro Echeverry, Edison Pérez, Francisco Javier Giraldo, Jairo Hoyos, Alberto Barragán, Héctor Fabio Arizmendi, and Juan Carlos Narváez. In the hours following their abduction, the Colombian Army began a series of aerial bombings in the area where the lawmakers and the guerrillas were walking. From a helicopter, the commander of the *real* Third counter-guerrilla battalion, General Pedraza, asserted that they would not stop firing until the guerrillas freed the lawmakers. The military air operation resulted in the deaths of a journalist, a news van driver and a cameraman (Editorial 2002).

At 10:10 P.M., Assemblyman Juan Carlos Narváez was allowed to phone a radio station. After confirming that the assemblymen were not injured, he made three requests. First, that the Army Forces stop firing in order to guarantee their wellbeing. Second, that a Red Cross Commission come the following day to the place where they would be held in order to start the protocol for a humanitarian mission, since this kidnapping was political and did not involve a monetary ransom. Third, that the General Assembly of Cali refrain from issuing and debating decrees in protest to the kidnappings. The next day, Juan Carlos Narváez called again. He made the statement that due to the continued military operations, the assemblymen were "carne de cañón," that is, "cannon fodder." He pleaded again for the mediation of the Red Cross and sadly acknowledged the death of the news team. He asked the families of all twelve assemblymen to work together and be united in those difficult times. Two more telephone communications were made, again asking to cease the aerial bombardment. The time between calls increased as they walked further and further, signaling their progressive internment into the Colombian jungle (*El Tiempo* 2002).

The Colombian armed conflict has largely taken place rurally, with few urban incursions by the guerrilla. Many politicians, journalist, former hostages and academics have described this space division derived from the conflict as "the two Colombias." One urban,

[5] Among the hostage memoirs written by "the interchangeables," only Sigifredo López's dwells on looking at the jungle not just as their natural jail but also as the source of sublime beauty. He describes his amazement at the greatness of Colombia, and the contradictory feelings that arose from that experience.

prosperous, a city-state, and the other marked by the absence of the rule of law, armed actors operating outside of the state, poverty, political exclusion, illegal activities, such as drug trafficking and corruption among others (Paternostro 2007; United Nations Development Programme 2003; Anonymous 1997; Romero 2008; Americas Watch Committee (U.S.) 1982; Fastenberg 2010). The rhetoric of the two Colombias enacts a series of oppositions such as city/jungle, peace/war, civilization/savagery, highlands/lowlands. These oppositions are also expressed along racial lines between whites and mestizos living in the highlands and Afro-Colombians and indigenous people in the lowlands (Taussig 1991). These distinctions not only serve to describe spatial demarcations but they also produce them, by distilling the possible forms of incorporation and exclusion from a unity named Colombia.[6] Paradoxically, these space demarcations could not explain the infliction of violence as the result of producing and marking the distinction between enemies and friends based on ethnic, racial, religious or linguistic differences (M. Uribe 2004). The Colombian conflict in its spatial distribution allows for temporary and arbitrary inscriptions that make those who cross between the different spaces susceptible to random violence. Political kidnappings, and specifically those committed by the FARC-EP, entail a forced transfer between spaces and spheres of authority, transfers occurring between the two competing authorities that continuously enact the spatial divisions between the two Colombias.

In the late nineties, the guerrilla started using roadblocks around the countryside to randomly kidnap people. This strategy made any individual --perhaps someone crossing the mountains on a family trip, making commercial delivery, or taking an educational field trip-- vulnerable to kidnapping. These random blockages came to be known as 'miraculous catches' (Moor and Zumpolle 2002, 30). The FARC-EP, and ELN did not only kidnap the wealthy (Moor and Zumpolle 2002, 14). In an effort to minimize their vulnerability, middle class families usually prepared a scripted identification speech that aimed to reduce the value of their possible kidnapping; they trained their children how to answer questions about the jobs of their parents, their friends, properties or the whereabouts of their extended families. The guerrillas, in turn, assumed that those living in the cities would have the financial resources to free their love ones; any sign of possessions of value, such as a car, a house or a farm was seen as a privilege that must be taxed through kidnapping. In the nineties, Colombian roads and the countryside appeared to be someone else's territory ruled by different ghost authorities whether they were guerrillas, paramilitaries or criminal mafias. And even after ten years of DSD policy, this distribution of spaces still haunts the Colombian state. For instance, in its travel warning for November 2010, the United States Department of State advised American citizens who visited Colombia to avoid traveling by road outside urban areas, and to travel between major cities only by air (U.S. Department of State 2011). Random roadblocks extended vulnerability not only to those who live in one space or another but also to those who were merely passing through.

The 2009 CSIS Americas Program's report titled "Lessons from Colombia" analyzes how the country has reversed a process of state failure that in the nineties appeared to be imminent. Since Colombia is the largest recipient of U.S. aid in Latin America and third in the world, the report considers it absolutely necessary to assess the effect of U.S. assistance and to derive some practical lessons from the Colombian case that can be applied to other failed states. In particular, the report focuses on "the area of national security, with special

[6] The distinction of the two Colombias has allowed the exertion of arbitrary violence on rural populations and peasant's political movements. Peasant protests are often accused of being infiltrated by guerrillas; this claim assumes a rural depoliticized population whose politicization can only be the result of infiltration from external (and illegal) forces. When they are unable to determine who are the guerrillas and who are the real peasants, either the state or para-state forces unleash arbitrary violence against the civilian population through massacres or forced disappearances (Historical Memory Research Group).

attention to the expanded capacity of the state to close the very large sovereignty gap at the core of Colombia's vulnerability" (U.S. Department of State 2011). The report considers important gains in security resulting from the measures taken under the DSD policy, but signals that "the gains in security have not been matched by advances in the rule of law and the protection of human rights" (2009, 2). Among those gains listed in the report are the professionalization of the army, the buildup of Armed Forces (Army, Police, Navy and Air Force), large-scale air eradication of coca fields, war taxes, and sustained and extended counterinsurgency operations. However, the DSD policy, as I intend to show, has involved more than the development of the state military apparatus. Rather, security has occurred within a complex system of domination dispersed through modes of correlation between, space, territory, identity, nation and citizenship, as well as through the militarization of social rights and values. Kidnapping, and specifically political kidnapping, is a site in which these correlations are contested.

The Colombian state has developed strategies in which national identity and security are tied together. For instance, to close the large sovereignty gap, the DSD policy calls for "the security of solidarity" (Republic of Colombia 2003, 57), and it defines it as:

> The Government will encourage the voluntary and patriotic cooperation of Colombian citizens in performing their constitutional duties and, in particular, in demonstrating the *solidarity* demanded by the modern social democratic State to help prevent crime and terrorism, by providing information relating to the illegal armed groups. The Government will also establish regional security committees, which will enlist the support of civil society. Research on the prevention of crime and the experience of many other countries suggest that prevention based on citizen participation is more effective than coercive measures to contain crime. If 44 million Colombians support and feel supported by the State, terrorism can be defeated.*(Republic of Colombia, 57)*

Vulnerability constructed from incomplete sovereignty is translated into an incomplete national identity that requires the recruitment of forty-four million Colombians. However, even as the government speaks of the Colombian population in its totality as a number, forty-four million, and even as the document speaks of enlisting "the support of civil society," the government executes different policies in relation to rural regions and cities. In other words, even as the DSD policy individualizes security as a responsibility of each citizen regardless of where he or she lives, its execution speaks of a structural zoning of security starting with the primordial division between rural and urban. The DSD agenda militarizes support and solidarity in some spaces rather than in others. Citizen participation and solidarity as defined by the DSD policy has entailed the creation of a network of informants and the creation of rural civilian units called peasant soldiers. Peasant soldiers do not leave their households; they remain in their home area acting as military and state presence at home. These peasant soldiers were inexperienced men whose involvement in military operations in regions where they previously lived as peasants could generate countless reprisals from illegal groups against their families. Meanwhile, and contrary to this reality, security continued to be characterized as a patriotic act, an urgent act of solidarity for all Colombians and a commitment to a better and safer future. This rhetoric "enlists" support and solidarity; it militarizes values as well as social relations.

During the inauguration ceremony of Álvaro Uribe Vélez (August 7, 2002), the FARC-EP attacked the presidential palace with mortars ("Atentados Terroristas Sacuden Posesión Del Presidente Alvaro Uribe" 2002). In response, the government declared a limited state of emergency, which under Colombian law is known as "state of internal disturbance." Among the decrees and measures taken under the state of emergency was the militarization of Colombian roads, deploying troops along the main highways and operating holiday

convoys between major cities and tourism destinations (Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Canada 2003). This military campaign was accompanied by an advertisement campaign entitled: *"Vive Colombia, Viaja por Ella"* (Experience Colombia by traveling through it)[7]. This ad campaign invites Colombians to travel across the country with confidence, to "a paradise where everything is waiting to be discovered," "a paradise called Colombia" with "two coasts where one can breathe in the air of freedom and fulfillment," and with "more than 43 million souls who sing to life in unison, grateful to be part of a country like this" (*Vive Colombia, Viaja por Ella*). This campaign attempts to move fear from the realm of security to the realm of the exotic. In this campaign the diversity of geography becomes a manifestation of the power of nature, a blessing that is offered to those who decide –or are brave enough- to experience paradise. The campaign brushes off difference, and the fractured territory, under the concept of paradise. Paradise is described not as wild, unruled space but rather a space that has merely been hidden in a lost time and is now ready to be discovered. Here, "paradise" erases history, conflict and social reality by reducing the gap between territory and sovereignty to treasure hunting: an encounter depicted as a moment of mythical transformation. Paradoxically, going to paradise does not entail a specific point of arrival but a movement; it entails a road. The campaign tells us to travel through Colombia: a movement that in the advertisement video is expressed by aerial shots in which the camera "travels" across the national territory. This movement across the land, across the diversity of its geography, is an exercise in mastering the territory. If the "core of Colombia's vulnerability is the sovereign gap," the dislocation of the correspondence between state and territory, the DSD policy not only deploys a military effort to expand structures of authority into the enemy's territory, but also re-imagines the national territory as a paradise, mobilizing a myth of origin for Colombia through which an idea of Colombianness can be derived. [8]

On the weekends, military convoys accompany vehicles leaving the cities and heading to the countryside, monitoring by land and air, on the lookout for any suspicious movement along the roads. This strategy of retaking territory by means of civilian occupation is not based on permanent presence in the land of the enemy, but on a movement across the enemy's territory, and from the city to the countryside and back. Accompanying this strategy of temporary flows from the cities to the countryside, was another opposite strategy: closure. In the countryside, the government of President Uribe established areas called "rehabilitation and consolidation zones" defined as those areas particularly affected by actions of criminal groups. In order "to ensure institutional stability, restore constitutional order, and protect the civilian population in these zones," the DSD policy allowed the application of emergency measures. In these zones, military personnel were granted special powers to restrict movement, impose curfews, perform arrests, raids, house searches and wiretapping without prior judicial authorization (Lawrence 2004, 64). These strategies of movement and closure consist in the spatialization of power, the recruitment of geography in the effort to unify a sentiment of patriotism, of one Colombia and Colombians. Mastering this land is only

[7] This campaign was created by the Ministry of Commerce and Tourism. The stated aim of the campaign is: "*Vive Colombia, Viaja por Ella* is intended not only to remind Colombians that they have a country that is inviting them to get to know, explore and travel through it, but also to demonstrate that, despite the difficulties the country has faced, it is still an attractive destination for both domestic and international tourists."

[8] The international version of this campaign is called "Colombia, the only risk is wanting to stay" and it is dramatized through the stories of nine foreigners who visited Colombia for a short period of time and decided to stay for good. In this campaign, risk, as with fear, is moved from security to an emotional field. The identification expressed in these stories presupposes a fixed identity to which the foreigners developed all kind of attachments: land, geography, food, and diversity all in one, Colombia.
http://www.colombia.travel/en/international-tourist/colombia/tourism-campaign

possible through the symbiosis between the military strategy and a cinematic experience, which starts by leaving the city accompanied by helicopters and military convoys.

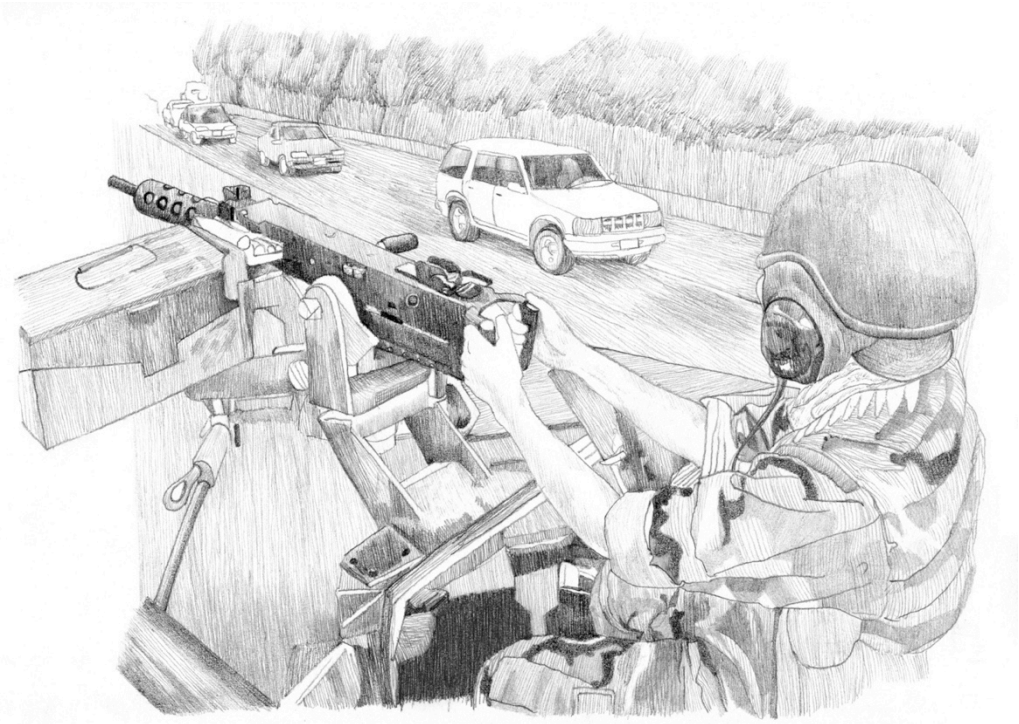


Figure 2: Drawing by Luis Morán, a copy of an photograph included in the Human Development Report 2003 for Colombia "Colombia: The Conflict, a Non Dead End Street," (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, Colombia 2003, 157). This image shows military convoys deployed over the weekends throughout Colombia.

If the images of the state attempted to erase the gap between a fractured territory and a unified sovereignty, what message did the images of kidnapping operations performed by the guerillas convey? The two videos produced by the FARC-EP about the kidnapping of the twelve assemblymen are structured in three different movements. First the videos show how the guerrillas trained to simulate a bomb threat. Second, they show the actual operation of the kidnapping in which the state officials were removed from the guarded space of the Assembly Building, driven away the city center in a vehicle that took them passed the outskirts of Cali to finally (third) arrive at a point where their kidnappers meet their base. The videos exhibit a movement from the rural guerrilla encampment (training and planning) to the city (penetration and capture) and back to the jungle (guerrilla base). One of the videos shows members of the FARC-EP the night before the kidnapping standing in the mountains looking at the city. We see the silhouette of their bodies and their rifles standing between the camera and the city, their bodies occluding the city lights. We see the silhouette of a hat usually worn only by the counterinsurgency unit; they are standing in disguise looking from a vista point in one of the main access roads to the city. We hear them talking, commenting on the city, pointing at landmarks, but also at military targets, assessing the distance between the closest military base to the Assembly building. They stand looking at the city in a vista constructed by the city for its own admiration and awe. In their reconnaissance, they act as military strategists but also as tourists. The two views overlap. The same overlap occurs when the Army military convoys and helicopters accompany Colombians to tourist destinations on weekends. The guerrilla members stand there pointing at landmarks, military bases but also paradoxically we hear them speaking and pointing at sites with personal significance. One of

them says, “There is my house, there is my mother.” He jokes that he can see her. This view gives them visual command over a target that they are about to penetrate.

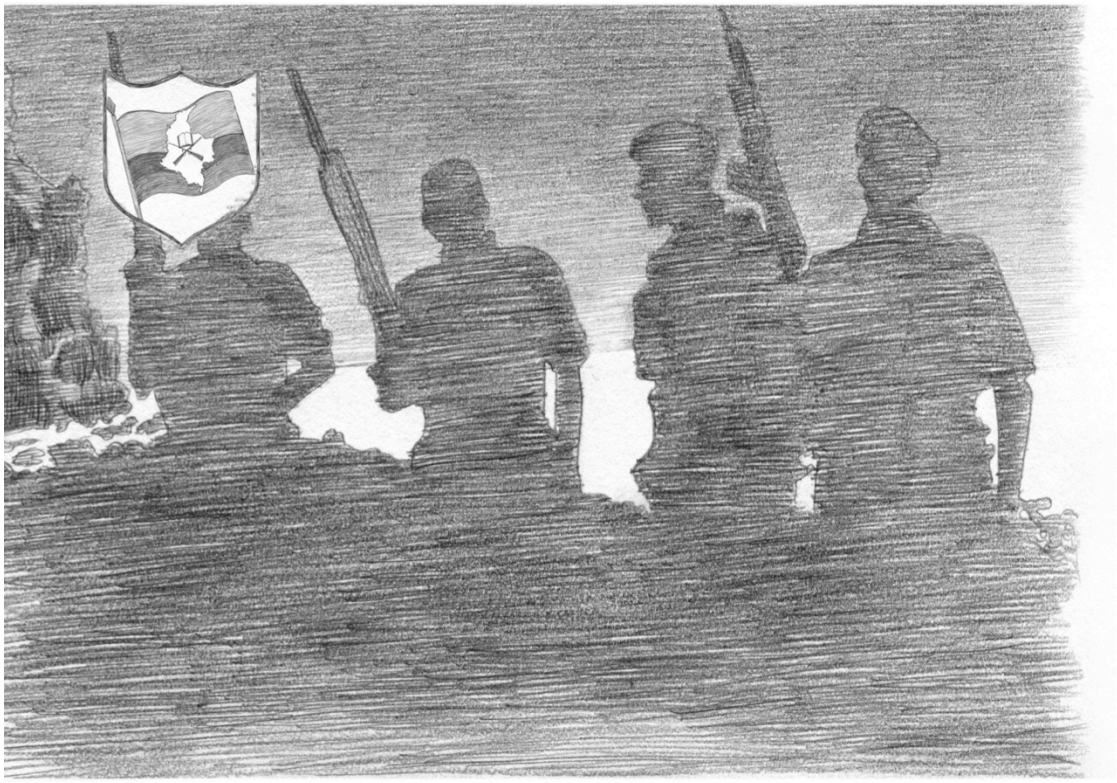


Figure 3: Drawing of Luis Morán, a copy of a still of a video released by the FARC-EP of the planning and execution of the kidnapping of the twelve assemblymen in Cali (Secuestro Diputados Cali 2002 FARC 2007). In this drawing we see the guerrillas the night before the kidnapping looking at the city of Cali.

The next day the video shows the operation to have started with those remaining in the encampment bidding, farewell to their members in disguise. The camera follows the van, truck and motorcycles as they leave the guerrilla camp heading to the city. Progressively we see them approaching the city, moving from country roads to the main highway that surrounds the city. Once they get to downtown Cali, where the Assembly building is located, we see how each of the disguised members takes a position in the area. The camera pans and locates the position of the guerrillas, as if it were checking that everybody is standing where they are supposed to be. The next shot is in the first floor of the state building; everybody is running, following the orders given by one of the guerrilla members who announces the need to evacuate the building. The next shot has the assemblymen inside the van. We hear the FARC commander telling the lawmakers “Gentleman, we are the FARC, we are taking you away from downtown Cali.” The two videos released by the FARC-EP are counter-images of the state media campaigns. While the former shows how to penetrate the city and perform a kidnapping of politicians, the latter, flies over exotic locations of the Colombian territory with amazing views of exotic locations. In the former we see the guerrillas joking and looking from a vista point the city of Cali, in the latter there is no subject looking, it is the camera that commands the view as it moves above, air power as vision.

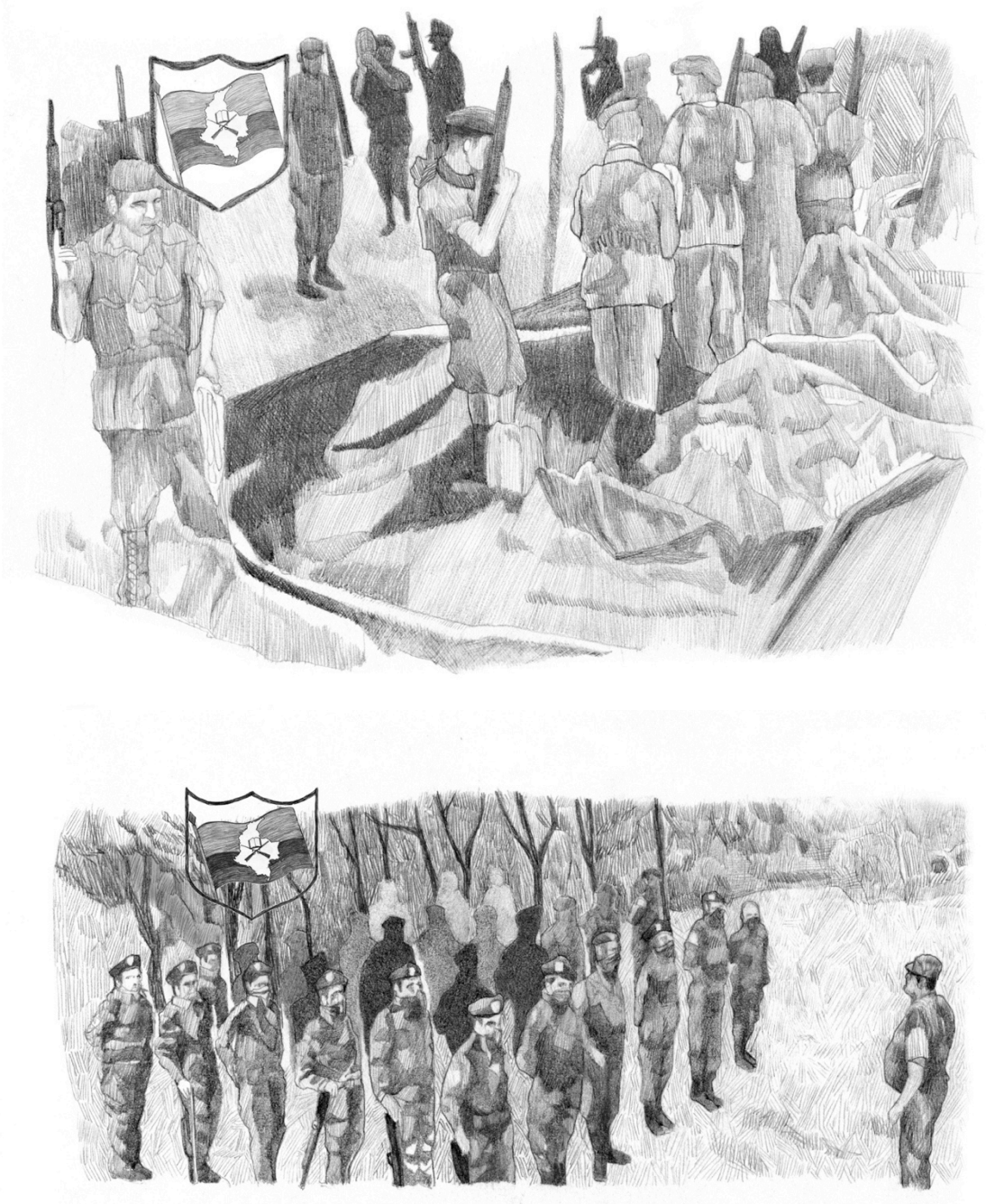
One Colombia and the Other: Rehearsal of Otherness

Kidnapping for political purposes relies on the profile of the possible hostage. In the distribution of vulnerability and security through demarcation of spaces in the Colombian

conflict, political kidnapping entails penetration of guarded spaces. In this strategy the perpetrators adopt codes of authority and power, which allow them to access these guarded political spaces. In the case of the 12 assemblymen kidnapped in Cali in 2002, guerrilla members of the FARC-EP disguised as Colombian Army Forces entered the government building pretending to be protecting the assemblymen from a supposed terrorist attack. The disguised guerrillas were apparently controlling a dangerous situation. The spectacular qualities of the kidnapping operation, and the exceptional circumstances fabricated in order to make the assemblymen submit to their captors (acting as their protectors) attained a cinematic dimension.

One of the videos recorded by the FARC-EP shows about thirty men training and preparing their impersonation by rehearsing codes of military protocol: marching, counting, standing at attention, and drill commands. The military codes of authority are relocated into the space of a parallel armed-force. They put on army uniforms, gear and hats worn by special military units, in order to meet their counter-representation. However, this construction of alterity cannot be understood outside of their desire to acquire belligerent status in the Colombian conflict.[9] The FARC-EP as an armed force has shown, through different media scenarios, that they also have a structure of authority, obedience and power, visible through military postures, codes of behavior, and a system of rewards and punishments like any other army. In the document titled *Belligerence*, the FARC-EP fashions itself as a rebel army rather than a guerrilla organization. In this framework they define their actions as conducting an uninterrupted war of resistance since 1964, "exercising their legitimate rights of rebellion and self-determination of people struggling for building a New Colombia" (my translation, FARC-EP 3). In the document they outline their statutes, disciplinary rules and rules of command and explain the structural organization of their troops. They equate their ranks to those of a traditional army. For example, a first corporal in a traditional army corresponds to a squad commander in the FARC, a general in the former is a commander of the secretariat of central high command. This set of equivalences enacts their identity based on the representation of a counter-force, which they view as equal. They establish their identity by mirroring the force they oppose. However, in the video we see how, while rehearsing their cover-up, they mock the codes of authority and rank that they are trying to master and equate; those same codes that they are trying to embody as a belligerent force.

[9] President Uribe got to power under a hard line agenda against the insurgency groups in Colombia. A few months after he took office in a speech during the promotion ceremony of several military officers, Uribe invited Colombians to refer to the FARC-EP and ELN "not as parties to the armed conflict, but as terrorists" since the former would
"place both the rebels and the Armed Forces on equal footing" (*Eltiempo.com* 2002). Uribe vehemently denied the existence of a war in Colombia. Conversely, he stated that Colombia was under a terrorist threat. With this rhetorical move, Uribe closed any possibility of peace negotiations, recognition of political hostages as prisoners of war, humanitarian negotiations, and more importantly Uribe feared that the recognition of the FARC-EP as an armed group party to an armed conflict, would result in the application of international humanitarian law thus providing some protection to the guerrillas.



Figures 4 and 5: Drawings by Luis Morán, copies of video stills from FARC-EP Video #1. "Rehearsing"

During a training session shown in the video, a group of FARC-EP guerrillas standing in formation and dressed like the Colombian Army state their mission out loud: "Provide security at the door." To whom? Are they speaking as Army soldiers or guerrillas? The murkiness continues when, during the kidnapping, one of the guerrillas holding a megaphone and directing the evacuation from the State Assembly building says, "We are the Colombian Army, your Army." There is slippage here. Some of the visitors that day at the government building recalled thinking that those soldiers were too short to be part of a counterinsurgency unit. Others thought that they were pushing people too hard. We could say that the mimicry was off. Or we could say that this mimicry does is not an exact copy since it dwells in both

defacement and legitimacy, in a power that recurs to violence ambivalently under discourses of security, revolution and liberation, constantly crossing spaces of legality and illegality.

In the video, it is difficult to discern whether the mimicry is oriented towards defacing the Colombian Army or mirroring it as its legitimate counterpart. During rehearsal, we hear one of the FARC commanders shouting, "Evacuation team 1, enter the first floor." In their improvised mock-up, they try to run in step in row formation while calling cadence. They bump into each other and mock the protocol, their march and the inflection of their voices in the cadences. The mockery does not only serve to weaken the image of their enemy. This derision is not simply making fun of the state military apparatus. The FARC-EP gesture conveys the idea that their enemy is actually in disguise: disguised with codes of authority emptied of power that can be easily appropriated.

In September 2004, the United States Embassy in Bogotá reported to Washington on the status of the three American hostages held by the FARC-EP who, at the time of this cablegram, had been in captivity for eighteen months. The cable states:

> Based on our analysis of the Colombian Military's training, equipment and tactics, the Colombian military [COLMIL] is not capable of conducting a hostage rescue operation without endangering the lives of the hostages. President Uribe has told us he would allow a unilateral U.S. effort to release the hostages, and we believe the security forces --with some ruffled feathers-- would accept his decision to do so. It is clear, however, given the likely remote location of the hostages when, and if, a rescue is attempted by U.S. forces that some involvement of Colombian military is inevitable. The degree to which we can count on COLMIL [Colombian military] participation will depend on the nature of our cooperation and our relationship with the COLMIL rescue units. (United States Embassy in Colombia)

Contrary to the United States assessment, on June 2, 2008, the Colombian Army released fifteen hostages including the three Americans in a military operation called Check as in Checkmate (See Chapter Four). Operation Check was another example of mimicry. The Colombian Army posed as NGO workers in a humanitarian mission and as members of the Venezuelan news agency TeleSur. The commander of the FARC's first front Gerardo Aguilar aka César, responsible for keeping custody of the hostages (Schneier 2008) was tricked into believing that Mono Jojoy had ordered him to hand over the hostages to a rebel-friendly NGO that supposedly was going to transport the hostages to the encampment of Alfonso Cano, the FARC's new leader. Paradoxically, the success of this operation was not achieved by deploying military force, in the classical sense, but by copying the same mimicry that the FARC-EP used in the kidnapping of the assemblymen: disguised as the antagonist Other.

Operation Check and the kidnapping of the assemblymen have been qualified as cinematographic (Villamarin 2009; Redacción 2011; Lozano 2009; *El Universo* 2002). This qualification derives from the fact that these events have superseded the real in a way that can usually only happen in the movies. In an interview for TeleSur, the FARC-EP commander 'Felipe,' who participated in the kidnapping of the 12 assemblymen, states that the operation was not the result of improvisation but of much careful planning. 'Felipe' asserts that the training included watching movies that served to show his men how fighting is done in the cities. He tells the interviewer that during combat in the countryside they take cover under whatever nature provides, therefore they needed to familiarize their men with the city's organization, hideouts and protections. The FARC plans for the kidnapping by copying, in turn, movie protocols and attitudes that were later featured in their own videos produced by the FARC-EP's production team.

The mimicry reaches its climax at the moment when the assemblymen are told the truth. The video begins by showing the evacuation of the state building, followed by the

assemblymen directed to get into a van. Once inside the vehicle, Assemblyman Sigifredo López, speaking to the camera, says that they were told there was a bomb in the state building and that they were heading to a military base under the protection of the Colombian Army. Up to that point events have unfolded very rapidly showing efficacy and planning and finally some calm has settled over the assemblymen who feel safe in the van, as Sigifredo López expresses to the camera. Then the FARC-EP commander of the operation reveals their identity and informs the assemblymen that they are their hostages. He explains that they are being taken to a remote location away from the city of Cali. The camera pans over the assemblymen as they silently absorb the revelation of their kidnapping. The second video released by the FARC-EP does not show the progression of the kidnapping but cuts intermittently between the somber faces of the assemblymen, the kidnap operation, and the FARC-EP training. These series of cuts end with the scene in which the disguised members of the FARC-EP embrace their comrades at the rendezvous point celebrating the success of the kidnap operation; they embrace and a salsa song starts to play, a soundtrack specially produced for the video. The music accompanies a series of slides that describe the operation, the main points of a prisoners' swap and the condition of the hostages. While this textual information appears on screen, we listen to the lyrics of the salsa song:

> Let me tell you a story / that actually happened / what I am about to sing / happened here in Cali / those distinguished assemblymen / the guerrilla took away / A trained guerrilla force / Clever and experienced / applied their intelligence / Proving their condition / The 12 assemblymen / Taken to the mountains /
>
> Hey Generals Mora and Ospina / Marulanda is asking for a swap / Ours are coming out / Hey Generals Mora and Ospina / What we did in Cali was magnificent / And ours are coming out. (Lyrics Soundtrack, Video #2, my translation)

The qualification of the kidnapping as "a story that actually happened" describes this event as superseding the expectations of the real, making it almost mythical: a story worthy of being told for its extraordinary qualities, yet embedded in the realm of the real. The political is built into the cinematic, each defying the other's limits. The political interrelates with the cinematic through modes of enunciation and narration that are political in its state of becoming; they unfold as a narration of a state and a para-state enacted by the FARC mimicry. They do not enunciate or define the political but perform its actualizations through articulating the fictional relationships between territory, culture, and citizens making them coexistent: 'naturally' embedded into discourses of security, development and war. These two videos enter into this economy by creating a parallel action-image that, through parody and mimicry, reframe military codes as clichéd images. But parody is not a liberating action for the conventional clichéd image of military force. The videos multiply the clichés, which in turn allow for multiple appropriations of these same videos.[10] However, by emptying the convention, by opening its codes, the multiplication of clichés allows us to question our submission to these codes.

Who is speaking? When, Where and What?

[10] On sites like YouTube, next to the FARC-EP videos, there are users' appropriations of these same videos. One of these appropriations leaves the video as it is but layers text on the image as if it were part of the introductory credits of the video. It reads, "We are the FARC-EP / We attack towns / We don't respect human rights / We plant landmines / We kidnap / We recruit children / We commit crimes against the civilian population / We bomb energy towers / We commit massacres…" Once the salsa song starts, the text disappears and the video continues as the FARC-EP edited it.

The assemblymen entered the jungle still possessing the power of the state. However as they entered the chain of mimicry, the state and FARC-EP mimetical constructions of identity and alterity, and the correlations embedded in the spatial demarcation of the conflict, their speech, image and identity diffuse.

Is the speaker in the proof of life video the same person who was once a legislator, a presidential candidate or a governor? This is the recurrent question that haunts these videos. They are subjects of continuous reframing; the hostages are made to appear sometimes as victims, and in other instances as allies of their captors. This continuous reframing through which these subjects are read shifts through human rights reports, photographs, military operations, international policies, rumors and memoirs of ex-hostages. Each text reframes their identity depending on the discursive forces acting upon them. Indeed, a victim by definition becomes vulnerable given that he or she is *in between* armed actors in a conflict. The victim is in between physically but also discursively. The identity of the kidnapping victim is constantly shifting due to his/her in-betweenness. But an analysis of the in-betweenness of a hostage for political purposes in the Colombian case must take into account the spatial demarcations of the Colombian conflict that mobilize the Colombian geography based on ideas of national identity and sovereignty.

The geographical location of the hostages is unknown and the only point of reference for their position is their captors. Many of the ex-hostages speak in their memoirs of the sense of disorientation experienced in the jungle due to the evenness of the landscape, the monotony of the rain and the thick foliage. This evenness produces in them an acute anxiety combined with a sense of powerlessness. For the hostages, the jungle is guerrilla territory; their captors are equipped for this unfriendly space. The captors recognize difference in the forest's monotony and therefore geographical orientation becomes a source of power over the hostages. Political hostages that have attempted to escape often end up right back in the territory of their captors. Clara Rojas, a political hostage released by the FARC-EP in January 2008, states in her memoir that "[the] jungle, as we would soon discover during our attempts at escaping, became our jail cell, rendering every effort to flee futile" (2010, 39). In her description, the jungle is an accomplice of her captors; the connection between the landscape and its inhabitants renders the hostages suspicious of every person they cross paths with during their attempts to escape. The hostages see everyone as a potential guerrilla fighter in this territory, enacting the same stereotypes that have guided security policies as well as arbitrary violence in the countryside. But, paradoxically, this suspicion has extended to the hostages themselves. Rumors back in the cities claim that some hostages were not even being held captive: it is speculated that some of the high-profile women kidnapped were actually in love with high commanders of the guerrilla, and that some of the male legislators kidnapped were in fact guerrillas. I have also heard rumors on the streets that Ingrid Betancourt, a presidential candidate kidnapped in 2002, was never kidnapped, that she was hidden from the public capitalizing on the publicity of her kidnapping to build her political comeback for the next presidential election.[11] For the hostages, being in the jungle and in a forced closeness with their captors is a undesirable intimacy whereas for the general public, mobilized by the disbelief that a person can be kidnapped for four, six or even fourteen years against his or her will and still be alive, performing as an articulate speaker in front of the camera, being in the jungle entails an intimacy of contagious savagery (Taussig, 76). In other words, those who have been kidnapped for years and still act as sane people in front the cameras are deemed to have adapted, integrated and assimilated into the other Colombia. In these unsubstantiated

[11] Taking advantage of all the rumors around Ingrid Betancourt, as well as the unflattering portrait the three military contractors provided of her in their memoirs, a comic book titled "Même le silence a une fin" was released by the publishing house Gallimard. For instance, the comic book portraits Betancourt as having an affair with a guerrilla commander (Goddard 2010; Febbro 2010).

rumors, the women fall in love with their captors with a wild passion attributed to these unruly forests: women prisoners of a savage love. And of male legislators and politicians it is speculated that they have always been guerrilla members who managed to infiltrate the Colombian government through their capacity for deception, camouflage, and trickery proper to the 'forest people.'

