THE WAR AGAINST DRUGS AND THUGS: A STATUS REPORT ON PLAN COLOMBIA SUCCESSES AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

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THE WAR AGAINST DRUGS AND THUGS: A STATUS REPORT ON PLAN COLOMBIA SUCCESSES AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 2004

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:50 p.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Tom Davis of Virginia (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Tom Davis of Virginia, Souder, Duncan, Harris, Cummings, Kucinich, Tierney, Watson, Van Hollen, Ruppersberger, Norton, and McCollum.

Staff present: David Marin, deputy staff director and communications director; Keith Ausbrook, chief counsel; Robert Borden, counsel and parliamentarian; Rob White, press secretary; Drew Crockett, deputy director of communications; Susie Schulte, professional staff member; Teresa Austin, chief clerk; Brien Beattie, deputy clerk; Corinne Zaccagnini, chief information officer; Michael Yeager, minority deputy chief counsel; Anna Laitin, minority communications and policy assistant; Tony Haywood, minority counsel; Richard Butcher, minority professional staff member; Cecelia Morton, minority office manager; and Christopher Davis, minority investigator.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Good morning. I want to welcome everyone to today's oversight hearing on Plan Colombia, an important component of U.S. foreign and counternarcotics policy. Today we'll examine the U.S. Government's support and contributions to the progress being made in Colombia in fighting drug trafficking and international crime, and in improving economic and social conditions.

Since its inception in 1999, Plan Colombia has been an integrated strategy to meet the most pressing challenges confronting the country today promoting the peace process, combating narcoterrorism, reviving the economy and strengthening the democratic pillars of society. The combined efforts of several of our Government agencies, who are here testifying today, are providing assistance to meet these challenges and improve the stability and future of Colombia.

Not only is Colombia one of the oldest democracies in our hemisphere, but it is also home to three terrorist groups who fund their guerrilla activities with drugs smuggled into the United States for American consumption. Colombia is a significant source of cocaine

and heroin for the U.S. market. As many of us are well aware, the drug trade has a terrible and destructive impact on Americans through addiction, drug related crimes and death. Because drug trafficking and the guerrilla insurgency have become intertwined problems, Congress has granted the United States expanded authority and increased flexibility to fight narcoterrorism and reduce the flow of illicit drugs into the United States.

I led three congressional delegations to Colombia last year and can say first-hand that our significant investment, after years of effort, is beginning to see returns on the time, money and resources spent in Colombia. Together with the strong commitment of President Alvaro Uribe and historic levels of support from the Colombian people, U.S. involvement is beginning to hit narcoterrorists where it hurts.

Some European left wing politicians and human rights groups claim the Uribe administration has failed to honor commitments on human rights. They've also criticized new Colombian anti-terrorism laws passed in December. But I think the view from Bogota looks very different. And I think the European left may be guilty of clinging to an overly romantic, naive opinion of the guerrillas. The mask is off the Lone Ranger. These are not idealistic liberators. They're thugs and terrorists, funded by the illicit drug trade.

The fact is, President Uribe continues to enjoy unprecedented support from the Colombian people because his no-nonsense strategy is producing results. He's popular because Colombians feel safer. Men, women and children once afraid to hit the road to visit family and friends for fear of kidnapping or worse are now doing so. A publicly recognized state presence now extends to towns and villages that for decades had been rebel territory.

We are seeing tremendous results in illegal crop eradication, and Plan Colombia's efforts have produced record reductions in coca production and in the destruction of drug labs. Net coca production in Colombia dropped from 355,347 acres in 2002 to 280,071 acres in 2003, a stunning 33 percent decline from the peak growing year of 2001. Interdiction efforts by the Government of Colombia have increased significantly and each week brings news of seizures of cocaine and heroin, interdictions that are usually the result of U.S. supplied intelligence. Eradication, coupled with increasingly successful interdiction efforts, is a key to our war on narcoterrorism, reducing profitability and slowly but surely leading farmers to abandon coca in favor of other, legitimate crops. Ultimately that in turn will mean less cocaine on American streets.

