

THE FARC

HON. BOB BARR

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 8, 2002

Mr. BARR of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, as we are aware, one of the Colombian terrorist organizations, the FARC, recently stated that U.S. citizens and friends of U.S. citizens would be killed. The FARC has already kidnapped 77 American citizens and murdered 12 in the past decade. This has taken place virtually without notice in the United States. In the first action to make good on that threat against American citizens and their friends, a young, dynamic Colombian woman, Eugenia Delgado Sanchez, was brutally assassinated as she was opening the door to her home in the town of Salento, Colombia at 1:30 a.m. on August 24. This defenseless woman went down in a hail of gunfire, receiving six shots to the back from two vile and cowardly terrorists wearing ski masks. I want to ensure that what she did and the purpose for which she made the ultimate sacrifice, is never forgotten. Her name now joins the names of over 40,000 innocent Colombians who have been killed in the growing narco-violence we witness today.

Ms. Delgado Sanchez was fully engaged in the effort against narcotics. She had reasons, one very personal—the narcos had killed her parents when she was 6 years old—but her greatest concern was for the young children who are offered drugs and addicted before they can even understand the danger that drugs present. She had worked with the Colombian anti-narcotics police and had become a trusted asset to that organization.

She undertook very dangerous assignments based on her deep convictions and concerns for people. She spent some time penetrating narcotics operations in the Jackson Heights area of New York City, where she saw dealers giving drugs for free to elementary school kids, just to get them addicted. She was passionate about protecting those children. Her efforts and information have resulted in numerous convictions.

Many in this House, and congressional staff members, remember meeting with Eugenia during delegation trips to Colombia or in the United States in the company of General Rosso Jose Serrano, the heroic former Director of the Colombian National Police. In April of this year she attended the USCINCPAC Change of Command for Admiral Dennis Blair, and she was going to marry a classmate of Admiral Blair's in October at the U.S. Naval Academy chapel in Annapolis, MD.

Eugenia had been a model and actress, who was at ease with the rich and famous, but never lost sight of the common touch and the less fortunate. Protecting children, poor people and animals were her passion.

After the devastating earthquake in January 1999, centered near the city of Armenia near where she grew up, she organized relief efforts for the children and the poor to bring them clothing and food. She managed to get the first relief in and on the ground, even before the Colombian government or private organizations could get in motion. After providing earthquake assistance, she returned to live in the town of Salento, Quindio where she had grown up as a child.

During her childhood, Salento was a tranquil town at the foot of the mountains devoted pri-

marily to cattle farming with the slow, peaceful pace of life that accompanied agricultural pursuits. As she spent more time in her hometown, she was alarmed by the changes in life because of the drug trade. The mountains were no longer safe. The FARC, to ensure that they had safe lines of communication to bring drugs out and weapons and ammunition in, focused on attacking these rural towns. One night she called her U.S. fiancé and gave him a minute-by-minute account of an ongoing FARC attack on her town. The FARC were going house-by-house looking for people who were "cooperating" with either the Colombian or U.S. governments. That night the FARC got to within two houses of where she lived before the Colombian National Police beat them back in a counterattack.

Eugenia cheered when President Bush made his announcement of the "War on Terrorism," and asked her U.S. fiancé if he thought the United States would assist Colombia with its terrorism problems, particularly since the FARC had kidnapped and executed U.S. citizens with no U.S. military response. She felt the new United States Administration under President Bush would be very serious about protecting U.S. citizens, and citizens of other countries, against terrorists. Obviously there were laws that needed to be enacted or changed to permit the United States to provide more direct assistance against terrorists. She said she hoped these changes would happen fast, since information she possessed concerning the FARC, indicated they were massing strength in the mountains near Salento.

Eugenia, by virtue of her training, always kept her eyes and mind open and her mouth shut while living in Salento. In this manner, she was able to see, hear and observe what was going on, and then pass it along to U.S. sources in Bogotá, without fear of telephone interception. Eugenia started accumulating a tremendous amount of information concerning how the FARC guerrillas were operating, along with identifying key FARC supporters in the village. She was able to unravel how they were able to obtain provisions, and transportation, how they moved kidnap victims, and how they organized weapons and ammunition stashes.

This information was always passed on in general terms to visiting U.S. delegations and others in the U.S. government. Eugenia always made herself available to provide briefings to U.S. personnel and for many she became "the face of Colombia."

Increasingly a race against time developed. Eugenia accumulated information on FARC and narcotics activities, while waiting for U.S. laws and regulations to change so this information would be useful and actionable. The FARC then sent word it wanted to meet with Eugenia. When her fiancé tried to pressure her to leave Salento, Eugenia said that she would but she wanted to get all the details on the location of safe houses the FARC used to transport kidnap victims. She told him, "Imagine what it is like to be kept blindfolded and placed in cages under the ground. God would not forgive us if we had the opportunity to help these people and we turned our backs because we were cowards. Remember, they kidnap both U.S. and Colombians; the next kidnapped person might be you."

In an e-mail sent to her fiancé on February 6, 2002, she laid things out in chilling detail:

On the other hand I want to tell you that have thought a lot about you due to the

things that are going on in my country. I don't know what will happen. I am very worried because I think that about 90% of the population of this town is guerrilla and our president (Andres Pastrana) is not doing anything.

Say hello to President Bush and ask him to help us . . . the reality is that we will die at the hands of the guerrillas and no one will say anything.

OK, I love you and if I have to die for you or your country, I will—I love you.

When she was gunned down by terrorists on August 24, she had less than 48 hours remaining before she would have permanently departed Salento, to be safe and alive in Bogotá. Obviously, the terrorists feared the information they thought she would provide, not realizing it was already too late.

The terrorists who killed Eugenia should remember the words of President Bush to the recovery crews after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. . . . "soon the people who did this will hear from all of us."

Today, from the U.S. Congress I am proud to pay tribute to the tremendous strength, valor, and nobility of Eugenia and her efforts on behalf of the United States and Colombia. She served as a tremendous inspiration, and demonstrated what an amazing difference one single, dedicated person can make in the lives of so many people. I am sorry more of my colleagues did not have the opportunity to know her; you would be as proud of her life and legacy as I am.

HONORING NIVEDITA BHAT—FINALIST IN DISCOVERY CHANNEL YOUNG SCIENTIST CHALLENGE NATIONAL COMPETITION

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 8, 2002

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, today I commend a young woman from my District, Nivedita Bhat. At only 14 years old, Nivedita has risen to the highest level of scientific academic achievement for middle-school students.

Nivedita Bhat is one of only 40 students selected from 400 semifinalists from grades 5–8 throughout the United States to compete in the nation's premier science contest: The Discovery Channel Young Scientist Challenge national competition. She has shown excellence as one of America's top middle-school students in demonstrating leadership, team work and problem solving skills. As one of the finalists, Nivedita Bhat will join her fellow academic achievers on a trip to the nation's capital to compete for a scholarship and the title of "America's Top Young Scientist of the year."

Nivedita's winning project, entitled Toxins and Environmental Justice. Are We at Risk?, is a testimony to this young woman's impressive ability. Most compelling, is the attention she has brought to environmental injustice occurring in Miami-Dade County. Using a high-level technological tool that assembles and displays information relative to spatial locations, Nivedita showed several public schools were within a one-mile radius of a Toxic Release Inventory facility and face potential health risks. Nivedita also concluded that low-income populations were more likely to live near these facilities.