

WEEKEND SERIOUS MOVIE SEASON



SUMMER HAD ITS CHANCE — NOW IT'S TIME TO PREVIEW THE MORE GROWN-UP FILMS OF FALL

BUSINESS, 1C GASOLINE PRICES FALLING

SOUTH FLORIDA TRAILS NATION, BUT MORE DECREASES ARE COMING

INSIDE NATION, 3A SHUTTLE GETS 'GO' FOR TODAY

LOCAL NEWS, 1B BUSH PUTS CRIST IN SPOTLIGHT

BUSINESS, 1C AIRPORT SAFETY A TEAM EFFORT

SPORTS, 1D MARLINS FALL TO PHILADELPHIA

WEATHER SUNNY; STRAY SHOWERS

INDEX table with categories like ACTION LINE, AMERICAS, COMICS, etc.

MEDIA

10 Miami journalists take U.S. pay

At least 10 local journalists accepted U.S. government pay for programs on Radio Marti or TV Marti. El Nuevo Herald fired two of them Thursday for conflict of interest.

BY OSCAR CORRAL ocorral@miamiherald.com

At least 10 South Florida journalists, including three from El Nuevo Herald, received regular payments from the U.S. government for

programs on Radio Marti and TV Marti, two broadcasters aimed at undermining the communist government of Fidel Castro. The payments totaled thousands of dollars over several years.

Those who were paid the most were veteran reporters and a freelance contributor for El Nuevo Herald, the Spanish-language newspaper published by the corporate parent of The Miami Herald. Pablo Alfonso, who reports on Cuba and writes an opinion column, was paid almost \$175,000 since 2001 to host shows on Radio

Marti and TV Marti. El Nuevo Herald freelance reporter Olga Connor, who writes about Cuban culture, received about \$71,000, and staff reporter Wilfredo Cancio Isla, who covers the Cuban exile community and politics, was paid almost \$15,000 in the last five years.

Alfonso and Cancio were

dismissed after The Miami Herald questioned editors at El Nuevo Herald about the payments. Connor's freelance relationship with the newspaper also was severed.

Alfonso and Cancio declined to comment. Connor was unavailable for comment.

*TURN TO BROADCASTS, 2A

STEELERS 28, DOLPHINS 17

LATE LETDOWN



JOE RIMKUS JR./MIAMI HERALD STAFF

BREAKTHROUGH: Running back Ronnie Brown runs past the Steelers' Ryan Clark to score in the second.



IN MY OPINION DAN LE BATARD dlebatard@miamiherald.com

Fins lose this fight, but 15 bouts remain

PITTSBURGH — It is difficult to smile when you feel like throwing up. When you get sucker-punched in a way that leaves you gasping and groping in the sawdust on the barroom floor, your instinct isn't to immediately get up from your wooziness to be proud of what you did in the fight.

But that's how the Miami Dolphins should feel today. Beaten. Sick. Floored. But good. About as good as an 0-1 team can.

There are precious few moral victories in professional sports, but the Dolphins opened this Season of Great Expectations with one of those Thursday night, hard as that is to see through bloodshot eyes.

Yes, the Dolphins lost to the Pittsburgh Steelers by an inflated 28-17 score that wasn't representative of how tight this savage game was. Yes, new quarterback Daunte Culpepper unraveled at

*TURN TO LE BATARD, 20A

COMPLETE COVERAGE IN SPORTS Pittsburgh's big plays in the fourth put the game out of reach for Miami, 1D

MIAMIHERALD.COM: View a narrated slideshow and photo gallery from the Dolphins' opener, plus download wallpaper.

WAR ON TERROR Experts oppose terror court plan

Military legal experts objected to President Bush's proposal to limit rights of terrorism suspects in special court.

BY MARISA TAYLOR AND GREG GORDON mtaylor@mclatchydc.com

WASHINGTON — Top Pentagon lawyers took issue Thursday with key aspects of President Bush's proposal for a special court system that would limit the legal rights of terrorism suspects and exclude them from parts of their own death-penalty trials.

To protect classified information, Bush's proposal would bar terrorism detainees from trials in "extraordinary circumstances." It also would narrow what constitutes coerced admissions — a central issue in prosecuting 14 top terrorist suspects who were subjected to unorthodox interrogation techniques that critics call torture.