Criminals who have remained at large for years are being captured and extradited to the United States for prosecution. Colombia extradited 90 suspects to the United States in the first 16 months of the Uribe administration, quite an accomplishment considering that 5 years ago it offered up just one of its citizens to the U.S. justice system. The extraditions illustrate the unprecedented cooperation and partnership between our two nations, and the fact that public opinion on extradition in Colombia has changed, due largely to the political will and persistence of President Uribe.

Last month, Attorney General Ashcroft announced the indictment of nine top leaders of Colombia's largest drug cartel, an organization responsible for as much as half of all the cocaine smuggled

in the United States. This cartel has exported more than 1.2 million pounds of cocaine to the United States through Mexico since 1990, a load worth more than $10 billion. To put that number in perspective, it's approximately the combined annual budgets of the FBI, DEA and the Bureau of Prisons.

Our continued support of Colombia's unified campaign against drug trafficking and terrorist activities and their effort to obtain democratic security is a wise investment. Although U.S. assistance to the Colombian Government has led to meaningful sings of success under the strong leadership of President Uribe, challenges remain. Complete realization of U.S. policy goals requires a concerted Colombian strategy and effort sustained by continuous U.S. assistance. Our panels of witnesses today will provide an update on the current status of U.S.-Colombian programs, progress that has been made in recent years and an assessment of remaining challenges in the war against narcoterrorism.

I look forward to our discussion today and I again want to welcome our witnesses and their important testimony.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Tom Davis follows:]

Statement of Chairman Tom Davis
Committee on Government Reform
Hearing on "The War Against Drugs and Thugs: A Status Report on Plan Colombia Successes and Remaining Challenges"
June 17, 2004

Good morning. I want to welcome everyone to today's oversight hearing on Plan Colombia, an important component of U.S. foreign and counternarcotics policy. Today we'll examine the U.S. Government's support and contributions to the progress being made in Colombia in fighting drug trafficking and international crime, and in improving economic and social conditions.

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Not only is Colombia one of the oldest democracies in our hemisphere, but it also is home to three terrorist groups who fund their guerilla activities with drugs smuggled into the U.S. for American consumption. Colombia is a significant source of cocaine and heroin for the U.S. market. As many of us are well aware, the drug trade has a terrible and destructive impact on Americans through addiction, drug-related crimes, and death. Because drug trafficking and the guerilla insurgency have become intertwined problems, Congress has granted the U.S. expanded authority and increased flexibility to fight narcoterrorism and reduce the flow of illicit drugs into the U.S.

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Our continued support of Colombia's unified campaign against drug trafficking and terrorist activities and their effort to obtain democratic security is a wise investment. Although U.S. assistance to the Colombian Government has led to meaningful signs of success under the strong leadership of President Uribe, challenges do remain. Complete realization of U.S. policy goals requires a concerted Colombian strategy and effort sustained by continuous U.S. assistance. Our panels of witnesses today will provide an update on the current status of U.S.-Colombian programs, progress that has been made in recent years, and an assessment of remaining challenges in the war against narcoterrorism. I look forward to our discussion today, and I again want to welcome our witnesses and their important testimony.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I will now yield to any Members wishing to make opening statements. Mr. Kucinich.

Mr. KUCINICH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for holding this important oversight hearing, and I also want to thank the Chair for the manner in which he conducts the work of this committee. It's much appreciated.

This hearing is important because Plan Colombia is a $3.2 billion failed foreign operation. The war on drugs has not been won, nor is it being won. Drug usage at home has not decreased. Aerial eradication efforts in the targeted southern provinces have not eliminated coca production as intended; rather, crop cultivation has shifted to other regions. In the Department of Putumayo, for example, coca production decreased by 82 percent 1999 and 2002. During that same period, however, coca cultivation rose by 163 percent in the Department of Guaviare.

This is ironic, considering that aerial eradication efforts in the Guaviare region in the mid-to-late 1990's shifted production to the Putumayo region in the first place. Coca is one of the easiest and most profitable crops to grow, and simply put, people are going to continue to grow it if it will bring them money. For the past 15 years, despite several programs aimed at eradicating coca cultivation, crop supply has never ceased to meet demand. And this will not change.