If the closeness to their captors is a source of transposition of their affiliation, the captives' distance from the Colombian centralist government produces a progressive de-identification with the power they used to hold. As the time in captivity progresses and the hostages perceive they are been taken deeper into the jungle, their political identity suffers a transformation.[12] The titles attributed to their public office service shift; from governors or legislators they become ex-governors and ex-legislators. Ingrid Betancourt, candidate for the 2003 presidential elections who was kidnapped in February 2002, states in her memoir:

> The government's strategy would be to let the time pass, hoping that our lives would become less valuable, forcing the guerrillas to release us without obtaining anything in return. We were given the heaviest sentence that could be inflicted on a human being, that of not knowing when our captivity would end. […] The future could no longer be viewed as a time for things to be created […] The future was dead. (Betancourt, 112)

Betancourt reads their political de-identification as a government strategy in which value, time, space and identity correlate in an equation whose result is an abandoned life: a life left to die. Betancourt attributes the crafting of this process to the government, as part of the state's war strategy. Certainly the forces of the state hold the desire to perform as a despotic signifier from which every predicament is interpreted and overcodified, but this process of de-identification is the result of the spatialization of power in which abandoned life is an articulation within the distribution of the Colombian political space.

On January 21, 2006, the families received the third proof of life video. In it, three assemblymen made a controversial request. Nacianceno Orozco asked, "Considering the indifference of the government and the FARC for a pact to secure our freedom, I formally ask Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez to grant me political asylum"(*BBC* 2006a). Different political and legal analysts pointed out that this petition was not juridically viable (*El País* 1006). However, President Uribe stated that he and his government would support this request since the most important thing was the assemblymen's freedom (*El Tiempo* 2006). The FARC-EP responded by asserting that first there should be a humanitarian agreement, and once the exchange between prisoners and hostages took place, then the assemblymen would be free to go and ask for asylum in the country they pleased (*BBC* 2006b). In the video, Juan Carlos Narvaez asked for asylum as well as pleaded to the FARC-EP "to proceed by delivering me to this fellow nation since the Colombian state has no interest in resolving my situation" (my translation). During their captivity, we saw the assemblymen speak coherently, strong and sweet, personal and public (Semana 2008a; Semana 2008b). In the proof of life videos they appeared as both politicians and private citizens. As politicians, they proposed possible protocols to implement in a humanitarian agreement for their release, and as fathers and sons, they hugged themselves enacting signs of affection for their loved ones back home, went over details about the management of the household, read poems, sang songs. Through these videos the assemblymen brought to the fore the fact that there is no connection between their location and that of the government, as if the power of the state

[12] Sigifredo López is the only surviving assemblyman. He managed to survive because at the time of the killing he was punished by the guerrillas and put in solitary confinement separated from the other eleven assemblymen. Once he was released by the FARC-EP, López was arrested several times by the Colombian government accused to be a guerrilla member and the direct responsible for the planning and execution of the kidnapping of the eleven assemblymen. López was exonerated from all the charges (J. Otis 2012).

invested in them could not be traced back from the jungle to the center of power. Through their personal messages they politicized their affections; their private lives became a matter of public concern.

But after four years of captivity, their request for political asylum appeared as a break in this continuum that they have tried to maintain between the center and periphery, the government and their political identities as statesmen. Political asylum requires that the request be made outside the territory of one's own country. The assemblymen, on the contrary, requested political asylum from a location within the Colombian territory and yet unknown. Their request pointed to the mythical structures that connect nation, sovereignty and territory. Indeed, their location was inside the Colombian territory while also being outside the sovereignty of the Colombian government. In the video, the assemblymen who requested political asylum addressed President Hugo Chávez directly. For the assemblymen, the Colombian government becomes a tacit accomplice of their captivity due to either its lack of interest in their situation or its incapacity to guarantee their freedom. To understand the proof of life videos as a form of mediation between the space of the jungle enacted by the FARC-EP and the official space of the Colombian state is to set aside the fractures and gaps that dislocate such opposition. The request for political asylum is one instance of such fracture. The fracture is given as they are Colombians in some place within the national territory and still outside the territory, which is the condition allowing them to ask for political asylum.

In these videos the assemblymen address the state and the guerrilla as well; the proof of life video is a message to their captors too. In the last proof of life video of the assemblyman Jairo Hoyos, he said:

> Stop playing with our pain as kidnap victims! Stop politicizing the humanitarian agreement! Do not delay the humanitarian agreement further! Do not divide the Colombian people, polarizing them in favor or against it! Do not make us the face of the government political opposition! […] Does the government think our corpses will best serve the interests of its Democratic Security program? And the FARC-EP, if you are studying the proposals made by a commission of friend nations about the humanitarian agreement; and if you support a peace process, then be more flexible, and propose alternatives or possible areas for the exchange. Sit down and dialogue, show that you guys really want to have a humanitarian agreement! Gentlemen: we are flesh and bone, or what do you think? (*Ultima Prueba de Supervivencia Diputados Del Valle* 2007 My translation).

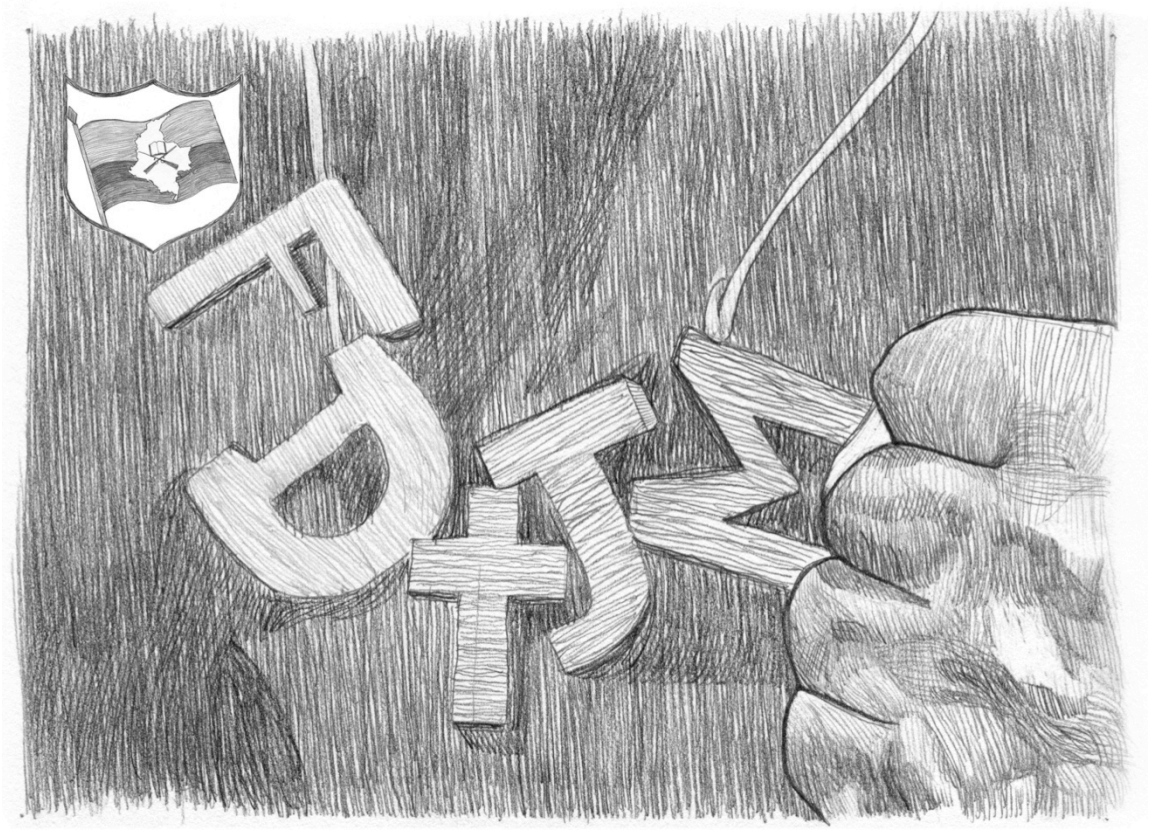
The assemblymen confronted their situation by articulating themselves as actors and participants in a social and political situation. However, the location they spoke from carved a space outside the space of the state (which they initially felt they represented), and the space of their captivity. Meanwhile, different sectors of the Colombian society responded to this absence of identification --neither with the state nor with their captors-- by asserting that the political hostages were suffering from Stockholm syndrome (*El País* 2009). Their progressive de-identification drove the assemblymen to situate their demands outside the space of the state and their captors. However, this choice they made put them back beside their captors with headlines back in the Colombian cities claiming their level of insanity. They were placed in an in-between space for the sake of the equation of territory, jurisdiction, authority and sovereignty.

In the proof of live videos, the frame becomes a space in which the state, families and the guerrilla intersect. The location of the hostages is reinvented through their image on video. Between the place/space/location where the hostage actually is and the one in which his/her social position has meaning (family environments, work, even the public sphere in the

case of politicians, soldiers and police officers), the video becomes a space of all kinds of investments. As Juan Carlos Narváez puts it in front of the camera:

> Daniela, my dear daughter, I want you to know that I love you with all my heart. Maybe, I won't be with you this Christmas because I may still be doing something that our beloved father God gave me to do […] tell Junior that I love him very much […] please obey your mother in everything and give her kisses everyday […] I wear the initials of the persons that I love the most […] they give me the strength and energy to endure this captivity but sincerely I don't want to be in captivity any longer (*Segunda Prueba de Supervivencia Diputados Del Valle* 2007).

The assemblyman addresses his youngest daughter, and tries to explain to her, to a child, the risk of his duty and public service. This personal address moves from his family to the state and back to the non-location where the guerrillas are holding him. In this case a kid is being socialized within the conflict, not only through the absence of her father but also through his presence in the video.



Figures 6 and 7: drawings by Luis Morán, copies of video stills from the second proof of life video (Segunda Prueba de Supervivencia Diputados Del Valle 2007).

In the proof of life videos, the composition of the image has the hostage in the middle of the frame, looking at the camera, in front of a flat background, usually a sheet or a blanket. In the upper left corner hangs the FARC-EP flag as the marker of their authority. Allen Feldman argues that violence and its aesthetic force the subjects to adopt poses that under other circumstances they would never adopt. He refers, for example, to those instances where IRA fighters appear to be shaking hands and receiving checks from the police, where "the state visually fixes and reduces its victims to manipulatable surfaces, the scopic regime of the state can effectively derealize the body and the self" (Feldman, 64). This derealization of the body takes place through the body itself, through the pose. Feldman understands violence and its aesthetics as a moment in which the body is deprived of any weight, turning it into pure surface upon which an image is carved. The proof of life videos as visual document lack such elaborated and constructed settings. The blanket as a background, the figure in the center of the image, and the flag of the FARC-EP in the upper left corner of the frame seems rather a simple composition compared to the set-up that Feldman describes. However, these videos can be read not only by focusing on the subject/body posture but also by examining the framing utilized. An image by Colombian artist Alejandro Sánchez is helpful to understanding the productivity of the frame.

Figure 8: Alejandro Sánchez. Photograph "A story about kidnapping." 2009

Sánchez's artwork is a photograph of the condition of production of a political image such as the proof of life videos. This image seems to be a zoom out of the frame of a proof of life video. The artwork image produced by Sánchez includes a camera, a sheet, a chair, the metal chain and padlock that the hostages carry around their necks resting on a chair, and a pair of rubber boots. Behind the patterned sheet, there is the jungle. The sheet creates a square that serves as a background for those who sit in front of it. But in this artwork the chair is empty; the hostage is absent but he is still in the image via the camera's viewfinder. Roland Barthes argues that *a* photograph cannot escape the gesture of a finger pointing, the deictic language that, when seeing a photograph, allows us to say, "this is my brother, here he is." But this photograph by Sánchez reveals how images of political hostages painfully point to an unknown location. When looking at the proof of life videos of political hostages we can say, "Look, here is Juan Carlos Narváez" and still know that he is nowhere. Sánchez shows that the relationship between the image of the hostage in the viewfinder and its referent, which is absent, is a constant space of contestation. Where is the hostage? On which side of the conflict? In the space of state power that he or she claims to represent, or in the space of the other Colombia, of illness and contagion? The language the assemblymen use in the proof of life videos is articulated through the same language of the state; they constantly perform to the camera as statesmen. However, there is a dislocation between the speech and wording used in the video and the framing of the image. The space delineated by the image's frame escapes the authority and language of the state and as it is aired this gesture becomes omnipresent. Their official language is captured in this frame, a frame devoid of any state influence. In the space of the frame, authorized and produced by the FARC-EP, several things collide: the physical and iconic capture of the hostages, their use of state language and

their public display of an image that is broadcasted to the nation from the nation but, at the same time, without a place of origin.

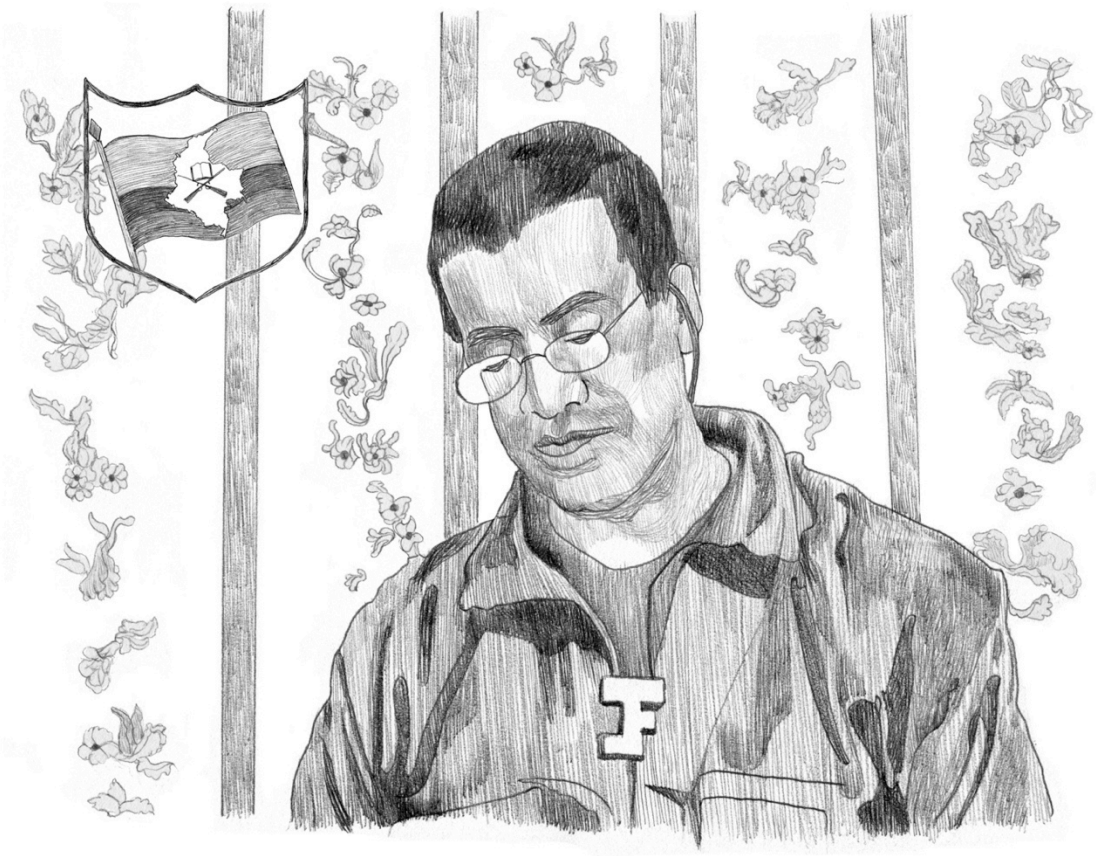


Figure 9: drawing by Luis Morán, a copy of a video still of the Assemblyman Juan Carlos Narváez. Last proof of life video (Ultima Prueba de Supervivencia Diputados Del Valle 2007).

Flows of Information

DSD policy states the necessity of controlling information as part of a collective commitment developed through a solidarity movement for the restitution of security in a "democracy in danger." Sections 136 and 137 of the DSD document, entitled 'Terrorism and Communication" read:

> 136. Terrorism is a form of political violence, which uses communication to spread fear and terror in both urban and rural areas. Terrorist action reflects neither military nor political strength, but rather the weakness of those who do not have the support of the people and try to impose their will through terror. It is an empty strength. *The Government will keep the public fully informed of developments in all areas relating to the Defense and Democratic Security policy in order to boost confidence and encourage citizen co-operation and solidarity* (emphasis mine).
>
> 137. The responsible handling of information is not just a task of the Government. The media, too, should fulfill their constitutional duty by being both responsible and prudent when *releasing information*, (emphasis mine) which endangers lives or jeopardizes operations. Fulfilling these constitutional duties is an especially difficult task in a democratic country that faces a terrorist threat, as is the case in Colombia. Such organizations not only attack

> the freedom of the press through intimidation and violence, but also spread confusion through false information and manipulated opinion. The Government will encourage debate and reflection around such issues as the support of democratic values, the use of the media by those who attack the civilian population as a sounding board to justify their actions, and the impact of the language that is used when reporting information. (Republic of Colombia 2003, 60).

In this text the government posits itself as the primary source of information; it "will keep the public fully informed of developments in all areas relating to the Defense and Democratic Security policy," while the media is enjoined to practice responsible and prudent distribution of information. During the presidency of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, the information released through the Colombian media reflected these statements. Since then, the state has become a media producer, documenting their successful military operations as well as their forensic procedures as gestures of transparency and accountability. In the meantime the media has become a distributor and a side commentator of images. However, the proof of life videos disrupt the fantasy of transparent communication that the DSD policy predicates. Transparent communication is based on the assumption of a linear procession of statements in which the origin as a center of intention is mobilized in turn by a moral obligation to such transparency. However, in its efforts to convey transparency, the Colombian government has permitted the public display of gruesome images. Videos of military operations targeting guerrilla commanders have been shown on national TV, in which their corpses are fully displayed as evidence of the success of the DSD policy and as proof of their identity (*El Espectador* 2010). With the state as the main source of information on topics of national security and the media as its side commentator, the proof of life videos come to disrupt this homogenous and hierarchical structure of information, unsettling the locations of who emits and who receives the message.

The government of Colombia has launched Intel operations to seize the proof of life videos and their couriers. The state intercepts the circulation of these videos but it cannot do the same to their public display. Their families require such proof and the government has no other option but to pass them to the families of the hostages and the media. The temporary hold that the state exerts on these tapes is justified on military grounds. The state claims to be able to see and identify signs that can be fed back in to their military strategy. In November 2007, President Hugo Chávez acting as mediator between the FARC-EP and the government, promised the families of the hostages a proof of life video (*El Tiempo* 2007a). The Colombian Police located these tapes in an impoverished area of Bogotá, seized them and arrested their couriers (*El Tiempo* 2007b). By seizing the tapes whose origin lies outside the state's reach, the state sought to restructure the borders that divided the outside and the inside of its field of power.

Jean Baudrillard, in his book *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1995), speaks of the symbolic crisis of today's war. For Baudrillard, the hostage is the image that best illustrate this crisis. He says, "the hostage is the phantom actor, the extra who occupies the powerless stage of war"(24). Even as a phantom, as an apparition, and as an image, the hostage acts. However, its actions are not framed under the conventional procedures of an active participant in a war, of a combatant. The action of the hostage as a bargaining chip denounces the inaction of the battlefield. The image of the hostage either calls for a halt in hostilities to guarantee the lives of the hostages or stands as the assurance that in the middle of the confrontation there is still an unreachable space, a location that has escaped the action of the battle where the hostage is kept alive. The hostage's image is a reminder of a space beyond the reach of the state. In this sense, the Colombian state acknowledges the importance of proof of life videos by making them seizable objects, but at the same time dismisses them. In

the last proof of life video (April 27, 2007), Assemblyman Jairo Hoyos questioned the government and the FARC-EP when he asked "Are you waiting to negotiate over our dead bodies?" (*Ultima Prueba de Supervivencia Diputados Del Valle* 2007). He expressed his total rejection of a military rescue, asserting that the humanitarian agreement should be part of President Uribe's DSD policy. The minister of defense at the time and now current president of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2014) commented on these statements saying that the government cannot renounce their right to a military rescue and that analysis of the videos did not reveal any new information (Posada 2007). For Hoyos, the space from where the hostages speak is produced not only by the state's inability to reach it, but also by the state's deliberate inaction. In contrast, Santos answered by asserting the state's right to act, an action that would not only reach that space but also in the process of seizing it would more likely result in the death of the hostages.

Conclusion

In Colombia, kidnapping and its countermeasures are embedded in struggles over spaces. However, it is more than taking over the enemy's territory. These struggles unfold in modes of seeing as a way to have command over spaces, in narratives in which difference is subdued in stories of belonging, embedded in forms of appropriation and consumption. The Colombian conflict is not a conflict over frontiers or for establishing borders, but a contestation over belonging to a fictional category of Colombianess, built over stories of liberation, oppression and encounters. In order to bring together the symbolic force of a nation, the opposition of the two Colombias has served to justify policies of exclusion and incorporation.

Kidnapping in Colombia is a site for such narratives, but one of not quick and easy resolution. Ingrid Betancourt wrote a letter to her mother while in captivity in which she describes the political hostages as lepers. She states, "we [the political hostages] have been the lepers that mar the ball" (Betancourt, Delloye-Betancourt, and Delloye-Betancourt 2008, 33). The visual and spatial metaphor is significant. They are at the ball; they are not outside. The political hostages as embodiments of the state and its authority cannot be totally excluded from the dynamics of the conflict; however for the sake of the symbolic unity of the nation, which involves sustaining the mythical and categorical binaries of rural and urban, they must be casted away. Betancourt tells us that they are lepers. In the image that she provides, their bodies have changed through a contagious disease. Visually they bring a sort of interruption to the ball. However the risk is not that they are only visually rejected, but that they have also come into close contact with those invited to the ball. This closeness carries a risk of contagion. While kidnapping has taken them into a remote location in the Colombian territory where the conflict takes place, it has also brought them into close contact with the structure that sustains the policies of security that bring arbitrary violence to those who live in rural areas.

The Colombian state, through the militarization of rights, has added force to their symbolic attempts to construct one Colombia. Arbitrary violence arises at the impossibility to create a single system of signs that can embody the nation. The political hostages are impediments to this unity and therefore are subject to all kind of violent investments.

Chapter Two

False Positives in Colombia: Illegal violence and the construction of enemies and citizens

"A guerrilla not wearing his camouflage uniform dies as a civilian"
Graffiti written on the walls of Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano

False Positives are extrajudicial executions of civilians whose corpses are made to look like guerrillas or members of illegal groups killed in combat, which were carried out by the Colombian Army during the years of the Democratic Security and Defense Policy DSDP (2004-2010). Although this abhorrent practice has been part of Colombia's military culture for more than 25 years, as reported by the CIA in 1994, the instances of False Positives under the DSD policy show a systematic execution model (*Semana.com* 2011; Central Intelligence Agency - Office of African and Latin American Analysis 1994). All levels of the Colombian army were actively engaged and/or had knowledge of these crimes, which were committed by a large number of military units around the country with disturbing frequency. The victims of false positives were young men who were tricked into leaving their homes with promises of employment in the countryside. These young men would be transported 300 to 400 miles away, handed over to a military unit and executed. Their corpses would be dressed in fatigues, and weapons would be placed next to their bodies. Autopsy reports show that victims died between 12 and 24 hours from the time they were last seen by their family members (*Semana* 2008e). The indication is that these crimes were rigorously planned and are not, as the Colombian government asserts, the result of a few bad apples within the Colombian Army who misinterpreted the policies of the DSD policy (Uribe Vélez 2009a).

The targets of the extrajudicial executions known as False Positives were Colombian males between 16 and 37, often considered delinquent by those who recruited them. Also included in this group were soldiers on leave, due to illness or injury during combat, who believed they were being given an opportunity to earn money while away from their post (Morris 2010). Being members of the armed forces did not give them immunity from illegal state violence. The violence inflicted on these young men was not incited by hate or fear of minorities, as in an ethno-nationalist context. Therefore, this violence cannot be explained through the framework provided by Arjun Appadurai, in which processes of globalization put pressure on the national ideal of unity, provoking an anxiety on national majorities and generating all sorts of internal violence (Appadurai 2006, 52). My contention is that in order to understand the operational logic behind the False Positives we need to consider how Colombia, in its struggle to gain control over its entire territory, has used violence to symbolically connect what otherwise would be discontinuous territories under different forms of authority.

These forms of control enact a form of governmentality that advances a social project traversed by security and market logics. Killing the enemy situates the living in a unity defended by one sovereign state. If governance entails that the state guarantee the protection of its citizens throughout its territory, this construction of alterity by violence appeals to a symbolic operation of belonging through which the outsider, the enemy, is cast out by violent death, and the space of death is constructed under the notions of security and prosperity. In the case of False Positives, Violence figures not only as the instrument of coercion and death inflicted on the Other, but also as the mode in which that otherness is constructed. The question of whether the state has gained control over its entire territory is displaced through a reiteration of violence against the enemy among us. These men were brought to their place of execution from different regions of the national territory; they did not belong there and

therefore they were unknown and untraceable. Locals living in the combat zones identify them as outsiders who came to do harm. Citizenship is displaced from a discussion of rights to a sense of belonging. This symbolic strategy, which guarantees the presence of the state as a master signifier of what it means to be Colombian, is anchored in violent performances of fabricated other.

The case that brought attention to the False Positives scandal is now known as "the mothers of Soacha" ("Las Madres de Soacha: Colombia" 2013). The national and international scope of this scandal forced the government to acknowledge that the security forces of the state were responsible for systematically committing extrajudicial executions. Soacha is a poor city at the southern edge of Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. In 2008, 13 mothers reported their sons missing; each case was isolated but all exhibited shocking similarities. The young men in question disappeared between January and August of 2008. All of the mothers reported that their sons had talked about accepting a job offer in the countryside that would pay 400 dollars including room and board for two weeks. They left and never returned. All were between the ages of 16 and 27, unemployed and in need of money, and several of them also showed signs of drug addiction. Their cases were linked in October 2008 by the Commission on the Search for Disappeared Persons after implementing a software that cross-referenced the Colombian Armed Forces, National Forensics Department, hospitals and police databases on dead, injured and criminalized subjects.[13] They discovered that their sons were reported to have been killed in combat in the northeast area of Colombia approximately 400 miles away, and were buried in anonymous mass graves. The National Forensic Institute confirmed that the time of death of all the victims from Soacha was registered between 11 and 24 hours from the last time they were seen (*Semana* 2008d).

The former minister of defense and current president of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2014), responded to the scandal by acknowledging that there are segments of the Colombian Armed Forces that measure success via the enemy body count (*Semana* 2008c). International organizations like the United Nations (Alston 2010), Amnesty International (2008; 2009; 2010; 2013), Human Rights Watch (2012, 228–235; 2011, 227–232), International Federation for Human Rights (2012), among others have explained the False Positives as the result of the formal and informal benefits, including monetary rewards, that the DSD policy set out in a series of classified directives issued by the Ministry of Defense, in exchange for successful military operations (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, República de Colombia 2005). The False Positives are referred to as instances of the body count mentality or the body count syndrome (International Federation for Human Rights and The Coordination Colombia - Europe - United States (CCEEU) 2012). The DSD policy has encouraged civilians, through its program of informants, to report the location and identity of enemy combatants in exchange for cash rewards ("Información de Cooperantes Permitió Realizar 21 Mil Operativos En 2005" 2013). This policy has extended to the military through secret directives in which military units receive bonuses for capturing or killing enemy combatants or for seizing any property or element that can contribute to weakening the enemy's position.

Indeed the DSD policy has put in place an economy of death by which members of the military forces gain benefits from protracting the Colombian conflict through staged successful combats. Notwithstanding the significance of this argument, in what follows I analyze this practice by considering the intersection between the economy of death, the

[13] National Commission for the Search of Disappeared Persons – a permanent national body, created in 2000 by Law 589. The National Search Commission is composed of representatives from the Prosecutor General's Office, the Inspector General's Office, the National Ombudsman's Office, the Defense Ministry, the Presidential Human Rights Office, Medicina Legal, ASFADDES and the Colombian Commission of Jurists.

construction of alterity through a fabricated enemy body, and the establishment of the national territory in connection with global security policies. I argue that explaining these events based solely on the rewards and benefits given in exchange for systematic killing, and placing responsibility only on those who pulled the trigger, obscures the historical categories and social relations through which the body of a young man is turned into a commodity and his corpse is inscribed with the image of the enemy.

The reports issued by international organizations speak of the victims as young men belonging to vulnerable populations living in marginalized areas, where "recruiters" picked targets with mental disabilities or substance abuse problems, and/or who were unemployed and desperate for money. The victims were lured into leaving their homes with the promise of work and transported 300 to 400 miles to a location where they were killed. The vulnerability outlined by these reports is not only the result of belonging to a marginalized population. There are modes of domination that are not considered in this image of the victim. In these reports, these young men's vulnerability is seen as external to and prior to the power that murdered them. They were already victims before their murder. In this chapter I ask, How to understand the monopoly of violence, when the state fakes its legitimate power to kill its enemies by performing illegitimate violence against its own citizens, marginalized and vulnerable citizens who are re-labeled by the state as enemies? If war-making is state-making, following Charles Tilly (1985) ,what state is being made by these enactments of war?

Cash Rewards and the Economy of Death

The exact number of False Positives is still unconfirmed. Approximately 4,000 cases have been reported to various state institutions including the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Inspector General and the Ombudsman (Alston 2010, 11; *Semana* 2009; *El Espectador* 2014). However, organizations like the United Nations and Human Rights Watch estimate more cases that have gone unreported because of concerns to personal safety when raising complaints against agents of the state, and the lack of information about where and how to make a such complaints (Alston 2010). Actually, the relatives of many victims have received death threats to coerce them into dropping charges; some have been injured and killed for pursuing legal action, and others have relocated due to the permanent fear of death.[14] International organizations and academic studies confirmed that the practice of the so-called False Positives reached its peak between 2002 and 2010 during the implementation of the DSD policy and its policies of rewards (*Semana* 2014).

The DSD policy has followed two different courses of action to introduce cash rewards into the conflict as a way of influencing the invisible "battlefield" of the war on terror. The first course of action took the form of an incentive to perform, to show results: the Ministry of Defense established the legal framework by which members of the Colombian Armed forces would earn bonuses for capturing or killing enemies of the state. The second way that money was distributed within the Colombian war scenario was through the policy of cooperation embodied in the programs of Co-operation Networks and Informants. The purpose of these programs is to enroll civilians in a "culture of security," to integrate the civilian population into the Colombian Armed Forces in a national effort that would create, according to the DSD policy, a "security of solidarity" (Republic of Colombia

[14] Both of Carmenza Gómez's sons have been killed. The first one, Víctor Fernando Gómez disappeared in August 23, 2008 and was found dead two days later 400 miles away from his home; he was a victim of the False Positives. Five months later, her son John Nilson was killed as a result of searching for the truth about his brother's death. He received several death threats warning him to not pursue legal action. For a second case, similar to this one, see the Amnesty International report "Colombia: Murdered man's brother threatened" (Amnesty International 2009).

2003, 57). Cooperants are defined by the DSD policy as committed citizens who enrolled in the network out of patriotism and solidarity, without expecting monetary rewards. And informants are citizens who seize the opportunity and provide the Colombian Armed Forces with valuable information in exchange for money.

The DSD Rewards Policy has been defined through a series of decrees and confidential directives issued by the Ministry of Defense: Directive No. 29 (2005), Directive No.2 (2008) and Directive No. 1 (2009), in addition to decree 1400 (2006) known as the beret decree, later derogated in 2007. All of these documents are classified although Directive No. 29 has been widely circulated as a direct consequence of the False Positives scandal (Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular 2011, 2:251). Directive No. 29 outlines what the rewards are and who is entitled to earn them (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, República de Colombia 2005). Additionally, it defines the criteria through which the value of a member of an illegal organization can be assessed. For this purpose, it creates a scale from level I to level V, based on a criminal's role in terrorist acts and the national, regional or local impact of his actions.

The highest reward, level I, is up to $2.5 million dollars for ringleaders of an illegal organization, regardless of their rank within the top-level hierarchy, that are "publicly renowned for the atrocities committed against the population and/or constitute a threat to national security" (Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular 2011, 2:255 my translation) Level II is a reward for up to $900,000 dollars for the capture or killing of a top-level leader or regular guerrilla member who is responsible for organizing, supporting or developing terrorist actions with a national impact. These two instances (level I and II) describe an enemy based on the responsibility they have held in planning and developing terrorist actions that have strongly affected national security. The scope of influence of Level III and IV is between the regional and local reach of the terrorist actions. Level V profiles the direct perpetrators of attacks, often those of the lowest rank who are carrying out the orders of their superiors in crimes like kidnapping, extortion, cattle rustling, ambushes, harassment, or attacks on military installations or towns. Each level determines the maximum number of rewards that can be given. For example, there can only be 40 rewards in level I, whereas level IV and V have no limit. The document also outlines in detail the money given in exchange for equipment seized during military operations and categorizes it under war material, unconventional weaponry and explosives, systems of information, special equipment, communication equipment, vehicles, drugs and chemicals, industrial machinery, medical equipment and pharmaceuticals, and livestock. Seizing a chainsaw brings a $50 reward; a horse, $5; a digital camera, $100; a cell phone, $5. Directive 29 states,

> a. Payment of rewards:
> Consists of a cash payment or in kind compensation, previously established by the national government to an indeterminate person in exchange for timely and truthful information that leads to the capture or overthrow in combat of leaders of Illegal Armed Groups. [...]
> b. Payment for information:
> It is a compensation, cash or in kind, given to a natural person in exchange for providing relevant information in the interest of intel, counterintelligence and criminal investigations regarding any criminal activity that affects the stability and security of any region of the country. [...] (Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular 2011, 2:254–5 my translation).

For three years (2005 to 2008), the category of "indeterminate person" category allowed members of the Colombian Armed Forces to qualify for benefits from this directive. How could a member of the state apparatus act as an informant and a member of the military, existing both outside and inside of the war scenario? Directive 002 of 2008 amended

Directive 29 by excluding public servants from receiving rewards. But, Decree 1400 of 2006 formalized bonuses specifically for members of the Colombian Armed forces who participated in successful military operations of national importance. This decree was derogated in 2007 but at the time Directive 29 was still in place, allowing rewards to be collected by members of the state's security apparatus (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, República de Colombia 2005). In addition to the incentives established by the DSD policy for the Colombian Armed Forces and informants, Decree 128, 2003 ruled that members of illegal organizations in the process of demobilization that want to collaborate by providing information to the justice system will also be entitled to rewards (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, República de Colombia 2003).

Through this legal framework, the DSD policy made information the most valuable commodity in the war on terror. The value of information was based on the verifiable results it produced. Results equal rewards. Directive 29 included a series of protocols to assess the value of information that would function as a guarantee for payment. It required a report from both the commander of the battalion and his superior listing the details of the operation, organizational charts of the illegal group in question and a mandatory photographic record and/or video taken at the site of the incident (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, República de Colombia 2005). This report was then verified by revisions and approvals up and down the chain of command. This process led to a reformulation of information that collapsed the initial category of informants as outsiders and intelligence gatherers as insiders. Examining the subject positions of informants and cooperants, civilians and members of the Colombian Armed Forces, interpellated by the Colombian state in an economy of terror, and mediated by the image/record of the enemy of the state, results in a better understanding of the landscape within which the False Positives became a natural occurrence during the years of the DSD policy (2004 – 2009).

Informants and Collaborators, Civilians and Members of the Colombian Armed Forces, Insiders and Outsiders: A Pedagogical Process

The DSD policy defines six methods for defeating terrorism: coordinating state action, strengthening state institutions, consolidating control of the Colombian territory, protecting the rights of all Colombians and the nation's infrastructure, cooperating for the security of all, and communicating state policy and action (Republic of Colombia 2003, 33). "Cooperating for the security of all" defines the set of policies through which the government encourages the collaboration of all Colombian citizens as a constitutional duty. For this purpose, the DSD policy created the Co-operation network: citizens in both rural and urban areas who, guided by patriotism, provide voluntary and timely information to prevent terrorist and criminal actions (Republic of Colombia 2003, 57). They do not receive any payment; instead their reward is the sense of security in their community, security being defined by the government as "an effort of the entire State and of all Colombians. A strong State structure, supported by citizen solidarity, guarantees the rule of law and the respect of rights and civil liberties" (Republic of Colombia 2003, 7).

