

Testimony of Wilson Rey, leader of the Movement against the Clearance of Vistahermosa, Meta

Vistahermosa, Meta, January 19 (SP). The following is the testimony of Wilson Benjamín Rey, President of the Movement against the Clearance of Vistahermosa, given during the community meeting held in this municipality in Meta, which was part of the military-free (clearance) area.

President Álvaro Uribe Vélez: What does your shirt say and what does it mean?

Wilson Benjamín Rey, President of the Movement against the Clearance Area: You can read it right there, it is what Colombians want: to say “No to the Clearance Area”.

President Álvaro Uribe Vélez: What does the clearing remind you of and why are telling Colombians: No to the Clearance Area?

Wilson Rey: I would like a minute to tell you that the National Movement against the Clearance was created as the need to express the feeling of the people of Colombia in its firm support and consistent defense of the Democratic Security, which has allowed us to re-conquer our families and the regions where we live in a political, social, financial and moral manner since the beginning of your administration.

Those of us who have been victim to the terror and the cruelty of the guerrilla dictatorship, of para-militarism and drug trafficking, are willing to defend the Democratic Security with our own life if necessary; Democratic Security that you, Mr. President, with so much effort and despite the grand opposition have given us, along with the Army of Colombia.

Today we recall the savagery and the cruelty we endured here when the clearance area existed, when the narco-terrorists of FARC ruled around here through subversion and forced our land-owners to grow cocaine or be killed.

And ‘Mono Jojoy’, here in the central park of Vistahermosa, told the scared peasants they would forcefully recruit: the idea of Farc is to take over power through military means and we need your help to finance us and assist us by kidnapping political, financial and important actors from our capital cities. And then the scoundrel would tell them that if they complied, they would receive land and machinery. Isn’t this true, those of you who lived this barbaric situation?

Mr. President, the clearance area set up here during the time of that mistaken policy, was a historical mistake that we may forgive today; but thanks to divine wisdom, to fate, we have been given this Democratic Security. It was right here,

Mr. President, that the guerrilla managed to increase its army in over five thousand men, most of them minors under age 15, 15 year old boys and girls.

And do you know what they did? Since they owned marihuana production – and we have testimonies, witnesses and sound proof to back this up – they would give these children marihuana and place them on the front of the troops in combat.

These delinquents of Farc told the people of Vistahermosa, the brave town of Vistahermosa, that the government had given FARC 42 thousand square kilometers, that this was theirs, as well as the life of the towns and that of their inhabitants. That if they wished they could kill us the next day because it was theirs.

They would go to the municipalities surrounding the clearance area and destroy, ransack, kidnap, assassin, and murder in more than 200 municipalities, and then they would cross over the dividing line with a sign saying: 'Welcome to the New Colombia'.

These delinquents took our ID cards and gave us a card in replacement, saying that such card replaced the cédula de ciudadanía (ID) of Colombia.

And after they ransacked - they ransacked over 200 municipalities - they would come and take shelter and strut around the streets of Vistahermosa in the latest SUVs, stolen elsewhere by common delinquents paid by them, and were then brought to the clearance area. They were brought to the clearance area and they would strut down the streets. And they would strut down the streets of Vistahermosa, heavily armed, snatching the pretty women from the poor peasants.

This is why the Movement against the Clearance was created with the survivors of that era. We are here. We were declared a military objective more than 10 times, but we are still here.

President Álvaro Uribe Vélez: Wilson, there is something we have to discuss: Would you recommend accepting the clearance of Pradera and Florida? Why do you think the Government would be making a mistake by accepting the clearance of Pradera and Florida?

Wilson Rey: Mr. President, you interpret the will of the people of Colombia. This has been your nobleness, your elegance and your valor in the interpretation the majority of the people of Colombia, all the people of Colombia, and the people of Colombia are against the clearance area.

We have narrated and told you this because we want the pain to stop in Colombia; we don't want any more torture, no more suffering for the people of Colombia.

President Álvaro Uribe Vélez: Were there more or less kidnappings during the clearance area? We must be very cautious considering the national and international community.

Wilson Rey: I was just about to mention that during the existence of the clearance area, the amount of kidnapped persons was increased in over 800. And they would be taken around the streets of Vistahermosa – most of them -. It increased. And the people of this town know that Ms. Ingrid Betancourt was kidnapped at the time of that clearance area.

So we have a special proposal and it is the following: as long as the drug-related terrorism of FARC persists, with a little international support, mainly supported by underground parties and movements, sheltered by the security provided by the Government and the freedom provided by the democracy that they attack, the No Clearance and Democratic Security policies must become policies of the State, but through a constitutional mandate.

Since we are aware of the political outlook, which has been closely studied, we have observed that the parties and government coalition movements shall divide come the next election, regardless of the rules of engagement.

Who can ensure us that the next President will not decree a clearance area because we were unable to remove FARC in these past three years?

And there is one other thing: we have received serious and accurate information – we also carry out intelligence tasks – that FARC live by an international guideline: “resist, resist, resist. Do not leave your holes while Uribe is still President. And if you do leave them, run for border territories and take shelter in the eastern or southern borders to avoid being pursued by the Army. Resist, resist and resist, for Uribe shall not be reelected”.

And the first thing the next President will do, moved by the drama of the hostages' relatives (because we all suffer, you and I and all of us), but, moved –as per the strategy–, the first thing he'll do is decree a clearance area.

Well no. I want for you and the people of Colombia to sleep in peace once your administration has ended, so we may invite you to fish in Río Guayabero, where the cave of these bandits may be found. Because we owe all this to the Democratic Security, which we shall defend with our lives if we have to.

And one more thing: I would like to invite the people of Colombia to constitute a People-Government group. And that each one of us may become a soldier and a civil army policeman/woman for peace and democracy.

We support our Army in giving the last blow left to eliminate these scoundrels, narco-terrorists FARC. This is our invitation.

We are not speaking through pain. We are used to all of this. But if there is anything to emphasize here, it is the courage of the people of Vistahermosa. And history and divine justice shall prevail. As one of the earlier participants stated correctly: you are the second liberator of our country.

It is said that you can either fool everyone for a while or fool some all the time. But you can't fool everyone all the time. And FARC cannot fool us anymore, regardless of the suffering of the hostages.

The people of Colombia are here, Mr. President, to tell you, with the same courage mentioned by General Padilla: we are here with you, we are here with our Army, we are here with the legitimacy of the Government. And we are ready to give our lives to defend that Democratic Security.

We have been quoting this for some time now: for national dignity, for democratic security, against insults and oppression, let us attend on Saturday (moved for tomorrow to not interfere with the Community Council), the great manifestation at the central park of Vistahermosa, to support democratic security and President Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

The civil soldiers and policemen/women of the Army for Peace and Democracy salute you and say: our life is yours to dispose of in order to defend the democracy of Colombia.

(End)