What Plan Colombia has succeeded in, however, is in the funding of rightist paramilitaries, groups that have been named terrorist organizations by our own State Department for their heinous human rights crimes. This has occurred because the Colombian military and paramilitary units have a close working relationship. According to the Human Rights Watch World Report 2002, military units have been found to "promote, work with, support, profit from and tolerate paramilitary groups." The relationship between military and paramilitaries has included active coordination during military operations, the sharing of intelligence, the sharing of fighters and the sharing of resources such as vehicles, bunkers and roadblocks. Active duty soldiers have served in paramilitary units, paramilitary commanders have lodged on Army bases and Army trucks have been used to transport paramilitary fighters. For their cooperation and support, military officers have received payments from paramilitaries.

Most atrocious, however, is that these right wing paramilitaries, such as the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, that's AUC, have been routinely assassinating labor organizers, making Colombia the most dangerous country in the world for unionists. Since the mid-1980's, over 4,000, over 4,000 trade unionists have been assassinated. According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, in 2002 alone of the 213 trade unionists killed in the world, 184 were killed in Colombia. Of those, 70 percent were public sector workers.

Why are so many trade unionists being killed? There's a disturbing correlation between the assassinations and intimidations of public sector unionists by paramilitary groups associated with right wing business interests and the rampant privatization in Colombia. U.S. multi-national corporations are benefiting from the privatization and de-unionization of Colombia.

What a terrible irony it is that taxes paid in the United States are being spent to defeat the basic human rights to decent wages, job security and the right to organize in Colombia under the guise of a war on drugs. We have a big problem with the Government of Colombia, and it starts with the president. In a speech delivered in September 2003, President Uribe described unions and human rights non-government organizations as working "in the service of terrorism."

So I think that it's going to be useful to hear a discussion on how the use of war on drugs funds for the de-unionization of Colombia and the assassination of union supporters serves the cause of the United States of America. It is not authorized by Congress, it is not U.S. policy and it should not be tolerated. Thank you.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Do any other Members wish to make opening statements? The gentlelady from Florida and then Mr. Souder.

Ms. HARRIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for holding this hearing today as well as for providing me the opportunity first-hand to view the coca eradication going on in Colombia. I also want to thank the distinguished panel of members that we have today for their testimony. I've had the pleasure of working with several of you on improving U.S.-Colombia relations now for several years. Up to a half million Colombians reside in my State of Florida, where they make a tremendous contribution to our economic and cultural dynamism.

In addition, Colombia consistently ranks as one of Florida's top 10 trading partners. Under the extraordinary and adept leadership of President Uribe, his domestic approval ratings have remained above 70 percent. Since August 2000 and 2002 Colombia has made great strides toward eradicating illicit drug production and trafficking, lowering general crime rates and reviving the domestic economy. Indeed, the GDP growth this year is expected to reach 4 percent, which is the highest in 7 years. Exports have reached record levels and the return of confidence within the private sector ensures that increased investment will continue to spur the economy.

Moreover, the definitive peace agreement with the national liberation army terrorist group, the ELN, appears to be drawing closer. In this vein, it's our sincere hope that Mexico's offer to mediate these talks will expedite the resolution to hostilities. Yet we are reminded of the difficult path ahead. Just yesterday, 34 campesinos were apparently killed by the FARC terrorist organization.

This should only steel our collective resolve to continue to provide Colombia and President Uribe with the support necessary to pacify their nation, bringing opportunity and prosperity to its 45 million citizens. Furthermore, the proposed free trade agreement to be singed among Colombia, the United States, Ecuador and Peru should significantly bolster the process in this region to a much greater level.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Katherine Harris follows:]

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–0913

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

OVERSIGHT HEARING

"The War Against Drugs and Thugs: A Status Report on Plan Colombia Successes and Remaining Challenges"
June 17, 2004
2:00 p.m.
Room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building

OPENING REMARKS

I wish to thank the Chairman for holding today's hearing on the critical issue of the status of Plan Colombia. I also wish to thank the distinguished members of today's panel for their testimony. I have had the pleasure of working with several of you on improving US-Colombia relations for several years now. Up to 500,000 Colombians reside in my home state of Florida, where they make a tremendous contribution to our state's economic and cultural dynamism. In addition, Colombia consistently ranks as one of Florida's top ten trading partners.