The DSD policy legitimizes the Co-operation networks under article 95 of the Colombian Constitution. Article 95 reads: "Every person must… 2) comply with the principle of social solidarity, responding with humanitarian actions to situations that place the life or health of persons at risk." According to the DSD policy, cooperants and informants are the true mechanisms of social solidarity, whose actions should produce what the DSD policy calls "the security of solidarity" (Republic of Colombia 2003, 57). In this sense, the duty of social solidarity is what should drive every Colombian to collaborate with the Colombian Armed Forces. However, just months before president Álvaro Uribe took office for the first time (2002), the Constitutional Court of Colombia ruled, in sentence C-251/02, that the

cooperation of civilians should never put them in a position of being labeled allies or enemies, thus making cooperation with the state in regards to defense and security optional (Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2002). Álvaro Uribe Vélez addressed this court ruling in his speech of November 11, 2002 stating, "Personally, I'm convinced otherwise, that the principle of solidarity, as it is built into our social democratic state, requires mandatory cooperation" (Uribe Vélez 2002b all translations of President Uribe are the author's). Forced to comply with the court's interpretation of the constitution, Uribe Vélez adds, "I am of the view that it is obligatory, however the government wants to practice it voluntarily, so we told the police and the army to achieve voluntary citizen support through pedagogy" (Uribe Vélez 2002b). With this statement, Álvaro Uribe Vélez hints at the methodological approach of the DSD policy. He articulates a distinction between theory and practice: in theory, as the court's interpretation of the constitution states, solidarity with the state is voluntary, but in practice, it is obligatory. In practice the DSD policy has put in place different mechanisms, in which education and coercion intersect as they invoke the duty to be Colombian. On different occasions, Uribe Vélez presented an image of Colombians under the reign of terror. He said that Colombians did not trust the corrupted and weak state and fell prey to indifference, thereby forgetting their constitutional duties. The DSD policy's response to this attitude is the Co-operation Networks and the rewards programs. Between theory and practice, the DSD policy establishes a process of transformation, a pedagogical process that would reawaken a patriotic citizenry committed to the security of all and supportive of state institutions and the Colombian Armed Forces. The police and the army are the pedagogues who recruit the collaboration of the Colombian citizens.

The DSD policy makes reference to the success of programs like Neighborhood Watch in other countries as perfect examples for the Co-operation networks and the program of informants (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, República de Colombia 2004a, 1–2). However, the reference is not transparent; there are several differences between programs like Neighborhood Watch and the Co-operating Networks. The network is not a civilian force or part of a community effort to reduce crime. Cooperants are anonymous and operate discreetly. Their identities are kept secret to protect them from retaliation by illegal groups. Neighborhood Watch is a civic organization that identifies itself as such. Conversely, the cooperant is recruited through a pedagogical process formulated by the DSD policy. The members of the network do not know each other; only the commander of the security forces who recruited them has knowledge of their individual identities; it is his network, not a network of citizens. The cooperant remains hidden within the network and his patriotism is transferred to the success of the military operation.

"Cooperating in the security of all" was expressed by the DSD policy in the following statement: "if 44 million Colombians support and feel supported by the State, terrorism can be defeated" (Republic of Colombia 2003, 57). During Álvaro Uribe Vélez's presidency, the number of cooperants was constantly invoked in his speeches. In 2002, the goal was set to recruit 1,000,000 people to participate in the recently established Co-operating Network program. By 2003, after reaching the initial goal, Uribe invited Colombians to set a new mark: "let's reach the goal of 5,000,000 people collaborating with the Colombian Armed Forces, that will be our next step towards what Colombia must be: 44 million people surrounding the State institutions in order to defeat crime" (Uribe Vélez 2003a). In 2009, in his closing remarks at the 7th Pan-American Conference on Private Security, he stated that the network was comprised of 4,000,000 Cooperants (Uribe Vélez 2009b). In 2010, he stated that the network included 2 million 200 thousand active members (Sala de Prensa, Presidencia de la República de Colombia 2010a). In his last speech as President, Uribe Vélez announced:

> I am going to ask the elected President Juan Manuel Santos, to allow me, starting on the night of August 7th, when I return to the beautiful role of being a simple citizen of Colombia, to be part of the network of cooperants. But I will not carry a gun: only a cell phone, which is all we need to inform the authorities and help them defeat crime (Sala de Prensa, Presidencia de la República de Colombia 2010b).

Álvaro Uribe Vélez posits his voluntary enlistment in the Co-operating Network as an example of good citizenship. Now that he has returned to being a simple citizen, his next step is to become an active supporter of the Colombian Armed Forces by denouncing and reporting criminal activity. He invokes a pedagogical process, positioning himself as the paradigmatic citizen. During the years of the DSD policy, members of the Colombian Armed Forces were consistently interpolated as pedagogues charged with the task of persuading Colombian citizens to collaborate with them: persuasion rather than coercion.

> [With the DSD policy] information is obtained with solidarity and good treatment. From the President, the Minister of Defense, from the highest level of command to the most humble policeman and soldier, we have to proceed with persuasion, with clear communication, with commitment, with respect for all human beings, so peasants and all citizens repudiate the terrorists and come to us in support of the Colombian Armed Forces. Each Member of the security forces has to be an educator to attract the public trust (Uribe Vélez 2003a).

> Every officer and every policeman of our country will be a pedagogue to persuade the citizenry to cooperate with the security forces. Nobody can complain at being constrained or coerced to collaborate; much more than the principle of self-defense, cooperation rests on solidarity, essential to the foundation of the Democratic state (Uribe Vélez 2002a).

The DSD policy makes a distinction between persuasion and coercion. The DSD policy does not deny that the Colombian Armed Forces are the legal coercive arm of the State; in fact DSD policy, using the international aid brought by the Plan Colombia has invested greatly in counterinsurgency training, technology and resources in order to strengthen the tactical ability of the Colombian Armed Forces. However, DSD policy makes the distinction between persuasion and coercion in order to collapse it. It is in the subject of the policeman and soldier where persuasion and coercion are integrated. Members of the Colombian Armed Forces are asked to reeducate the Colombian citizen and defeat terrorists in one and the same strategy. The DSD policy provides us with a story that explains the effects terrorism has had in the minds of every Colombian citizen. It purports that since material violence weighed so heavily on Colombians, the natural result was apathy, apathy towards the state and towards each other. In other words, the anarchic and intangible forces of terrorism have colonized the minds of the citizens making them despise the law. This narrative is set to explain the apparent weak commitment of the Colombian citizen to state institutions, which the state responds to by blurring the line between force and education. DSD policy has called for a "total revolution in education" and a "cultural revolution of security" (Uribe Vélez 2010a).

Persuasion in the hands of members of the Armed Forces is a counter-insurgency strategy established to integrate citizenry into the state security apparatus in order to win the war against terrorism and, at the same time, re-educate Colombian citizens. The "cultural revolution of security" and "the total revolution in education" are set to place security as a "democratic value […] a transversal element for the prosperity in all facets of Colombian life" (Uribe Vélez 2010a). This program of re-education promotes an ideological change at the core of DSD policy that would permeate the country's social fabric. By blurring the

distinction between force and education, the battlefield of the war on terrorism is broadened to include schools, transportation and taxi agencies, union offices, and community organizations, among others. The operating manual (designed to guide members of the Colombian Armed Forces through the process of setting up a Co-operating Network) suggests recruiting individuals that belong to previously established social organizations in order to take advantage of their social modes of communication and connections (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, República de Colombia 2004b, 1).

The power of persuasion is transferred to those who hold the monopoly of force. However the exercise of persuasion has not been as transparent as DSD policy has declared. Persuasion by itself "with clear communication, with commitment, with respect for all human beings, so peasants and all citizens repudiate the terrorists and come to us in support of the Colombian Armed Forces" did not produce substantial results (Uribe Vélez 2003a). The members of the security forces found that regular Colombian citizens were unwilling to collaborate. Confronted with the indifference of the Colombian population, the DSD policy began to provide additional incentives, in the form of money and rewards, to motivate collaboration.

> Last week, in Cartagena I was talking to Admiral Barrera, the commander in Bolívar, and he said to me "President, the problem is that people do not collaborate here," "Insist, Admiral, insist." [...] We need to insist week after week, to show that we are not going to fail with our Rewards Monday program, it gives us credibility. There are two ways of offering a reward: one is punctual and the other is permanent. The occasional reward is generally reactive, when a major security incident occurs, then the government offers a reward in order to find those responsible. The permanent reward gives us more credibility because the state is not merely reacting, but taking the initiative. It doesn't have to be much, the important thing is its regularity. It should reliably arrive every Monday. When people see the money flowing regularly, every Monday, they will start cooperating and collaborating. We want our citizens to know that the public force pays out on Mondays (Uribe Vélez 2003b).

President Uribe sees that if the state becomes a regular provider of cash rewards, citizens will be willing to cooperate with it. However, in another speech he specifies the context of such stimulus as the principle of solidarity rather than regular and reliable money payments.

> Providing information must be driven by the principle of solidarity, because we are all responsible for our society. The rewards program cannot replace solidarity, however, it stimulates those who, at a given time, might need financial support.

We could ask, what reaction does the government of Uribe Vélez expect: solidarity or information? In response to the criticism raised by the False Positives scandal and its economy of death, President Uribe stated the reason why cash rewards were necessary.

> Why have we offered rewards? Because widespread criminality, which has hurt Colombians so much and which we have not yet totally defeated, has impelled us to stimulate Colombians to provide information about criminals through rewards (Sala de Prensa, Presidencia de la República de Colombia 2008)

The explanation offered here is that widespread criminality has made Colombians unwilling to cooperate, due to their distrust and their apathy. Uribe Vélez's government answered with a motivation that can compete with the mental, social and economic structures that have been established by years of living among criminality: cash rewards. President Uribe Vélez displaced the state's responsibility to the damage exerted by criminals in

Colombia. Money is seen as a driving force to making the country secure, just as the mafia in the 1980's and 1990's used their money to create alliances and buy silence.

When money is added as an additional factor to persuasion, the distinction between informants and cooperants collapses. The answer to citizens' reluctance to collaborate is to make the state a provider of financial support. The money arriving on regular basis to the hands of those in need, locates the state outside the precariousness of the population. In other words the state serves as a benefactor in a situation it denies being a part of. It is as if the state and its policies were not shaping an economy of inequality. In 2008, from the total national budget of 3.56 billion pesos, 2.3 billion was allotted to military expenditure; a total of 6.5% of the GNP (Isaza Delgado, José Fernando and Campos Romero, Diógenes. 2009, 4). The state posits itself as external to the financial realities of the country and its citizens, but uses that reality to recruit for the Co-operating Network.

In order to efficiently recruit, the members of the armed forces need to locate those average citizens in need of money. Through periodic monetary incentives given to cooperants, the state social assistance services were dislocated toward the militarization of aid. However, for the purpose of this analysis, it is necessary to accurately name this money exchange. Is it a form of aid or is it a reward? Is it a salary or is it a bribe? Each form of monetary exchange creates its own form of social obligation. Think about how a bribe binds the briber and bribed. The periodic payment to cooperants from their recruiters is not a reward, even if the DSD policy program calls it that: Rewards Monday. The money does not come in exchange for information that has proved to be valuable, but rather quite the opposite: the money arrives before the collaboration has produced advantageous results. The Rewards Mondays program establishes a specific type of relationship, more than articulating a commodity exchange. This money is setting a debt in advance. Advancing money for information that has not yet been received creates a social obligation rooted in debt. A debt sets a moral relationship between the parties, entailing a punishment if payments are not met.

Friedrich Nietzsche in On the Genealogy of Morality (2006) suggests that the feeling of guilt emerges from the materiality embedded in relations of selling and buying, which translates in an indebtedness towards another: "The feeling of guilt, of personal obligation, […] originated, as we saw, in the oldest and most primitive personal relationship there is, in the relationship of buyer and seller, creditor and debtor: here person met person for the first time, and measured himself person against person" (2006, 45). Nietzsche presents almost a visual encounter in which two parties compare each other as equals, but whose relationship unfolds in indebtedness. It is through debt that one party asserts itself upon the other. From the debt comes duty and from unfulfilled duty comes punishment. Nietzsche makes an important connection between punishment, memory and debt. If someone failed to pay off a debt, that obligation could be settled by their submission to punishment, cruelty, or torture. If a creditor could not have his money back, he could have its equivalent in pain and torture. But pain also has a place in memory; Nietzsche tells us, "pain was the most powerful aid to mnemonics" (2006, 38). Therefore the mnemonics of it ensures that the debtor will not forget his debt/promise next time.

To transfer this figure of social interaction to the relationship between cooperants and members of the armed forces relationship, we find that there is already –before the regular payments– a form of debt. In his last speech as President of Colombia, Álvaro Uribe Vélez addressed the Colombian Armed Forces, and pointed out the unpayable debt that each Colombian has with every member of the security apparatus (Uribe Vélez 2010b). Upon this initial debt, cash rewards and regular payments set a second debt. The imbalance of power between the recruiter and the informant already brings the image of punishment into the relationship.

Cooperants are recruited based on their need for financial support, to which the state responds by providing a token of solidarity, a small stimulus, in order to establish a fictitious exchange of a commodity that, at the time of the contract, does not exist. The recruiter pays for a commodity that he has not yet received. The cooperant's vulnerability is used for recruitment but it is also restated as the fictitious exchange continues. The cooperant fears retaliation from the enemies of the state, because his position as collaborator dissolves the distinction between civilians and combatants in war conflicts. However, it is the state that dissolves this distinction. With the small monetary token the state makes an alliance that ensures the flow of money, as well as fear. David Graeber asks a relevant question, which I apply to articulate the moral obligation the DSD policy seeks to create in Colombian citizenry, with the financial advances as educational incentives. He asks, "How do social obligations, rights and duties that people have with one another, end up becoming attached themselves to objects of material wealth, so that the mere transfer of such objects can often render one person entirely at another's command?" (Graeber 2009).

Inverting the structure of the question, I would like to ask, how does the transfer of money create social obligations, rights and duties in people, rendering the receiver of the monetary transfer, under the giver's command? In this dynamic the amount of money is not important. Social obligation and duties do not exist apart from the physical world in which they are present; they are not metaphysical external forces that suddenly strike Colombians initiating the dynamics of solidarity with the state's security forces. My contention is that vulnerability – both economic as well as the one that arises through dissolving the distinction between combatants and civilians through permanent cash rewards– is the site where social obligation emerges, and in turn, the latter continuously re-stages such vulnerability.

Figure 10: drawing by Luis Morán, a copy of a photograph taken by the Colombian National Police.

The economic rewards given by the state make the population vulnerable to retaliation from irregular armies and criminal bands. As the conflict in Colombia has taken a new turn in 2013 with the Havana peace talks, different organizations have decided to undertake their own peace conversations with the FARC-EP as well. One case is the indigenous peoples of Cauca (*Semana.com* 2013). They have decided to address one of the most ruthless commanders of the FARC, Timochenko, as they feel that the conversations happening in

Cuba do not reflect the day-to-day reality of the conflict in their land. The public letters written to Timonchenko question the FARC's ideological stance stating that their war is not against the Colombian state but to the Colombian people and specifically to the indigenous population. Since 2002 the FARC has murdered 70 indigenous leaders just in the small region of Cauca, and the latest victim was the traditional medicine man Benancio Taquinás, a killing that occurred on April 29, 2013 in the middle of the Havana peace talks. Commander Timochenko replied by accusing the traditional medicine man of being an informant for the Colombian Armed Forces whose cooperation, he claims, resulted in great losses to the FARC's mobile column Jacobo Arenas and the 6th front. In response, the indigenous organizations stated that the informants are inside the FARC but that "the commanders would rather blame us than take responsibility for their poor recruitment strategy" (*Semana.com* 2013 my translation). This exchange of letters exhibit the paranoia and the exacerbation of vulnerability that the DSD policy has put in place through their networks of informants and cooperants. The constant suspicion allows the cycles of violence to continue. Nobody knows who is speaking to the ears of the security apparatus. And once there is the suspicion that so and so is an informant or cooperant, a chain of retaliation has begun, and there is no one to question whether that is really the case.

The economy of death as a stimulus to those in need of financial support hints at a market of information, in which vulnerability is a variable contemplated in "the rate of return" and the state is the main beneficiary. In the following speech, Álvaro Uribe reformulated the figure of the collaborator or cooperant. Addressing the geographical difficulties of patrolling the national borders and bordering countries' concerns about coca cultivation and terrorist migration into their territories, Uribe Vélez, speaks of the river that marks the border between Ecuador and Colombia and states:

> Look, we have made many efforts on the border with Ecuador. We are not able to station a soldier at every meter along the riverbed; it is impossible. And the terrorists make use of any free space. […]. We have improved a lot, yes, but we need much more. […] The security forces alone are not enough; we cannot station a soldier every meter along the riverbed, but what we can do is to avail of citizens' cooperation. Without their collaboration, it is impossible to ensure our effectiveness. […] I invite you to set up a Co-operating Network with economic bonuses along the entire line of the riverbed, and in any other place in our homeland, wherever it is required. We give them a little bit of money each month, to help them to carry out their duties, and we compel them further with the cause of the homeland, to inform the police. […] In the end, the budget that we use for the program is very small, and it has a very high rate of return. [Members of the Colombian Armed Forces] supervise the collaborators, guide them, remunerate them, reward them; it costs us little and helps us a lot. Success at a relatively low cost equals efficiency (Uribe Vélez 2009c).

This discourse on security is transversal with an economic rationality that uses modes of resource optimization as a social organizing principle. It is an articulation between the insurmountable geographical landscape of Colombia, the optimization of the national budget and the citizens' eyes as cheap means to multiply the scopic regime of the security apparatus in places where there is no state presence.

In *Security, Territory and Population* (2009), Michel Foucault describes what he calls the apparatuses of security. Foucault outlines the different spatial organizations that emerge from the legal juridical, disciplinary and security apparatuses (*dispositifs*). Legal juridical regimes are always exercising within the borders of a particular territory; disciplinary apparatuses configure spatial hierarchies of constant surveillance by the distribution of individuals, and security apparatuses navigate through a given space (2009, 12–14). The

latter does not create a space but rather simply navigates the conditions of a given space. A security apparatus projects itself after analyzing a set of probabilities, in order to maximize the success of modulating a given space, while taking into consideration its uncertainties and instability. Foucault borrows, from biology, the concept of the "milieu" in order to define the space of intervention of security apparatuses. The milieu is the medium for the circulation of goods, people and wealth, simultaneously producing and regulating the already existent natural and artificial movements of the multiplicities of social life in the body of the population (2009, 20–21). Upon the indomitable geography of Colombia –a natural given–, the DSD policy does not propose a spatial organization but rather a spatial gaze. This *dispositif* does not act through the artificial disciplinary space of distributions and hierarchies, but through the distribution of surveillance in which the inhabitants of the riverbank are subjects and objects at the same time. Here surveillance is a mechanism anchored in the optimization of resources, what Foucault calls "the economic behavior of the population" and not in a system of corrections (2009, 41). Indeed, surveillance is a disciplinary mechanism; however here it is incorporated into the security apparatus and used for modulating probable events occurring between gazes and market logics.

When speaking of the subject of these investments, Foucault explains that these *dispositifs,* instead of subjecting the individual to obligatory rules, *anticipate* what decisions and calculations the subject will make when facing an event. In his example of scarcity, Foucault provides a set of questions that guide the analysis of the security apparatus as it attempts to calculate the behavior of the subject of its investments:

> We will try to identify, understand, and know how and why they act, what calculation they make when, faced with a price rise, they hold back grain, and what calculation they make when, on the other hand, they know there is freedom, when they do not know how much grain will arrive, when they hesitate so as to know whether there will be a rise or fall in the amount of grain. All of this, that is to say that completely concrete element of the behavior of homo æconomicus, must also be taken into account (2009, 40–41).

The Co-operating Network Program anticipates its commodity –information– as the result of modulating a set of probabilities within the behavior of "the homo æconomicus." Foucault states that there is no age of sovereignty, disciplinary age and then age of security; they do not replace one another (2009, 8). These mechanisms coexist in a "fuzzy history of technologies" within which any mechanism –at any moment– could be redeployed within specific tactics in combination with any other mechanism from the disciplinary or security apparatus or from the legal-juridical system. In Colombia, surveillance does not operate as a disciplinary mechanism by creating a series of spatial *dispositifs* in order to formulate an arrangement of order and truth. Rather, it is inscribed within the security apparatus and uses the population and their eyes as nothing more than cheap means in a costly war, working as a variable within the choices that "homo æconomicus" must make to survive. Instead of proposing the hierarchical gaze of a disciplinary apparatus, DSD policy multiplies its optic machine into a rhizome of gazes. In the network, the eyes of others watch the watcher while watching them. The collaborator knows he is the eyes of the state without knowing who else is watching, other than his recruiter who sees them all. The manual of the Co-operating Network states,

> Optimization of Resources:
> A well used Co-operating Network allows unit commanders to optimize the human and logistical resources, so that the eyes of the security forces are multiplied throughout the region, through the citizens linked to the network, who become an early warning system (Ministerio de Defensa, República de Colombia 2006, 9).

This statement reveals relations of force that dramatize a security economy driven by optimization and integration of surveillance and territory, the security forces of the state and the Colombian citizenry. If we continue using the example of the river described above, it is a given natural space with limitations for state presence; the president in his speech reveals that the state cannot post a soldier at every meter along the riverbank. Instead of modifying such space, the security apparatus inserts a disciplinary mechanism, surveillance, understood as an organizing principle of circulation of goods –information– derived from an apparent economic choice for those living in places where the state cannot exert full presence and who are in need of extra income.

In this framework, the state organizes security as every citizen's responsibility, which makes the Co-operating Network and the periodic bonuses a problem of demand and not a form of political rule based on economic exploitation. With the DSD policy announcing that "the cultural revolution of security" is prosperity for all, then the state's duty of protecting all of its citizens is redefined by a fantasy of safety in which every citizen can prosper as a self-regulating individual. Security is made everyone's responsibility through a principle of optimization and resource management in which the security apparatus of the state is extended to society, producing a citizen who is "a leading and strategic player in the definition of security, support and cooperation with the authorities" (Departamento Nacional de Planeación 2003, 45). However, these techniques of management are only possible by articulating a subject whose decisions are based on a cost/benefit analysis. Security is then a field of economic rationality, colonized by apparent external forces of efficiency and prosperity. Security is constructed in the organization of demand based on heightening vulnerability; in this process the state locates itself outside any social principle as if it were outside any social reality.

Paola Castaño in her study of categorizations in the Colombian Armed Conflict, states "one of the fundamental questions about the Co-operating Network is that of its consensual/voluntary or coerced/forced character particularly with regard to the issue of remuneration for cooperation" (2010, 59). My contention is that these questions cannot be answered as either/or. Instead, and in order to address this question, the following passage by Michel Foucault is helpful:

> I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, […] He has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, he has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion or domination. The contact point, where the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think, government. Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself (1993, 203–4)

Foucault, in the passage, integrates domination/coercion and technologies of the self in which contestatory processes of persuasion and coercion are transversally integrated into one another. For Foucault, conduct and freedom to act cannot be understood outside of the techniques of power and more specifically outside of the security apparatuses (2009, 48). It is within the latter that freedom is understood as letting things develop, understanding why and how things happen but oriented towards programming its future in the form of self-regulation (2009, 41). The way an individual behaves is necessarily tied to others, therefore this integration of coercion and persuasion is also transversal to different bodies: cooperants as

recruited civilians in need of financial support, cooperants as demobilized ex-paramilitary, and cooperants as retired military profiting from the economic logic of the conflict. What I have analyzed above concerns only the first category of cooperants, those recruited civilians in need of financial support. However, the same economic logic (optimization of resources, efficient management of means, and a high rate of return) drives retired military and ex-paramilitary to join the Co-operating Network. Here are some extracts from the testimony of Mayor Julio César Parga, during the legal proceedings against members of the Colombian Armed Forces, regarding the False Positives.

> We relied on the Co-operating Network, who are retired officers and noncommissioned officers, […] The cooperants would bring us the victims, who were lured by deception to the site of the events. At the same time a patrol was in the field conducting a search maneuver as part of their mission. This was to show that the patrol was provoked by the enemy during a mission and that they were merely reacting when engaging in combat, thus justifying the use of ammunition, rifles and the casualties. But the truth is that the provocation never existed because we had already coordinated [the recruiters] taking the victims to the site, meaning that the victims were deceived into going there […] To launch this kind of operation we had to have denunciations from the community, which is why we relied on the network to seek cooperating civilians to make accusations […] the information was fictitious, they [informants] were just used to collect the money, then we gave them part of it and kept the rest for us. This was done in order to legalize the budget assigned by the Brigade […] Since the subjects had no weapons we had to stage some around them […]Captain Parra's job was to heat up the area, which, in coordination with the Co-operating Network, had to be done a week before the day of the events in order to generate a sense of insecurity in the area. Captain Parra had to do this [agitation], in collaboration with the Co-operating Network (Observatorio de derechos humanos y derecho humanitario 2012, 53-4, my translation).

Mayor Parga describes a modus operandi of collapsing ex-military personnel, ex-paramilitary and citizens in need of money into the same figure of the cooperant to guarantee the highest rate of return. These cooperants were on the lookout for what could pass as the enemy: they brought the victims. Their job as informants is to craft the image of the enemy into the body of another by luring these young men into the economic opportunity of their lives. Their modus operandi quoted above outlines how the security forces operate, in order to protract the Colombian war for their own benefit. In these locations where a false sense of insecurity was created, the corpses were an index of control and security that nonetheless iterated a fear of the outsider and guaranteed the military presence, which in turn benefitted from the money allotted to the Co-operating Network and informants. The ex-military men as cooperants seek to continue benefit from a structure they are well acquainted with: civilians earning money from their collaboration with the security apparatus of the state. Being ex-military gave them privileged knowledge, which allowed them to use the system on their behalf. Here there is a cycle of different sets of economic variables at play, but they are all driven by the same logic of the highest rate of return: risk management, "internal revenue," organized profit and availability of resources, among others.

Areas: mapping distance and constructing representation

The documentary *False Positives* by Simone Bruno and Dado Carillo (2009), traces the ordeal the loved ones of false positive victims went through. Dorian Constanza and Hector met because her fiancé, Norbeiro and his brother, Alexander were killed in the same skirmish, according to the Colombian Army. After being notified of her fiancé's death,

Constanza recalls meeting with the regional attorney and asking to see images of his body to confirm his identity. In addition to recounting the details in the photos that remind her of the history they shared; a tattoo on his wrist that symbolized their love and the white jacket he was wearing that she had bought for him, she also signals the anomalies in the pictures. In the photographs, there is an old carbine next to the body. Hector, the brother of the second victim, Alexander, states that his brother suffered from severe bipolar affective disorder. Alexander's body was photographed next to a submachine gun leading Hector and Constanza to wonder how Alexander, in his condition, could fire such a weapon while Norbeiro, who had been in the military, is pictured next to an old carbine. In the documentary, "False Positives, a story that could have been avoided" (Morris 2010), Viviana Andrea Salcedo retells the story of her brother while holding an image of him with crutches. She says her brother went out to have a beer with a friend nearby but never returned. After searching for him for two days, she went to the Technical Investigation Team. They showed her what they claimed were images of dead guerrillas killed in combat. Recognizing her brother in one of the photos, she remarked that that was impossible, her brother was not a guerrilla but a member of the Colombian Army who was on a combat-related injury leave. The first thing siblings of false positive victims recall is seeing an image of a corpse. In these photographs, they both recognize their loved ones and reject the way they are portrayed.

Through these images, there is a process of recognition through misrecognition, between what is apparently real and its representation. The certainty of the referent is disputed: that is indeed Alexander's body, but that is not Alexander. On the one hand, the families claim that their sons were unemployed young men, or in need of extra cash with the dream to build a home for their mothers or their new families. On the other, the security forces of the state claim that those men were looking for trouble, that they were new recruits for illegal organizations driven by ambition and easy money. "Family Portraits" is another documentary about the false positives, by Alexandra Cardona, that re-states the conflict between personal truth and state evidence. In the documentary, the mothers of Soacha share their personal history through family albums. The viewer is shown images of the victims in high school graduation pictures, as babies, and in military uniform during the year of mandatory military service: anecdotes and dreams of their dead sons told through old photographs that speak of a life presence in another time. The photographs issued by the Colombian Army also exhibit a presence: a dead body on the ground. However, there is also an absence that allows for the presence of the corpse. The absence of life constitutes the possibility of fabrication, a malleability that creates something other from the available corpse. The poses of those corpses in the photographs could only have taken shape as the bodies of the victims became posthumously manipulatable. Photographing the dead is a situation in which corpse and image coincide, an instance of total control over the pose. In this contestation of truth, the relatives of false positive victims constantly point out the untruths created about their loved ones: they were not delinquents; they were not rebels; they were not members of illegal organizations; they were not drug traffickers; they were not N.N. (Nomen nescio). These claims assert that the life lived by these young men did not match the way in which they died. The photographs of the corpses attempt to erase the signs of their previous identities. In Cardona's documentary, one of the mothers states, "They [the recruiters] thought these kids did not have mothers, brothers or sisters who were going to look for them."

These images taken by the state security forces as evidence of successful combats attempt to substitute any verbal explanation by stating the preeminence of the referent. These photographs assert, "Here is the rebel"; "here he is holding a gun, wearing military fatigues"; "There he is"; "He was dangerous"; "He is dead." However, the certitude of the referent is disputed in the encounter between the producers of the image (the security state apparatus),

the relatives of those portrayed, and the general public. This dispute is also a struggle rooted in distances. These encounters open a zone of contestation between what happened out there in a rural combat zone and here, understood as the urban homes and dwelling places of the victims of false positives. There and here are actual locations, for instance Ocaña and Soacha, as well as places of citizenship, of enactments of public and private spaces. The photographs in the family albums, as well as the pictures carried by relatives and friends of false positives during the protests against human rights violations committed by the state, open a debate by interpellating the photograph taken by the state as evidence and surpassing the intentions of those who took the picture.

Amnesty International (2008, 16) reports of an event registered in March 2002, in which a unit of the 4th Brigade opened fire on a car with five people in it and presented their corpses as guerrillas killed in combat. The bodies were presented to the press dressed in fatigues and with wires beside them that the army claimed were going to be used to blow up a dam. It is not clear whether the army fabricated the story to cover up an unintentional mistake or whether it was a premeditated false positive. Regardless, the image of the event offers an aura of certitude. However, the image exceeds what is made visible within the frame. The image is a part of a set of relationships that unfold in its production and distribution. Whether the army gathers the media around the corpses allowing them to take the photographs, or they take the images from the crime scene and then submit them to the media for publication, there is always a process of production and distribution that mediates between audiences. The iteration of these images reveals a pedagogical process by which one learns to see the enemy. The corpses generally appear with something that signals a viable threat: wires, bomb triggers, guns, explosives, and/or other weapons. Since the images of false positives have become evidence against military personnel in a legal process, it has become difficult to access them. Although, in 2010, the magazine *Semana* published a few photographs and audio recordings from the judicial proceedings (*Semana* 2010b). Here, I present four drawings copy of those photographs published by Magazine Semana made by the Colombian artist, Luis Morán.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Figures 11, 12,13, and 14: Drawings by Luis Morán, copies of photographs published in The Magazine Semana. The Photographs correspond to a False Positive attributed to the 7th Army Division. They issued a communication regarding this military operation and it reads "the largest military operation took place in the rural area of La India in the municipality of Chigorodó, Uraba, when troops of the Seventeenth Brigade, in a military control area operation, neutralized six suspected members of the criminal gang Bacrim in combat" (Semana 2010b).

The magazine explains that these photographs belong to a military operation questioned by the military judge Alexánder Cortés, who was in charge of overseeing the proceedings following each combat in the area. Cortés tells the magazine that there were apparent anomalies in this and other combats, so he decided to move the cases to the ordinary justice system. He suspected they were extrajudicial executions and not combat related deaths. Without any explanation, Judge Cortés was removed from office in 2010. The magazine recounts the anomalies found by Cortés:

> Among the dead were minors, and there were obvious flaws in the combat scene. The bodies of most of the dead were in odd positions for men who had allegedly been fighting. The clothes worn by many of the dead were too big, and sometimes brand-new. […] Some of the corpses had bullet wounds shot from a short range, and forensic testing to determine traces of gunpowder on any of the alleged gang members was negative (*Semana* 2010, my translation).

In the drawings above –copies of the photographs-- we see a supposed rebel with two hand grenades in his pants' pockets hanging from their safety levers; if a combatant were running with hand grenades hung from his pants like this, they could explode at any moment. In another image, a corpse wears new rubber boots on the wrong feet. A third corpse has his finger on the trigger of a machine gun but it is not squeezed as if he were shooting when shot. Should these anomalies be categorized as mistakes? Poor fabrications? My contention is that these images, including their anomalies, exhibit an effort to narrate the impending fear of the future. Indeed these images are a testimony to the past; nevertheless their narration could be explained in terms of a moralizing pedagogy for future citizens and ideal spectators. The images insist on resisting ambiguity. Two grenades in each pocket, finger on the trigger, and

extra magazines hidden inside the rubber boots are attempts to prove that killing these men was the only available recourse.

In 2011, one year after leaving office, Álvaro Uribe was asked about the false positive scandal at a meeting at a University in Bogotá. He said that those crimes had a painful truth. "I have a very sad story: I have spoken on many occasions with the mothers of Soacha. And many of them, in very private meetings, have confessed to me that unfortunately some of the boys were involved in illegal activities. Therefore, the issue is much more complicated than was first observed" (Caracol Noticias 2011). He is referring to issues of drug addiction that some of these men wrestled with at some point in their lives; a fact acknowledged by some of the mothers. In this statement, drug addiction is criminalized in a chain of crime: drug use , delinquency and finally drug trafficking and rebellion. This chain of evil by which the actions of the Army are read, not as human rights violations, but as their only course of action to halt the future threat posed by these young men justifies excesses committed by the security apparatus of the state in an economy of prevention. However, ambiguity is reinstated by the contestation that occurs in the encounter between different spectators: the mothers, the judges, magazines like *Semana*, and the general public.

In Bruno and Carillo's documentary (2009) Hector and Constanza travel more than 400 miles to recover the remains of their relatives, Alexander and Norbeiro. The first stop is the office of the regional forensic unit where they receive the results of the autopsies. The cause of death is listed as chronic anemia from hypovolemic shock. Alexander and Norbeiro did not die when they were shot, but were left to bleed to death from their wounds. Constanza and Hector's journey retraces the distance enacted between representation in the center of country where their loved ones are photographs of killed guerrillas, and the real, where their bodies remain. Constanza and Hector retrace the distance between a war somewhere and the center of power that commands such a war. This distance traces a geography of fear, an equation between representation, distance and an imagined other. The state, specifically through DSD policy, fragments the battlefield of the war against terrorism in order to objectify the country's geography. Colombia's geography is constantly read as part of the conflict. For example, Álvaro Uribe writes in his memoirs,

> Geography has always been Colombia's biggest blessing and our biggest curse: a blessing because our country is endowed with stunning natural beauty and resources, […] It is sometimes hard to believe that God has endowed one country with so much. Yet the same extraordinary terrain that yielded these bounties has also made aspects of governing Colombia extraordinary difficult –politically, economically and militarily. Throughout our history, this has almost always been the case. "A guerrilla's delight," was how a *Time* magazine reporter described it in 1956. Indeed our geography is one of the main reasons why, in two centuries of history, no government in Bogotá has ever been able to extend full control over our territory. Three distinct mountain ranges cut through the country from south to north, separated by deep valleys. Half of the country is virtually unpopulated –much of it in the south and east Amazon, the Orinoco river basin and its savannahs, and also in vast areas such as the Pacific coast. The mix of terrain makes Colombia a perfect place for armed groups to operate –and to hold hostages for years at a time (2012, 23).

As this excerpt attests, geography is deemed an obstacle for full sovereignty, a "chronic weakness," insurmountable, a curse and a blessing. The Colombian geography is epitomized by the image of the jungle. President Álvaro Uribe Vélez describes the jungle:

> The FARC usually held its prisoners in areas of thick jungle populated with snakes and other horrors. Twenty-foot anacondas were rumored to have

> dragged grown men underwater as they tried to swim away in the river. The vegetation was so thick that it could be difficult to hear, much less see, anything more than ten yards away. Seemingly the only people in Colombia who knew how to properly cope with this terrain were the FARC, who had accumulated four decades of experience as jungle nomads (Uribe Vélez 2012, 12).

