

## **100 missionary families evacuate base in Colombia for fear of kidnapping**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Quito, Ecuador--At least one hundred U.S. missionary families are evacuating their base in Colombia for fear of kidnapping by leftist guerrillas.

Missionaries with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an arm of Wycliffe Bible Translators, have worked in the jungle base of Lomalinda for more than thirty years. Its workers have labored at Bible translation and providing education and health services in the jungle areas and highlands of Colombia.

The missionaries left the base at the urging of the United States embassy in Bogota, according to Edgar Orlando Parra, mayor of the nearby town of Puerto Lleras.

According to Parra, the embassy encouraged the missionaries to move to an urban area rather than to live in the more dangerous rural region. The mayor told Reuters news service that "the missionaries said they were moving to the city in order to provide better service, but in fact they feel more protected in the city."

SIL officials, however, deny that there was a mandate from the U.S. government to move. Instead, according to a statement, "the primary reason for the action was the March 31, 1994 kidnapping of Ray Rising from Lomalinda." Mission officials also said "Other security issues have raised S.I.L.'s concern for the safety of members and employees living and working at Lomalinda. Recently, S.I.L. received additional information concerning specific threats to the Lomalinda center."

The mission statement said that there had been two recent bombing attacks against military personnel near the mission compound.

SIL missionary Ray Rising of Glenwood, Minnesota was abducted near the camp in March of 1994. Rising reported in a note last year that he was suffering from a nerve disease, but otherwise was being fed three times a day. Military officials said they believe that Rising is still alive.

SIL representatives said that negotiations for Rising's release have been broken off by his captors.

Mayor Parra told the EFE news service that the missionaries had been leaving the base gradually and while they had not reflected any pressure to leave immediately, they had expressed their worries about possible kidnappings.

Parra said he had notified Colombian president Ernesto Samper and Horacio Serpa, Minister of the Interior, about the missionary's decision.

The SIL statement said that while the mission was closing the Lomalinda center, most of the missionaries would remain in the country and continue their work.

Two missionaries from the U.S. based New Tribes mission were killed this past June when government soldiers attacked guerrillas who were holding them. Three other New Tribes missionaries were kidnapped in January of 1993 and the Associated Press reported that they are believed dead.

**100 missionary families evacuate base in Colombia for fear of kidnapping,** *Compass Direct*, Nov 28, 1995

#