Under the extraordinarily adept leadership of President Alvaro Uribe – whose domestic approval ratings have remained above 70% -- since August, 2002 Colombia has made great strides towards eradicating illicit drugs production and trafficking, bringing down general crime rates and reviving the domestic economy. Indeed, GDP growth this year is expected to reach 4% -- the highest level in several years; exports have reached record levels; and the return of confidence within the private sector ensures that increased investment will continue to spur economic recovery.

Moreover, a definitive peace agreement with the National Liberation Army terrorist group (ELN) appears to be drawing closer. In this vein, it is our sincere hope that Mexico's offer to mediate these talks will expedite a resolution to hostilities. Yet we are reminded of the difficult path toward peace still ahead: just yesterday, 34 campesinos were apparently killed by the FARC terrorist organization. But this should only steel our collective resolve to continue to provide Colombia and President Uribe with the support necessary to pacify their nation, bringing opportunity and prosperity to its 45 million

citizens. Furthermore, the proposed Free Trade Agreement to be signed among the US, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru should significantly bolster progress in these areas at the regional level.

Thank you, Mr. [redacted]

QUESTIONS

1. While progress continues to be made in coca crop elimination (a 20% to 30% reduction has been achieved) it is important to remain aware that at least half of the cocaine proceeding from Colombia flows to Europe, and a substantial portion is sold within South American countries such as Brazil. In light of this, what greater role could the European Union play in assisting Colombia's drug eradication efforts?

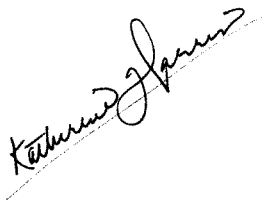
2. By contrast, 100% of the heroin whose provenance is Colombia ends up shipped to the United States, including to my home state of Florida. Why is this market different from that of cocaine and what can be done to combat the production of this particular drug?

3. Since only a limited portion of the Colombian poppy crop can be eradicated by aerial spraying, what is your opinion of stepping up manual eradication efforts?

4. This week, in an effort I supported, HIRC Chairman Henry Hyde announced that three DC-3 planes have been obtained for use in Colombia to move manual poppy eradicators into the relevant zones. How long will it be until these planes are put into operation?

Record Insert items

I ask unanimous consent that a recent CHICAGO SUN TIMES article on how Colombian heroin is creating havoc in American cities be included in the record. In addition, I ask that a January 2003 report by former member Bob Barr on Plan Colombia and some of the problems, especially with the aircraft we are using and providing down there, be included in the record as well.



Chairman TOM DAVIS. I thank you very much.

Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much for this hearing. I'm on the subcommittee and our chairman has held hearings on Colombia and the Colombian approach. I believe it merits the full attention of the committee that you are giving it today.

Mr. Chairman, particularly those of us who live in big cities often hear the simplistic notion that, you know, go after the supply and maybe we can settle this matter. Well, I think Colombia shows that going after the supply is not an easy matter, it's a very difficult matter, and just how difficult this entire approach is. The approach we're using in Colombia is essentially a bipartisan approach. It was begun in the last administration, I'm not sure there's any other real approach available to us.

I am very concerned that Colombia continues to be the leading supplier of cocaine and heroin to the United States. I do note with some optimism that there have been some recent decreases in those numbers. I also note what our subcommittee has also found, that Afghanistan is quickly becoming a competitor, a real competitor to Colombia in the provision of these drugs in our country, something that is particularly worrisome for other reasons.

The new flexibilities seem to be warranted by conditions on the ground. I have been particularly hopeful, because of some progress in civilian institution building and the attention that the new president had been able to get for that approach, and I continue to be optimistic that he will be able to build the civilian institutions, the justice institutions and other civilian institutions in the country. I am very disturbed, however, at reports of human rights abuses. We would hate to see one kind of abuse, drug abuse, be replaced by human rights abuses in order to pacify the country.

And I am concerned, today's New York Times reports the most serious massacre since President Uribe took office, 34 coca farmers killed by FARC. Apparently, they were all farmers who were employed by the paramilitary commanders. All of this has led to the notion that President Uribe's efforts to in fact negotiate with the paramilitaries could bring FARC, could escalate FARC violence. I cite this because of how difficult it is, not because I have an answer for all of this or because there are a dozen things the administration could be doing.