In these words, the FARC rebels and the anacondas are the only ones who can survive such hostility; those living in the jungle, the FARC, have developed modes of survival that make them its proper inhabitants. The ex-president suggests the impossibility of order in the jungle; order implies state presence and any form of presence in the jungle is threatened with disorientation, and altered states of perception. Territorial control of this complex geography is not developed through a strategy of extending modes of governance from the center to the periphery. Being that the Colombian geography is both a blessing and a curse –the source of "stunning natural beauty and resources" – we are left with two different scenarios. As a blessing this geography is an object of contemplation of its natural beauty, or a site for natural resources extraction; as a curse, this geography, already plagued with horror, is a site of violence, a natural environment for terrorists. Considering "this picture," I argue that the control that the Colombian state has established across the complex geography of the Colombian territory is one in which violence, and violence produced by the state or sanctioned by it—one example is the cases of false positives—is a strategy of fragmentation that allows different forms of local sovereignties to emerge for the sake of an all-encompassing, powerful state. Tactics such as the creation of the "rehabilitation and consolidation zones," the Co-operation networks and the program of informants, tourist routes defined by the State and protected by military convoys with advertisement campaigns like "Vive Colombia, Viaja por Ella" (See Chapter One) and illegal state violence (like the false positives) create this new fragmented geography marked by differential global investments of security, violence, and zones of economic exploitation. Philip Alston, special UN rapporteur in extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in his report regarding false positives, states,

> 21. As security in Colombia began to improve in 2002, and as guerrillas retreated from populated areas, some military units found it more difficult to engage in combat. In such areas, some military units were motivated to falsify combat kills. In other areas, the guerrillas were perceived by soldiers to be particularly dangerous and soldiers were reluctant to engage them in combat. It was "easier" to murder civilians. In still other areas, the guerrillas there are links between the military and drug traffickers and other organized criminal groups. Local military units do not want to engage in combat with the illegal groups with which they are cooperating, so killing civilians falsely alleged to be part of these groups make military units appear to be taking actions (2010, 12).

Alston is looking for the causes of False Positives. In his explanation he categorizes areas of conflict in which different forms of power and authority are in place. In the first area outlined by Alston, the enemy has retreated and therefore the military units rarely engage in combat. Here the war is restaged; the real conflict has receded but, in order to continue a national security policy based on military presence, a positive balance of killing state enemies is constructed through false positives. Locally, the false positives are cause for military presence. This balance asserts that the enemy is still out there. Their staging creates an "outsider" who entered an area with disruptive intent. Lack of local roots is understood as a sign of enmity. For instance, testimonies by siblings of false positive victims who traveled to

their burial sites recount open hostility from those living in the area, who identify them as enemies (Bruno and Carrillo 2009).

In the second area described by Alston, the military retreats to their bases and the enemy imposes their authority onto the civilian population. Therefore, instead of losing the battle by engaging in combat, the army decides to stage its victories. Between the authority of the illegal organization in the area and the staging of successful combats, a heated war is sketched. Here the continuation of the DSD policy is justified by a war without end, a conflict without resolution between parties who do not wage war against each other; two sets of authority coexist in complicity, for their own survival.

The third area exhibits the everlasting murkiness of the Colombian conflict, characterized by the complex nexus between illegality and state institutions. These alliances – between paramilitaries and the state, drug traffickers and the army, or paramilitary and the army– are motivated by the positive political economy of the war, in which all parties profit by perpetuating the war system (See Richani 2002). Sometimes temporary alliances to eliminate common enemies are derived by pragmatic approaches to open profitable channels rather than ending the war. In these areas, we see how the instrumentalization of the army by local illegal authorities serves to eliminate the obstacles they encounter in their activities. In these areas, the logic of the conflict is based in corruption, where all parties of the conflict seek to benefit from the political economy of the war on terror. Here the army stages war as if the casualties were derived from the antagonistic position between the state and the guerrilla but, in fact, force is used to establish local arrangements of authority. In this third area, the victims of false positives are indigenous people and peasants; community members who threaten the rule of the local illegal authority.

In this chapter, I have worked through the dynamics exhibited in the first and second area outlined by Alston. In these two areas there is a relationship between distance and representation and the type of sovereignty that is enacted; in both cases the enemy is an outsider, someone brought in from somewhere else. They are killed and photographed. The image is proof of unreachable events happening somewhere else.

The DSD policy's main goal, as stated in its doctrine document, was to gain control over the entire national territory by combating illegal authorities that threatened the sovereignty of the state. However, its strategy has been to reanimate the idea of the inside and outside, the local and the national, center and periphery, by fragmenting sovereignty into multiple arrangements of authority, both legal and illegal. Fragmentation of this kind serves to displace state presence as the index of territorial control in order to enter into microtechnologies of power in which each citizen reenacts a state gaze through a pedagogical process in which coercion and persuasion intersect, benefitting local illegal arrangements of authorities.

Image of the enemy in the war against terrorism

María Victoria Uribe has spoken of the lack of differentiation between neighbors and strangers that characterizes violence in Colombia (2004). She explained the Colombian conflict, specifically in the case of massacres (1943 - 1964), which were violence against defenseless people, in terms of sacrificial manifestations guided by what Sigmund Freud called the "narcissism of small differences." She describes how the slightest distinction between peoples acquires the greatest importance triggering extreme violence between neighbors. Uribe understands this violence as a way in which the identity of the perpetrator is being constructed in relation to the victim.

Maria Victoria Uribe considers partisan violence, specifically massacres that occurred during 1948 – 1964, as sacrificial manifestations since the victims were defenseless and in many cases their political affiliations were disregarded (1990). With this gratuitousness,

Uribe sees the massacres as rituals in which the executioners performed a series of semantic and symbolic operations that dehumanize the body of the other. The executioners, marginalized from power, made use of violence as extreme performances of domination. Here the violence erases the victim's identity; it dehumanizes the other. This procedure entails a transformation from person to flesh, order to disorder. As described by Uribe these performances of violence require an alterity prior to the aggression, a natural given identity that would allow the perpetrator to situate himself within an antagonistic us versus them conflict. The antagonistic relation can be gratuitous, but still needs to exist within the framework defined by Uribe. Contrary to this argument, Arjun Appadurai (1998; 2006) and Liisa Malkki (1995) argue that violence is used in order to instantiate difference that creates instances of otherness. Speaking of Rwanda, Malkki considers how violence constructs ethnic differentiation. For Malkki, through violence the body becomes part of a categorical other; difference is demonstrated and inscribed through violence. For both Malkki and Appadurai, globalization brought an atmosphere of uncertainty and paranoia in which aggression and violence serve to disambiguate re-locating the we/they dialectic.

Uribe, Appadurai and Malkki, through their different approaches to the construction of alterity, ratify that, ultimately, otherness becomes the justification for the performance of violence. In the case of Rwanda, as argued by Malkki, even if violence inscribes otherness onto a body, otherness is read as the source of violence. Anxiety produces alterity, even if violence carves out such alterity. Alterity becomes real as violence unfolds onto the body of the victim and therefore instantiates a relation of cause and effect. Violence surges as the fabricator of the cause, simultaneously unleashing its effect. However, such temporality does not destroy their causal relationship. This simultaneity does not destroy the discourse that places violence as an instrument for something external to it. It still performs within cause and effect, and the temporality of before and after.

If we consider the case of false positives through the lens of Freud's narcissism of small differences, we find that these young men do not exhibit any traits on which differentiation can be based. There are no religious, ethnic, or language differences between the victims and the executioners by which a clear distinction of friend and enemy can be sustained. Freud's narcissism of small differences entails that those living close to each other use the slightest trait of what otherwise makes them alike as the trigger for their aggression toward each other. This aggression presupposes dynamics in the field of the visible; difference must be able to be seen and recognize as such even it is small. Conversely the dynamics exhibited in the cases of false positives are not based on difference as the source of violence; there is no cause and effect nor the temporality of before and after. In conflicts between neighbors their differences, however minute, are brought to light. The visibility that sustains Freud's narcissism of small differences is constituted and played out before violence occurs. It is still inscribed in the body of the other as a cause behind the violence inflicted by the enemy. In the case of the false positives, the visibility is fabricated after death, the visibility of the enemy is constructed in the form of an image.

The image of the corpse, as the embodiment of a neutralized Other, is not a mere side effect of the false positives. Those young men were recruited and executed in order to construct an image of dead enemy combatants. The uniforms, boots, grenades, the rifles, carbines, machine guns, and the corpses were props used to fabricate an image. They were acquired in order to manufacture that image. The image was not an afterthought but the paradigmatic illustration of terror. These images were meant to be evidence of an event, functioning within a system of explanation; they were created by collapsing violence and representation. The distance that these young men traveled from their hometowns to the site where they were killed enacts the distance between representation and the real. The displacement was an attempt to use a subject of untraceable origin. Therefore, the image is

not an afterthought; it is terror at the service of a structure of the real and its representation, embedded in modes of explanations that register violence as a means to an end outside of the violence itself. The false positive executions follow a logic that mediates different sites of authority, using the image as a pedagogical tool, to construct a country with a symbolic discourse of citizenship. In this process market logic is employed, in an attempt to optimize security and citizenship by creating a new geography of the nation state.

Chapter Three

Operation Phoenix, Sodom and Media Ops: from body combat to a war through screens

In this chapter I look at military operations and the images produced by these operations and about them. Specifically I analyze Operation Sodom (2010), Operation Phoenix (2008), relevant advertisement campaigns carried out in war zones, and media operations in remote areas of the Colombian territory with the aim of understanding the visual regimes they create. Operation Sodom and Operation Phoenix were part of what is known as Plan Bubble. It is the Colombian Armed forces' strategy aimed at killing or capturing the top-level hierarchy of the FARC-EP (CIA Office of Transnational Issues; Conflict, Governance, and Society Group 2009). This strategy envisions that killing the members of the FARC-EP secretariat --the highest command of the rebel organization-- would lead to the organization's gradual demise, by fragmenting their fronts into leaderless gangs (Ávila Martínez 2011). Since 2008, as part of Plan Bubble, the Colombian Armed Forces have executed multiple military operations against the secretariat: Alfonso Cano was killed on November 4th, 2011, in Operation Odiseo; Mono Jojoy was killed on September 23rd, 2010, in Operation Sodom; Raúl Reyes was killed on March 1st, 2008, in Operation Phoenix; and Ivan Rios was killed on March 3rd, 2008, double crossed by his security chief Pablo Montoya, who received the reward money while convicted of manslaughter. [15] Even though Operation Sodom and Operation Phoenix have the same goal, killing two leaders of the FARC-EP, the images generated from them exhibited two different forms of visuality and yet both require additional explanations that could unpack what is seeing in the images.

Jan Mieszkowski, in his book *Watching War* (2012) argues that the experience of the battlefield, even in the modern theater of war with its technological improvements, is always insufficient. The spectacle of warfare cannot explain the what, how or why of war. Its insufficiency invites a specific form of spectatorship. For the spectator, the experience of warfare is always disappointing; war is never literal enough and therefore its representation relies on metaphors that produce images, products of material forces as they are in the imagination. Operation Sodom and Operation Phoenix are inscribed in a system of accountability. Under a discourse of transparency, it has become customary to show in a

[15] After the successful operations of 2008, the Ministry of National Defense issued a report entitled *The FARC at their Worst Moment in History.* The report reflects the optimism derived from the results yielded by Plan Bubble. The report states:
Losing nearly half the members [of the secretariat] in such a short period has had a negative effect directly on command and control […] of the rest of the organization. It has also had a powerful psychological effect on the morale of every member of the FARC by destroying the aura of invulnerability the organization's leaders had up until this point. Particularly in the case of Tirofijo [the oldest guerrilla member on the continent and main commander of the FARC-EP who died in the jungle of natural causes in 2008], not only does the absence of this mythical and rallying leader leave a vacuum, but it also gives rise to a situation of dissension and internal conflict as new leadership is consolidated (Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Colombia 2008, 6).
Plan Bubble has also targeted mid-level commanders as part of the same fragmentation strategy:
But in addition to its high leadership, the FARC has also been losing a growing number of its mid-level commanders. In operations carried out by the Armed Forces and the National Police "JJ," "Martín Caballero," "Negro Acacio," "Martín Sombra," "Limón," and "Karina," have all been captured or killed, several of them leaders with legendary reputations among the rank and file guerillas. An important number of mid-level commanders have also deserted the FARC through demobilization, after having belonged to the FARC for an average of 5 to 10 years. The loss of these mid-level commanders has even more of an impact on the FARC than the loss of their high commanders, because the middle level leaders provide cohesion in the organization and are the ones who guarantee proper exercise of command and control (Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Colombia 2008, 6).

press conference broadcasted live on national TV the video of each military operation. There, the president asks his highest-ranking military officers to explain the military operation in reference to the video we are looking at. The insufficiency denounced by Mieszkowski speaks of this system of accountability and representation enacted by the Colombian government. In this chapter, I examine the documentation of these two military operations in order to understand how military force appears, looking for those metaphors that Mieszkowski speaks about. With Operation Sodom and Operation Phenix as part of the same strategy and still so different in terms of the images derived from them, I start this chapter by looking at their documentation analyzing how the state's monopoly of force is expressed in these images, and how these images define force.

This chapter begins by investigating the images derived from the documentation of Operation Sodom and Operation Phenix. Specifically, I analyze how the state's monopoly of force is expressed in these images, and how these images define force. I also analyze advertisement and media campaigns in war zones that take place in the enemy's territory. These media campaigns tailored for members of guerrilla groups create media objects that travel across vast distances in order to establish communication with a community of rebels that cannot be reached by airwaves and that is invisible. These advertisement campaigns penetrate temporarily with their objects the Colombian jungle through air and water (rivers), two traditional dimensions of war. These operations generate media objects, military objects that are forced into the terrain as they want to establish communication with the rebels. With these objects circulating in rebel territory, the media military campaigns take photographs or record videos creating another layer of imagery that is imposed on the landscape of the jungle that refer back with nostalgia to that another Colombia, one with authority, order, family and consumer goods.

Theorists of war speak of four dimensions of war: land, sea, air and a separate and fourth one, information warfare. In what follows I demonstrate that information, and in particular information transmitted through visual means, is neither an isolated dimension of war nor an illustration of the mindset of those in power. In fact, it is both things. It permeates all dimensions of war (land, sea and air) and transforms them as it represents them. In this chapter I show a genealogy of visuality within the discourse of military force that could reveal how mediation between the three dimensions of war (land, sea and air), legitimacy and authority is created in Colombia.

Operation Sodom

On September 25th, 2010, during the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, newly elected president Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2014) announced Colombia's candidacy for the Latin American seat on the Security Council 2010-2012. In his speech he affirmed that, "We are confident that our long and painful experience, through which we have developed a strong technical and operational ability, can prove very useful to all members of the Organization." Among the experience gained in matters of security, President Santos listed,

> We have achieved great results in the fight against drug trafficking: there has been a substantial reduction in hectares of coca production and we are committed to continuing in this task until those crops are completely eradicated.
>
> We have hit hard the mafias that control this business, including guerrilla groups that have become true drug cartels.
>
> We will continue to combat them relentlessly. We will spare no effort. *Just yesterday, from this very city, I announced to the world the news of the death of the FARC's main military leader, in an operation impeccably conducted by*

> *our Armed Forces.* This is the most important and decisive blow that has been struck against this terrorist group in its history, and we hope it will bring us closer to peace.
>
> We want to achieve peace, either by reason or by force. And we will achieve it, so that we can dedicate and focus all our energies and efforts to achieving growth and prosperity for our people. (2010, 5–6, my emphasis).

On September 23th, 2010, the government of Colombia celebrated the death of the rebel and military strategist of the FARC-EP Victor Julio Suárez Rojas, a.k.a. Mono Jojoy. He was killed in the military operation called Sodom (Torres 2010). From New York City, President Santos announced the success of Operation Sodom to the world at his first address at the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. During the same week, President Santos met with President Barack Obama who congratulated him on the success of the military operation. In response, President Santos took the opportunity to announce a change in their bilateral agenda. He stated that with the security problems more or less solved they could now turn to a new partnership that would yield mutual benefits on matters such as social development, prosperity of the region, climate change and the environment (Office of the Press Secretary 2010). This proposed new turn was guided by the perception that this military operation was like no other; in the military leadership and president's opinion the success of Operation Sodom indicated "the beginning of the end," because "the symbol of terror in Colombia has fallen," "we reached the heart of the FARC, their lair," "this is probably the most hard-hitting strike that we've made against the FARC," and therefore "it is no longer time to sow terror, now is the time to sow peace, and prosperity" ("Santos: 'Es el principio del fin de las FARC'" 2010; Santos 2013; Bedoya 2010; T. P. with J. Otis 2010; *Habla Rodrigo Rivera Acerca de Muerte de Mono Jojoy* 2010).

How could a *single* military operation signify the beginning of the end of the FARC-EP as well as, in the president's words, the end and the beginning of a new era? How could the killing of *one* man, "in an operation impeccably conducted by the Colombian Armed Forces," bring about such a about-face in the global political landscape? What is the source of its vast power? A comparison of the documentation of the two different military operations –Sodom and Phoenix– and their tactics, both visual and military help to elucidate the historic authority attributed to them. Following Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011b), I understand visuality as a historic supplement, as the apparently self-evident presentation of authority from which statements like President Santos' could be derived. Mirzoeff has rightly identified the global counterinsurgency project as a cultural war. He presents visuality as the locus where authority and power interface and, therefore, where it plays an important role in the construction of legitimacy. But the relationship between visuality and legitimacy goes beyond indoctrination in the construction of hegemony through media. Visuality restructures these spaces of warfare, creating the contested territory of war and, as per Mirzoeff, culture. Sodom and Phoenix are two successful military operations that have shown to the world a type of surgical war that is not usually waged by a third world country. They made visible the military capacity that the Colombian Armed Forces had acquired under PC and DSD policy.

Time magazine's article "After the Fight: Hope for Colombia" describes Operation Sodom as a display of overwhelming force unheard of in the history of counterinsurgency in order to kill just one man: Victor Julio Rojas, a.k.a. Jorge Briceño, a.k.a. Mono Jojoy. The article points out that nobody seems to be complaining about the asymmetry between the amount of force vs. the body count (T. P. with J. Otis 2010). The military mission included 78 military and police aircraft, approximately 900 men and 7 tons of smart bombs in an operation to kill one man and 19 more guerrillas. In the aftermath of Operation Sodom, there was zero inquiry into the counterinsurgency strategies and military force used; the celebratory mood was challenged only by few voices quickly deemed to be enemy

sympathizers (*Eltiempo.com* 2010; Samper Pizano 2010). The Colombian public did not raise any complaints against the overwhelming use of force and its environmental impact, its effect on the lives of the few civilians living in this jungle or the obscene public display of the body of the FARC-EP leader. Operation Sodom escaped criticism and analysis.

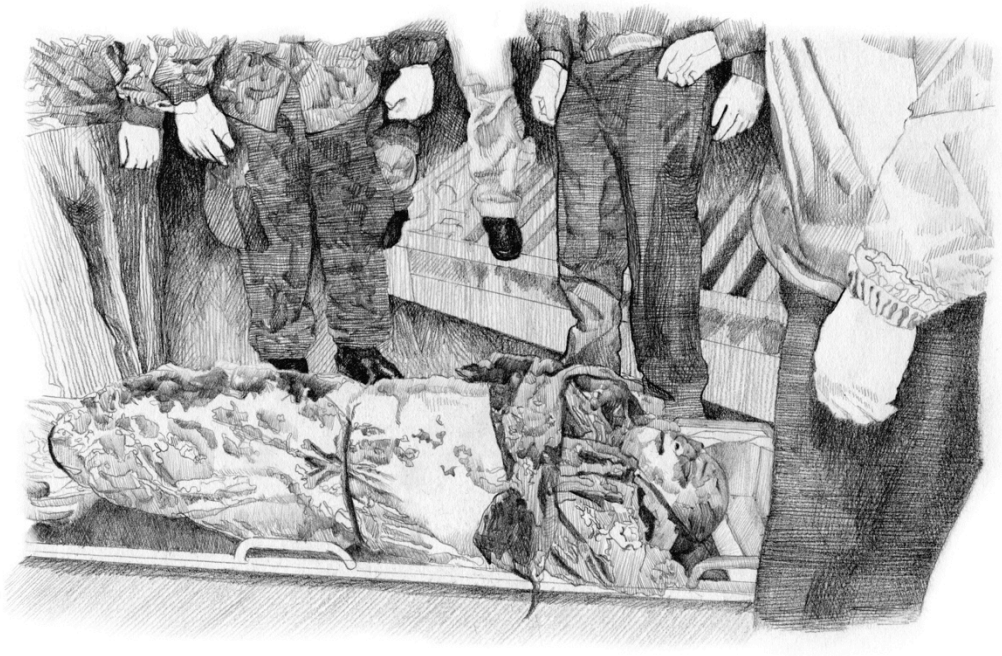

Figure 15: Drawing by Luis Morán, a copy of a photograph of he corpse of Victor Julio Suárez Rojas, a.k.a. Jorge Briceño, a.k.a. Mono Jojoy when his body was exhibited to the press.

Operation Sodom tracked down Victor Julio Suárez Rojas (a.k.a. Mono Jojoy, who was the commander of the Eastern Bloc, considered the strongest military faction of the FARC-EP (Ávila Martínez 2011). In 1993, Jojoy joined the FARC-EP secretariat. He conducted *his* war from a location that was a strategic corridor to the Colombian capital and with exits to Ecuador and Brazil. To state that Jojoy had *his* war is to acknowledge the role he assumed in the 90's as the FARC-EP military strategist. He implemented the doctrine of war of movement, which means a war conducted by large contingents, moving and advancing across the disputed territory. While the Eastern Bloc was in charge of besieging Cundinamarca (the territory that surrounds Bogotá), in other parts of Colombia he implemented guerrilla warfare and attacks to infrastructure, diluting the efforts and strategy of the Colombian Armed Forces (Flores Henao 2012, 45). For Jojoy, surrounding Colombia's capital meant laying siege to the state's strategic deployment location and allowed him to enter into Colombia's collective imagination as the driving force behind a general insurrection (Villamarín Pulido 2011). In 2002, Jojoy commanded 9,000 men, half of all the insurgent fighters belonging to the FARC-EP (Flores Henao 2012, 47). The Eastern Bloc came to expand its war machine into 55% of the country, including urban incursions, making the FARC-EP a real threat to the Colombian state. Large amounts of money were required to sustain this level of deployment and influence over the Colombian territory. Therefore, Jojoy is known to have advocated kidnapping, drug trafficking, extortion and illegal mining to fund the FARC's war against the state ("Así Se Formó El Bloque Oriental de Las Farc" 2013; Villamarín Pulido 2011). Under Jojoy's military leadership, the Colombian Armed Forces suffered 13 significant defeats. Among them were attacks to the anti-narcotics base in

Miraflores (1998), the Battalion of Las Delicias, the Military Base of La Uribe (1998), ambushes against special forces in Puerres (1996), El Billar (1998), and finally Jojoy's most important strike, the siege of the regional capital of Mitu (1998). In the 2000s, Jojoy ordered political kidnappings, car bombings in San Martín (2001), Florencia (2002), and the bombing of the exclusive social club "El Nogal" in Bogotá (2003), and the rocket attack against the presidential palace on the day of President's Uribe inauguration (Villamarín Pulido 2011). Not only did his military success consolidate him as a strategist, it contributed to the myth surrounding him: his reputation as a cruel, bloodthirsty man, who was untouchable.

Jojoy's military strategy earned the FARC-EP a place in the Colombian imagination; the war came closer to urban centers and its attacks became part of everyday life (Flores Henao 2012, 52). From kidnappings to threatening to cut off the supply of drinking water to Bogotá, Jojoy and the Eastern Bloc reached an image of mythic proportions in Colombia. By the end of the 90's the FARC had become a national security threat and, through its new diplomatic efforts on the international stage, the FARC-EP achieved the position of a legitimate interlocutor (See Ibarz 1995).

The FARC-EP's positioning on national and international stages brought global concern about the stability of the region. Starting with the government of President Pastrana (1998-2002) and following the DSD policy of President Uribe's government (2002-2006, 2006-2010), the Colombian Armed Forces --with the aid of the United States through the Plan Colombia-- began a quick transformation. In 2004, as part of a series of changes in military procedures and doctrine, the Colombian Armed Forces adopted the Doctrine for Joint Operations. As a first step, a force of 21,000 soldiers from the National Police, Army, Air Force and Navy were assembled to create a joint task force called Omega, with the express purpose of launching counterattacks on the Eastern Bloc. Omega's goal was to displace the FARC-EP from Cundinamarca to the farther regions of Meta, where a military offensive of disarticulation and neutralization would be put into affect. Once Omega cleared Cundinamarca, under the auspices of Plan Patriota, Mono Jojoy hid in the FARC-EP's most important fortress: a mountain range called the Serrania de la Macarena.[16]

The Doctrine for Joint Operations speaks of arrangements for territorial control in which different forces organize the spatial dimensions of the conflict. Air, sea and land are spatial axes of the territory as well as dimensions of warfare. My contention is that those axes are tactical in two senses, both militarily and from a media standpoint. Therefore it is necessary to explore the military tactics discussed in this chapter as strategies for territorial control, as well as forms of organizing visuality. Organizing visuality --how we see and fight a war—is a means to define and control territory.

Colombia implemented four different military structures for joint operations, all of which share the common characteristic of being comprised of more than one force: Joint Operations; Jurisdictional Joint Units; Transitory Joint Units; and Special Joint Units; each of them performs within different spatial-temporal axes. Joint Operations perform specific tasks in a demarcated territory. However, each force remains independent under its own commander. Their orders are received from command hierarchies that define military strategy. Jurisdictional Joint Units are assigned a specific territory among which they constantly perform operations under the responsibility of one commander according to the proposed objectives for the area. Transitory Joint Units are assembled by request and guided by the requirements and dimensions of a specific target. They disassemble once the operation has taken place, leaving the respective Jurisdictional Joint Unit in control of the territory. Finally, Special Joint Units are permanent joint forces that operate across the national

[16] The complex geography, its caves, and high mountains were the perfect hideout for the FARC-EP. They exerted authority over the territory of the Serrania; they collected taxes and tolls and they traversed the territory in jeeps, implanted their own laws and perform tribunals (Tim Johnson 2000)

territory and can be deployed at any time. Precision and speed are their defining characteristics. Their missions focus on specific targets rather than territorial control, for example Operation Sodom was executed by the Joint Special Operations Command (CCOES). While the seven-year strategy against the Eastern Bloc was orchestrated by Omega, including the collection of intelligence required for Operation Sodom, CCOES carried out the mission of bringing down the high value target (Flores Henao 2012, 81).

On September 22nd, 2010 at 11PM, Operation Sodom launched an air raid on the GPS coordinates provided by an infiltrator in the guerilla army and afterwards in a press conference the Colombian government showed the video of the successful military operation. This time live on TV, the president on the phone from New York spoke congratulating the Colombian Armed Forces while his high-ranked officers explained to him and the country the operation. But this documentation was unusual. When comparing this video with previously released visual documentation of military operations against the FARC, the documentation of Operation Sodom is codified by its technology know how that becomes a main indicator of another type of war, one waged by countries with a highly technological war infrastructure. Different versions of how the military operation were conducted appeared on the news, some of which verged on fiction. One story mentioned a device installed in the boots of Mono Jojoy that emitted a signal to guide the smart bombs to their target. Also, there were varying reports about the number of bombs used during the airstrike; some reports stated that 50 smart bombs were dropped, others reported 100, confusing the actual number of bombs with the payload of the weapons deployed (*El Tiempo* 2010). These details ran parallel to the release of the video documentation of the operation. Conversely, rather than settle the facts of the military operation, the visual documentation of Operation Sodom generated even more speculation, feeding a different version that the military leadership is still trying to sort out, at the time of writing (*Semana* 2010c).

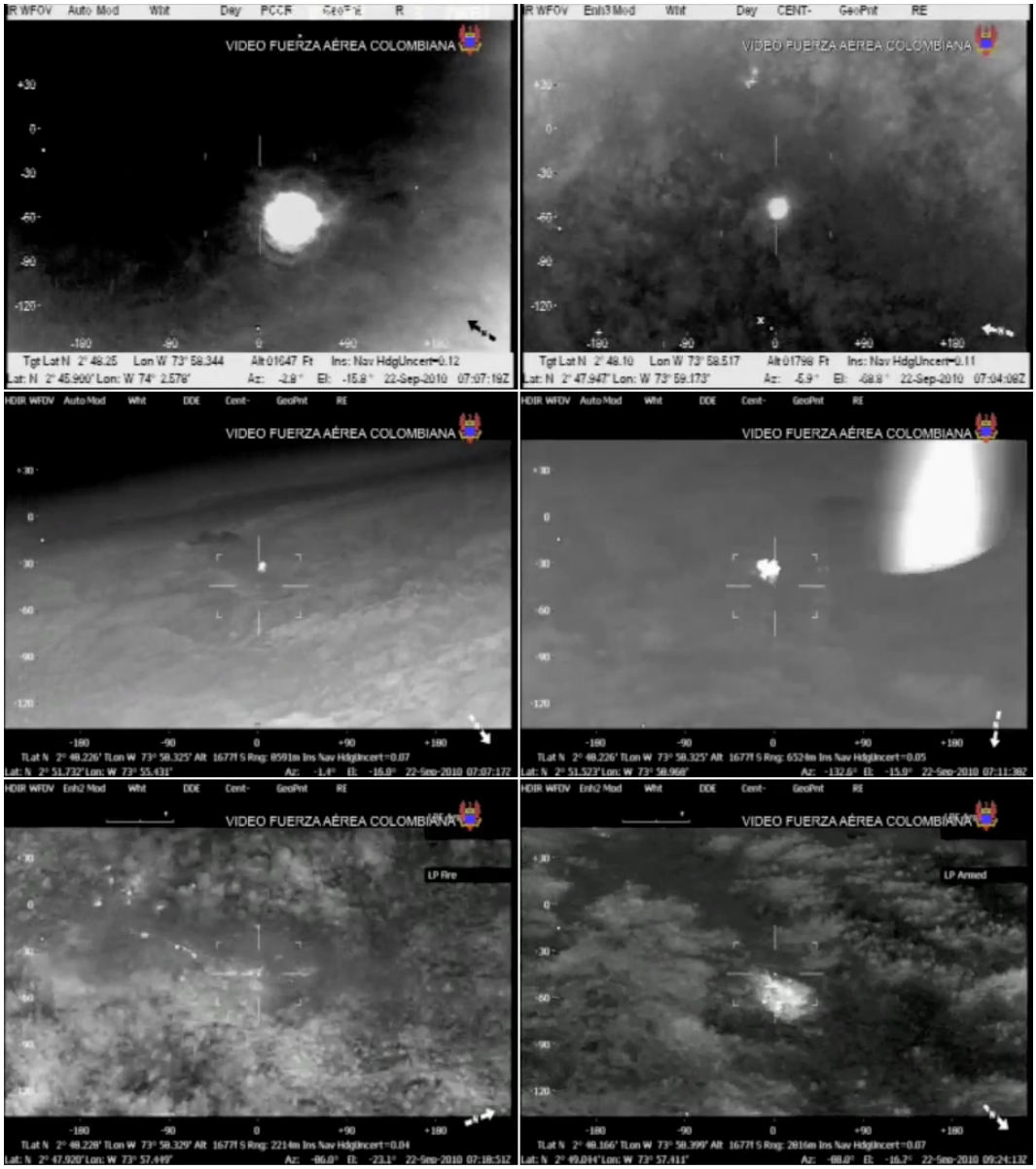

Figure 16: Video Stills from the Documentation of Operation Sodom.

Media outlets repeatedly replayed the same fifty-one-second clip of Operation Sodom released by the government. The infrared images show air raids on the encampment of high profile rebel Mono Jojoy. The video was edited from different cameras installed on the Super Tucano aircrafts used during the operation. The video cuts between six different bombardments that took place over the course of the two-day operation. The images depict aerial views of the jungle framed by numerical data from the weapon's interface. In these images, the jungle is rendered as an indeterminate landscape, resembling clouds in one frame and treetops in another, almost indistinguishable from one another. The top and bottom black borders of the image show the data from the aircrafts' sensors and in the center of the frame are the crosshairs for targeting. Heat, movement, and location data are all stamped on the video. The evenness of the treetops and clouds is deconstructed into small indexes of difference, either by color-coded imagery or GPS coordinates on the position of the aircraft and weapon range. The foreground of the image enlists information to produce a readable image. Layered above the image of the jungle we read coordinates and all sort of information that explain the image to those ready to attack. This readability is produced by layering

abstraction over the physical world, an abstract coding in the technological age of war through screens. This abstraction is not apparent to the spectator outside the war system. The information from the sensors, the GPS coordinates and its continuous flux on the screen signal a system of abstractions that constructs this image as an image of war outside the reality of those to whom this violence is inflicted. This abstraction is not outside force. It is force in itself.

The indeterminacy of the image, marked by its grayness and low resolution with an unchanging landscape, contrasts the claimed accuracy of the measurement system of sensors and their data. It is as if there is a process of compensation between the accuracy of the measurement system and the low resolution of the image. This compensation brings certainty to the system through the factuality that arises from the apparent correlation between what we see and the category of enemy. However, the correlation does not arise from a visual identification by which, one, only by looking at this kind of images could point and say, "Look, there is the enemy." Among the evenness of the landscape, there is nothing in the image that could suggest an index for enmity; there are only treetops and/or clouds. The data visualization system, in which heat and movement are translated into color-coded images and numeric data, cannot be used for an actual identification. Their role of the system is to identify difference among the evenness of the landscape; but the reading of such difference is not outside the image. This reading is provided within the codes of the interface. In the middle of the frame, the crosshairs indicate where a precision-guided munition will hit. We know that where those two lines cross in the center of the frame, we will see something happening. The index of enmity is provided in advance by the weapons system. Enmity is not the result of seeing, analyzing and coding. What foretells the presence of the enemy are the crosshairs superimposed over the image of the landscape. It is the moment when an object falls under the crosshairs when we, as spectators, can point and say, "that is the enemy."[17] As spectators the readable moment or action of the video is when an explosion occurs. It is readable because we are expecting it as the system's final accomplishment. The interface of the weapon lends itself to this dramatic moment of storytelling: target hit!

In the technological age of war through screens, an image like the one of Operation Sodom appears to be just a window opened onto the battlefield through which the weapon's system calibrates its aim. In this framework, the image figures as an instrument for mediation. However, the instrumentality that this image apparently serves is deceiving. It locates the value of the image as a mere interface, an image without content that serves the ends of the system. This instrumentality is established by asserting the role of the image as pure form: image as a window and image as a frame. As a window, the image encloses a space of visibility that it merely allows us to see into. What we see could be any war, any conflict, any enemy. As a frame, the image encloses and limits the field of vision in order to magnify and capture. But unlike this commonplace view, this image of indeterminate grayness, bordered on top and bottom by changing numerical data and with its targeting system, creates a universe of readability: it is a system whose goal is precision killing. In this system form and content collide. The image is not neutral. Its formal organization outlines content and this content is more than a representation of the enemy's terrain. It creates the terrain that, in its grayness and coupled the sensors' data, allows us to read presence as the enemy's presence. The grayness is not a problem of low resolution that could be solved with technological innovation. The grayness creates a space in which the sensors and the GPS coordinates outline a specialized field of perception; a percept that belongs to those who can

[17] This fact is more conspicuous in other war-like systems as the target can be locked on an object, following it regardless of the aircraft's movement. In this system we see the crosshairs not at the center, but rather moving across the screen as the target moves.

recognize the enemy among them and among us. Their authority seems to rise from a percept that we, as spectators, don't have access to, as well as from the system that allows such a percept to emerge.

In the instrumentality framework of the weapons system, the image is an interface serving those outside it. The outside is understood as the space of those who are not within the frame, those who are not represented in the image and those who command the direction of the camera, which correlates with the nose of the aircraft and the targeting area. What we see in the case of Operation Sodom is not the documentation of an air raid. There was not a cameraman among the actors of the conflict documenting a reality outside of himself. What we see is a video from a camera located between the weapon and the target; it figures as mediating between two fields of reality. Here, the image disassociates the reality of the shooter and that of the target. Those outside the image see; they recognize forms and difference among the evenness of the landscape. Conversely, those who appear in the image suffer from extreme blindness; they cannot see those who see them. Seeing from the aircraft, seeing through the screen, targeting and triggering the bombs are operations made at the expense of those outside on the ground who have no mechanism through which they can anticipate the next bombing. They are watched and targeted within a visual field that does not admit any exchange of gazes. Those on the ground try to hide, run at the sound of the first bomb without actually knowing where to go: they are blind.

In the video of Operation Sodom, there are no visual or readable signs to discern what is being targeted from the landscape itself. There is no moment of anticipation for what we see; it is the territory, the whole background that is under suspicion, as if the treetops were a natural camouflage for the insurgents, and therefore the strike not only hits the insurgents but also their natural shelter, the Colombian jungle.