At a House Armed Services Committee hearing, lawyers for all of the armed services generally endorsed Bush's push for a separate new military court tailored to deal with the complexities of prosecuting dangerous terrorist suspects while protecting national security secrets.

But the lawyers voiced concern about the fairness of pre-

*TURN TO TERROR COURT, 22A

UP FRONT | GAMBLING

FICKLE WIN: A camera phone image shows Freddy Howard and his father Felix with a fake, oversized check. Howard was later told he won nothing.



WINNER IS LEFT BETWEEN HARD ROCK, HARD PLACE

A Sunny Isles Beach man thought he won nearly \$260,000 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino — until casino officials told him there was a computer malfunction.

BY TODD WRIGHT twright@miamiherald.com

For about three hours, Freddy Howard was showered with all the glamour and glory he had ever dreamed of.

The struggling actor was told he had just won a \$260,000 jackpot at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino near Hollywood in the early hours of Aug. 29.

Complete strangers were asking to take pictures with him. Others ran

*TURN TO JACKPOT, 22A

MIAMIHERALD.COM: CLICK ON TODAY'S EXTRAS TO READ THE PRESS RELEASE AND TO TAKE A WEB VOTE

COLOMBIA

Traffickers-turned-'paras' find way to foil extradition

The Colombian government is getting criticized for admitting drug traffickers into the paramilitary peace process.

BY GERARDO REYES AND STEVEN DUDLEY sdudley@miamiherald.com

BOGOTA — Some 32,000 illegal paramilitary fighters have surrendered and their top leaders are in custody. But the Colombian government now finds itself on the defensive about the peace talks with the so-called paras, amid complaints that top drug traffickers infiltrated the paramilitaries to avoid extradition to U.S. courts.

"It's a farce," said one longtime U.S. government investigator of drug trafficking in Colombia whose agency's regulations do not allow him to be further identified. "Some of these guys were never paramilitaries before."

Drug traffickers have been trying

*TURN TO PARAS, 22A



EL TIEMPO

FIGHTER, TRAFFICKER OR BOTH: Accused trafficker Jhonny Cano joined the now-demobilized AUC, presumably for amnesty.

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WAR ON TERROR

Bush plan for terrorist trials criticized

*TERROR COURT, FROM 1A

venting a defendant from hearing and confronting evidence against him.

"I'm not aware of any situation in the world where there is a system of jurisprudence that is recognized by civilized people, where an individual can be tried without, and convicted without seeing the evidence against him," Brig. Gen. James C. Walker, staff judge advocate of the U.S. Marine Corps, told the panel.

The administration's court plan is likely to provoke a rousing debate when the measure goes before Congress next week. Democrats support an alternative bill being

crafted by a trio of Republicans that would guarantee suspects more protections and would be more in line with international law.

During Thursday's hearing, Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., pressed Navy Judge Advocate General Bruce MacDonald as to whether he would bar the use of crucial classified evidence if it otherwise meant sharing it with suspected Sept. 11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

FAIR HEARING

"I can't imagine any military judge believing that an accused has had a full and fair hearing if all the government's evidence that was introduced was all classified

and the accused was not able to see any of it," MacDonald replied.

Steven Bradbury, acting chief of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, contended that sharing the information with a defense lawyer, who has a national security clearance, would address the problem. But several of the military lawyers disagreed.

The administration proposed the legislation in response to a recent Supreme Court ruling that struck down the administration's earlier attempt to create a special military terrorism court.

Bradbury said a new system is needed because traditional military court rules are

too rigid for terrorism cases. U.S. troops or intelligence agents can't read newly captured terrorists their Miranda rights, he said, and national security concerns make it impractical to comply with speedy trial rules.

The proposal also would allow the use of hearsay, testimony relayed from witnesses who don't have to appear in court and face cross-examination.

THORNY LEGAL ISSUES

Experts in military law said Bush's proposal would raise a host of thorny legal issues, especially surrounding statements made during aggressive interrogation techniques. Bradbury said military

judges should be left to decide on a case-by-case basis whether the detainees were coerced into making incriminating statements.