But I think that the emergence of these human rights violations and the continued leading place of Colombia in supplying cocaine and heroin will be worrisome because of the amount of attention we have placed on this one country and people therefore want to see some progress that the money and the attention and the military focus has brought.

I guess we shouldn't even think that there should be an exit strategy. We can't find an exit strategy out of places that we should find them. I think the way we're going now, we're going to be in Colombia for a very long time, and if we're not there, even given the fact that we don't see huge progress, even the small progress that we are seeing is enough, I think, to keep us there for a time to come and to build relationships with the new administration there, so that we don't go off on some detour, for example, involv-

ing bringing pacification to the country by violation of human rights.

Thank you very much again, Mr. Chairman, for this hearing.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I thank you very much.

I would recognize the subcommittee chairman, Mr. Souder.

Mr. SOUDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing.

I want to thank Delegate Norton for her comments, as well as the ranking member of our subcommittee, Mr. Cummings, and others, for the bipartisan way we've been approaching the Colombian question. Because it's very difficult, it isn't enough just to lock up kids in Washington, DC. or other places around the country, because of their abuse. We have to get to the bigger traffickers, the people who are behind the growing of this, the distribution of this, coming into our country, not just the users. We also have to be aggressive toward the users in the United States, because it's our problem, that it's caused the problems in Colombia, the market explosion in cocaine and heroin is because of domestic consumption.

But the fact is, the more that comes in, the cheaper the price, and the more the purity is. We have to pursue all strategies simultaneously: eradication, interdiction, border control, the networks to the United States and reducing demand and treating those who are abusing. We have had a tremendous internal battle since I was elected in 1994, over how we should fund the Colombia National Police, then the vetted units in Colombia and how we handle difficult human rights questions when there are major U.S. dollars involved.

I believe the progress in Colombia has been tremendous. It isn't perfect, but it's been tremendous. The pressures of the so-called Leahy Rule have led the military in Colombia to go through major reformation, and we hear repeatedly from their units that often an attorney will be in the field with them. They examine with pictures when there's been a battle to see whether there's been abuse. We have had two different groups from the right and two from the left who are committing these violations. The poor campesinos who are growing it, they get killed by one side and killed by the other side.

The Uribe government has gone in after all of them. It has made tremendous progress. The oldest democracy in South America, Colombia, has something to buildupon. As I pointed out before, and I think it's important for us to understand, we're seeing the tremendous difficulty in Iraq to get their police force to stand up. We're doing most of their fighting for them.

In Afghanistan, we have, in my opinion, a near disaster right now. Our Government is doing the best it can, but we don't control this tremendous explosion of heroin poppy that is occurring in Afghanistan. In Colombia, they're doing the fighting. We're having a debate over whether we should have a few hundred more advisors, not 100,000 people going into their country. So while we're at a critical tipping point, as Director Walters has said, and watching very closely, can we actually get a reduction for all this money and see the price rise and the supply go down and the purity drop in the United States? It is a very critical period.

The fact is, Colombia is a tremendous success story. Policemen and military people are dying on the ground because of our habits.

We have a few hundred advisors there, and maybe we need a little bit more, but we are rebuilding their institutions. We're rebuilding their police forces. We're rebuilding their military. We're getting vetted units. They're learning more what human rights is, and this is a success story when compared to the rest of the world.

I want to thank each of our witnesses who are here today for coming up to the Hill on a regular basis, for giving us the Colombia story, and for their work over many years. Each one of you have been involved in different ways. It has been a success story when those success stories are so rare around the world. Not a perfect story, just as Delegate Norton says. Drugs aren't going to go away. This isn't something where it's suddenly going to dry up and disappear, any more than our battles against rape, against spouse abuse, against the other evils of the world.

But we can control it more. We don't always have to stay at this level. If we do our job right and if we're organized, we can reduce the level of problems on the streets, and then start to deal with prevention in the schools and treatment in a more manageable form. Because right now, when it's so prevalent and so cheap and so common, we can't get control and make our prevention and treatment programs work.

So I thank the chairman for convening the hearing and I look forward to the questions and the testimony today.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Any other Members wish to make opening statements?