Peasants and settlers also inhabit this land, expanding the agricultural frontier of legal and illegal crops. But their invisibility as civilians is required in order to wage a war against the other Colombia, an image embedded in an alterity that erases singularity and is epitomized by the image of clouds and treetops, caves, anacondas, bats, or snakes. On March 2009, the Rapid Deployment Force (FUDRA) of the Colombian Army arrived to what they called "the caves of Mono Jojoy": a complex in Serrania de la Macarena made up of 13 interconnected caves. A rebel turncoat, Martha, disclosed the location of the complex. The article states that the caverns were Jojoy's hideout from air raids, where a unit of 200 men could live off provisions for seven months and where medical attention was provided in an improvised hospital specifically designed for orthopedics and gynecology. The current president of Colombia since 2010 and then Minister of Defense, Juan Manuel Santos (2006-2009) visited the caves. From the site he commented that, in the previous five years, the caves had transformed from a storage facility to Jojoy's permanent hideout due to the pressure exerted by the Colombian Armed Forces ("El Ejército Encontró Las Cuevas Del Mono Jojoy" 2009). For the Minister, this fact indicated the decline of the illegal group. Following this line, he makes a comparison, "Just as the Taliban hide in Afghanistan, the FARC-EP uses La Macarena." Caves in Afghanistan and caves in Colombia are the natural refuges of terrorists. The comparison inserts the Colombian conflict into the rhetoric of global terrorism, global enemies and a global geography of horrors.

Figure 17: Drawing of Luis Morán, a copy of a photograph taken inside "the caves of Mono Jojoy." Original photograph in http://www.elespectador.com/imagen-cueva-del-mono-jojoy.

The video documentation of Operation Sodom brings to the forth the power from the above. The evenness of the territory serves as a hideout of the high value target therefore the massive use of airpower against Mono Jojoy conveys that terrain and enemy coincide; both are the targets. We do not see the enemy running; we see the evenness of the thick jungle. The military approach to a geography of horror is that it also need to be destroyed.

Operation Sodom and Operation Phoenix: Two modes of Visuality

The documentation of Operation Sodom with its technological coded image differs greatly from previous military operations carried out during the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez. In March 2008, the military operation known as Phoenix involved air raids on a guerrilla encampment located 1.1 miles into Ecuadorian territory. The operation's target was the FARC-EP's second-in-command, Luis Edgar Devia Silva a.k.a. Raúl Reyes, the spokesperson and de facto treasurer of the group. According to Colombian military analyst and retired Colonel Luis Alberto Villamarín, operations Phoenix, Sodom, Checkmate and Chameleon were important tactical strikes with political strategic connotations that disrupted the FARC's plan of seizing power through the combination of "all forms of struggle." While Operation Phoenix targeted the diplomatic efforts made by Reyes to communicate the FARC's discourse throughout the entire continent in order to find political allies, Sodom was targeting the man in charge of the military strategy to expand FARC's control and authority throughout the Colombian territory (Villamarín 2011). Operation Phoenix caused a major diplomatic crisis with the neighboring countries of Ecuador and Venezuela. Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa denounced the raid as "an act of aggression," and Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez expressed his solidarity with Ecuador and turned the incident into a regional crisis. Then Minister of Defense and now president of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos provided testimony to Congress on the military strategy and decision-making process of Operation Phoenix. The State-run channel broadcasted his statement as well as the video documentation he provided of the operation. The Minister presented an edited version, and with the aid of intertitles he guided Congress through the different steps of the operation.

This documentation was mostly shot using night vision. It starts at 23:00 hours with the deployment of Special Forces. We see them getting ready, putting on their camouflage face paint, listening to instructions and waiting to board the aircrafts. They look into the camera and give the thumbs up sign. The next intertitle reads "Land penetration toward objective 00:30 hour – 1200 m." We see the unit advancing through the jungle. At this point we lose track of "the soldier" as a character in the video. Jungle vegetation fills the screen as the unit moves on the ground. We hear shots and the sound of aircrafts, accompanied by the intertitle "3:00 hours Air support." As the combat heats up we see flashes of light, frames that turn white, and we hear a soldier yelling instructions to his unit, but the image remains the same, jungle. Now there is a voice –still unseen on the video-- accompanying the image of the combat. We don't see the soldier giving instructions to his unit. We suppose, from the quality of the audio, that he might be the one holding the camera. The commander and the vision of the camera emerge as the same subject. Therefore the previous disembodied camera now acquires presence through the commanding voice. His orders map out an area in combat: "enemy to the left," "let's advance," "we need a machine gun over there," "stop fire," "let's go to the left," "R6 maintain your position, be still, this area is your responsibility," "Piña, Piña, here," "Gonzalez we are getting fire from there," "this is it, this is the location." Although these orders provide a sense of orientation and mapping, the camera does not reiterate those directions. It does not turn to the left when we hear the order do to so or hold still when the order to stop is given. We don't see any soldier acknowledging an order; sometimes we see a helmet, communication gear or the back of a soldier. The image seems to depict random encounters in the dense leafy jungle. The next intertitle states, "Located high profile strategic target." The video shot with night vision continues and an image of a head appears amid the vegetation. It is Raul Reyes. The night vision flattens the image, therefore when we see the head it seems like it is emerging from an even background, as if it were part of the jungle itself. The camera is very close to the body. We see his nose, a blood clot emerging from his mouth, then his hand, a Rolex. Then somebody says "ring" and they show it to the camera; we see his ring, and blood in parts that we cannot identify because there is so little distance between the body and the camera. The camera makes a similar sweep three times. It moves over this body repeatedly and then continues through vegetation from which more bodies emerge, dead and injured, always enemy bodies. We hear some shots in the background to which the cameraman responds by exhorting the shooters to give up their weapons and come forward. He states, "We already got the big fish we came for; if you turn yourself in, we won't kill you." The camera continues and the voice explains where we are, in the kitchen, the barracks, the commissariat etc. He points to objects with the barrel of his rifle; we don't see his body, only the gun. He takes inventory of the objects spread out due to the shellfire.

Figure 18: Above left: Units preparing for deployment. Above right: Image of vegetation during combat. Middle left: Corpse of Raul Reyes. Middle right: Injured guerrilla combatant. Bottom left: Inventory of objects and buildings in the encampment. Bottom right: Pointing with the barrel of the rifle to some objects of interest. (OPERACIÓN FENIX COMPLETA 2013)

Figure 19: Drawing of Luis Morán, a copy of a photograph taken of the body of Raúl Reyes while exhibited to the press.
https://www.google.com/search?q=raul+reyes+cadaver&biw=1414&bih=699&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAYQ_AUoAWoVChMIj_H_ho-lxwIVi5seCh2eMQT5.

In the documentation of Operation Phoenix there is an emphasis on combat even when we don't see it. It is precisely its elusiveness that guarantees we are in a space of combating armies. This documentation conveys the realism of war: a stimulus-saturated event in which the video captured is insufficient, as Jan Mieszkowski has pointed out (2012). The camera did not accurately record the combat but rather images of vegetation. The other side of this realism is the horror documented in the aftermath. We see enemy corpses; they are the result of something we did not quite understand but that we actually somehow experienced. Not quite and somehow are symptoms that reflect the limitations of the medium. Rather than revealing it as a medium technologically inadequate for confronting the reality of war, this insufficiency actually underlines its capacity for realism. What we see and what satisfies us as real is the immediacy of the event escaping from the lenses of the camera. We verify the realism of the battle through this elusiveness.

The documentation of Operation Phoenix appears as unmediated, raw, and inexplicable through a strategy of attack and defense, threat and response. In the image, we don't see a sense of planning; everything seems rushed. There is not a correlative relationship between the sound of the video —gunshots and the orders issued by the commander/cameraman— and the image. The naturalism of this documentation emerges from the impossibility of being a cameraman and soldier at the same time. The logic of war imposes itself upon the logic of the camera. In combat, seeing through the rifle's sight is more pressing than seeing through the camera's viewfinder. Life emerges as more important than its representation. Therefore, documenting a life at risk is only possible by compounding what is seen through the rifle's scope and the camera's visor. We see the linked/synced system between a camera and a weapon as it happens with the images produced by UCAV, in which the documentation is recorded as the weapon's system executes, all on the same

screen. But vision field of a soldier on the ground, holding a rifle and a camera, is primarily constituted by the rifle optics and not by the camera. While these images appeal to a sense of authenticity that emerges from a pressing sense of survival over documentation, life over image, real over representation, it seems that they are constituted as the paradigmatic example, the point of origin of what is called "the documentary effect" (Foley 2005).

In examining the documentary novel, Barbara Foley questions the limits of fiction and non-fiction, rooting the distinction in a series of historical and contingent conventions agreed upon by readers and writers in order to deliver the real and what she calls "the documentary effect" (Foley 2005). Therefore realism is understood as a social practice rather than a problem of reference. The documentary effect as it has been incorporated into film theory, refers to a series of techniques like hand-held camera, long shots, no editing, no sound synchronization, full frame instead of zooming, which all contribute to conveying a sense of authenticity and realism in documentary film-making (see Trinh 1991). These cinematic technologies of truth build the idea of a cameraman integrated into the situation, riding along the spatiotemporal coordinates of life rather than those fabricated by the audiovisual language. As a result, an effect of closeness is created. The distance between the subject who depicts and those depicted is said to be minimized through a privileged point of view close to the real, almost unmediated, giving voice to the object of representation. When we see the documentation of Operation Phoenix, the image seems to escape the rules of cinematic language. The distance between subject and object has disappeared. Documenting war as a duty assigned to soldiers in the field is the point of origin of the documentary effect's model of truth. However, while it is point of origin it also multiplies and appropriates cinematic codes, recreating clichés of how a war should be portrayed. As a point of origin it also establishes itself as a paradigmatic example: an instance that serves the ideological stances of the so-called aesthetic of objectivity.

Operation Phoenix and Operation Sodom differ greatly. While the former makes emphasis on combat without actually showing it, exacerbating the realism of war, the latter gets rid of the soldier/cameraman subject, displacing objectivity to the technological apparatus of war. The fifty-one-second condensed footage of air raids during Operation Sodom broadcasted as documentation of Mono Jojoy's death, as compared to the more than 25 minutes of Operation Phoenix, is a minimalistic gesture in which war is reduced to a serial process in which a weapons system anticipates the closure of the battle by means of its own presentation. The difference between the visuality of Operation Sodom and Phoenix brings to the fore a different war, one in which the enemy has disappeared. In Phoenix, we could hear fire shots and the voice of the soldier commanding the scene. We hear the enemy but we don't see the insurgents combating against the Colombian Armed Forces. In Sodom, the enemy is not there. It has disappeared below the technological know-how of the Colombian Armed Forces. However, this closure did not preclude its unfolding through documentary film making.

Documentation and Documentaries: highlighting the technological edge

The full narration of Operation Sodom appeared in a documentary made by Los Angeles and Colombian production house Lulo Productions for the Discovery Channel. Through interviews, archival footage from the security forces, and reenactments, the documentary reconstructs Operation Sodom —everything we did not see in the documentation released by the government— while it builds the profile of a mythological enemy, the guerrilla leader Mono Jojoy. The reenactments focus on the performance of the Colombian Armed Forces on the battleground, ground forces in combat, the process of Intel gathering and the technological apparatus of the Colombian security forces. They put particular emphasis on the professionalization process the state security apparatus has

undergone since 2002. However, the reenactments of combat never portray a FARC-EP guerrilla. Members of the FARC-EP appear only during the reenactments of the infiltrators' story: policemen who penetrated Mono Jojoy's security rings and lived as guerrillas for more than five years. Through a series of interviews, one of the four infiltrators tells his story. First posing as a hawker, he became a regular provider of goods to the outer security ring of the guerrilla leader. He built a relationship with the FARC-EP as a reliable supplier. Posing as a trader who had finished high school, he would engage in ideological discussions with the guerrillas, working his way closer to the ideologist and leader of the front. Soon afterward, he enters the enemy lines as a new recruit. Through a parallel montage, the documentary builds two storylines. On the one hand, we see the intel work of the Security forces at their central office in Colombia's capital and on the other we see the story of this infiltrator in the middle of the jungle. At the central intel office, videos, and photographs of Jojoy are analyzed to create a profile of the guerrilla leader. As the intelligence advances, the infiltrator spends years in the jungle with little opportunity to communicate with his superiors. The climax of the parallel montage occurs when the infiltrator gets to the main encampment, records the coordinates of the location where Jojoy might be, and leaves the guerrilla in order to pass this information to his commanders. At the central office, this information is collated with information gathered by other sources and leads to the launching of Operation Sodom against Jojoy.

With computer graphics the documentary exp[lains how Jojoy was said to be guarded by 1,800 men in 10 concentric security rings moving constantly among 20 encampments in Serrania de la Macarena, a location impossible to penetrate. The documentary establishes a distinction between here and there, between them and us, through the use of visual resources. The documentary constantly updates the context of what the spectator is seeing. The use of computer graphics from 2D to 3D transforms what we see into information. For example, in the case of the landscape, we first see the image of the jungle of the Serrania shot from helicopters. Subsequently, those images are relocated within the frames of flat screens at the Intel offices of the state security forces. On these screens, the landscape turns into a 3D object for study. We see the Intel technicians moving from the video image to satellite imagery using digital cartography software. Now that the landscape has become an object, its evenness is deconstructed by the use of information systems that can read geological formations in terms of vantage points for military penetration. The landscape is fragmented on the screens; the vastness of the jungle is divided into quadrants, and extracted for view and study. The new landscape is abstracted in order to become the object of overwhelming force. It has become an object upon which abstractions are imposed, setting a new landscape through television and computer screens.

The documentary describes a new era for the state's security forces. It points out that this new age was brought about by the leadership of Álvaro Uribe Vélez. The documentary signals him as the main actor in the modernization of the security apparatus of the state. This process involved training that improved military intelligence, operational capacities and inter-agency cooperation, as well as technological acquisitions. However, Colombia has restrictions on weapons' trade due to human rights abuses attributed to the Colombian state, a fact that the documentary does not mention. The documentary suggests that the modernization of the security apparatus was decisive in the success of Colombian military operations against the FARC-EP. Helicopter propellers, the smart bombs guided by computer interfaces, various aircrafts and their strategic advantages in combat, from the Super Tucano planes, the Blackhawks, to the Arpia III are part of the inventory of the overwhelming force that figures prominently in the documentary. This inventory defines the structure of the video as well as its content. The documentary describes this coming of age by the state's security forces through a visual dynamic imposed by the technological pace of the war machine. The

pace of the video is marked by the technology used in the battlefield; it imposes rhythms through the sounds of helicopters and Super Tucano aircrafts, the swiftness of the military procedures on the field, bullets and bombs, as well as by the data organized on the screen. It marks an urgent pace that correlates the proximity and elusiveness of the target. This rhythm is expressed by the constant forward movement of troops,[18] closing the gap between themselves and the location of the enemy. The rhythm sets an urgency in which the ends justify the means. The technological display presents itself as responding to the impenetrability of the landscape; technology developed for a specific task.

[18] Operation Sodom used ground troops to extract Mono Jojoy's corpse.

Figures 20 and 21: Video Stills from the documentary "Operation Sodom" made by Los Angeles and Colombian production house Lulo Productions for the Discovery Channel.

From the fifty-one-second clip of Operation Sodom, the media speculated on the number of bombs that were dropped on the guerrilla leader's encampment. The media reported that between 7 to 50 tons of smart bombs were used in the operation. However, a special detail was constantly brought up in these speculations: these smart bombs were made in Colombia, an almost unbelievable fact. This was tempered by another rumor that those bombs were targeting the location of a signal emitted by an electronic device planted in Jojoy's boots. General Oscar Naranjo, Commander of the Colombian Police Force, made a statement to the press that such a device never existed and that Jojoy's killing was certainly the result of the professionalization of the Colombian Armed Forces (*Semana* 2010c). Yet the press did not stop searching for that fabled device.

The Colombian-made smart bombs are produced by the state sponsored company Indumil and we see these weaponry constantly in the documentary "Operation Sodom" made by Los Angeles and Colombian production house Lulo Productions for the Discovery Channel. Since 2002 and under the DSD policy, Indumil became part of the Colombian State's newly-created Social Oriented Defense industry complex. This organization was created in order to adjust the objectives of the military industry in the country. Indumil was set to respond to the specific needs of the Colombian war conflict. Its objectives were self-sufficiency and technological development tailored to the specifics of the terrain and the needs of military strategy. Self-sufficiency aimed at reducing the costs of the war by replacing imports and building the maintenance and repair skills for weapons purchased abroad. Also, the DSD policy wanted to ensure the supply of arms regardless of the restrictions on weapons trading imposed on Colombia because of human rights violations. Indumil has taken ambitious steps regarding technological development. Through the transfer of technology (TOT) between Israel and Colombia, Indumil now produces the Galil Assult

rifle. After TOT, Indumil acquired the license of the rifle allowing this state-sponsored company to modify the original design in order to tailor it to the challenging conditions of irregular wars. The new Galil is half the weight, shorter, easy to conceal and fitted to special operations units working under extreme weather conditions. The new versions of this rifle, Galil ACE 21/22/23, are now exported to countries like Mexico, Paraguay, and Israel, among others. Indumil has successfully developed other new products from TOT experiences, including the IMC-40 grenade launchers, 40mm MGL MK-1 grenades multiple launcher, munition and the now famous smart bombs used in Operation Sodom (INDUMIL 2010).

Figure 22: Drawing by Luis Morán, a copy of a photograph of the Minister of Defense Gabriel Silva (2009-2010) posing with the new assault rifle Galil ACE. Original photo published in El Tiempo newspaper, May 26, 2010. Photographer Diego Santacruz.

A second documentary called "Anonymous Heroes," made for Colombian National Television by the private channel Caracol, narrates the story of those members of the National Police who infiltrated the FARC-EP and whose intel work resulted in the success of operations Sodom and Phoenix. The documentary sets up its plot by establishing a distinction between previous air strikes and those that effectively took down members of the FARC-EP leadership, Mono Jojoy and Raúl Reyes. The distinction is between air strikes without ground knowledge and those that integrated the work of the police moles in the FARC-EP. They supplied strategic information about the location of the FARC-EP leadership's hidden encampments. The documentary begins by claiming that prior to Plan Patriota[19], FARC-EP commanders used to die of old age. They remained safe due to the natural protection provided by the Colombian jungle, which, according to the documentary, is so dense that satellites and their imaging devices cannot penetrate it. If, as the documentary states, war

[19] *Plan Patriota* (2004-2006) was a war plan developed specifically to displace the FARC-EP from its traditional territorial enclaves specifically in the southeast areas of the country. In support of *Plan Patriota* (Plan Patriot) the Omega Joint Task Force with Joint command was created (Pinilla 2009). After *Plan Patriota* came *Plan Victoria* (Plan Victory). *Plan Victoria* involved the creation of five units of Rapid Deployment Force (FUDRA), which entailed less ground forces and more air power (Bedoya 2006).

technology such as satellite imagery surveillance and reconnaissance systems are useless due to the conditions of the Colombian jungle, why does the documentation of Operation Sodom highlight the use of such new weaponry, marking a shift in the way the Colombian conflict has been presented to the public? And, considering the jungle's impenetrability, what kind of technological mobilization and state intervention is carried out? What does customization for irregular wars entail? What is there in the relationship between airpower and ground intervention that would allow satellite imagery surveillance and reconnaissance systems to finally work?

The results of the Colombian policy on technological innovation customized to irregular wars taking place in hostile theaters of operation is the subject of a National Geographic television series made for Latin America called "Inventos de Guerra/ War Inventions" ("Inventos de Guerra: Armada" 2013; "Inventos de Guerra: Ejercito" 2013; "Inventos de Guerra: Fuerza Aérea" 2013). Each episode features a different branch of the Colombian Armed forces. The season describes different technological innovations specific to each dimension of war: air, water and ground. The Colombian newspaper *El Espectador* describes the director's interest in making this television series as being about revealing how "under hostile scenarios, experts have developed new war inventions that have changed the course of the country's history" (*El Espectador* 2013). The TV series locates Colombia as a technological innovator out of pure necessity. The hostility of the war environment has made some of the war technology that is available on the global market inoperable. The Colombian Armed Forces --without the resources available for technology research that first-world countries have-- have customized and created devices specifically tailored to irregular wars and hostile environments. The Colombian magazine *Semana* and the newspaper *El Espectador* state that what the TV series does is reveal the top-secret weapon of the Colombian Armed Forces, which for both media outlets is *ingenuity*. The TV series constructs the idea that a third-world country could achieve progress just by using creativity and *resourceful* appropriation. The transition between a war apparatus based on physical combat and the technological age of war through screens brings with it a rhetoric of technological development. However, this is not development based on economic investments on social programs. It is the discourse of security in a global war on terror where this form of development is anchored.

The fifty-one-second clip documenting Sodom serves as a point of origin for a broader exploration, condensed into the following question: how did the success of Operation Sodom happen? This question allows for a series of documentaries and TV series that explain the multiple factors (technology, deception, intelligence and resourceful appropriation) that drove the success of the military under the DSD policy. Technological inventions figure prominently in this new era. The Colombian war through screens highlights the new airpower capabilities that have conquered from above the hostility of the Colombian jungle below. The use of ground forces in Operation Sodom are part of a major strategy in which the air dimension of war guarantees control without actually having a permanent presence. The first form of ground presence in Operation Sodom was by the army and policemen who infiltrated the FARC-EP as new recruits in order to gather information. This tactic is predicated upon undetected state presence. The goal is to infiltrate the enemy ranks by disguising as part of their group in order to defeat the enemy from within, like a virus. As I have explored in Chapter Two, this form of the state's undetected presence creates high levels of suspicion and paranoia that exacerbates cycles of violence against the civilian population, as well as violence within the enemy's own ranks. The image of a virus is revealing. When a virus is already inside a cell, it is difficult to kill it without killing its host. In 2008, the Colombian magazine *Semana* revealed that the FARC-EP was conducting executions of its own members (*Semana* 2010a). Documents and diaries seized by the Army reported 180

executions in the Mobile Column Teofilo Forero, 300 in the José María Córdoba bloc ordered by Ivan Rios between 2005 and 2007, and 112 executions in the Eastern bloc ordered by Mono Jojoy during the first half of 2008. In the documents there are records of the trials that lead to the executions. Among the "crimes" listed in the documents are "being an infiltrator," "playing radio without permission," "speaking during training sessions," "firing a shot while cleaning the rifle," "buying sweets without permission," or "wearing a silver barrette that can be seen by the enemy from above" (*Semana* 2010a translation by the author). The petty crimes for which these young people were executed show that any behavior could be read as a sign that someone was an outsider, a threat to the group that needed to be eliminated. The strategy of undetected state presence creates in the FARC-EP an acute paranoia that s them start killing themselves.

The second form of ground presence during Operation Sodom was by Special Forces deployed after the airstrike. However, their main objective was not to gain territory for the state but to extract the corpse of the mythical leader. The body of Mono Jojoy was irrefutable proof of their military success. These Special Forces groups were part of air assault units. If Plan Patriota destroyed the FARC-EP's strategy guided by the doctrine of war of movement, with large contingents advancing and controlling the national territory developed by Mono Jojoy, Plan Victory held back the FARC-EP not by holding on such territories with state presence but by rapid deployment of force with small, highly mobile combat forces operating in dispersed formations using speed and surprise.

Speed and surprise, as enacted by combat forces coming from above and delivered to contested areas, underline the type of presence of the state. The state inserts itself not as a permanent fixture but as transitory and fragmentary. The "sudden and unexpected delivery of combat forces" signals a form of control without occupation. These two forms of ground intervention --first, a state presence that cannot be detected and second, the sudden and unexpected delivery and extraction of combat forces-- are predicated on a ghostly presence that produces control based on auto regulation and paranoia. Airpower also appears as a latent presence that kills from above. Many memoirs and accounts of FARC-EP hostages speak of how the sound of military aircrafts above the jungle canopy brought a sense of disorientation and impending danger while they were in captivity. From the air looking down onto the tree canopies, there is no distinction between hostages and kidnappers; bombs fall equally on both. Three months before his death, Tirofijo wrote an email to Raúl Reyes signaling the pressing military air operations against him. Speaking about the airstrikes, he wrote, "I have seen the devil, a devil without horns and tail" (Villamarin 2009, Loc. 4184). While a FARC-EP announcement stated that Tirofijo died from a cardiac arrest, the Armed Forces claimed he died as a result of three military operations that, in only ten days, delivered more than 20 airstrikes around his encampment (*El Tiempo* 2008). His vision of the falling bombs as the devil signals an invisible hand that manifests itself not as presence but as fire and impending death. No horns or tail brings an image of evil that fails to conform to any particular representation. Bombs falling from the sky limited his field of vision to an almost hallucinatory state in which the enemy is everywhere and nowhere. Airpower in Colombia has served as a cheap form of control based on self-regulation out of fear and paranoia; a control from above that appears out of nowhere, giving no indication of where it is going to strike. The emphasis on the technological edge achieved by Colombia during the years of the DSD policy brings the idea of a national development based on security, and of resourceful appropriation building the idea of a nation as self-built and self regulated. Airpower was not only instrumental to such a state, it also drew a specific form of sovereignty: a power that does not occupy territory, and therefore cannot be resisted or expelled. It hovers over the dense jungle as a latent form of violence.

However, airpower is not simply an idea of technological acquisition. In a global war on terror, airpower is also constructed within global structures of visualization. On December 21st, 2013, the *Washington Post* published an article entitled "Covert action in Colombia" (Priest 2013). The article revealed that beyond the almost nine billion dollars of Plan Colombia, the United States has funded a secret intelligence program directed to locate FARC-EP leaders, using a black budget. This covert operation began after the kidnapping of the three American military contractors in 2003, to address the lack of progress on capturing or killing FARC-leaders. As the article describes this situation:

> Locating FARC leaders proved easier than capturing or killing them. The story was always the same. U.S.-provided Black Hawk helicopters would ferry Colombian troops into the jungle about six kilometers away from a camp. The men would creep through the dense foliage, but the camps were always empty by the time they arrived. Later they learned that the FARC had an early-warning system: rings of security miles from the camps (Priest 2013).

Again the topography and density of the jungle made it impossible. Under these circumstances, airpower seemed to be the best tool for penetration once the location of the enemy was accurately determined. Therefore attacking from the air determined the strategy: killing was easier than capturing. In order to do this, the government of Colombia requested technological assistance from the U.S., specifically in the form of "the Enhanced Paveway II, a relatively inexpensive guidance kit that could be strapped on a 500-pound, Mark-82 gravity bomb," turning it into a precision smart bomb. However, as the Washington Post piece describes, the United States showed some reservations about this petition. First of all, the U.S. feared being accused of assassination; a U.S lawyer interviewed for the *Post* presented the concern in this way: "could we be accused of engaging in an assassination, even if it is not ourselves doing it?" The United States wanted to keep a policy of non-military involvement, therefore the use of this technology needed to be a form of non-direct action. Secondly, the United States feared that once the technology passed into Colombian hands, the armed forces of the state would use it to target perceived political enemies. To address these concerns, the United States decided "to maintain control over the encryption key inserted into the bomb, which unscrambled communications with GPS satellites so they can be read by the bomb's computers. The bomb could not hit its target without the key. The Colombians would have to ask for approval for some targets, and if they misused the bombs, the CIA could deny GPS reception for future use" (Priest 2013). The issue here is not whether responsibility means action and if in fact the United States is or is not responsible for selective killings in Colombia. The question here is, how have different forms of vision constructed modes of direct or indirect action? How does the screen appear to be the "instrument" through which we distinguish between direct and indirect action? How can we understand presence as being remote, a presence from which authority is derived? How does a scopic apparatus allow for a rhetoric of non–involvement? To address these question I would like to analyze a video posted on military.com which shows the operational articulation between different levels of visuality between the United States and Colombia (Military.com 2007).

On the website military.com, posted under the description "Colombian Air Force Downs Drug Plane," is the video documentation of a plane flying over the Colombian jungle, which crashes after being hit. The audio reveals the interaction between four different operational levels as they organize the strike against the plane. The audio presents the command structure between 1) the Colombian pilot persecuting a presumable drug smuggling plane, 2) a Colombian commander giving instructions to the pilot and taking information, directions and authorization from 3) an American crew flying above the Colombian pilot on a US Cessna Citation surveillance plane and 4) in the same audio, we also hear members of the

Miami-based U.S. Southern Command speaking with the crew of the U.S Cessna plane.[20] This video shows that there are levels of visuality that correspond with levels of direct and indirect action. For example, on the first level we identify the Colombian pilot. In the documentation, we never see his point of view but, at times, we see him approaching his target, which he can see as he follows it closely. His field of vision and action is at the same level of the drug smuggling plane. Therefore direct action is defined through the horizontality of the field of vision in which the pilot from the Colombian Tucano aircraft operates. A second level would be the Colombian commander, a higher level of command and authority above the pilot. However, he seems quite blind. His visual field is comprised by two different visual inputs, which are two different points of view: the American crew seeing from above and the Colombian pilot. The image that he creates of the battlefield is comprised by what the Americans and the pilot transmit to him. From above, the American crew has the visual of the smuggling plane as it is being chased by the Colombian military aircraft. The Colombian pilot, as he follows the target, has direct sight of the enemy's movements in a horizontal plane. But even with these two different visual inputs, the Colombian commander seems to be an interface without a visual field of operation of its own. His translation between English and Spanish, as he transmits to the Colombian pilot the incoming data from the surveillance plane and the U.S. radar, highlights his lack of a visual. And still, he commands the pilot to execute. In one instance the Colombian commander asks the pilot to confirm if he has fired warning shots at the plane, to which the pilot responds in the affirmative; in that moment the Americans identify his affirmative not by what the commander transmits back to them but from the visual they have of smoke and a fuel leak on the drug smuggling plane. The Colombian commander receives authorization from the Americans to proceed with phase three while his pilot constantly asks if there is authorization yet. Once the encryption key is released the Colombian commander transmits to the pilot and, seconds later, the Americans acknowledge, from the visual they have, that the plane is smoking and going down. The commander is not fast enough; the visual of the Americans is faster than his translation. This video, more than a *representation* of the type of operations within a global counterinsurgency policy, signals the importance of screen-mediated forms of presence. The visual documentation posted in military.com is from the U.S. Cessna surveillance plane. Therefore the documentation (video and sound) testifies of the presence of the American plane and crew during the military operation. When the drug smuggling plane is taken down, we hear the following interaction:[21]

American crewmember 1: 2.2 miles to the frontier
Colombian Commander: Vibora a Chiroco
American crewmember 2: ...man
American crewmember 1: OK he's on fire, he's on fire, he burned up, he's down, he's down
Pilot: cayó, cayó
American crewmember 1: Jesus… Christ
Colombian Commander: OK, blanco derribado
American crewmember 1: OK watch our altitude, we are going to circle, I don't want to hit the…
American crewmember 2: yep, we are right here under it
American crewmember 2: OK, go ahead and pass that, pass that marker

[20] It is not clear whether the Americans flying the US Cessna surveillance plane are members of the United States Armed Forces. As reports on other incidents under similar covert operation programs in Latin America have suggested, they might be private contractors (Borger 2001; Tamayo 2001; Forero 2003). In order to comply with congressional refusal to allow U.S. military involvement in Colombia, private contractors have become one of the mayor forms of non-direct action.
[21] Min 3:27 sec. (Military.com 2007).

American crewmember 2: phase three complete
American crewmember 1: verify 5-0-gator-2 target has been executed and is down and burning, time is 4:2 past the hour
Pilots: uhuuuuuu
Colombian Commander: OK muchachos, excelente trabajo
American crewmember 1: OK give me the coordinates, give me the coordinates
SouthComm: Gator-2 this is bravo…

As this audio testifies, the Americans' presence was within a distance in which they could hit anything. They are still within the field of operations, on a range within the action. Their presence, however, is framed by a discourse of non-direct action and therefore non-direct killing as their presence is mediated through screens, and by command structure.[22] When Paul Virilio (2005) asks "How can we fail to recognize […] that the true intervention force in the Gulf is television?" he is conferring the status of a weapon to the televised image. In 1991, when Virilio was asking this question, cameras started to be attached to missiles; in the 2000's, multiple forms of vision were used as part of the global counterinsurgency policy of non-direct action, as I have described above. Since this layered vision carries different sets of authority, could we continue speaking, in the same sense as Virilio asked in the 90's, of the image as intervention and the image as force? If this is the case, what kind of force is envisioned by the televisual?

Eyal Weizman has described the complex, layered and discontinuous distribution of space in the Israel-Palestinian conflict as the result of what he calls "politics of verticality" (2007, 12). In these politics, airspace figures as an observational vantage point for surveillance and attack but it also is the most vulnerable frontier. Airspace as the sovereign ceiling was confirmed in Article 1 of the Chicago convention in 1944, reaffirming the sovereignty of each country on the sky above their territories. However, in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, any airspace activity requires prior approval from Israel. The Israeli-Palestinian scenario is similar to the U.S.-Colombian one described above. Weizman describes how, during the Oslo Accords, the debate regarding the distribution of airspace sometimes dwelled on the question of who should be on top. This question is revealing. From a military operations strategy, the top is the maximum point of visibility, the most strategic location for remote-controlled airborne surveillance and attack. The authorization required by the Colombian Armed Forces from the Americans, and the approval from Israel for any airspace activity, speaks of a verticality in which who should be on top is always a point of contention. But I would argue that the problem is not deciding who is at the limit of the horizon, as Weizman seems to suggest. The relations of vulnerability between the top and the bottom does not necessary extend linearly from an untouchable top to the most vulnerable bottom. On the contrary, as in the video I described above, the vision that carries the authority for executing violence is not at the limits. As the transcription of the audio from the U.S. Cessna Citation surveillance plane shows, those who gave the authority to release the weapon key are "under" something that they could hit. Authority emerges from a vision that can transit among different visual and operational levels without touching them: it is a vision that can contain others' fields of vision. It is not necessary to be on top, at the maximum level of authority. The proliferation of small drones is an example of the need to traverse different operational and visual levels.

In Colombia, the density of the jungle poses problems of penetration and identification at the lowest visual layer. If airpower and weapons development signals a

[22] American private contractors pilot fumigation planes and in 2013 more than two planes were taken down by the FARC-EP, causing American casualties. It is interesting to see that for the U.S. interacting directly on nature by fumigating coca plants is not direct involvement even when it involves American casualties.

power from above, my contention is that media operations afford new tactics of penetration in which identification is revealed as different forms of media interpellate their subjects. In the next section, I will discuss Psychological Operations and how they penetrate the density of the Colombian jungle at the lower dimension of war: ground.

Media operations: From Psychological Operations to advertisement

During the DSD policy, the Colombian government has established new military bases around the country in strategic corridors used for the transportation of illegal goods, within the vicinities of energy and oil infrastructure, along international borders, and in territories previously claimed to be under FARC-EP control. However, these bases exhibit more complex spatial arrangements that go beyond the idea of exerting territorial control as state presence. Indeed these military bases are sites of gathering, recuperation, concentration and deployment of military troops, but they also work as nodes that expand and recoil at demand. As I explained in Chapter two, the Colombian government has exerted its presence through the militarization of the civilian population vis a vis the workings of a necroeconomy in which collaborating with the security apparatus of the state is the exercise of an ideal form of citizenship fostered by injecting money deemed as incentives, payments, money rewards and periodic fees into the civilian population. State presence is transplanted to each and every citizen. These forms of control enact a new form of governmentality that advances a social project traversed by security and market logics. The DSD policy outlines its strategy for territorial control as a process in which presence, mobility, pedagogy and coercion blend. In this framework, a military base is more than a fixed place for the local display of authority or a bunker of power from which authority radiates in concentric zones of influence as mobile units are deployed. Indeed, military bases govern the landscape as a visual and material presence. However, there is a sophisticated idea of mobility. The military strategy of mobility is based on a network in which the mobility of the troops is merely one among many. Mobility is understood not only as a distribution of force on an area of influence, but in the creation of such influence in a rhizomatic movement. For example, the structure of the networks of informants and cooperants speak of a construction of territorial control in which fragmentation is fostered as a way to produce such control. The informants do not know each other; secrecy and suspicion create a paranoid environment in which fragmentation unifies the territory. Social cohesion is threatened by paranoia in which distinctions are blurred even more by the new forms of citizenship interpellated by the state, like informants, collaborators, infiltrators, and moles. These military tactics do not gain territory by expanding the line of the national border. Military presence is tantamount to civilian presence, exerting Colombian citizenship as tactical participation.

