

Venezuela Hands Over Colombian Warlord to Bogotá



Caracas, November 5 (RHC-EFE) -- A Colombian militia chief wanted in his country for murder and land theft was extradited to Bogotá on Tuesday, the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry said.

Omar Montero, alias "Codazzi," was apprehended more than three months ago in southwestern Venezuela in a joint operation by Venezuelan and Colombian police.

The head of Colombia's national police, Gen. Rodolfo Palomino, has described Montero as "the terror of campesinos in the (northern) provinces of Magdalena and Cesar," where Codazzi intimidated small farmers into handing over their lands to the AUC.

United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, or AUC, in Spanish) is a Colombian para-military and drug trafficking group which was an active belligerent in the Colombian armed conflict during the period from 1997 to 2006.

Montero has already been tried and convicted in absentia for the 2003 murder of Colombian attorney Antonio Maria Rivera Movilla and he faces a 39-year prison term for that crime.

The AUC was designated as a terrorist organization by many countries and organizations, including the United States, Canada and the European Union. The U.S. State Department added the AUC to the list in

2001, condemning it for massacres, torture, and other human rights abuses against civilians.

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