Let's move to our panel. We have our first witness, who is the Honorable John Walters, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Thank you very much. Director Walters will provide the committee with a report on how we're achieving the President's counter-drug objectives by reducing the production of cocaine and heroin in Colombia and the Andean region. It's our policy that we swear you in before you testify, so if you would rise with me.

[Witness sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. I think you know the rules, the light will turn orange after 4 minutes. Your entire statement is in the record. When it's red, 5 minutes are up, and then you could move to summary. Questions will be based on your entire statement. We appreciate the job you're doing, and we welcome you here today, and look forward to your testimony. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF JOHN P. WALTERS, DIRECTOR, U.S. OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

Mr. WALTERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the many members of this committee. Some of them are not here now, but have worked very hard on this issue, and we appreciate it very much.

I also appreciate the committee's particularly longstanding support for the Andean Counter-Drug Initiative. And I'm pleased to report today that the news is very good. For the first time in 20 years, thanks to the unprecedented efforts of the Uribe administration and support of the U.S. Congress for the Andean Counter-Drug Initiative, we are on a path to realize dramatic reductions in

cocaine production in Colombia and a complementary reduction in the world's supply of cocaine.

My written testimony discusses a number of areas which affect the success of our drug control efforts, and I request that the full statement be put into the record.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. WALTERS. My opening remarks today will focus on the progress that's been made in Colombia, most appropriate for this hearing, the good news of our eradication and interdiction efforts against cocaine and heroin. The United States and the Government of Colombia have developed a strategy which focuses on three items: one, eradicating almost the entire illegal drug crop each year, regardless of replacing efforts; two, interdicting and arresting drug shipments and the traffickers involved; three, pressuring trafficking organizations through extradition and other organizational attack initiatives.

Today, the United Nations released its latest numbers for coca cultivation and we have seen more good news, a 15 percent decrease in coca cultivation over the last year in the Andean region, according to the U.N. numbers. For 2 years in a row, we have seen record decreases in coca and poppy cultivation, due in part to the unprecedented commitment to aerial eradications through the spraying campaign. In 2003, Colombia sprayed about 127,000 hectares of coca and manually eradicated another 8,000 hectares.

At our current pace, coca cultivation should drop to as little as 80,000 hectares by the end of this year, compared to 144,000 in 2002. In 2002, Colombia had as much as 4,900 hectares of opium poppy under cultivation. U.S. supported eradication programs sprayed an excess of 3,300 hectares and in 2003, Colombia sprayed nearly 3,000 hectares of opium poppy and about 1,000 more were eradicated voluntarily in connection with alternative development programs.

Our eradication efforts have led to double digit percentage decreases in total cultivation of both coca and poppy. Most importantly, the same good results are holding true throughout the Andean region. Total coca cultivation for Peru and Bolivia declined from an estimated 61,000 hectares in 2002 to 59,600 hectares at the end of 2003, a combined reduction of 1,400 hectares, countering any significant concerning regarding the so-called balloon effect.

Thanks to increased Government of Colombia efforts in 2003, Colombian anti-drug forces destroyed 83 HCL labs, the conversion of coca plant product into what we see as powdered cocaine, captured 48 metric tons of cocaine base, 1,500 metric tons of solid precursors and 75,000 gallons of liquid precursor chemicals. We have seen increased success at sea, where the greatest amount of cocaine was interdicted last year ever. We have taken advantage of improved intelligence and cooperation with the United Kingdom and Colombia to interdict a high portion of the boats carrying illicit drugs as they depart Colombia, the principal means of transit to the United States.

We expect to see a substantially disrupted cocaine production capacity with coca cultivation reduced to about one half its peak level from 2 years ago. In disrupting the market, we need to continue our success in eradication, maintain our interdiction performance

and keep up the pressure we have placed on major traffickers. An unprecedented number of extraditions from Colombia has helped fan these efforts referred to by you, Mr. Chairman. In addition, there have been significant reductions in all indicators of human rights abuses in 2003. Homicide is down over 20 percent, massacres down 33 percent, kidnappings down 26 percent, and forced displacement of individuals were cut by 49 percent.

A key indicator of this historic progress is that allegations of human rights violations committed by the military has dropped from an excess of 40 percent of all allegations 7 years ago to less than 2 percent of all allegations in 2003. As a result of these advances, Colombia's citizens are safer and democracy in Colombia is more secure. The good news that we have seen in the Andean region and particularly in Colombia is a product of sustained funding by this Congress for the Andean Counter-Drug Initiative, the strategic use of resources, our commitment and the commitment of the Government of Colombia.