In 2002, through the Psychological Operations Group (GEOS) of the Colombian Army, the DSD policy started a program called “Soldier for a day” in the eastern region of Arauca on the border with Venezuela. Students from rural areas were invited to spend a day at the nearest military base (International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) 2005, 32). The invitation allowed them to play in the facilities, use the pool, have refreshments, enjoy clown shows and get inside tanks while the soldiers showed them their weapons (León 2003). At the end of the day they were given a 20,000 pesos note of play money printed with the following text: “The government pays! It pays to collaborate; your family deserves another opportunity, return from that life.” Responding to the criticism raised against this program, the military stated that the goals were to "instill in young children a love for their country," "to strengthen the love and respect for our patriotic symbols" and "to make the son of a guerrilla member question his dad" (International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) 2005, 33; León 2003). The program was later extended to the regions of Antioquia, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Santander.

Figures 23 and 24: Images of Play Money used in the program Soldier for a Day. Personal Archive.

In 2003, the Office of the Inspector General closed the program as designed by the GEOS. However, the program "Soldier for a day" remains active. It is no longer a school program; it now targets groups of professionals from state-trusted companies and state employees who travel to military bases to be soldiers for a day (International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) 2005, 33; Garzón 2004; *Ejercito Nacional Soldado Por Un Dia* 2009; Mora Basto 2011). Its dynamic resembles a reality show in which the participants, outside their normal context, endure a day of what it is like to be a soldier; dressed in full military camouflage and combat boots, they participate in military exercises and fitness, weapons training and shooting practice with the Colombian manufactured Galil ACE 5.56.

As these examples show, more than a space of domination, the military base creates relations of space, in which coercion and pedagogy are structured in very malleable terms. The money offered to the children is play money with a potential of becoming real money. Suddenly the child has been provided with the magic power of turning play money into real money, as he could become a collaborator, a playmate in the game of war. The games and weapon demonstrations that the child encounters during the day at the military base are

charged with the same potentiality. It is between the fear and the playfulness of the day that coercion and pedagogy nestle against each other. When the military lists the goals of the program, to instill love for our country, to strengthen respect for our patriotic symbols and finally to make a child question the activities of a rebel parent, it seems to be describing a chain reaction. The latter appears to be the result of the previous two and not of the play money that could hypothetically be exchanged for real money. Here a new node in the network of surveillance is created. But this node has entered the most private space: the family. Without drawing a direct vector between the military base and the rural home of a guerrilla member's child, the state security apparatus has constituted a form of presence divested of a state's representative body. This ghostly presence manifests as it fragments relations within the rural home. The state sets the conditions for a paranoid environment, but this time among family members. These conditions are promoted by ambiguities, uncertainties and blurred delineations of sameness and difference that generate suspicion and mistrust. In such an environment fragmentation prevails, as attachments are broken due to extreme suspicion. Under such pressures violence appears as a way to build certainty through destroying weak points, disambiguating identities and closing spaces of suspicion. The military program "Soldier for a day" brings fragmentation for the sake of control. Fragmentation imposes itself on those family ties, as they are subject to the necroeconomy developed by the DSD policy.

Conversely, the same program, when oriented toward professionals, creates, through simulacra, a connection between those working for the state or in the productive sector and the Colombian security apparatus. This simulacrum is initiated by imposing a principle of authority; those visiting the military bases become submissive to the conditions of the environment and to their commanders. As they underperform during the military exercises and their incompetence is mixed with admiration and humor, "integration between the civilian and military personnel [is created], reaffirming the sense of belonging on the part of the civilian population to the force" (Mora Basto 2011).

These examples demonstrate that a military base is more than creating linear frontiers to enforce, expand and defend. Military bases as places of concentration develop dynamics of engagement that exhibit plasticity as borders are temporarily drawn, fragmented, elongated and contracted (see Chapter two, the discussion on Phillip Alston's report). Between the rural and the urban, the same military program configures different dynamics that construct relations between here and there, public and private, fear and admiration, submission and authority.

Eyal Weizman speaks of elastic geography as a mechanism through which "the political spatiality of the nation state has splintered into a multitude of temporary, transportable, deployable and removable border synonyms – 'separation walls', 'barriers', 'blockages', 'closures', 'road blocks', 'checkpoints', 'sterile areas', 'special security zones', 'closed military areas' and 'killing zones' – that shrink and expand the territory at will" (2007, 6). In Colombia such flexibility is exhibited in military, guerrilla and paramilitary tactics, the nexus between politicians and illegal groups, military operations executed through temporal alliances between illegal and legal forces, the program of cooperants and informants (Chapter Two), consolidation zones (Chapter One), the deployment of troops along the main highways and convoys between major cities and tourism destinations during the holidays (Chapter One), kidnapping (Chapter One), state-sponsored global ad campaigns of Colombia as a secure tourist destination, and media military operations. Examples of the latter are *Operation Christmas* (Lowe-SSP3 – Colombia 2010), *Operation Bethlehem* (Lowe-SSP3 – Colombia 2012), *Operation Rivers of Light* (Lowe-SSP3 – Colombia 2011), *Operation The Code* (DDB Colombia 2011), *Operation Life* (DDB Colombia 2010) and *Operation Soap*

Opera "La Maldición de los Martinez" (DDB Colombia 2012).[23] The campaigns are guided by the premise that their target audience –guerrillas- have no access to print, TV, or consistent radio signals. Therefore these campaigns have devised alternative media objects that would traverse and penetrate the density of the Colombian geography. These media objects move across the jungle and rivers, using the topography as their medium. The assumption is that if they are put into circulation within guerrilla areas, these objects would eventually encounter guerrilla members.

The message of these campaigns is an invitation for demobilization. For example, *Operation Life* targeted female guerrilla members who want to start a family. Military intelligence as well as Human rights groups have gathered testimonies of female deserters from FARC-EP and ELN who were forced to have abortions and/or use contraception (Amnesty International 2004; Amnesty International 2011). The campaign was an invitation to women to leave the guerrilla and to fulfill their dream of becoming mothers. During a period of four months, twice a week, a total of 7,000 pacifiers were air-dropped in zones and routes of guerrilla presence using seven helicopters MII-17 and three aircrafts CASA C-295. The pacifiers had a tag that read: "If you are part of the FARC, your baby won't be born to enjoy something as simple as this [the pacifier]. There is a different life. Demobilize"(DDB Colombia 2010).

Figure 15: Video stills from the Video Documentation of Operation Life, DDB Colombia. (DDB Colombia 2010).

Through the national Army radio services, *Operation Rivers of Light* gathered mothers, sons, daughters, friends, or anybody who might know a FARC-EP member to send them messages during the Christmas season. For this purpose, the Colombian Army circulated spheres, where a small object and a message could be put inside and then sealed, among the civilian population. The spheres were gathered and dropped into the jungle's key waterways in the southern part of country (Lowe-SSP3 – Colombia 2011). The spheres had a mechanism that allowed them to glow in the dark with a blue light. Using both military boats and helicopters, the army dispersed the spheres into the water four kilometers upriver from

[23] All these operations were developed by important global advertising agencies with offices in Colombia.

various areas occupied by the FARC-EP. Eight kilometers below the drop off points, nets were used to collect the spheres that had drifted downriver beyond their targeted areas, allowing the army to make estimates of how many spheres might have been picked up. This process was repeated several times during the holiday season. The Minister of Defense claims that he has several spheres in his office given back by guerrillas who decided to demobilize through this campaign (Rodríguez 2012). The campaign evokes the idea of a *message in the bottle*: a container is set adrift without knowing when or where the message will be found by its intended addressee. But who is the intended addressee in this ad campaign? Is he/she just any guerilla? Indeed the messages were personalized letters and gifts to individual guerrillas but nothing guaranteed that they would actually find their way to their specific addressee. On the contrary, the campaign never presupposes that the message will accurately find its intended recipient. The power of these notes is that whoever picks it up is unlikely to be the person for whom the message was written. It is the longing for a personal note that actually delivers the message of reinsertion. The real intent of the campaign seems to be about conveying a 'longing for home or normalcy,' rather than the specific content of the note. Just like the traditional message in a bottle, whoever finds it at shore becomes a medium. Usually the bottle contains two messages, one for its final addressee and a second one directed at the person who finds it. This note usually instructs about the last stretch to its final destination. But in the case of *Operation Rivers of Light*, whoever finds the sphere constitutes its addressee.

In *Operation Rivers of Light*, the rivers are used to circulate these media objects as they traverse the Colombian jungle; here medium through which this message is delivered guarantees circulation. The message –which is inside the light balls,– and the intended addressee –the guerrilla members,– are in constant movement. The guerrilla members are in constant movement through the jungle making temporary encampments. The ad campaign is predicated upon a possible encounter between two movable subjects. These spheres glowed in the water, marking their route, carried along by the river current. The jungle and its river became a spectacle. From the air at night, the spheres illuminated the paths of rivers through the jungle that would otherwise be invisible. The campaign stated that the lights were lighting the guerrilla's way back home. As the spheres were opened their lights turned off. That was a signal to those watching from the air, not to those who sent the messages. President Juan Manuel Santos and his ministers, traveling in military boats, put the 6,823 spheres into the rivers, but it was the vision from the air that mastered the territory. The landscape became a spectacle.

Figure 26: Video stills from the Documentation of Operation Rivers of Life, DDB Colombia (Lowe-SSP3 – Colombia 2011).

In *Operation Christmas*, the Rapid Deployment Force (FUDRA) of the Colombian Army chose nine 75 ft. tall trees near nine different strategic guerrilla-used trails throughout the country. On each of the nine trees, two counter-guerrilla units installed 2,000 Christmas lights that were activated by motion sensors. A banner was set next to the tree that read: "If Christmas can come to the jungle, you can come home. Demobilize. At Christmastime, everything is possible" (Lowe-SSP3 – Colombia 2010). The documentation of this operation shows FUDRA men in full combat gear and with maps in strategic meetings, planning the operation. Two Black Hawk helicopters transported the two counter-guerrilla air assault units to the different locations.

The spheres in *Operation Rivers of Light* were moved by the river's current in the southern part of Colombia, the pacifiers were dropped from military aircrafts and the Christmas trees from *Operation Christmas* were set in guerrilla corridors in the Colombian jungle; their media (water, air and land) are in fact the three dimensions of warfare: land, sea and air. These three dimensions are typically where warfare takes place; they are the scenarios of warfare. Traditionally, military strategists read information warfare as the fourth dimension of warfare (Schneider and Grinter 2002, 172). These media operations began with the premise that no media can reach the guerrillas, thus it was necessary to create alternative media objects -- pacifiers, messages traveling through rivers, and Christmas trees-- that could circulate within the density of the jungle. These media objects function as forms of military

penetration, reaching through the density of the jungle to merge with the landscape. In these three ad campaigns, new media were created, water, air, and ground. The rivers were transformed and the trees too. The rivers and trees became a spectacle that could be seen beyond the fabricated encounter between the message and the receptor, the guerrillas. These campaigns also took the form of TV commercial spots (Zamora 2011). They were broadcast on national television. The documentation of these media military operations became commercials whose message was always to "Demobilize. If we can come to you, you can come to us." But if the goal of the alternative media campaigns was to create media objects capable of penetrating the density of the Colombian jungle, why convert them back into traditional media meaning TV spots?

These campaigns turned into 30-second TV spots are central to creating ambivalent constructions of distance throughout the Colombian territory, but this time enacted through the airways of media space. These campaigns are very compelling and emotive; they fabricate a sense of unity in the making. These TV spots carry a message from a home that has been abandoned by those who have joined the guerrilla, whether they are from the FARC-EP or the ELN, but which has now come to the jungle to reach them and bring them back. It is a home that extends and retracts; it leaves the jungle intact, navigating it without accepting this territory as its own.

Conclusion

The DSD policy has sought to exert control over the Colombian territory, which is threatened by local illegal authorities and institutional void, through a discourse of unification and presence imposed on a territory understood as fragmentary, lawless and violent. However, as I have tried to show, instead of deploying a concept of sovereignty tantamount to state presence, the DSD policy has created territorial, social, and political fragmentation through which different forms of local sovereignties merge for the sake of an all encompassing powerful state. In this scheme, military use of force is one of many tactics employed. In Weizman's 3D layered political space the military is deployed around Gaza's fences and the air space over it. However, fences and airspace are both limits; top and edges figure again as borderlines to defend. As I have shown, air space is more complex than exerting authority from the utmost position at the top. Airstrikes exhibit the intersection between power from a privileged visual position, which transverses all levels of operations, and visuality and practicality. The latter is derived from an economy of death in which precision killing is framed within the legal moral rhetoric of 'lesser evils,' setting in motion brutal mechanisms of control. These mechanisms have entailed technological developments in areas of weapons development and unmanned aviation with an intersection of different global dynamics of transfer of technology (TOT), global assistance and super*vision* and diplomacy of security.

Fragmentation has departed from the traditional definition of frontiers and straight lines as articulated by a 2D military cartography to be redeployed in multiple and layered articulations of mobility and separation. Forms of territorial control such as the ones described in this chapter are complex arrangements of visuality. In Colombia, the 25 minutes of documentation of Operation Phoenix, the fifty-one-second clip, and the media military operations are different forms of visuality that also occupy and create space. They speak of specific forms of spatial arrangements that create a vision that outlines the Colombian territory.

Chapter Four

Operation Check: A Visuality of Success

2008 was a turning point in the global press' coverage of the Colombian war conflict. International public opinion and perception was influenced by the success of the Colombian Armed Forces in combatting one of the country's most widespread, most visible and most internationally known crimes: kidnapping (DeShazo, Forman, and McLean 2009, 37). In a 2011 RAND report entitled "From Insurgency to Stability: Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies," Colombia is a featured case study, and it signals 2007 as the beginning of the transition from counterinsurgency to securing stability (Rabasa et al. 2011). It marks 2008 as a year of major military successes against the FARC and identifies, as the most significant development from a counterinsurgency perspective, "the collapsing of the FARC's command and control structure. This was manifested in Operación Jaque (Operation Check), the rescue of Ingrid Betancourt and fourteen other hostages in July 2008." (2011, 57). Operation Check, as in checkmate, was a military operation that resulted in the freeing of 15 hostages, including former Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, three American Security Contractors, and eleven Colombian soldiers and policemen. Operation Check's success was based in deception. The Colombian Armed Forces tricked the FARC-EP rebels into handing over the hostages, to a fictitious NGO set up by Army officials. Pulled off without firing a shot even when they had the opportunity to do so, Operation Check demonstrated the success of intelligence versus the use of violence in an aerial bombardment or a ground attack (Hirsh and Isikoff 2008).[24]

In the global landscape of the war against terrorism, and in twentieth century military history, Operation Check stands as one of the greatest military and Intel campaigns in the last 20 years. At the time, the U.S ambassador to Colombia William Brownfield deemed Operation Check the most perfect rescue operation in the history of military affairs (*Soldados Sin Coraza* 2009). President Álvaro Uribe explained that "for Colombia, the success of Operation Check is proof that there is a strong desire to defeat kidnapping, and a strong government decision to free hostages without using violence and, most importantly, without yielding to the kidnappers' demands, including surrendering Colombian territory to them" (García 2008, my translation). Operation Check also influenced public understanding of the Colombian conflict. On the one hand, many Colombians saw Operation Check as a true sign of victory after the ten-year application of the Democratic Security and Defense Policy (DSD policy) and Plan Colombia ("ENDING COLOMBIA'S FARC CONFLICT: DEALING THE RIGHT CARD" 2009). On the other hand, Operation Check communicated to the international community that Colombia's long internal instability was over, and that the country had become a regional player in matters of security and an important rising partner for new global markets (DeShazo, Forman, and McLean 2009, 14). The international press reported on this turning point with headlines and statements like "After Taint Of Drugs, Colombia Reinvents Itself," "Colombia is without a doubt the latest Latin American economic miracle," "Colombia: Latin America's rising oil star," and "Colombia Becomes Safer for Business as Rebels Renounce Kidnapping" ("After Taint of Drugs, Colombia

[24] "Vice Defense Minister Juan Carlos Pinzón told NEWSWEEK, "But we made the decision not to attack," because the government wanted to convey it had a new "strategic concept." "We want to send a message to the FARC and to the world: not to exterminate the FARC but to welcome back anyone who wants to come into the system." Last week, to drive that point home, the Colombian military equipped helicopters with loudspeakers that began booming Betancourt's recorded voice over the jungle, saying "Hey, guerrillas … demobilize now … You'll recover your family, your honor, your liberty."" (Hirsh and Isikoff 2008).

Reinvents Itself" 2012; Linares and Montejo-Torres 2012; Blas 2012; Kopp 2012). Some of these articles recount a brief history of Colombia's security problems and improvements but they always identify Operation Check among the strongest evidence of Colombia's new era.

Operation Check not only consolidated the success of Colombia's military tactics in the global landscape of irregular wars but also highlighted the successful U.S. military intervention in the country, an intervention that was initially requested by Andrés Pastrana (President from 1998 to 2002) and made official policy by Álvaro Uribe Vélez (President 2002-2010).[25] Since 2000 the Unites States has provided more than 6 billion dollars in aid through Plan Colombia, along with permanent training and supervision of military performance in the country. After heavy U.S. involvement in Colombia, aid has steadily declined since 2008, while the American government has pushed for a "Colombianized" version of Plan Colombia (Tickner 2014). Operation Check responds to such "Colombianization."[26] Many critics of the Colombian government have cast doubt on the authorship of Operation Check, claiming that the United States was behind its planning and execution. One U.S. counterinsurgency expert working in Colombia spoke about Operation Check only under the condition of anonymity, "The rescue "was the Colombians' show--that's the official tale. But our Special-Ops Command has been deeply involved with Colombia for some years. We gave strategic guidance on the concept [of the ruse]. We pushed the whole infiltration idea" (Hirsh and Isikoff 2008).

In what followed, I am less interested in ascertaining the actual author of the operation. Instead, I approach the success and controversy over the author of Operation Check as as an opportunity to elucidate what is being transferred from the United States to Colombia and into the scales of the transfer. Or in other words, I am interested in the relation between the global and the local and what it produces. To this end, I trace the degree to which, in the global state of war, the military doctrines of Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) and global counterinsurgency (GCOIN) have shaped the local context of the Colombian war conflict, specifically through the lenses of Operation Check. Both global strategies entail different relationships with the local contexts in which they are applied. Scholars are divided as to whether the success of the Colombian case is the result of strategic counterinsurgency tactics or RMA efforts.[27] Authors like Nicholas Mirzoeff have seen GCOIN as a continuation of the revolution in military affairs (RMA) producing a hybrid that has updated old colonial imperatives to a global war on terror. Colombia's strategy against the FARC-EP, he argues, has been a fusion between counterinsurgency tactics *on the ground* and RMA *in the air*. The former is inscribed in the DSD policy as a population-centered approach with strategies of "clear, build and hold," while the latter is focused on building *air power* based on surveillance, precision, and lethalness, with technological innovation in areas of weapon development, military intelligence and information, improving command and control—resources that have strengthened the tactical ability of the Colombian Armed Forces.

Indeed Colombia has used both strategies simultaneously in military operations against the FARC-EP. My argument in what follows is that such an amalgam of tactics, strategies and technology needs to be more carefully analyzed, due to the way in which each

[25] See Tickner 2007. Tickner develops the concept of "intervention by invitation strategy," through Colombia accepts the U.S. agenda in its country in exchange for aid from Washington,

[26] This word came from different members of the U.S. Congress, who have, each year since 2004, called for a reduction of U.S. aid to Colombia and a "Colombianization" of the program "under which Colombian security forces would assume the operational capabilities to
take over functions now provided by the United States." (Veillette 2005, 13)

[27] Scholars are divided as to whether the success of the Colombian case is the result of strategic counterinsurgency tactics or RMA efforts. See an example of the former in the work of Grenobl and Rose 2011; and of the latter in Rochlin 2011.

doctrine shapes the 'theater of operations,' as it is referred to in military jargon; a theater of operations which is local, as it takes place in the Colombian territory but whose scope of influence respond to global interests. Each doctrine creates its own space of war, with distinct scales and modes of territorial assessment, as well as strategies for territorial control. Even as RMA and GCOIN have been brought together in a hybrid formation argues, as Mirzoeff and others argue, each of these strategies require two different forms of vision and create two different forms of territory and therefore of power. Specifically, it is necessary to understand the global and local scope of each of these two strategies in order to understand their relationship. For it is one thing is to see how Colombia has used COIN tactics and transformed its armed forces through the implementation of RMA, but it is another to inquire into how the Colombian war conflict is seen on the global scale of RMA and GCOIN. The analysis of these two distinct doctrines can reveal the global structures of action that construct political and economic geographies anchored in different forms of territorial control, surveillance and military intervention that are local in scope.

The Colombian state claims that, over the past ten years, it has consolidated control over the National territory and guaranteed the rule of law and democratic governance as a result of the execution of the Democratic Security and Defense policy (DSD policy). However, in Chapter Two I argue that it was done not through military and state presence but through the dissemination and fragmentation of the Colombian population via multiple tactics employed by the security apparatus. Since the Colombian state has interpreted control over the national territory to mean the application of multiple techniques, in this chapter I analyze the military space created through the application of RMA and COIN strategies. If in Chapter Two I argue that the consolidation of the national territory was done through the security apparatus, in this Chapter I examine the construction of the military space as the space for military intervention. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri speak of a unified space, the constituted global empire of war, in which those with capital and strength direct the flow of weapons and goods, define the enemy and decide how and where war is waged. This Chapter departs from this wisdom and instead advances the second argument that this global homogenous space is created by fragmented local spaces. Indeed there is a global state of war, but it is comprised by local struggles that are far from been homogenous. In this framework, I examine the position of a third-world country like Colombia striving for full sovereignty within this global structure; how the local military space is inserted in a global flows of money, goods, people, images and weapons that incorporate a regional player like Colombia into global policies of war; and how COIN and RMA, as military strategies, participate in this positioning. I focus on 2008, the year that signaled the end of Álvaro Uribe Vélez's presidency, and was a turning point in the Colombian war conflict, when Operation Check achieved the pinnacle of the Colombian military strategy's success against the FARC.

The third argument of this Chapter concerns visuality's relationship to military strategy within the global state of war. I focus on Operation Check which was a highly visual military operation; it was even called a cinematic operation. By analyzing Operation Check as the height of Colombia's success against the FARC-EP, I inquire into how local success is represented in global imagery of the war on terror. I argue that in this global space, images are not the evidence or proofs of a military strategy, but themselves are inscribed in the very same order.

What was Operation Check?

Operation Check was the result of what David Kilcullen, counterinsurgency expert, calls a "bottom-up tactical innovation" (Kilcullen 2010, 18).[28] A bottom-up tactical innovation is when field operators rather than senior officials come up with strategic plans and operations. In this framework, it was field officials, with their first-hand knowledge of local conditions and environment who planned and developed Operation Check rather than ranked officials (Dombret 2009; Villamarin, 2009, Loc. 4109). For Operation Check, the Colombian army officials deployed a sophisticated version of man-in-the-middle (MITM) attack. MITM is an attack in which communications between two parties are intercepted and manipulated. The parties believe they are speaking to each other when, actually, it is the attacker who controls the conversation, delivers new information to the parties, and deletes original messages. An MITM attack requires the opponent being able to impersonate both sides to the satisfaction of the other; in other words it requires deep knowledge of the parties' shared context (J. Otis 2010, Loc. 4751; Schneier 2008). Context is the main form of authentication; therefore, only field officials with access to local knowledge and with informants on the ground could perform such an operation (Villamarin 2009, Loc. 4324).

The attack was directed at communications between FARC-EP military strategist Mono Jojoy and the commander of the FARC's first front Gerardo Aguilar aka César, who was responsible for custody of the hostages (Schneier 2008). César was tricked into believing that Mono Jojoy had ordered him to hand over the hostages to a rebel-friendly third party that was supposedly going to transport the hostages to the encampment of Alfonso Cano, who was, at the time, the FARC's new leader (Rabasa et al. 2011, 57). This third party was a fictitious international NGO, called the *International Humanitarian Mission*, designed to deceive the guerrillas. The members of this "humanitarian organization" were military intelligence officials in disguise.

In order to fabricate this theater of operations, Operation Check mimicked previous hostage releases; specifically the unilateral release of Clara Rojas and former congresswoman Consuelo González negotiated by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and carried out by a humanitarian commission headed by the International Committee of the Red Cross on January 10, 2008 (Villamarin 2009, Loc. 4266). The Pan-Latin American television network Telesur had broadcasted the hostage releases negotiated by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez. The Colombian Intelligence Office analyzed the video documentation of this humanitarian mission, as it was the only reference that could provide clues on what the FARC-EP would expect from an international commission (J. Otis 2010; Villamarin 2009, Loc. 3781). For Rojas' and Gonzalez's release, Hugo Chávez dispatched two Russian MI-17 helicopters painted white with an orange trim and covered in International Red Cross logos. Their crew included Red Cross delegates, the Cuban ambassador to Caracas Germán Sánchez, Venezuela's Minister of the Interior Ramón Rodríguez and his secretary, Colombian congresswoman Piedad Cordoba, a medical team, and a cameraman and journalist from Telesur. Operation Check used the same type of helicopters, painted exactly the same way, and designed a crew that would match the global political backdrop seen in the release organized by the leftist government of Chávez (Bruce, Hayes, and Botero 2010, Loc. 4046; Otis 2010, Loc. 4466; Villamarin 2009, Loc. 3342).

While Operation Check was a copy of a previous hostage release, it also used a video camera during the operation, both to distract the rebels and also to record the operation in its entirety. The Colombian government showed this video as documentation of the operation. This 8-minute video has been included in several documentaries, TV specials and TV series made about Operation Check. These visual products are not necessarily Colombian. There is

[28] A bottom-up tactical innovation is when intelligence and military strategy are derived from operations in the field as opposed to being products of headquarters' orders. Counterinsurgency recognizes that knowledge gained in the battlefield is a site of innovation.

also a Hollywood movie in the making, a Spanish TV series, and American documentary, all of which enlist the global imagination around a local war conflict.

In an article entitled *Lessons Learned from Operation Check [Mate]*, Captain (USAF) Dylan D. Dombret points out Operation Check's contributions to the United States Armed Forces. He underscores "the use of human intelligence (HUMINT) and small operational footprints at the tactical and strategic level," the intrepid use of air force, and leadership, "the use of restrained force and seeking transformational effect-based objectives [that] could turn the tide against the insurgency aggression more than a full-scale land assault" and the highly effective strategy on public opinion (2009). Majors (USAF) Steven J. Ayre and Jeremy F. Hough in their masters thesis entitled *Air Power In Irregular Warfare* for the Naval Postgraduate School under the supervision of Dr. John Arquilla –one of the most influential theorists on Revolution in Military Affairs in the United States– analyze Operation Check as one successful example of the unconventional use of air power in an irregular conflict (Ayre and Hough, 2012). These are just two examples of many in which international military literature incorporates Operation Check as part of a global understanding of war, in the analysis of its organizational, technological, doctrinal, and strategic dimensions, with Colombia understood as a successful case of U.S. intervention in the region.

Operation Check consisted of both RMA and GCOIN strategies. To better understand the Operation and its place in the global articulation of war, the following section probes the definitions of RMA and GCOIN, their understanding of the enemy, the notions of space and power that emerge under this arrangement, and how RMA and COIN, as discourses, have played a role in framing the Colombian conflict within a global landscape of the war against terrorism.

Revolution in Military Affairs and Global Counterinsurgency

According to Andrew Marshall, director of the Office of Net Assessments inside the Office of the Secretary of Defense, RMA is:

> […] a major change in the nature of warfare brought about by the innovative application of new technologies which, combined with dramatic changes in military doctrine and operational and organizational concepts, fundamentally alters the character and conduct of military operations (Kraus et al., 1998, 65).

This definition stresses the influence of the application of new technologies on the way of conducting warfare. However it is not clear what constitutes an innovative application of such technologies and what constitutes a dramatic change. Next to RMA, there is COIN. David Kilcullen, quoting the current U.S. military field manual, defines it as:

> The military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency." Counterinsurgency, therefore, is an umbrella term that describes the complete range of measures that governments take to defeat insurgencies. These measures may be political, administrative, military, economic, psychological, or informational, and are almost always used in combination (Kilcullen 2010, Loc. 78).

Kilcullen (2006) creates a distinction between classical and modern counterinsurgency signaling that nowadays there is a new set of paradigms that make counterinsurgency multidimensional and global in its environment. Therefore, all measures, he argues–whether political, economic, psychological or civic—need to contemplate a wider platform of action beyond the site of the armed conflict.

One of the points of contention between GCOIN and RMA is the nature of the enemy. While RMA anticipates "future wars against hostile radical adversaries armed with weapons of mass destruction," making emphasis on rogue nation-states, GCOIN sees irregular conflicts on the rise, whose area of influence goes beyond the nation-state, with global

insurgencies networking conforming a "conflict ecosystem" [29] (Schneider and Grinter 2002, 6; Kilcullen 2006, 9). However, RMA acknowledges that after the Cold War the nature of the enemy has changed to smaller regional political conflicts.[30] RMA's answer to these new threats can be summarized in the following statement by Jacques S. Gansler, Former U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (1997-2001),

> On the military side, one fundamental change seems clear: we will likely see more regional conflicts of the type we have recently seen in Kosovo; namely, seeking *to project power* without putting a large number of forces at risk. Clearly, many -- if not most -- of these future conflicts will require ground forces, and lives will be lost. But, in general, our approach will be to replace massed forces with massed firepower, precisely placed on targets. As I said, modern, "reconnaissance/ strike" warfare is based on two things: real-time, all-weather, accurate and secure information systems, combined with long-range, unmanned, "brilliant", retargetable in flight, highly-lethal weapons designed to achieve precision kills (including on moving targets). (Jacques S. Gansler 1999, my emphasis).

Gansler's statement reflects one of the characteristics of RMA: to empty the battlefield of ground forces and to shift to air power, putting an emphasis on precision targeting. This is a paradigm shift away from *the principle of mass in warfare*, which consists of using a large footprint of force and mass firepower in strategic sites at a decisive time to achieve overwhelming results that could change the balance of war. RMA's strategy of emptying the battlefield, puts the focus on air power (Schneider and Grinter 2002, 8). Air power, as described in the statement above, is an offensive tactic. Reconnaissance, surveillance and precision comprise a tactic built over a technological complex of remote vision and weapon development designed specifically to target *over* enemy grounds. Information gathering is a prerequisite for precision killing. The nature of this tactic as "real-time, all-weather, accurate and secure" speaks of inanimate systems. These systems sense the battlefield environment through collecting data from diverse types of sensors, which feed information to the shooter in real time, increasing the "situational awareness and battle space visibility" (Gongora and Von Riekhoff 2000, 39). These systems do not provide information on the target's context, but rather, visibility is the condition for a successful strike. The data fed to the system reflects the relationship between visual capture and strike; even when the target escapes the field of visibility, the weapon system looks for other forms of compensation, such as heat sensors or infrared cameras, to bring back the target as a visual element. With a technological system capable of real time surveillance over the whole world and weapon systems' power based on their de-localized readiness, what this strategy seeks is *power projection*.

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[29] COIN understands the conflict as more than a binary struggle between insurgents and the counterinsurgency force. Kilcullen writes, "we might conceive of the environment as a "conflict ecosystem" with multiple competing entities seeking to maximize their survivability and influence. The counterinsurgent's task may no longer be to defeat the insurgent, but rather to impose order (to the degree possible) on an unstable and chaotic environment" (2006, 10).

[30] For example, this change is reflected in NATO's strategic concept at the Washington summit in April 1999. There, the strategy acknowledges new threats posed by regional conflicts beyond the Alliance territory, which in the text is called *the periphery of the Alliance*. In this landscape, NATO sees large-scale conflict as rather remote compared to a scenario in which "oppression, ethnic conflict, economic distress, the collapse of political order, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" pose new risks to the Alliance ("NATO - The Alliance's Strategic Concept Approved by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C." 2014; Read 2000).

Power projection is radically different from territorial defense. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2005) explain how RMA shifted the military strategy from defense to a security approach. In this security approach, offensive intervention is used to gain strategic advantage over the enemy; therefore power projection anticipates threats by making its ghostly presence—through remote sensing, air surveillance and satellite reconnaissance—a permanent threat. Power projection is based on the premise that any place in the world is reachable and can be attacked at any moment; it is through systems of remote vision hovering over unstable territories around the world, with strategically positioned aircraft carriers ready to launch offensive operations, that war has become ubiquitous and continuous.[31]

By establishing areas of influence around the world outside the territorial boundaries of war conflicts, the U.S. security strategy contains possible threats by instilling fear of massive use of force. In this model there is no territory to defend. Rather, the model conveys the capacity, performance and readiness to deploy an offensive strategy even without a potential enemy. If we consider war as not only the actual battle but the capacity to express the willingness to wage war, as a performative speech act, then the spectacle of war --from military museums, rumors of weapon development, war movies and political acts, among many others-- make war available to the senses as war without being fully engaged in battle. This space of war is another area of influence used for power projection. Power projection creates a permanent feeling of war. These areas of influence are as real as they are virtual: haunting spectacles for future wars, constant surveillance, remote engagements and dislocated attacks (Schneider and Grinter 2002, 9).

Power projection is predicated on both a performative speech act of war, which speaks of the willingness and capacity to attack, and on having the technological capacity to do so. To have great power projection means that the time between expressing the will to engage in war and the actual military intervention tends to zero. When a war power with great capacity for power projection --whether a nation state or a coalition of forces-- announces the willingness and capacity to engage in war, we could expect a military operation at any moment. There is no delay; there is no space for mobilization or negotiation. This time compression creates deterrence through fear, and it widens the borders of war zones.

Derek Gregory suggests that if war's temporal framework has become perpetual war, we need to rethink its geographical dimension (2011). Indeed, as I mentioned above, the scope of war has become perversely omnipresent and endless, but still there are geographic territories with borders and coordinates, landmarks, rivers, mountains and people subjected to the tactics and strategies of war. Gregory introduces the term "everywhere war" to underscore that war is being waged already here and there, losing the "conventional ties between war and geography" but with "spaces that enter European and American imaginaries in phantasmatic form, barely known but vividly imagined" (2011, 239). Gregory's concept of everywhere war is an invitation to rethink how war can be global and localized at the same time; as he writes "the everywhere war is also always somewhere"(2011, 240). Gregory rigorously analyzes the work war has historically done in three different border zones that are now targets of drones and reapers, showing us that, in the broken ties of geography, war requires "a legal apparatus that constitutes the extended war zone" (2011, 241). The killing space, says Gregory, has reached us, with terrible intimacy. Death departs from the traditional battlefield and can be delivered across vast distances; distances between shooter and targets, zones of battle and attack have become larger in an everywhere war.

[31] "If military forces follow the strategy of disengaged combat, the battle front may be hard to find. Indeed, in such remote engagement warfare, it may not exist. […] If remote engagement were adopted as a strategy, then only after sufficient damage has been inflicted on the adversary via disengaged combat, would an attempt be made to close and force a capitulation" (Schneider and Grinter 2002, 11)

As a response to this massive use of technology and force, an enemy without such resources, must resort to ground strategies that create blindness on the remote vision systems above. An enemy embedded in the population uses strategies of hiding and passing to create blind spots within the type of vision promoted by RMA, described by Negri and Hardt as "target poor" (Hardt and Negri 2005, Loc. 1088). Military strategists have realized that technology can only work for certain aspects of war. The technological dominance held by countries like the United States –-the most advanced country in RMA– has shown its vulnerability in low-intensity conflicts where the enemy takes advantage of disguise and opacity strategies. Therefore this situation has shown the necessity for a full-spectrum dominance that combines military, social, political, ideological and psychological control, mixing military and civilian components (Hardt and Negri 2005, Loc. 1050). Thus, counterinsurgency (COIN) appears as the military strategy that compensates on the ground for the blindness that remote vision systems exhibit from above. Because as Hardt and Negri point out, complete domination is always provisional and limited and the maintenance of order must constantly be policed and preserved, making counterinsurgency a full-time job (2005, Loc.1076). This is how RMA and GCOIN intersect.

Nevertheless, GCOIN and RMA are still poles apart. GCOIN is localized within a territory, whether its organization is tribal-based or a nation state, and defines its form of territorial intervention as a "conflict ecosystem" (Kilcullen 2006). This ecosystem consists of the network formed by the various actors participating in a conflict, which are not necessarily part of an insurgency force but rather seek survivability and influence in the conflict environment (See footnote 28). They are forms of networked organizations. Kilcullen (2006) explains that this ecosystem expands beyond the place where the armed struggle takes place, due to transnational flows of money, global media, Internet and migration. In this new landscape, insurgencies are also networks; they have no power center but rather, power is distributed along the network nodes with dispersed actions (Mirzoeff 2011b, Loc. 5418; Gregory 2010, 160; Hardt and Negri 2005, Loc. 1080). Kilcullen states that "modern insurgents operate more like a self-synchronizing swarm of independent but cooperating cells, than like a formal organization" (2006, 6).[32] When GCOIN fights a local threat, the territory is taken as another node within a network of collaboration, dispersed finance systems and multiple threats on a global scale. When GCOIN operates within a physical territory fighting local insurgency, it uses strategies of "clear, build and hold." This strategy entails clearing the insurgency from the area of influence, separating the guerrilla from the population that supports it, and creating new territorial arrangements. Walls of separation, camps and physical partitions are used in this strategy. These tactics of identification and separation are set up to create what Nicolas Mirzoeff calls "necropolitical regimes of separation" (2011a, 298–308).

