



Operation Jaque Ten Years On

OE Watch Commentary: On 2 July 2008 the Colombian Army carried out a spectacular operation to rescue presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt and three American contractors who had been taken hostage by the FARC over five years earlier (The history can be read in English in the 2009 book *Out of Captivity*). In the operation, the Colombian Army also freed about a dozen government police and military personnel that the FARC had been holding hostage even longer for the purpose of strategic extortion. The operation was an historic victory for the Colombian armed forces and especially for Colombian military intelligence. In the operation, two FARC guerrillas were captured, and, as the accompanying excerpted reference from *RCN Radio* notes, the fates of the two have been quite different. One of the FARC prisoners, who was transferred to the US justice system, is said to be still in jail. The whereabouts of the other is unknown, after having been given amnesty under the recent FARC-government accords.

The anniversary of the rescue comes at an influential moment, given that President-elect Ivan Duque takes a less positive position toward the accords than does the current President Juan Manuel Santos. The rescue operation carries a considerable amount of public emotion and is emblematic of a feeling within much of the population that the government of President Santos forfeited the expected outcome of successful military efforts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



“...Ten Years Ago the Country Rejoiced...”

Source: Juan David Escobar Valencia, “La traición al espíritu de la Operación Jaque (Betrayal of the Spirit of Operation Jaque),” *El Colombiano*, 2 July 2018. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/opinion/columnistas/la-traicion-al-espiritu-de-la-operacion-jaque-CL8940334>

“Ten years ago today the country rejoiced at the results of one of the most important military operations in its history: Operation Jaque. Colombians did not believe in the myth propagated by the guerrilla’s academic minions who assured that defeating them was impossible and that we should resign ourselves to living together with them.”

Source: Rafael Pérez, “¿Qué pasó con los dos guerrilleros capturados en la Operación Jaque? (What happened with the two guerrillas captured in Operation Jaque?).” *RCN Radio*, 2 July 2018. <https://www.rcnradio.com/judicial/que-paso-con-los-dos-guerrilleros-capturados-en-la-operacion-jaque>

“Alias ‘Cesar’ was the chief of the jailors of that group of hostages...alias ‘Enrique Gafas’, was the other FARC jailer trapped by Operation Jaque... ‘Gafas’ was paying his sentence for his crimes in Colombia. However, on 2 June 2017...he was freed...for security reasons, the whereabouts of ‘Gafas’ is a complete mystery at this time...”

Source: Ricardo Puentes Melo, “La Operación Jaque y la Cruz Roja. 10 años después (Operation Jaque, 10 years later),” *Periodismo Sin Fronteras*, 7 July, 2018. <https://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/la-operacion-jaque-y-la-cruz-roja-10-anos-despues.html>

“While the terrorists have been awarded their liberty, money and seats in Congress, the soldiers who risked their lives to liberate the hostages in Operation Jaque have been pursued, vilified, threatened and dishonored.”