Domestically, we have also seen very good news. We have surpassed the President's 2 year goal of a 10 percent reduction in drug use among our Nation's youth, an 11 percent actual reduction between 2001 and 2003. With the continued support of this committee, we fully expect to meet the President's 5 year goal of a 25 percent reduction in the number of drug users in the United States.

I commend the House for providing full funding for our counter-drug efforts, and not placing burdensome, restrictive conditions on those dollars. However, continued full funding in accord with the President's fiscal year 2002 request of $731 million is necessary now, more than at any time in our history, to advance this historic success. We have the opportunity to make a real change in the world drug market and we need your continued commitment and support as we have had in the past.

I look forward to working together to ensure that our goals are met in Colombia and the Andean region and of course, here at home. Last, I'd like to ask to be able to provide for the record, given the opening statement by Congressman Kucinich, a detailed breakdown of eradication province by province to correct the record. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Walters follows:]

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY
Washington, D.C. 20503

Statement by John P. Walters
Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy
Before the House Committee on Government Reform
June 17, 2004
"Colombia: Delivering Good Counter-Drug Results"

Chairman Davis, Ranking Member Waxman, and distinguished members of the Government Reform Committee. I am honored to appear before you to report how we are achieving the President's counter-drug objectives by reducing the production of cocaine and heroin in Colombia and the Andean region. Our progress has been due in great measure to the foresight of this Committee in its strong support for Andean counter-drug assistance.

For the first time in 20 years, thanks to the strength, dedication, and perserverance of our Colombia allies, we are on a path to realize dramatic reductions in cocaine production in Colombia, and a complementary reduction in the world's total supply of cocaine. U.S. counterdrug assistance to Colombia has been forged into a plan for near-term success through the personal leadership and insights of Colombian President Uribe. President Uribe has attacked Colombia's many problems simultaneously: dramatically expanding the areas governed by the rule-of-law, reducing human rights abuses, reducing violence, increasing economic growth and reducing unemployment while reducing coca cultivation and cocaine production, arresting thousands of criminal drug traffickers and extraditing their key leadership, and militarily engaging the AUC, FARC, and ELN in a battle they cannot win, causing the terrorists unsustainable mass desertions and personnel losses.

The integrated U.S. military, police, counterdrug, USAID, and intelligence support to Colombia has been the crucial enabler for these results, and will continue to be necessary at its current level. The challenge before us is to stay the course and ensure the success that is within sight.

Colombia will have a solid foundation for continued economic and social development in an environment based on democratic institutions and with the rule of law present throughout its territory. We anticipate a substantially disrupted cocaine production capacity, with coca cultivation reduced to about one-half its peak level of three years ago, and with the Colombian government capable of taking on an increasingly independent role in sustaining illicit coca cultivation at this new low level.

In order to ensure long-term success, the Government of Colombia will have to be persistent and attentive to the threat even as it is diminishing. Cocaine traffickers will be able to rapidly reconstitute mass-cultivation of coca if a substantial eradication program is not maintained. Essential complements to the success in Colombia are effective eradication and law enforcement programs in Peru and Bolivia. Cultivation in Peru and Bolivia has remained in check and need to stay that way to ensure no explosive growth of coca that can replace losses in Colombian cultivation. However, let me make it clear, our strategy is working. As the New York Times on June 9, 2004 reported, "the overall decline in coca in Colombia and the rest of the Andes is indisputable, and the strategy appears to have controlled the so-called balloon effect: the recurring

phenomenon that once saw huge fields of coca pop up in one region after being stamped out in another."

The United States' support is extremely broad, encompassing economic development, humanitarian assistance, and assistance in strengthening Colombia's justice system in addition to the more visible U.S. programs that aid with drug crop eradication and illicit drug interdiction. The Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Homeland Security, Treasury and USAID have all made major contributions of expertise and experience. Our function in the Office of National Drug Control Policy has been to coordinate the multiple contributions and help focus on the counter-drug programs that make a strategic difference in destroying the capacity of drug traffickers to make their illict product and sell it for a profit. We work with the interagency counter-drug partners through the mechanism of an International Drug Control Policy Planning Committee and through the budget and program guidance we provide to all the federal drug control agencies.