As I have shown in Chapter Two, in striving to establish full sovereignty, Colombia has created different spatial arrangements that do not speak necessarily of territorial control in the form of a state presence in every town, city or municipality, but rather through scattered and discontinuous mechanisms of surveillance among civilians. In Colombia, tactics of identification and separation between insurgents and the population have established strategies of mutual surveillance embedded in a perverse economy of war in which the model used is not division, as for example with walls of separation, but distribution. Colombia's counterinsurgency tactics use networked tactics designed to multiply forms of intimidation and surveillance, specifically through civilian programs of cooperants and informants. This sophisticated form of territorial control speaks of the non-localized

[32] Kilcullen suggests that there is little structure to this ecosystem, that "even the fashionable cybernetic discourse of "networks" and "nodes" [applied to insurgencies] often implies more structure than exists" (2006, 6).

character of GCOIN that simultaneously deploys its forces within a localized territory. Therefore the non-localized form of GCOIN not only attacks virtual settings of (transnational) collaboration such as the Internet or the international financial system: as I have shown in the Colombian case, it can also be embedded into the social relations of a specific location.

Unlike RMA, GCOIN operations require a large presence on the ground, but they are no less technological. In an interview for *Wired* magazine, David Kilcullen was asked about the role of technology in GCOIN, and he answered,

> Close-access SIGINT [signals intelligence] technologies and counter-IED technologies are probably the most critical tools. Unmanned aerial vehicles like Predator, new communications technologies like software-defined cell-net radio systems, surveillance gear like the RAID tower and persistent satellite surveillance, plus biometrics technology like BATS [Biometric Automated Tool Set] and HIIDE [Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment] also give us a real technology edge, provided they are used right. And air superiority, though often taken for granted by ground guys, is absolutely critical. But the key is still the individual counterinsurgent, on the spot, armed and aware, with a close relationship with the local community based on trust. He's got to have the ability to be there when the population needs help — and to prevent insurgent intimidation and violence. Technology enables that, it doesn't replace it (David Kilcullen 2009).

The technology listed by Kilcullen is used in surveillance, identification and communication. Kilcullen clearly states the purpose of technology in GCOIN is to support ground forces in their direct relationship with the population --a relationship, as he tells us-- that is based on trust. However, as he explains, "wining hearts and minds" is not a process of emotion but rather of calculated self-interest (Kilcullen 2010, 37). In this sense the population becomes a technological field of intervention. Biometrics, satellite surveillance and HIIDE create a technological network atop the population's social network, with the objective of permeating, separating and reconnecting the nodes of the latter network. Ground forces are technologically interrelated with the population. They create new nodes of dependence and intimidation.

In the article *Death from Above, Outrage from Below*, Kilcullen describes the appeal that drone attacks have to policymakers: no American causalities, and measurable effects (number of terrorist leaders killed), among others (Kilcullen and Exum 2009). Kilcullen presents three reasons why the costs outweigh the benefits. Aerial bombs fall on terrorists as well as on civilians. These strikes kill individual terrorists but create public outrage among civilians; therefore it solidifies the support and popularity of the terrorists and potentially increases the number of insurgents. Kilcullen states, "While violent extremists may be unpopular, for a frightened population they seem less ominous than a faceless enemy that wages war from afar and often kills more civilians than militants," adding that "press reports suggest that over the last three years drone strikes have killed about 14 terrorist leaders. But, according to Pakistani sources, they have also killed some 700 civilians" (Kilcullen and Exum 2009). The faceless enemy embodied by the drone strikes is, in Kilcullen's argument, a motivation to exacerbate asymmetric warfare. On the other side of the argument, drone attacks are seen as a lesser evil. While they do indeed kill civilians, the argument for them is based, in a utilitarian fashion, not on the damage they produce, but on the evil they purportedly prevent (see Weizman 2011). In this framework, air power is seen as too aggressive if "air strikes and indirect fire [are used] to deny areas to insurgents, they may actually contribute to a feeling of insecurity on the part of the population and hence may have

a destabilizing effect on the district" (Kilcullen 2010, 70). Yet COIN views air power as aiding surveillance and reconnaissance while supporting patrol operations on the ground.

In Colombia, air power and mass firepower have a specific site of operation: the Colombian jungle where the FARC-EP has historically operated. The massed firepower used against leaders of the FARC-EP in the Colombian jungle is predicated upon a relationship of similarity: only madness, violent people, and snakes could inhabit an inhospitable territory like the Colombian jungle (see Chapters One and Two). Therefore, all casualties during those massed firepower operations against the FARC-EP in the Colombian jungle are considered members of the insurgency, without taking into account that the jungle is also the home of countless indigenous populations, as well as farmers. The strategy of air power in Colombia, which is result of improved command and control, new technologies for intelligence, communications, and weaponry –RMA characteristics-- engenders division of the Colombian territory. Air power is employed above inhospitable areas, as just one of various levels of separation imposed on the territory. Inhospitable can mean several different things including land that is attractive for economic development; while barely populated, the Colombian jungle not only is the site for coca cultivation and cocaine production but also for illegal mining.[33] Therefore, we have a policy of interested securitization for economic development constituted as a major force for land reclassification and population separation. Even if GCOIN practitioners opposed RMA strategy of mass firepower from above, the Colombian case shows that the construction of a territory as a map of possible targets implies more than designating areas as the enemy's territory. Rather, RMA strategies –specifically air power with mass firepower-- are integrated into GCOIN tactics on the ground, creating modes of territorial control in which intimidation becomes ubiquitous and homogenous. Both doctrines develop power projection. Any conflict between the two doctrines is irrelevant as long as they work together to build power projection, which entails forms of proxy power. Whether by means of surveillance transferred to the population, firepower based on long-range weapons, or war through mercenaries and private contractors, the idea is to build domination through fear of what is absent, fear of that power that resides somewhere else but that is ready to be deployed.

Whose RMA? RMA on a Global Scale

In the year 2000, Colonel David W. Read highlighted the gap between the strategy undertaken by European countries and the United States after the Gulf War. He stated,

> If the US has embraced the RMA as a means to promote their national security interests by increasing lethality, improving mobility, and reducing the vulnerability of American forces engaged in operations, no such big ideas stir the European members of NATO. They are still caught in a national security paradigm based on territorial defense, and have only recently begun to accept the need to be able to project power. But even in a massive coalition effort, European forces today would, for example, be incapable of carrying out anything approaching the type and scale of operations that the US forces conducted in the Persian Gulf in 1991 (2000, 17).

[33] Adam Isacson, in his written testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission before the US congress, summarizes the situation in this way: "While conflict in these zones often revolves around competition for control of drug transshipment corridors, it is increasingly a result of outsiders' desire to exploit the natural wealth of lands held by Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and smallholding farmer communities. Rising commodity prices and new extractive techniques have made many long-neglected corners of Colombia suddenly attractive for oil and gas exploration, mining of coal, minerals and gems, timber extraction, and cultivation of capital-intensive crops like soy and biofuels" (2013, 14).

RMA's idea of projecting power through lethality, long-range precision killing, and reduction of mass and fire power --in other words, more accuracy and agility with less men on the ground-- have promoted American interests around the world outside the paradigm of territorial defense. Projecting power is a form of action through distance. High-tech capabilities allow a greater scope of influence as well as quick mobilization of force beyond national boundaries. The technological nature of RMA is unattainable for a third-world country like Colombia. In a RMA environment, military technological capabilities are acquired from a diverse range of civilian and academic research that entails a complex arrangement of knowledge and economies. When I say that a country like Colombia could not attain such status, I am not only referring to military budget and research; clearly, over the past twelve years the Colombian Armed Forces have received a major investment in technology and innovation from the United States. But it is the militarization of innovation and research in the United States, as well as the global privatization of war, that enhanced the power of projection of which Colonel Read speaks. It involves academic institutions and corporations integrated into the military complex and guided by new modes of production, management and global divisions of labor.

The book, Toward a Revolution in Military Affairs? Defense and Security at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century by Thierry Gongora and Harald Von Riekhoff echoes Colonel Read's assertions that the United States position on RMA has surpassed its previous equals in the global order. The authors claim that U.S. primacy on RMA will remain unchallenged until at least 2020, when its major competitors might have undertaken the necessary changes for RMA. With its leading military position, the U.S. plays a central role in defining global perspectives on RMA. The authors indicate that the U.S., with its unprecedented military hegemony, can choose which regional conflicts to get involved in, and in what capacity (Gongora and Von Riekhoff 2000, 7). This unprecedented freedom of choice on involvement as well as mode of intervention --which increasingly opts for new forms of non-direct action-- leaves the other world players in a position where have no options but to play their assigned roles within a global division of labor in the war against terrorism. The U.S., as the global leader in command, control, communication, computers and intelligence (C4I), intelligence collection, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) and precision force, positions itself as the best eyes in the world; its primary role is to provide intelligence and systems assistance, illuminating the battlefield with its dominant situational knowledge for the other actors to act upon. Progressively, ground forces on the front line are comprised more and more by soldiers from allied forces, a variety of soldiers from other nations and private contractors, while U.S. forces center their action on remote forms of intervention (Hardt and Negri 2005, 46). This division of labor inevitably leads to making every war in which the U.S. participates asymmetric, not only in regards to enemy forces but also among U.S. allies.

With this international hierarchy of power and division of labor, Gongora and Von Riekhoff offer four categories of countries, based on the role RMA plays in crafting their global politico-strategic interests and their relationship with the U.S. The first category consists in the United States and its closest NATO allies. The second is a category that Gongora and Von Riekhoff call "peer competitors," which are Russia and China; the third category is called "niche competitors, and it consists mainly in developing countries with a capability to make selective use of some RMA technologies" (2000, 10). And the last category is the residual cluster comprised of countries without prospects of adopting RMA technologies, and the authors recommend their strategy be "to avoid involvement in conventional wars in which RMA technology is likely to figure prominently or, failing that, to minimize damage from the RMA by resorting to a strategy of deception and camouflage" (2000, 10).

The category of "Second-tier RMA users" is made up of countries that work specifically on interoperability. In order to be able to play a role as U.S. allies in global conflicts, these countries work to build an infrastructure they can use to "plug and play" into U.S. capabilities. Lack of interoperability threatens U.S. allies with marginalization from global decision-making. Therefore, countries like Canada work specifically on acquiring the right technology that would allow them to still be able to connect to U.S. systems (2000, 12). The category of "niche competitors" operates on a regional scope. The authors define them as developing countries with some technological sophistication. Rather than seeing this cluster as the losers of the RMA, Gongora and Von Riekhoff point to the possibility, suggested by other military theorists, that these countries in fact could be major players if their influence increases in specific regions where the U.S. and the global players seek power projection. This status could be achieved by selectively acquiring RMA technologies and successfully coupling them with conventional war technologies while developing tactics and politico-military strategies tailored to global regional interests. As the authors describe, these countries make an independent effort in order to position themselves as influential regional players. These "niche competitors" are provided with agency that translates into ambition to augment their influence in the global decision-making process by becoming influential regional players.

In what follows, I suggest that instead of considering the U.S. as a reference point around which these countries develop their actions, we approach it as the one crafting such actions, and therefore creating these categories, as part of their RMA strategy. Further, Colombia's change of military doctrine and strategy could be read as an effort to become a niche competitor, however its's regional influence has been crafted as the result of U.S. interest in the region, using RMA as a strategy.

Jim Rochlin (2011) presents a series of RMA features that are at work in Plan Colombia (PC), a plan that transformed Colombia into what Hugo Chávez deemed "the Israel of Latin America" (2011, 715). In the article, Rochlin suggests that RMA in Colombia would have been impossible without U.S. assistance; therefore he explains PC as the result of a bilateral agenda between the United States and Colombia in a war against terrorism. He provides an image of RMA in Colombia as "[relying] on newfangled and sometimes clever conceptions of force that have weakened the relative power of the FARC" (2011, 716). This statement, more than highlighting the technological edge of the Colombian conflict, qualifies the use of force as clever, which speaks to how adaptable the relationship between RMA selective technology and conventional uses of force has been.

Rochlin provides a list of RMA features he sees at work in the Colombian war conflict: asymmetry, privatization of war, the discourse on terror, and technology and information dominance. He tracks technological cooperation between the U.S. and Colombia by listing names of corporations and private services industries in the United States and the amount of money assigned to them out of the 7.5 billion dollars the U.S. allocated to PC. This lists speaks of one of the most important features of RMA: the privatization of war. Private services have become the U.S.' chosen mode of non-direct action and power projection. Private contractors have trained Colombian Armed Forces on different highly technological military strategies as well as in the use of information and communication systems. PC is the result, in a globalized world, of U.S. interest in the region.

In the 1990s, it is often argued, Colombia was not a country "with a reasonably sophisticated technological infrastructure" and not even "a partially closed society" (Gongora and Von Riekhoff 2000). On the contrary, at the inception of the PC, Colombia was a very weakened country that had ceded to the FARC-EP a portion of the Colombian territory the size of Switzerland (see Rochlin's description of Colombia in the 1990s, 2011, 719–723). Rochlin states that PC was driven by the U.S.' growing fears of the rising power of the

FARC-EP in Colombia and the region; this illegal insurgency group had already acquired part of the Colombian territory, mobilized an estimated 17,000 troops divided into 60 fronts across the country, created a regional coalition across the continent with leftist governments employing the rhetoric of a Bolivarian project, and had achieved political recognition from some European countries and NGOs. Rochlin sees the use of RMA strategy in Colombia as the result of a bilateral agenda prompted by rising fears of a left-wing coalition in South America, led by the FARC-EP. He asserts that without this agenda, RMA in Colombia would not have been possible. Contrary to Rochlin, I have been suggesting that PC was crafting a proxy intervention in the region, developing Colombia into a "niche competitor" and was then integrated into the RMA strategy of the United States. In other words, Plan Colombia was directed not only at combatting the FARC-EP but also at creating a security regime in the region that could expand U.S. interests and conceal U.S. intervention.

The particulars of the Colombian case are reflected in many articles where Colombia figures as a paradigmatic military strategy and, as such, an example to follow in Afghanistan and other volatile regional situations, including Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, among others (Haddick 2013; Haddick 2010; Wilson 2009; Wolfowitz and O'Hanlon 2011; "Colombia's Lessons for Counterinsurgency - and Afghanistan" 2014; *BBC* 2007; "US Lessons in Afghanistan Can Aid Colombian Troops" 2012). The idea that the Colombian Armed Forces have become an important player in the region, since Operation Check and despite some security issues, is noted in the 2013 report on *The Future of U.S. Special Operation Forces*. The authors state that "Although internal security issues remain, Colombia is now a net security exporter, providing CN training to numerous countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, and West Africa. Colombian forces are also contributing air and naval assets in a multinational effort to interdict smuggling along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of Central America. These achievements illustrate how a country's SOF can mature in a little over a decade to become an important node in the Global SOF Network."(Thomas and Dougherty 2013, 84).

This statement asserts a process that the writers of the report see as maturation, through which Colombia moved from "[being] plagued by insurgencies and internal security threats" to becoming an exporter of security. This maturation process, or the *Colombianization* of PC, is less an internal process in which Colombia achieved stability in matters of security and more a reflection of an agenda that allows Colombia to become "a node in the global special operation forces network." In other words, PC's Colombianization, a word that points to something becoming nationalized, is actually the opposite; it is the regional internationalization of a specific strategy of *securitization* through a country within that region. Robert Kaplan, expert in foreign affairs, writes, "The effort in Iraq, with its large-scale mobilization of troops and immense concentration of risk, could not be indicative of how the U.S. would act in the future. It was in Colombia where I was introduced to the tactics the U.S. would employ to manage an unruly world" (2006, Loc. 777). Further, in a recent article, Paul Wolfowitz writes:

> Rather than aiming to establish government control over the entire country [Afghanistan], the U.S. goal should be to contain the insurgency while giving the Afghans the tools to take over the fight from us in coming years. In fact, something to this effect has been the U.S. strategy on the ground for some time now. And, for both American and even Afghan purposes, such an outcome could be considered a genuine success. Over the past decade, we have achieved just this result in Colombia -- or, more accurately, the Colombians with our assistance have achieved such a result -- and it is rightly considered a substantial victory […] The country remains plagued by

> violence, to be sure, but is no longer in danger of state collapse and no longer has the omnipresent feel of a war zone. (Wolfowitz and O'Hanlon 2011).

This statement points to the murkiness of the concept of projecting power; a RMA strategy of crafting global actors for global security problems, in which the roles are not clear. When Wolfowitz and O'Hanlon speak of who is responsible for the success in Colombia, they point to the American effort made through use of the Colombian forces. Both the 2013 report on SOF in the U.S. and Wolfowitz and O'Hanlon's article frame success in the midst of violence; the former speaks of how internal security issues persist and the latter states that the country is plagued with violence. These statements reveal the subtle differences between violence and war zones that support their idea of success. What these statements convey is that in the Colombian case, the war zone as a defined territory with its boundaries has disappeared and this is read as a real victory.

But what also remains in the country is violence, begging the question as to, how could this be read as a success? If we consider PC as a program with two different spatial arrangements (a domestic and a regional space/agenda), then RMA and GCOIN are used to work these two different scales of PC. The image that the authors provide is revealing. They tell us that violence remains as a "plague" around the country. Violence as a plague has no boundaries; it spreads randomly and does not attack hierarchically; it is not interested in power, or the state, as such. It is a network that is contained by COIN strategies that have become a full-time job, with no beginning, no end, and no boundaries.[34] As GCOIN contains what the authors see as a plague working on a domestic scale, RMA in Colombia is not the implementation of RMA by Colombia but rather it obeys to a global division of labor in which Colombia is ready to operate as a proxy form of intervention in the region making the U.S disappears as an opaque force. In this sense the U.S. have crafted regional influence as Colombia has become an exporter of security in the region and beyond. Kaplan states,

> The U.S. goal was not to completely pacify Colombia. That would have been too ambitious. The goal was to break up the leadership networks of the guerrilla through assassination and other means, thereby reducing them to an even lower level of banditry. 'We aim to balkanize them and kill their centers of gravity,' one American military official said (Kaplan 2006, Loc. 1255).

The strategy of killing the leaders of the guerrilla fronts seeks to destroy the axis through which the objectives of war are defined, whether political or for profit. The presupposition is that at this lower level of banditry groups would not be a threat to state power. But instead what they require is a permanent exercise of force working on the contention of such violence. Paradoxically, this space of violence makes power and its apparatus of security more visible, which translates into managing fear, turning security in a civilian activity (see Chapter Two) and declaring the securitization of daily life a task that guarantees sovereignty.

Operation Check: Between RMA and GCOIN

Operation Check is a hybrid of RMA and GCOIN. It marked a shift in military tactics involving a major investment in technology, training and change of military doctrine in the Colombian Armed Forces. But, why was it Operation Check that marked such a change and not, for instance, Operation Sodom? Both military operations entailed a rhetoric of change

[34] In 2012, Senator Juan Lozano presented to congress a law project that would allow the entire counterinsurgency infrastructure developed by the Colombian Armed Forces under PC to be used against criminal gangs. The senator pointed out that the success against the FARC-EP could be replicated against criminals, since they are the major cause of the violence around the country. The proposal was cautiously received; many read it as a sort of patriot act and rejected it. Others saw it as a definitive way to finish off the criminal gangs.

(see Chapter Three). Sodom made use of overwhelming force, consisting of 78 military and police aircrafts and approximately 900 men and 7 tons of smart bombs, all in order to kill just one man. The reason why Operation Check is deemed the turning point is because it mobilized a different power regime that has dramatically shifted Colombia's position within the global landscape of security markets in the war against terrorism. This power regime is embedded in a dualistic language of coercion versus persuasion, which in the case of Operation Check is mirrored in a distinction between the use of mass firepower and a reliance on aerial bombardment or ground attacks versus military intelligence.

Timothy Mitchell (1990) correctly identifies that studies of power and resistance have been guided by a master metaphor. He suggests that this metaphor of power is grounded in our everyday concept of the person: "a unique self-constituted consciousness living inside physically manufactured bodies" (1990, 545). This distinction maps two locations for power to operate: the materiality of our bodies (physical space) and the internal realm of consciousness (mental space); in the former, power is a material force and in the latter, it takes the form of meaning or culture. This binary maps domination and violence as external forces exerted over a body. In this framework, violence appears to be a material force, coercing the subject's behavior without necessarily affecting his consciousness. Mitchell sees that social studies of power and resistance have used this metaphor in order to present the subjects of their studies as historical agents resisting the external forces of domination. In these studies, a subject could still emerge as a genuine political being as the result of his/her self-constituted consciousness, which remains outside the grip of violence. Moreover, Mitchell sees that this type of thinking has become complicit in reaffirming the same distinctions of materiality and ideology. His critique is that there is no examination of this dualism as an effect of the very workings of power. This dualism of coercion and persuasion plays a role in the framework of war. There are power regimes apparently restraining their own use of violence with a discourse of persuasion, negotiation and humanitarianism while still waging wars, albeit ostensibly for humanitarian purposes. Power itself has adopted the master metaphor of domination, embracing education and persuasion as forms that appear to have surpassed old methods of mass distributions of violence. However they are always intertwined. In order to understand Operation Check as a result of this modality of operation, necessary is an investigation into how it delivers a construct that mobilizes strategies of persuasion embedded in military intelligence as indicators of a new phase of the Colombian state.

Operation Check was a rescue mission based on deception. This deception was designed to guarantee the safety of the hostages. The FARC-EP has always threatened to kill their hostages if the Colombian Armed Forces attempted a rescue mission. This FARC-EP "policy" has caused the deaths of 10 assemblymen, one governor, a former minister of defense and a total of thirteen soldiers and policemen. The deception that led the FARC-EP to believe that they were among friends, and that their leader Alfonso Cano had ordered the transfer of the hostages, was never conceived as a theater totally free of violence. The ruse was a form of violence containment. Operation Check was comprised of two different scenarios: first, deception and second, what president Uribe called a "humanitarian cordon." The latter was conceived as a massive display of force in case the ruse was discovered. The humanitarian cordon consisted of an airborne assault, moving three counter guerrilla battalions in 24 helicopters (UH-60, 03 UH-IN, 03 MI) and one C-130 airplane. The plan was to first drop thousands of flyers that would read that the only way out of the military siege was surrendering and handing over the hostages. In the case of Operation Check, the humanitarian cordon appears as Plan B, but in fact, it was President Uribe's first option (United States Embassy in Colombia 2008a; Bruce, Hayes, and Botero 2010, Loc. 3948; Villamarin 2009, Loc. 4523).

On January 26, 2008 –six months before Operation Check-- President Uribe announced to the press that he had ordered the Colombian Armed Forces to locate the hostages, in order to isolate and encircle the guerrillas with massive air and ground force. The plan was to create a cordon around them to put *humanitarian* pressure that would drive them into a negotiation to turn over the hostages. Rather than locating the guerrillas and attack, the cordon was a way to force a negotiation that would offer the guerrillas cash rewards and legal benefits, in exchange for their prisoners. This plan was met with great opposition from the hostages' families, sectors of Colombian society and some European countries who saw the cordon as a military operation rather than a humanitarian effort. They warned President Uribe that an operation of that sort might prompt the guerrillas to execute the prisoners (J. Otis 2010, 421). John Otis describes in his book "Law of the Jungle" how President Uribe, and the U.S. ambassador in Colombia at the time, William Brownfield, saw this scenario as the "middle ground between those who favored a military rescue and those pushing for a prisoner exchange" (2010, 421). Brownfield describes the humanitarian cordon in the following way: "The concept was to stress the FARC, stress the local commanders with the expectation that at some point they'd be willing to open up, talk about, or just release the hostages. We should try to make it in their interest to let the hostages go. And it [the humanitarian cordon] had the additional benefit of tying together the two extremes in the U.S. government" (2010, 422). This description shows the dynamics between persuasion and coercion. The words used by President Uribe and U.S. Ambassador Brownfield seem not to be speaking from a power position defined by the threat of violence; rather they seem to be offering each guerrilla on the ground a setting in which they could decide in their best interest.

Brownfield describes the pivotal concept of the operation as *stress*. In this scenario, the stress that each guerrilla experiences should trigger a process of self-interest evaluation in which he considers the pros and cons of his situation. However, the stress that ambassador Brownfield refers to is generated through fear of infiltrators, starvation ("humanitarian" cordons blocking food supplies), and death (air strikes), which is fear of mass firepower and force. To say that this stress would motivate local commanders "to open up, talk about or just release the hostages" is a way to displace the question of life and death to a question of profit, self-interest, and personal evaluation, obscuring the coercion that runs through this process. In this way, the interpellation to the guerrillas seems not to be a question of the state's power over their lives, but of maximization of benefits as they are given the opportunity to choose. The choices offered are, on the one hand, a good life of profit, legal benefits, and freedom and on the other, fire, prosecution, and possible death. But the good life is not a political life; it is the life of a consumer who can enjoy his private new fortune: a life that is the opposite of the one lived in the jungle. Because the state appears to be giving the rebels the opportunity to choose, the decision over life and death is displaced from the sovereign to the subject. In other words, the decision is still executed by the state; the sovereign is in the position to attack and kill.

However, if the state executes its power and releases all its violence against these guerrillas, this action appears to be a response to the choices made by the guerrillas. If the state kills them it is because they have chosen against their best interests. Therefore, power appears not to be arbitrarily and capriciously deciding whom among its subjects will live and whom will die, but rather to be responding to someone else's will. The sovereign's decision appears to be a response to a set of events outside itself. If a guerrilla chooses to turn over hostages in exchange for money, as a result of the stress that has been put on him, it is a choice that does not place the emphasis on saving his life but rather on celebrating profit. Yet the threat to his life remains. The result points to persuasion embedded on latent mass distribution of violence. The coercion embedded in the choices given —profit and legal benefits, or death— is obscured by a sense-making framework in which the only rational

choice is money. This framework assumes a self-governing individual who makes decisions that emulate market logic, in which self-interest and gain are vectors of life-making choices. This strategy speaks to guerrillas who are interpellated as what Michel Foucault called *homo economicus.* A neoliberal *homo economicus* is a unit of self-interest whose decision-making process in the social realm is guided by cost-benefit calculation and uses market-based values in all its actions and judgments as a "man of the enterprise" (2008, 147).

In Chapter Two I explained how this perverse economic logic has permeated the Colombian population through the informant programs and Co-operant networks, through which, in exchange for information, the government offers rewards and regular payments, enlisting the eyes of every single citizen. This economic logic is offered to the guerrillas through radio and TV advertisements, radio soap operas, flyers thrown from military helicopters, speakers with the voice of Ingrid Betancourt inviting them to demobilize and have a better life, songs on the radio, Christmas trees in the jungle, messages in objects thrown into rivers and, in general, media objects that invite them to accept such offers (see Chapter Three). For example, on March 3, 2008 José Juvenal Velandia, aka Iván Ríos, the Head of the Central Bloc of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) and the youngest member of this guerrilla's Central High Command, was killed by his security chief, Pablo Montoya, aka "Rojas," the same week the Colombian Army killed Raul Reyes in Ecuador. On February 17, the Colombian Army set up an operation against Rios by surrounding and attacking his seven rings of security. Rios was cut off from any communication and food supply routes were compromised. On March 6, 2008, "Rojas" arrived to a military camp, turned himself in, and claimed that he had killed his boss due to the military pressure his unit was experiencing. As a proof of the killing, Rojas brought Rios's severed hand, his passport, ID card and computer. Rojas claimed the bounty that the Colombian government had set on Rios's head. The Colombian government had offered 5 billion pesos for the capture or death of José Juvenal Velandia, aka Iván Ríos. A cable issued by the United States embassy, entitled "Farc Mutiny Leads To Death Of Secretariat Member" describes the general consent between the Colombian government and military officials over paying the reward to Rojas as a tactic that would prompt further desertions, a decline in morale, and them turning on their commanders (United States Embassy in Colombia 2008b). However, some sectors of Colombian society found it unethical to pay. They saw that the government was paying for murder, conveying the message that justice was in the hands of bounty hunters (*Semana.com* 2008). The government decided to give him only 2,700 million of the promised 5 billion. The reason for this decision was summarized in the following statement:

> On March 14, the Ministry of Defense decided to pay Rojas a portion of the five billion Colombian pesos ($2.7 million) reward offered by the GOC for information on the location of FARC leaders charged with terrorism, kidnapping, and other crimes. The Ministry stressed that the payment was for Rojas' handover of Rios' computer, USB sticks, and other information--not for Rios' death. Defense Minister Juan Manual Santos told the press the GOC had to pay Rojas the reward or risk being seen as untrustworthy by other potential deserters. (United States Embassy in Colombia 2008b).

In relation to Rojas' reward, the Colombian magazine *Semana* published an article call "Money or Fire." While recognizing the effectiveness of the reward and bonus program, it concludes that the government should set clear limits on what actions are beneficial and legitimate, in order to protect the people and safeguard order (*Semana.com* 2008). Evidently the Colombian Armed Forces see killing or capturing FARC-EP leaders as a legitimate action, a means to bring about the end of the Colombian conflict. Therefore the controversy is not whether killing the enemy is beneficial or legitimate, but the question probes the means

of achieving such action; therefore what was questioned was the procedure, not the government program of payments and rewards.

Critics of Operation Check have claimed that such a deception never existed, that the guerrillas were not tricked but bought. The documentary Operación Jaque: Una jugada no tan maestra ("Jaque, not such a perfect move") develops this story. Through different testimonies and news reports, the documentary builds the idea that Operation Check was a financial operation and not a military one. It claims that the commander of the first front, César, negotiated with the Colombian government to turn over hostages in exchange for a large amount of money. If Operation Check was in fact a financial operation, why create such a script when these types of transaction were already part of the military strategy of the DSD policy?

The Colombian government has created an environment in which market logic cut across the internal conflict. As I have shown above, legal benefits and rewards have contributed to the success of the DSD policy. Indeed Operation Check could have been the result of paying a large amount of money to César, the commander of the first front. But whether Operation Check was a financial operation or not, the Colombian government capitalized on Operation Check's *mise en scène*, which produced a highly cinematic story. Operation Check became a highly profitable military operation because it was a media operation. By this I mean that processes of image making, image distribution and image reception are sites of military investment. Operation Check was an instance of such investment. If we consider the global markets of images and the tangible and intangible capital they create, Operation Check was both a financial and a media operation.

In counterinsurgency studies, these media operations are part of "the perception management plan," and in RMA they are considered "information warfare" (Kilcullen 2010, Loc. 1716; Schneider and Grinter 2002, 149). An effective perception management plan delivers one narrative whose purpose is to become the only sense-making platform from which to read the events of war. Operation Check was a scripted operation, planned as a theater piece with character design, actor preparation, role development, time and space cues as performance directions, and with a strict timeline of events. But Operation Check has been the object of multiple iterations and appropriations that generate branches of that scripted single narrative. Books, documentaries, TV miniseries, and special news reports have taken Operation Check as their subject matter, and some of them have offered contradictory versions, or unknown facts that question some aspects of the operation.

Operation Check was a sophisticated type of a financial operation. It has been a top selling story that has also sold a new image of the Colombian conflict through the entertainment world. If in fact the Colombian government paid César to release the hostages, then it would be also paying for the right to be the scriptwriter of the workings of war. In the next section I review concepts like information warfare, netwar, cyberwar and the perception management plan, in order to situate Operation Check in terms of the information strategy of RMA and CGOIN.

RMA and GCOIN: Two modes of Visuality

Traditionally, war has three dimensions where tactics and strategies take place: air, land, and sea. RMA has added a fourth one: information warfare. RMA adds information warfare as a fourth dimension not because it is new, but rather because the computer age has made these technologies so widespread and available that RMA has been forced to develop a defensive strategy against their capabilities (Schneider and Grinter 2002, 171). Information technologies are cheap compared to other types of weaponry and therefore could be obtained by rogue nations, terrorist groups or nonconformist individuals working to generate dissent (2002, 172). Information warfare is defined as any action designed to corrupt or destroy the

enemy's information and its functions in order to interfere with his capacity to observe, orient, decide, and act (OODA loop) with the objective of creating information dominance (2002, 149).

This definition emphasizes that information war is a disruption of a cognitive process between seeing, thinking and acting, in which an enemy's OODA loop is paralyzed. Other authors have criticized this definition as nothing more than a disruption of command and control structures and, as such, they refute information warfare's independent status as a fourth dimension of warfare. This position argues that any operation against an enemy involves a battle for or with information. Those who argue for the independent status of info war, like George Stein, see the need to carve a specific niche for information because it reflects the changes brought about by the global organization of immaterial labor.

Following Arquilla and Ronfeldt, Stein states that our current wars happen among ideas and knowledge, unlike previous wars, whose main objective was to gain access to territory and productive capacity (Stein in Schneider and Grinter 2002, 154). However, knowledge does not stand outside the forces that make it available; it is shaped in the struggle of such forces. Therefore, info warfare also entails a struggle at the level of epistemology. It is not only a battle to gain access to knowledge, but also to define the shape it takes. In this sense, two strategies become significant for shaping content, ideas and knowledge: net war and cyberwar.

John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, in their influential essay "Cyberwar is Coming!," define netwar and cyberwar as targeting information and communications; "they are forms of war about "knowledge"—about who knows what, when, where, and why, and about how secure a society or a military is regarding its knowledge of itself and its adversaries" (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997, 27). They distinguish between netwar and cyberwar, by defining the former's battlefield at the societal level, happening between nations and societies and the latter occurring at a military level (1997, 27).

Netwar's fields of action "may involve public diplomacy measures, propaganda and psychological campaigns, political and cultural subversion, deception of or interference with local media, infiltration of computer networks and databases, and efforts to promote dissident or opposition movements across computer networks. Thus designing a strategy for netwar may mean grouping together from a new perspective a number of measures that have been used before but were viewed separately" (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997, 28).

Netwar is about generating content and distributing it simultaneously along different channels in an attempt "to disrupt, damage, or modify what a target population "knows" or thinks it knows about itself and the world around it" (1997, 28). While netwar targets a population, in various forms because the societal actors of a conflict are multiple, cyberwar is aimed at disrupting the enemy's decision cycle, and even reordering and shaping such a process. Cyberwar works on knowing how knowledge is organized and constructed in order to interrupt its transmission; specifically "[…] disrupting if not destroying the information and communications systems, broadly defined to include even military culture, on which an adversary relies in order to "know" itself: who it is, where it is, what it can do when, why it is fighting, which threats to counter first, etc." (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997, 30).

Cyberwar must know the context and the variables that affect the enemy's OODA loop; context, as we have seen in Operation Check, is the main form of authentication. Knowing the context and its dynamics allows for the disruption of command and control structures by inserting new forms of content within the cycles of construction and distribution of knowledge.

Nicholas Mirzoeff addresses today's form of visuality as a hybrid, a combination between GCOIN and RMA. Mirzoeff speaks of a transition from war as cinema to networked forms of visuality embedded in digital technologies. In the former, understood as the

cinematic era of the RMA, the documentation of war is internal to the war machine in which the production and distribution of images are highly controlled. In this form of visuality, the author of these images is usually the one who has great power projection and advantage on the battlefield. An example of this kind of image is footage from military operations that belong to the weapon system; here we have images from remote vision systems following targets, showing sensor readings, GPS coordinates, and finally the airstrike on the target (see Chapter Three). Journalists accompanying Army convoys are an example of this kind of visuality; in these trips journalists are told what is interesting to document, from which perspective to frame it and from what distance is safe to record. Against this form, Mirzoeff sees that the neovisuality of GCOIN as the product of many different authors; war images cannot longer be contained as the product of one source. Their distribution is replicated on endless chains of re blogging, commentaries in websites and forum sites, diffusing its sources and point of origin.

In the distinctions offered by Nicolas Mirzoeff, the cinematic era is characterized by a highly controlled and specialized flow of images (2011b, 290). In order to understand these war images, for example those broadcasted during the Gulf War, an explanation was needed and it came from a specialized observer capable of deciphering the integration between the machine and the human eye. Therefore, information dominance derived from one's capacity to interpret the highly technological image, a capacity held only by few who had the specialized knowledge to infuse the image with meaning, but not just *any* meaning. In this form of visuality, dominance arises from superiority; this superiority is based on technology, language and the position of the observer: a technology the enemy does not have, a language that the enemy does not understand and a gaze that it is not mutual (see Chapter Three).