But Scott Silliman, a Duke University law professor and former Air Force lawyer, said he expects the issue of coerced statements to produce legal problems for prosecutors unless Congress sanctions a system "that says no matter how you get the evidence, it's always going to be admissible, no matter what techniques you use."

He said the Uniform Military Code of Justice governing traditional military courts lets prosecutors show defendants summaries or substitutions for classified informa-

tion, which is "an easy way to establish a system for prosecuting terrorists that satisfied the mandate of the Supreme Court." Edward MacMahon, the chief defense lawyer for convicted Sept. 11 conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui, a case knotted for two years by voluminous amounts of classified information, also questioned why national security secrets couldn't be handled the way they are in traditional military courts.

"You could use classified information . . . and show it to the lawyers, the defendant and the jury and never let" the public see it, he said.

McClatchy correspondent Margaret Talev contributed to this report.

COLOMBIA

In war, traffickers find way to foil extradition

*PARAS, FROM 1A

to push their way into the peace process since the talks began in 2004, hoping to win protection under an amnesty law that exempts *paras* from extradition and long jail sentences at home.

But now those maneuvers are being highlighted by the cases of four alleged members of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, or AUC: Jhonny Cano, Victor Mejía, Francisco Zuluaga and Juan Carlos Sierra.

Cano was the latest to slip into the peace process through the back door. He was a lieutenant for Hernando Gómez — an alleged drug trafficker from the North Valley Cartel now jailed in Cuba — before he was captured last October. On Aug. 15, the government OK'd his extradition to the United States but late last month his name suddenly appeared on the list of paramilitary leaders protected from extradition.

According to the government, Cano is on the list because he "contracted the AUC to protect him." The government refused to elaborate, saying only that it had passed the case on to prosecutors so they could determine Cano's status.

The explanation has not satisfied everyone.

"We're very worried that the government says they don't have the information to determine whether this person was a paramilitary," the chief observer of the peace process for the Organization of American States, Sergio Caramaña, told The Miami Herald. "This is very troubling."

The other three men, also wanted by U.S. authorities on drug charges, were well known in the Colombian underworld before declaring themselves AUC members.

The talks have succeeded in demobilizing most of the once-feared AUC units and have led to the surrender of nearly 32,000 fighters — more than the 15,000 the AUC was believed to have before the talks began.

But criticism persists because of the government's erratic decisions. At first, the government excluded Sierra and Mejía from the extradition protection — even while it accepted Zuluaga and Mejía's twin brother, Miguel Angel. But in August the two turned up as paramilitary leaders who will also enjoy benefits under an amnesty deal.

Colombia's government defends its actions by arguing that paramilitary activities and drug smuggling were simply too tightly linked for years to now be separated.

"I think this concept of drug trafficker dressed up as *para* or *para* dressed up as drug trafficker is not adequate," chief government peace negotiator Luis Carlos Restrepo told the El Tiempo newspaper. "Paramilitarism was articulated through drug



LUIS BENAVIDES/AP

PEACE DEAL: Paramilitary leaders Luis Eduardo Cifuentes, left, and Luis Eduardo Arroyave, center, are taken to a Rio Negro police station in August.



AUC areas of operation
Three blocs of the AUC control separate regions of Colombia.

trafficking, because drug trafficking gave it the resources it needed for its armed actions."

President Alvaro Uribe has extradited 380 suspected drug traffickers to the United States, far more than any of his predecessors. In part because of this record, Washington has continued to support the peace talks with the AUC despite its apparent flaws.

Last week, the U.S. government donated another \$1.9 million to support the demobilization process — even while it insists that Colombia must extradite the suspected traffickers participating in it.

"When we ask for someone in extradition, we mean it," an embassy spokesperson who did not want to be identified because of the sensitivity of the matter told The Miami Herald. "We continue to talk to the government about the cases not yet finally approved."

Distinguishing between paramilitaries and drug traffickers has never been easy in Colombia, home to both Latin America's longest-running guerrilla war and the largest producers of cocaine and heroin.

Legal "self-defense" groups began in the early 1980s as a response by landowners, businessmen and the army to the kidnappings and extortions by left-wing rebels in rural areas. Drug traffickers eventually began co-opting some of the groups, and the government outlawed them.

