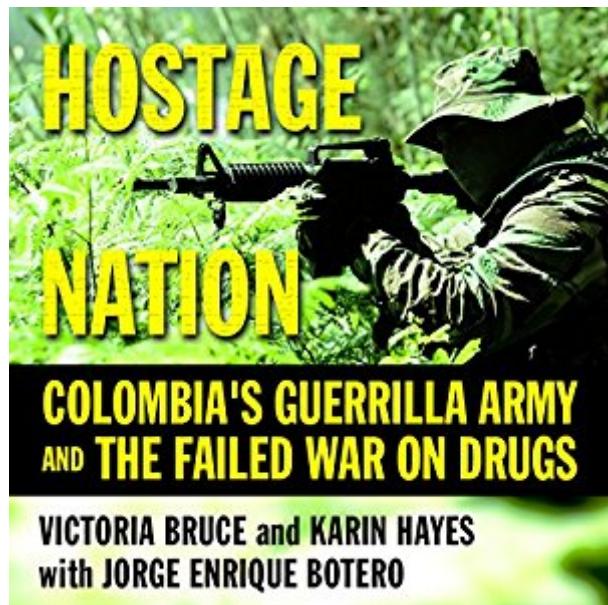


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Hostage Nation: Colombia's Guerrilla Army And The Failed War On Drugs



Synopsis

The crash of a U.S. reconnaissance plane into the Colombian jungle on February 13, 2003, set off a series of events that, five years later, would bring three South American countries on a collision course toward war, pit a giant government contractor against its employer - the U.S. government - and catapult a 40-year-old guerrilla army to the international stage as one of the most active and successful terrorist organizations in the world. Hostage Nation follows the players in this international drama in which lives interweave across a chaotic and deadly chessboard. While at first the case appeared to be a one-dimensional kidnapping of three American contractors that would play out in backdoor negotiations, as many had before, the paradigm shift that took over Washington after 9/11 made impossible any such path to win the freedom of the hostages. This is the story of Thomas Howes, Keith Stansell, and Marc Gonsalves, three Americans who went to work for the U.S. government's ill-fought "War on Drugs" and crash-landed into their worst nightmare, five years in captivity of the FARC rebel Army. It is the story of Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, poster child for all the prisoners in Colombia. It is the story of corporate malfeasance by Northrop Grumman, one of the largest defense contractors in America. It is the story of a paradigm shift that turned poor Colombian guerrillas into the biggest drug mafia in the world and earned them a prominent position on the U.S. list of terrorist organizations. This is also a fascinating exposé about the way that civilian soldiers have become the main players in covert wars that fly under the radar of the American people. It is the story of the U.S. government's ambivalence concerning victims who don't have to be tallied on the nightly news. It is the story of fragmented government factions that refuse to work together, and of foreign-policy blunders that put government contracts above American lives. It is the story of lives unraveling, of abandoned women and children, and of feuding families. And it is a revealing truth about the disastrous failure of the war on drugs that began back in 1970.

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Customer Reviews

Hostage Nation provides readers with critical examination of the FARC, how it functions, how it's activities disrupt an entire nation, and how it's hostage taking shatters individual lives. In the midst of these larger issues is the plight of three American defense contractors engaged in the war against drugs in Colombia. Their hostage ordeal calls into question the very purpose and effectiveness of the U.S. government's initiatives in that country. It often seemed as though the U.S. government's larger policy objectives took precedence over efforts to secure the safe and timely release of the three men. Hostage Nation provides a unique look into the cooperative and sometimes conflicting perspectives of the victim families, the employer of the hostages, and the government. Exposing the multiple layers of the relationships involved provides the reader with an unprecedented look into the process of responding to a kidnapping where political implications abound. Hostage Nation is a must read for anyone interested in Colombia, the FARC, the war on drugs, the use of military contractors, and the counterterrorism efforts of the U.S. government overseas. This well researched and well written book is hard to put down.

Beyond the kidnapping of Ingrid Betancourt and three American contractors, Hostage Nation pulls you into the lives and terror of every day people in Colombia and the experience of living in a nation with an ongoing 'civil' war with a terrorist organization. It details the fear, horror, and uncertainty of life in a nation that is being held hostage by an organization like the FARC, by telling the stories of individuals directly involved with the kidnappings. The ordeals of the hostages and their captors pull you in, as every story illustrates how they all want the best for their country yet the nation is unable to reconcile the issues that motivate people to join such a terrorist organization. From abject poverty to Marxist ideology to lucrative drug money and the US government response, the story winds its way around the kidnappings and makes you feel for a nation that has so much to overcome. A truly great read.

Bruce, Hayes, and Botero have channeled their first-hand experience of Colombia's conflict into a

compelling summary of the country's decades of strife. The conflict between the FARC and government, fueled by drug profits, forms the spine of this story, which is brought to life through personal testimonies and narratives. The indifference of the United States government and its unsuccessful war on drugs and lackluster efforts to tackle the kidnappings are helpful in providing a greater understanding of the conflict, but fortunately do not dominate what is ultimately a Colombian story. By covering several kidnappings from their inception to their conclusion, 'Hostage Nation' provides a steady, well-rounded account of this horrific practice. It's hard not to be angered at the civilian casualties brought on by this conflict, to be horrified by the impact of the kidnappings on those stolen and on their families, or to feel ashamed for not demanding action. Congratulations to the authors on their courage and perseverance in telling this important story.

This book is very well written, Hostage Nation is an excellent book with not only detailed information about not only the Guerrilla movement in Columbia, but also the drug policies followed by both Columbian and American Governments, but educated the reader on the covert drug war that is being waged today. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who wants accurate, factual information regarding FARC; the hostage situation involving three American private contractors, Columbia's corrupt government officials as well as the government's association with the two biggest drug cartels of that time, and America's failed war on drugs. This book arrived quickly and in the condition the seller described it to be in.

I read "Out of Captivity" and found the book hard to put down as a gripping personal tale of three long term hostages. I found this book a very well researched tome which fills in a lot of the questions I had after reading "Out of Captivity." It is written by reporters so it does a good job of covering the details of the hostage taking by the FARC and is well documented in its facts.

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