By contrast, Mirzoeff sees that network communication has propelled a different strategy beyond the cinematic era. Mirzoeff signals that war images have become impossible to contain because of always available, unending processes of copy and paste, blogging and re blogging, which create endless accumulation. Mirzoeff explains that this process does not mean more information but rather it produces chaos as a neovisuality. Indeed, information warfare by definition and strategy makes use of noise and chaos as a form of disrupting and rerouting the OODA process of the enemy. Stein points out that traditional propaganda is different from information warfare. While the former tries to discredit the enemy with mutual accusations, inflated rhetoric, polarizations between "us and them," and dehumanization directed at a general audience, the latter makes use of tailored messages in info niche-attacks, targeting specific groups defined by diverse interests, habits, and tastes. Stein indicates that as new actors like Greenpeace, or Amnesty International have come to play a role in the global sphere of war, military strategists see that the source of messages also needs to be decentered. While traditional propaganda tries to deny the enemy's claims by questioning his credibility, as a question of truth coupled with authority, info war wants to shape uncertainty. As Stein points out:

However, a successful all-out strategic-level information war may, however, have destroyed the enemy's ability to know anything with certainty and, thereby, his capacity for minimal reasoning or pragmatic communication (Schneider and Grinter 2002, 168).

But there is a limit to this chaos and uncertainty. Although Mirzoeff sees that GCOIN's goal is chaos, in which it is very difficult to know what is actually happening, info war theorists remark on the difference between generating chaos and shaping the battlefield (Schneider and Grinter 2002, 149). Shaping the battlefield means setting in motion a fictive or virtual environment in which the adversary is forced to respond, after disrupting and reorienting his ability to observe and decide. As a strategy, the enemy needs to be able to recompose a structure of logic while totally under the influence of the information war strategy that disrupted his OODA loop, producing predictable effects. If chaos rules,

predicting the enemy's moves would be impossible . The goal is not chaos but control, even if control means not knowing. What matters is creating a predictable response generated by a info war strategy. Successful cyberwar is not complete blindness but a framework in which the world and actions of the enemy can be anticipated. Mirzoeff's idea of chaos is defined as the product, as well as the justification, of GCOIN strategies. He fails to identify that this chaos is a sense-making process rather than just the fog of war ruled more by chance than design. It is a fine line, as Stein and other military theorists have argued, between generating noise and actually generating predictable effects: "to impose the allied commander's "order" on the enemy's "chaos" (Schneider and Grinter 2002, 162). Characterizing GCOIN and RMA's visuality as chaos constrains the analysis of why this effect is desirable, precisely because chaos seems to end in confusion.

Operation Check was an important media and financial operation. It used strategies from netwar as well as cyberwar. First, it interrupted the enemy's communication and oriented its decision-making process towards the liberation of the hostages as predicted by the Colombian Armed Forces, and validated the handover of the hostages to the humanitarian mission by making it a media event. It combined the creation of one narrative as in GCOIN, the generating of predictable effects as in RMA, and a media strategy, using both COIN and RMA. Operation Check created one narrative from which to read the hostage rescue, but afterwards it also produced noise by creating a reality out of historical references, and the derivatives and iterations that came out of this one narrative in the form of documentaries, TV series, movies, re-enactments, TV programs, museum pieces, etc. The initial single narrative has been able to negotiate with all the different versions that have appeared amid the noise produced by Operation Check. In the following section I will discuss how Operation Check was created as mimicry, the role played by the camera, and the media aspects of the single narrative that later bifurcates into a chain of referents that create strategic murkiness and noise.

Operation Check's videos: copies of copies

Operation Check was designed to be an exact copy of the humanitarian release negotiated by President Hugo Chávez on January 10, 2008. The video recorded and broadcasted by Telesur was the source that allowed the Colombian Armed Forces to plan the mimicry. For Operation Check to be an exact copy of the hostage release of January 10, 2008, this mimicry had to have its own cameraman and journalist producing a video documenting the military operation. The video of Operation Check released by the Colombian government starts with the helicopter landing at the rendezvous point, and ends with the helicopters landing in San José del Guaviare, where Army General Mario Montoya hugged his officers, celebrating the success of the operation. [35]

Seventeen members of the Colombian Armed Forces and the Intelligence Office comprised the rescue mission personnel for Operation Check; the crew copied the political backdrop exhibited in the release of January 10, 2008. The fake crew was a mission chief with an Italian accent, two international observers (an Arabic speaker and English speaker with an Australian accent), a cameraman and a journalist from the Venezuelan TV station TeleSur, a medical doctor and three nurses, two fake guerrilla delegates and an eight-person civilian flight crew for two helicopters. One of the fake rebels was actually a demobilized guerrilla who is now actively collaborating with the Colombian Armed Forces. Two

[35] The video I analyze in this section is the one showed by the Colombian government during the televised press conference on the day Operation Check took place. I found this video in a bootleg DVD sold in the streets of Bogotá entitled "Operation Check videos," which is a compilation of multiple edits of this footage, celebratory videos downloaded from YouTube, a Colombian TV show on Operation Check and the recorded press conference.

helicopters were used in this mission but, twenty hours before their departure, it was decided that only one helicopter would land at the rendezvous point. César had sent a message asking to travel with six more guerrillas; therefore, the Colombian Intel team decided to use only one helicopter and to tell César that his request was not admissible due to cargo restrictions, since only one helicopter was authorized to land. The helicopters were painted white with an orange trim. On the bottom of the fuselage were the logos of the international NGO and inside and at the door, the symbol for no weapons allowed (J. Otis 2010; Bruce, Hayes, and Botero 2010).

The cameraman, the journalist and the mission chief disembarked first. The latter was wearing a bib with the logo of the International Red Cross. The Venezuelan news team was wearing red shirts, blue vests and bandanas around their necks, as is customary for members of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela. The news team's first task was to inspect the surroundings with the camera, distract the guerrillas and, by turning and pointing the camera back to the helicopter, indicate to the crew in the aircraft that it was safe to disembark. The operation was supposed to last eight minutes but it actually took twenty-two due to the hostages' reluctance to and aggression toward being handcuffed by humanitarian workers (Bruce, Hayes, and Botero 2010, Loc. 4110).

The video released by the Colombian government on the same day Operation Check took place begins with the disguised journalist addressing the camera and describing the importance of this historical event as if reporting to a mass audience; behind him we see the rebel army impeccably dressed in the background. The journalist interviews the protagonists of this fake humanitarian mission and constantly gives indications to the cameraman on where to shoot from. We see the hostages as they are being introduced to the humanitarian mission; however, when they try to speak to the camera specifically about their difficult situation in captivity, protesting against the FARC-EP, the journalist stops them saying that their policy does not allow the prisoners to make statements to the camera. Nonetheless Keith, one of the American contractors, showed the camera his handcuffed hands and Army Lieutenant Raimundo Malagón --held hostage since 1998-- said "I have been chained for 10 years, I am Army Lieutenant Raimundo Malagon, from our glorious Colombian Army, kidnapped for multiple reasons…" The camera moves back, again the cameraman states that he cannot transmit any further, but Malagón moves closer and says "You should allow me to speak, I have something very important to say …" Again the camera retreats and we only see Malagón's mouth moving but we cannot hear what he says. The hostages look very angry, they move away from the camera; when the camera approaches them, they raised their handcuffed hands in protest.

The task of the fake news team was to distract the kidnappers, to drive attention toward the camera, since it was fabricating the image of the event for the world. The camera had a microphone that allowed the pilot to listen in on what was happening in the field. In turn, the central command of the Colombian Armed Forces was listening to the pilot and copilot's conversation. With phrases like "breaks OK," or "Anti-ice system OK," the pilot and the copilot were communicating to central command how the operation was playing out. If the operation were in peril, the chief of the fake humanitarian mission would have pretended to have lost his wallet. The pilot, listening through a microphone installed in the camera, would have delivered a code. This phrase would have communicated to the other mission field players, as well as to the military leadership following the operation from afar, that they were being discovered (J. Otis 2010; Bruce, Hayes, and Botero 2010; García 2008). Therefore the camera was a form of live transmission; therefore it had to stay on during the entire time of the operation.

The decisive moment in the documentation occurs back in the helicopter as they are flying away from the site, The Colombian intelligence officers subdue the kidnappers, César

and his second-in-command, aka “Gafas”. And then, the mission chief, whose name was Russi, yells “We are the Colombian Army, and you are free.” The camera jerks and we know that something is happening; it is not clear what we are looking at. Ingrid Betancourt describes this moment with the following words, “Something happened, I’m not sure what, and then we saw the commander who for years was in charge of us and had been so cruel and despotic with us, on the floor, naked, and blindfolded” (J. Otis 2010, Loc. 5157). Mark Gonsalves also points to the same chaos, saying “Suddenly, this big-ass fight breaks out, all these aid workers were just pounding on César” (J. Otis 2010, Loc. 5149).

Figure 27: Drawing by Luis Morán, a copy of a video still from the documentation of Operation Check.

The news team documented the operation by impersonating the work of a cameraman and a journalist. They broke with their roles when Russi revealed their identity to the hostages by announcing their freedom. However, their task of documenting continued. They kept recording; the cameraman continued to be a cameraman. Once Russi revealed their true identities to the hostages, the camera moved to Ingrid Betancourt. We see her crying and somebody asks her “Who do you want to thank?” and she answers “our army.” Everything was part of the mimicry; there was a news team in disguise doing what they were supposed to be doing, recording and reporting. But their work went beyond the impersonation; they continued recording even after their identities were revealed. In this sense, this video served two purposes. The video recorded during the operation served to support the mimicry as well as to actually document the hostages’ rescue. As part of the mimicry, the camera added authenticity since it served to create a media event that made it real for the rebels. The presence of the camera and the news team was an indicator of realness that sparked posing and laughter among the rebels as well as serious commentary about the importance of the event. In the documentary “The Perfect Rescue” (Discovery Channel) about Operation

Check, Army General Mario Montoya says that, out of all the team members, it was the cameraman and the journalist who were given the most special training. In the same documentary, the Intel officer who impersonated the journalist states that their intelligence revealed César as a very vain man; therefore, their job was to exploit this side of his personality by capturing his attention with the camera, and distracting him from the operation's progress. In the video of Operation Check, the camera moves constantly, following different actors in the event. The journalist asks César to give an interview, a request that the commander of the fake humanitarian mission vehemently denies. César, caught between welcoming the head of the fake humanitarian mission and his desire for media attention, reluctantly agrees. His smile never wavers as he nervously states that he does not want to break any protocol. We see César trying to walk away from the camera, with his guerrillas in new uniforms and perfect formation in the background, but the camera seems to be everywhere, always moving, spinning around him. We also see his second-in-command, "Gafas." He follows César everywhere; we see that he has a handycam. He records some moments and, in others, he puts the camera down.

The "nurse" from the fake humanitarian mission describes seeing the rebel army well-dressed and standing at ease with their rifles across their chest. She saw them documenting the mission with photo and video cameras. In fact, three months after the hostages' rescue, the news channel NOTICIAS UNO announced that the *real* video of Operation Check had been found ("EXCLUSIVO: El Video de Las FARC Sobre La Operación Jaque. : Noticias UNO, La Red Independiente" 2008). It was a video recorded by one of the FARC-EP rebels. The video that NOTICIAS UNO claimed was the real one begins with intercuts between the two helicopters, one flying above the site, and the other landing. When the cameraman, the journalist and the head of the humanitarian mission leave the helicopter, the guerrilla cameraman asks somebody to check if the camera is working properly. A woman answers saying that indeed the red light is flashing, indicating that it is recording. The head of the humanitarian mission goes straight to this camera and says "Hello" in Spanish, and continues saying, "me Spanish, little, OK?" to which the guerrilla that had previously checked the camera answers, "good, OK". The camera records him moving away, towards Cesar, and then records the encounter between César and the humanitarian mission. The next cut shows one of the U.S. hostages Mark Gonsalves looking up, following the helicopter that is flying above the site; we see him talking with the other two Americans in captivity. Then it shows members of the humanitarian mission addressing the hostages. The video cuts and the cameraman frames César, and the fake Telesur news team. The FARC-EP cameraman says out loud "An interview with Comrade César." Next, the camera records the hostages getting handcuffed and then everyone getting into the helicopter; one of the members of the fake humanitarian mission takes two cases of beer out of the copter and places them on the ground. Then the helicopter takes off with the doorway ladder still hanging down. And we hear the voice of the presumed cameraman, and he says "And Comrade César left; there he goes." What follows is a discussion about the beer left by the humanitarian mission as a present to the guerrillas.

In the FARC-EP video, the voice that speaks over the image places emphasis on certain moments. These moments mark what the Colombian news channel calls *real* about this video. The voice gives presence to those who were deceived. They give name to their deception: "An interview with Comrade César," "And Comrade César left," "that guy told me the beer was for us." What is real about this video is that the relationship between the words and the image appears to be established, allowing us to be certain that they were deceived. We know what the image is about; they do not know they are being deceived, and still they name what they see with what we expected from them, with what the deception had produced. In other words, when we see Cesar being chased by the cameraman and the

journalist, the rebels say to their camera "An interview with Comrade César," we know that that is not true but we want them to call it that; we want them to be deceived and our proof that they in fact were deceived is their words. The realness of this video authenticates the documentation made by the Colombian Armed Forces. The first video recorded by the fake cameraman and journalist constituted a mark of veracity for those guerrillas on the ground; their poses, formation and new uniforms speak of an image fabricated for the camera. The "fake" camera sustained the simulation. The second video made by the FARC-EP guerrilla recorded those creating the first one. This is a hand held camera; it bumps, jerks and shakes but still it underscores important moments during the hostage rescue with a voice over that stabilizes the image. The video by the FARC-EP ends as the cases of beer are left on the ground and we see the helicopter flying away, whereas the documentation by the Colombian government continues. It records inside the helicopter when the deception comes to an end by subduing the guerrillas, César and his second-in-command "Gafas."

These two videos —two different points of view— are intertwined. Both sides try to derive legitimate media presence from their documentation. However, each side uses a different strategy. In the first video, the one recorded by the Colombian Armed Forces, the news team appears as an outsider accompanying the parties involved; they are there only to narrate and document what they see. They describe and locate the event in a broader historical context, as journalist do. On the other hand, in the video recorded by the FARC-EP we see an image that is closer to the events. Here the cameraman acts as our translator of what we see and places his statements in a dialogue with those around him. The dialogue brings the image closer. The FARC cameraman does not move around like the fake news team, which follows people as they try to be where the news is. For the Telesur camera, the FARC-EP poses as a real army, with their uniforms, appearing disciplined and organized, in opposition to the portrait the Colombian government has depicted of it. For the camera of this apparently friendly TV network Telesur, the FARC-EP attempts to fabricate an image that they want to circulate and distribute, but what the illegal group did not know was that their image was already inscribed in a mimicry (see Chapter One).

The Colombian government uses netwar strategies as they mold public opinion. Operation Check boosted President's Uribe already soaring popularity. According to the poll commissioned by the newspaper *El Espectador*, President Uribe's approval rating soared to 93% after Operation Check (*El Espectador* 2008). The newspaper interpreted this phenomenon as the *Uribization* of the country, which is when politics are developed around a charismatic leadership. With politics centered on one person's authority, any political or military achievement cannot be seen as the result of the work of institutions but derived from the leader's exceptional qualities. But even with that emphasis, Operation Check and its multiple references and iterations, including the "real" one produced by the FARC-EP, have opened info niche-attacks that, without dispelling the realness of the military success, bring noise, and multiple frameworks of sense-making to the Colombian conflict.

Operation Check mimicked not only individual and group identities, but also protocols of war and humanitarian action. In this sense it subverts the images of those who in war appear neutral. With this mimicry Operation Check disrupts identities like neutral parties, friend countries, and NGO's integrating them within war as part of the enemy front.

Operation Check is a copy of a previous humanitarian release and it also exhibits a chain of different references. When the Colombian Armed Forces speak of how Operation Check was planned, they speak of the film *Ocean's Eleven*, Operation Entebbe (OE), Operation Bodyguard during WWII and even the Trojan horse in Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book II. Operation Entebbe is a reference in the history of military operations, specifically in resolving hostage crisis. Operation Entebbe was a hostage rescue mission executed by commandos of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) at Entebbe Airport in

Uganda on July 4, 1976. On June 27, 1976, members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the German Revolutionary Cells hijacked Air France Flight 139. The plane was detoured and flown to Entebbe, Uganda. There, with the support of Uganda's dictator Idi Amin, the hijackers held Israeli and Jewish passengers along with French pilot Captain Bacos, who refused to leave the Jewish passengers behind when the hijackers were releasing all the one hundred and forty eight non-Jewish passengers. OE used five Hercules planes carrying one hundred Israeli commandos that landed on Entebbe airport. They carried a black Mercedes that looked like Idi Amin's official vehicle and Land Rovers that looked like his security caravan. The planes landed with their doors open and in complete darkness. Then the fake presidential guard came out and drove towards the terminal where the hostages were being held. However, as they approached the terminal, Ugandan guards requested they stop since Amin's new car was a white Mercedes. With their disguise in danger, they killed the guards with silenced guns and continued to the terminal. With OE, disguising, infiltrating and penetrating enemy territory, like a Trojan horse, became a military paradigm for deception. The IDF rescued 102 hostages and three died under crossfire. Five Israeli commandoes were wounded, and the unit commander, Lt. Col. Yonatan Netanyahu, brother of Benjamin Netanyahu, was killed along with 45 Ugandan soldiers and all the hijackers. Operation Entebbe did not have a cameraman or a journalist among their crew. But still there were a series of movies and documentaries made about it, which in turn became visual references for the Colombian Armed Forces during the planning of Operation Check.[36]

But one of the most astonishing references is from the FARC-EP itself (J. Otis 2010, Loc. 4772). In Chapter One I analyze the kidnapping of 12 assemblymen from the state building in Cali, Colombia. At 10:30 A.M. on April 11th, 2002, a guerrilla unit disguised as members of the Third counter-guerrilla battalion walked into the Assembly building in Cali, while blocking the surrounding streets, and warned those inside of an alleged bomb threat. They evacuated the assemblymen from the state legislature building and provided them with special transportation arrangements to take them, supposedly, to a military base. Once inside the vehicles, the assemblymen learned that their protectors were the guerrillas of the FARC-EP posing as Army forces in order to kidnap them. In Chapter One I argued that the FARC-EP aimed at two different operations with this mimicry. On the one hand, as they were mimicking the armed forces of the state, they were showing that they could pass as such, precisely because they were in fact an army. On the other, in an opposite direction, they were defaming the Colombian Armed forces by mimicking them and thus revealing them to be impostors. In other words, they mocked the Colombian Armed Forces as they imitated them, showing that it is easy to imitate something that is already fake. Operation Check organized its mimicry within an expanded context. The mimicry exhibited by the FARC-EP during the kidnapping of the 12 assemblymen played with the idea of legitimacy and was addressed directly at and in dialogue with the Colombian Armed Forces, whereas Operation Check not only copied humanitarian protocols but --by copying a hostage release organized by President Chávez-- it cast a curtain of fog around the nexus between the left-wing governments of Latin America and the FARC-EP (Villamarin 2009, Loc. 235).

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[36] Films recreating Entebbe: *Victory at Entebbe* (1976), Director: Marvin J. Chomsky; *Raid on Entebbe* (1977), Director: Irvin Kershner; *Mivtsa Yonatan* (English title: *Operation Thunderbolt*) (1977), Director: Menahem Golan; *The Last King of Scotland* (2006, Operation Entebbe is one episode in the story of Idi Amin).
Documentaries: *Operation Thunderbolt: Entebbe* (1976); *Cohen on the Bridge* (2010); *Live or Die in Entebbe* (2012); "Assault on Entebbe", an episode of the National Geographic Channel documentary *Situation Critical* (2008); *Rise and Fall of Idi Amin* (1980); and *Operation Thunderbolt*, an episode in the 2012 season of the Military Channel documentary series *Black Ops*.

Operation Check projected power beyond the release of the 15 hostages by speaking to a global arrangement of enemy and friends in the region, which serves a U.S. RMA strategy. Operation Check was again the result of a RMA strategies as well as GCOIN tactics. Operation Check sealed the configuration of allies in the region by exhibiting dominance via restraining the use of force. The operation directly addressed Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez's concerns when he stated that Colombia was becoming the Israel of Latin America by invading its neighbors, to which he would respond with war ("AMENAZA CHÁVEZ CON GUERRA SI URIBE VIOLA TERRITORIO VENEZOLANO" 2008). However, the reference that Chávez invokes goes beyond the comparison. It is, in fact, a global arrangement developed through RMA strategy, in which military operations are part of a global imagination next to the entertainment industry with images like documentaries, TV series or films like Operation Entebbe.

Enactments of Operation Check

Figure 28: Drawing by Luis Morán, Ingrid and her double. Left, actress Marcela Mar in her role of Ingrid in the Spanish TV Series, Operation Check. Right, Ingrid Betancourt.

Operation Check has been an object of multiple iterations. Books, documentaries, TV miniseries, and special news reports have taken Operation Check as their subject matter. Hostages' memoirs like Ingrid Betancourt's bestseller *Even Silence Has an End*, and the three American contractors' *Out of Captivity*, feature Operation Check as the climatic moment of their narrative (Betancourt 2010; Gonsalves et al. 2009). Robert C. Doyle (1994) in his study of POW memoirs has identified six event-scenarios that the hostage's narrative follows. This genre begins with the pre-capture autobiography followed by the capture, the march into the unknown, a description of the prison landscape, the experience in prison, and finally the rescue, escape or release. In the prologue of *Hostage Nation: Colombia's Guerrilla Army and the Failed War on Drugs* (2010) the writers present the difficulties of writing a POW story:

As our subjects remain in the jungle, the book, which we have worked on for six months, did not seem to have either a market or an ending in sight. We shelved the proposal. Over the next few years, we would occasionally pull it out and dust it off —changing titles, reorganizing, and rewriting— only to discover that we still didn't have a book. […] The three of us worked together across continents for the next two years, until summer 2008, when Ingrid and the Americans were rescued by the Colombian military. To us, this seemed like a logical place to end a story we'd been covering for six and a half years (Bruce, Hayes, and Botero 2010).

The writers of *Hostage Nation* state that with their subjects in the jungle, they could not finish the book. They speak of the hostages' release as the logical place to end the story; the release of Betancourt and the three American contractors was conceived as the *natural* ending for their book. In order to turn a dramatic situation into a narrative they needed a conclusion. In the case of the book *Hostage Nation*, the narrative closure that the writers sought was a political event. Operation Check was indeed a pre-figured narrative for the country, for the success of the Colombian Armed Forces, and for the nation, as well as for many POW memoirs. The political event and its narration are intertwined. From the six event-scenarios described by Doyle, it is the rescue, escape or release that allows for the construction of the entire captivity narrative and, in this case, of a political narrative. It is the attained freedom that allows for the ex-hostage's reflection on his or her time in captivity as it creates a narrative for the new nation, a new stage of the Colombian state, and a new global player in matters of security. In the case of Betancourt and the three Americans, Operation Check not only delivered the freedom needed for them to bring closure to this dramatic event in their lives, but it also added a spectacular ending, which in turn is a spectacle of war.

Operation Check was a media operation planned by the state and delivered to us by a camera that was internal to the military operation, which would be a type of cinematic visuality in Mirzoeff's terms. What we saw was explained to us during the press conference given by the Colombian state on the same day the hostages were released. But this did not stop the multiple iterations, versions that sprung from the initial video, from creating noise around Operation Check, which would be the part of the neovisuality in which sense-making cannot be contained under only one subject creating it.

Several authors have identified that captivity narratives usually interpret the ordeal as having a moral purpose, which entails that these narratives serve specific ideological constructs. Some captivity narratives recast the experience as overcoming a personal trial. Whether the narrative takes the shape of a religious trial and/or an examination of one's patriotic values, they become the pillars from which the will to survive emerges. However, while these values are tested during captivity, they are, at the same time, being constructed (see Chapter One). Operation Check presents specific ideas of nation, and patriotic values that come to define the country's very nature through the interpellation it makes to the politician (Ingrid Betancourt), the American military contractors (to the world and specifically to a world waging war against terrorism) and to the Colombian Army (the 11 army and police men in captivity). Each iteration, whether a book or a TV miniseries, develops an aspect of these interpellations. Each iteration promises to deliver the same story in a way that it has never been done before, from the perspective of a different subject. Each is delivered as one node of this vast network of sense, creating several instances of neovisuality. For example, the ad for the documentary *Colombia Hostage Rescue* produced by National Geographic says:

The story of the kidnapping and subsequent holding of Colombian polemic political figure Ingrid Betancourt (along with other notable Colombians) in the country's deep jungles by the FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) has been recounted countless times since her rescue this year, but typically from a certain perspective—that of the official

government. This daring documentary delves into the controversial and top-secret Operación Jaque, the code name for the plan to free 15 hostages from their FARC captors, an endeavor which was unprecedented for Colombia. Through interviews with intelligence agents who drafted the plan, rescuers, FARC captors and the hostages themselves, the true story of the experience by the people who lived it unfolds on the screen ("COLOMBIA HOSTAGE RESCUE." 2008).

The article called "NatGeo lands first with Betancourt rescue doc" presents a list of projects around Operation Check, each delivering and promising new insight and a different point of view to the story.

Separately, Paraiso Pictures is prepping a two-part miniseries on the event for Spain's TVE. […] "This is a dramatization of the events that took place before and around the day the hostages were rescued by the Colombian military," Paraiso Pictures' Alex Pereira says. According to Paraiso partner Santiago Diaz, the mini will narrate and present four points of view on the matter: the kidnap victims and their drama, the kidnappers and their world, the military operation and all the stages of its planning, as well as the perspective of the minister of defense (De La Fuente 2008).

These iterations promise to deliver the story of Operation Check from a different angle. The personal angle is developed through the ordeal of the hostages or by recounting the lives, fears and sacrifice of the military personnel involved in the mission. Other iterations have promised to unveil the real level of involvement of the United States in the Operation, while others have claimed that the bloodless mission was in fact a total lie. This multiplicity is what allows for the construction of a layered story with multiple storytellers and not the product of a single speaker, which develops a very complex networked visuality. In fact, we do not have the government telling us what to believe, as in the cinematic model, and correcting each new version that appears to deliver the truth. The government released a video of 8 minutes and 46 seconds from which multiple spin-offs have developed; what we have is a field of speculation with certain points of closure creating a hybrid between cinematic visuality –which is the initial video of the operation– and a networked visuality in all the multiple iterations derived from it. The iterations of Operation Check that announced they would reveal the level of U.S. involvement bring a new global order to the table, in which copying Chávez or accepting technology and intelligence services from the U.S. is a new and acceptable transnational configuration. Hollywood is also planning a movie about Operation Check,

> EXCLUSIVE: In the wake of Osama Bin Laden's killing by a Navy SEAL team, Hollywood is suddenly obsessed with politically-charged fact-based mission movies. Momentum is building on one of those at Warner Bros, *The Mission*. David O Russell is circling the picture and the studio is courting Brad Pitt to star. […] The picture is basically the methodical six-year mission planned by American and Colombian covert operatives to free 15 hostages from the Colombian jungle. The hostages included three Americans and Ingrid Betancourt, once a candidate for President of Colombia. […] The hostages were held by the Colombian guerilla group FARC from between six and 15 years. It was a nightmarish existence as the hostages were moved around the jungles, often cruelly chained to trees at night by their necks. The central focus of the film isn't the ordeal of those hostages but rather on Operación Jaque, a covert effort involving numerous governments, diplomats and intelligence services and a vast network of spies, military advisers and soldiers plus high-tech surveillance measures. Nobody would confirm that Pitt was at all involved, and I'm not sure he'll be set, but I am convinced they are talking (Fleming Jr. 2011).

The TV miniseries and the Hollywood movies in the making underscore the spectacular character of the real, which stands ready to be exploited on the cinematic screen, adding a new level to the multiplicity of one narrative in which the noise of all these iterations only affirm that there is something worth talking about. The Hollywood movie plans convey that the military operations in Colombia have reached the global screen of war as spectacle inscribing them in a genealogy that links military action and spectacle: Operation Check and Operation Neptune Spear. When Colombia appeared on the Hollywood screen in the 1990s and 2000s, it was through depictions of Colombian bloodthirsty mobsters, kidnappers, drug lords, arms traffickers and guerrillas (Mann 2006; Cohen 2002; Llosa 1994; Hackford 2000; Norris 1990; Davis 2002; Noyce 1994; Niccol 2005; Day 1981; Lester 1983). Today, Colombia's portrait on the silver screen has shifted. Colombian characters are not only the antagonists but are depicted as heroes alongside the Americans. Operation Check on the Hollywood screen signaled Colombia's entrance into a global market of narratives, achieved by turning war into spectacle. The multiplicity that these iterations present is a sense-making process that is not unidirectional but, on the contrary, transversal and repetitive, always allowing for another version of the facts. This is precisely a netwar strategy. Info niche-attacks are presented here as they develop different levels of the story for different audiences.

The media iterations of Operation Check constantly dispute how this operation was planned and executed. They focus on different narrative angles and exploit the details that they claim are unknown. What they do not dispute is the success of the hostage rescue. In fact, new iterations are planned as I write. The successful hostage recue is the spectacular ending that gets recast in every movie, TV series, special news report or book. The argument that supports the production of a new spin-off of Operation Check is that new details will be revealed, but what allows it to exist, be funded and produced is the already known spectacular ending that gets recast over and over again, as well as celebrated. This form of content production replicates a structure of means and ends. What we continue to see is the spectacular ending with new details that bring to the forth the intricacies of the means used; however, these details only satisfy a curiosity based on rumor and gossip. None of the new details that appears in these iterations alter the legitimacy that the Colombian Armed Forces and government achieved with the rescue. On the contrary, what is created in this unending chain of enactments is the legitimacy of the ends despite the means used.

Operation Entebbe appears as a referent for the management of a hostage crisis. However, Entebbe is more a referent in terms of the multiple enactments it has produced of itself. Even today, 35 years after Entebbe, the story is recounted in the 2012 documentary *Follow Me: The Yoni Netanyahu Story.* This documentary tells the story of the raid's senior commando and brother of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (Gruber and Pinchot 2012).

Operation Check and its different media recreations (upcoming film, National Geographic series, and books) have created and multiplied a global "influential spectator's gallery of the international community" as part of a strategy of power projection. This is not simply a refashioning of the old propaganda machine of the state. The war on terror has brought an epistemological change between words and images, representation and explanation that has set up new differentiations between enemies and friends, and means and ends. If Operation Sodom erased the enemy from its documentation highlighting the technological know-how and capabilities of the Colombian Armed Forces (See Chapter Three), Operation Check erased the military apparatus as a recognizable institution. In other words, the large footprint that we see used in Operation Sodom and Phoenix is reduced in Operation Check at its minimum. Not only because it uses few military officers, but also they are not even recognizable as such. They are disguised. With this gesture, Operation Check contributes to disseminate power across the social fabric. What it does is a form of power

projection in which the security apparatus of the state is delocalized and with it the space of violence. Indeed Operation Check highlights the acquired Intel capabilities of the Colombian Armed Forces, but it is more important what it performs across the different operational scales in which it unfolds. It is a highly crafted operation, working at a global and a local scale as it is a hybrid between RMA and GCOIN strategies.

Conclusion

I would like to finish this dissertation with a story that points to an image. On June 28, 2007, the FARC-EP submitted a letter addressed to ex-minister Alvaro Leyva Durán and Fabiola Perdomo, the wife of Juan Carlos Narváez, one of the assemblymen kidnapped and killed by the FARC-EP, announcing that they would collaborate on getting the remains of the dead assemblymen back to their families for proper burial. After several months of negotiations, the Colombian government stopped military operations in an area where the FARC-EP promised to deliver the bodies. On September 2, 2007 a humanitarian commission led by the Red Cross, accompanied by ex-minister Alvaro Leyva Durán and a member of the Inspector-General representing the families, departed with the GPS coordinates where the bodies were buried (Aley 2007). Back in Cali there was an international forensic team put together by the Organization of American States and charged with the task of diagnosing how the assemblymen died. Recovering the bodies of the assemblymen killed by the FARC-EP (see Chapter One) proved to be extremely difficult ("Los Restos de Los Diputados Del Valle Estaban En Fosas Individuales, En Algún Lugar de Nariño" 2007). The territory was impregnable, and there was a new paramilitary group called New Generation that took control of the area where the FARC-EP claimed the bodies were buried (Arizmendi 2007). Therefore the humanitarian commission in charge of recovering the bodies had to negotiate with this new illegal group. But the commission was not only in danger from the paramilitary group. The Colombian government announced that it would only cease military operations in the zone for four days, but the difficult conditions were making the recovery of the bodies take longer than expected. Thus the commission was working under fear of attacks not only from illegal groups, but also from the Colombian Armed Forces.

Finally, the government announced that it would allow two more days, but not without President Álvaro Uribe Vélez expressing his concern that the guerrillas could take advantage of the military ceasefire in the area to "plot new terrorist attacks" (*EL PAÍS* 2007). Although the humanitarian commission landed approximately a mile from the burial site, it took them four days to get closer to the coordinates provided by the FARC-EP, because of the jungle's impenetrability and because their GPS systems were giving different readings of the same site. The only way to advance was with the help of the *baquianos* (guides) in the area. Although they knew the region, they were taken to the humanitarian commission's location by helicopter (Arizmendi 2007). Even small distances were impossible to traverse. Finally, the commission found an abandoned guerrilla camp, and 100 meters past it, 11 graves under piles of wood. In an interview with Caracol Radio, Alvaro Leyva Durán states that this territory seems to be another country, with no state presence, institutions, or infrastructure. Interestingly, in the interview, Leyva Durán gives a vivid description of the jungle when describing the difficulty of the mission due to the nature of the terrain; he speaks of the humidity, temperature, nature of the soil and vegetation, light conditions, plant density, visibility, sound perception, orientation, etc., and goes on to state that that is where combat occurs. This just seems common sense. But this assertion is an invitation to envision such a landscape from below, from inside the jungle and not from above. Speaking through the airwaves of the Colombian radio, he says, "I know it is not easy to imagine this." He invites every Colombian, starting with congressmen, to ask the following questions: Why does the conflict take place in these areas of the country? Which areas? Why those and not another ones? How is the Colombian armed conflict waged? What is combat really like? What does a soldier experience during combat taking place in areas like the ones described for the listeners? Leyva asserts that the central government does not know its own territory, nor do most Colombians.

Back in 2007, Leyva Durán provided us with an exercise: to imagine, through a detailed description of the territory, the space of war. What he pointed at is to the lack of an image that could account for the complexities of the Colombian territory, the inner workings of combat, and the articulations between them and the subjects of war: soldiers, *baquianos*, hostages, guerrillas, politicians, etc. He hopes for an image that would answer the questions he posed to his radio listeners as well as to the lawmakers in Congress. His description is detailed and yet he knows that, on one hand, the exercise is difficult and language is not enough and, on the other, that it is the work of the imagination. There is a gap between President Álvaro Uribe Vélez's description of Colombian geography as a blessing and a curse --an obstacle to control over the entire country-- and the detailed one offered by ex-minister Leyva Durán. It is precisely this gap that this dissertation attempts to understand. This geography that seems to be a burden --even Leyva Durán at one point calls it a hell (something that cannot be appropriated, domesticated or integrated into the image of a nation, including ungoverned spaces, havens for terrorist groups and their activities, areas of coca cultivation and drug trafficking)-- has been the subject of multiple investments, both discursive and violent. This geography, with its mountains, valleys, and rivers, cannot be separated from its inhabitants: invisible citizens living at the edge of the nation. Although the Colombian government has insisted that these areas are barely populated and that only guerrillas could endure their horrors, in fact there have been multiple disciplinary techniques in place within a perverse economy of war targeting that recomposes these citizens and this complex territory into a new spatial configuration of war. Paradoxically, this space of war has been how an image of a unified nation has been crafted. In other words, war has become the mayor strategy to create an image of one country and one type of citizenship. While ex-minister Álvaro Leyva Durán seemed to be calling for an image that could articulate the complexities of the multiple facets of the conflict and that could account historically for a definition of Colombia as a nation, what has instead been delivered is a united space of war, an apparently successful war, that securitizes entire communities. Even though I speak of a united space of war, this is created by fragmenting the space in order to make it subject of multiple forms of control.

Alvaro Leyva Durán says that what he saw was another Colombia: impoverished and frightened, but willing to help in recovering the bodies. He posed in a picture that he titled "Faceless solidarity" [Solidaridad sin rostro]. In this photo, we see the *baquianos* who helped with the extraction of the corpses from the jungle. Frightened by the possibility of retaliation from illegal groups as well as from the Colombian Armed Forces, they posed in the photo with their backs towards us, just as we, the other Colombia, have turned our backs on them for decades.

Figure 29: Alvaro Leyva Durán and the group of baquianos that assisted in the extraction of the bodies of the eleven assemblymen. Photograph titled "Faceless solidarity." Courtesy of Alvaro Leyva Durán.

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