In the late-1990s, the paramilitaries reemerged alongside an increase in guerrilla attacks and began a notoriously brutal campaign of executions of thousands of people they suspected of being leftist rebels or sympathizers.

Their best-known leader, Carlos Castaño, gave interviews in which he admitted that the groups got up to 70 percent of their financing from drug money to fight against the guerrillas — who also use drug money to fill their coffers — but denied the AUC was dominated by drug traffickers.

Castaño's denials soon fell apart, however, as major alleged traffickers such as Hernán Giraldo, Diego Murillo and Carlos Mario Jiménez challenged his leadership of the AUC. Others, such as Salvatore Mancuso, Rodrigo Tovar and Ramiro Vanoy, began as paramilitaries but allegedly later drifted toward trafficking.

Castaño's older brother, Vicente, was also known as a suspected trafficker and eventually sided with the traffickers in a dispute with his brother over who controlled the organization.

In 2002, the U.S. government indicted Carlos Castaño, Mancuso and Sierra for trafficking 17 tons of cocaine to Florida. U.S. prosecutors also indicted Vicente Castaño, Murillo, the Mejía twins, Zuluaga, Giraldo, Tovar and Vanoy.

In all, eight of the top paramilitary leaders negotiating with the government face U.S. indictments for drug trafficking.

"The whole peace process seems like it's a way for these guys to escape years of drug trafficking and murder," said one of the U.S. investigators.

Throughout the negotiations with the AUC, the government has argued that Colombia is better off without the paramilitaries in the field and with their leaders in custody.

"What should be a scandal here is that the AUC, allied with drug traffickers, has grown into a monster. This is a national disgrace," peace negotiator Restrepo told El Tiempo.

Herald special correspondent Jenny Carolina González contributed to this report from Colombia.

TRAFFICKING SUSPECTS

The following is a list of leaders of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) who are wanted on drug charges:

NORTH BLOC

Traffics drugs through Venezuela, Panama, Mexico and from the coasts of Colombia.

• José Vicente Castaño:

"The Professor." Wanted in the United States for drug trafficking and in Colombia for the murder of his brother, Carlos, in April 2004. He is at large.

• Juan Carlos Sierra:

"Crewcut." Wanted in the United States for drug trafficking. In custody.

• **Rodrigo Tovar Pupo:** "Jorge 40." Wanted in the United States for drug trafficking. In custody.

• **Salvatore Mancuso:** "Blondie." Wanted in the United States for drug trafficking. In custody.

• Francisco Zuluaga:

"Pretty Fatman." Wanted in the United States for drug trafficking. A longtime drug trafficker with the North Valley Cartel. In custody.

• **Freddy Rendón:** "The German." Controls territory along the Panamanian border, where authorities recently seized a boat carrying \$5 million in cash thought to belong to Rendón. At large.

• **Hernando Giraldo:** "The Boss." Wanted in the United States for drug trafficking. In custody.

CENTRAL BOLIVAR BLOC

Believed to be the largest portion of the AUC and the one most controlled by drug traffickers.

• **Carlos Mario Jiménez:** "Macaco." Thought to be the one of the largest single drug traffickers in Colombia. In custody.

• **Ramiro Vanoy:** "Cuco." Wanted in the United States for drug trafficking. In custody.

• **Miguel Angel and Victor Mejía Múnera:** "The Twins Mejía." Wanted in the United States for drug trafficking. At large.

• **Diego Fernando Murillo Bejarano:** "Don Berna." Wanted in New York for drug trafficking. Once the enforcer for all trafficking organizations, now in jail on charges of ordering the murder of a local politician.

• **Guillermo Pérez Alzate:** "Pablo Sevillano." Wanted in the United States for drug trafficking. In custody.

• **Jhonny Cano Corea:** Wanted in the United States for drug trafficking. In custody.

BOGOTA/ MIDDLE MAGDALENA/ LLANOS BLOC

Traffics through Venezuela, Brazil and Ecuador.

• **Victor Carranza:** Longtime emerald dealer and suspected drug trafficker. Carranza spent four years in jail awaiting trial for being a paramilitary. Various judges refused to hear the case amid repeated threats to them and their families. The charges were eventually dropped.

• **Ramón Isaza:** "Old-timer." Oldest of the paramilitary leaders, ruled a portion of the central mountain range where many cocaine refineries are located.

• **Luis Eduardo Cifuentes:** "The Eagle." A longtime paramilitary who controls areas near Bogotá also known for their cocaine refineries.

GAMBLING

It's short-lived win for man when jackpot goes bust

*JACKPOT, FROM 1A

up to hug him, and casino employees shook his hands.

Howard, 53, even took a picture with a giant cardboard check displaying his winnings.

Then, Howard said managers at the hotel told him it was all a mistake.

"They just said, 'You know the jackpot that you won? We're not going to pay it,'" said Howard, who lives in Sunny Isles Beach and goes to the casino five times a week.

"It was like I was in a movie. I couldn't believe it."

After parading Howard around as the winner of the jackpot for hours, hotel gaming officials called him into an empty room later in the day to tell him the kiosk that declared him the winner had malfunctioned, Howard said.

"I'm not sure what caused the error, but officials that night did think initially that the person had won," confirmed Gary Bitner, a Seminole Tribe spokesman.

In a short press release, Hard Rock officials said they were investigating.

"As with many casino jackpots, a verification process occurred. This verification process confirmed that the prize had not been won. Seminole Tribal Gaming Commission is reviewing and investigating the patron complaint of the alleged winning."

The Hard Rock, as part of the Seminole Indian reservation, is considered a sovereign nation — so it isn't governed by state or local law. So Howard may have no place to turn.

"We don't regulate the Seminole Indians anywhere in Florida," said Tom Butler, deputy press secretary for the state Department of Business and Professional Regulation. "We are hands-off. It's how the federal government tells us we have to be. It's a difficult situation."

Howard was playing the Swipe and Win Progressive jackpot, a free promotion run at the Hard Rock that's aimed at regular customers. Players swipe their Players Club cards as they enter the casino. The cards accumulate bonus points every time a patron plays a slot machine or game, according to the Hard Rock website.

Winners can win as little as \$5, a T-shirt or a free stay at the hotel. Big winners, which Howard thought he was, hit the jackpot, which can be hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Howard said the hostess and the casino supervisor confirmed that he was the winner of the \$259,945.75 jackpot. They verified his Players Club membership card and identification and made him sign a publicity release agreement, which allows the Hard Rock to use his name and picture in any promotional campaign.

Then came the big check that read, "Pay To: The lucky winner."

Howard, who does voice-



ALEXIA FODERE/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

ACCOUNTABILITY: Freddy Howard has retained an attorney to contest the casino's decision to withhold the jackpot.

overs for Spanish radio commercials, called his father and sister, who drove from their homes to join him for the photo session. It felt like the paparazzi, Howard said.

"Everyone was so happy. I just kept saying, 'Oh, my God, I can't believe I won,'" he said. "The whole time I am thanking everybody and hugging everybody."

But Howard became concerned when he asked for his winnings and was told he had to wait until later that morning. Almost 15 hours later, straight-faced casino officials told Howard that he had won nothing.

He understood they might not be able to give him all \$260,000, but he asked for \$15,000 so he could go play the slots and "tip everybody." Instead, the hostess brought him \$200 in casino money and a \$50 restaurant coupon.

After he used up the \$200, Howard checked back again to collect his jackpot but was told to go to his room and that he would be called when it was time to collect. It was about 9 a.m., Howard said.

He called back every hour and was told to wait. Then, he was told a meeting was being set up at 4 p.m., almost 15 hours after the kiosk pronounced Howard the jackpot winner.

In a 10-minute meeting in a quiet room once used for bingo, straight-faced officials told Howard that he had won nothing.

"If there was no jackpot won, why did they bring me the jackpot check?" Howard said.

People are constantly asking Howard for an update on his situation, but he has no answer. Officials at the Hard Rock won't return his calls.

He's hired an attorney, Keith Herbert, but his lawyer isn't getting any answers.

So far, all Howard has to show for his fleeting jackpot are a few blurry pictures in his sister's cellphone.

"Nobody appears to be accountable for what goes on over there," Herbert said. "If it is a mistake, well, then, bite the bullet and pay up."