Market Disruption Approach

The National Drug Control Strategy applies a market model of illegal drug production to identify where the production chain is vulnerable to disruption. We focus anti-drug programs at those key points, whether agricultural production, financing, transportation, or a criminal command and control structure, where we can interfere with the sequence of events necessary for illegal drugs to reach our shores.

The key vulnerability of the cocaine industry is the cultivation phase, which is attacked through coca eradication in source countries such as Colombia. Other vulnerabilities include elements of the transportation network, which are attacked through interdiction, seizures, and arrests—such as those that in the past have been directed against smuggling via large fishing vessels in the Eastern Pacific. Another vulnerability is the major trafficking organizations and their communications and decision-making processes, which are attacked through arrests, extraditions, prosecutions, seizures, forfeitures, and revenue denial activities targeting major drug trafficking organizations. Dependent drug users are quite conscious of the price and purity of the drugs they consume, and our objective is to make drugs as expensive and impure as possible, as well as difficult and risky to obtain.

The budget request this year for supply reduction focuses on strengthening enforcement and interdiction efforts, maintaining strong support for coca and opium poppy eradication in Colombia, and providing resources for promising new approaches.

In 2003, Colombia sprayed about 127,000 hectares of coca and manually eradicated over 8,000 hectares, causing a net reduction of about 30,000 hectares, thereby, reducing Colombia coca cultivation from 144,000 hectares at the end of 2002 to 114,000 a year later. Pure cocaine production potential dropped over 21 percent from 585 metric tons in 2002 to 460 metric tons at the end of 2003. If, as planned in 2004, Colombia, with U.S. assistance, sprays 130,000 hectares, coca cultivation should drop to as little as 80,000 hectares by the end of this year. Colombia's entire production will only be 323 metric tons of cocaine, a dramatic 54 percent reduction from Colombia's production of 700 metric tons in 2001. When combined with no dramatic increase in Peruvian and Bolivian coca production, there will be substantial shortages of cocaine in the United

States, Europe, and Latin America. This reduction in cocaine supply will contribute substantially to achieving the Adminstration's goal of reducing U.S. cocaine consumption 25 percent by 2006. At this juncture, Colombian coca eradication is proceding at a pace similar to 2003, a pace that will continue the substantial decline in overall culitvation and cocaine production.

The greatest potential impediments to Colombia's ability to continue eradication at the 130,000 hectare rate are unusually bad weather and/or the loss of spray capacity due to hostile fire. In that respect, Colombia is in a stronger position than it was last year. There are presently 16 spray aircraft in Colombia, with five more due to be delivered by the end of this year. This compares with an average presence of 16 spray aircraft in 2003. More platforms increase fumigation flexibility by offering more options for spraying in different areas when weather is uncooperative. Helicopter security and search and rescue support availability has generally been the limiting factor for coca fumigation in more isolated growing areas, but this year, spraying has also been successful in such sectors because of advance deployment of helicopters from temporary bases supplied with fuel bladders and protected by the Colombian military. The number of hits from ground-fire against spray planes and helicopters decreased markedly this year because of tactical operational changes and better intelligence about the presence of narco-terrorist elements protecting coca fields.

As coca comes increasingly under attack, we expect that growers and traffickers will react initially by planting in more isolated areas and protecting their fields more vigorously. This tactic is a reversion to the patterns before the coca boom of the late 1990s and will largely be unsuccessful. First, because the Government of Colombia has demonstrated that it can eradicate in isolated areas, and second, because production costs will increase. It is enormously expensive to clear jungle, import labor, and transport coca leaf and cocaine base from areas that are truly isolated and lacking infrastructure. As the major narco-terrorist organizations are pressured militarily by operations now underway in Colombia's Plan Patriota, their ability to protect growing zones from fumigation, provide technical assistance, and maintain administrative control over production and marketing will diminish, making coca production riskier and financially unattractive.

Additional coca cultivation in sites in Peru and Bolivia are possible, but there is no evidence of a substantial increase in those areas at this time. Total coca cultivation for both countries declined from an estimated 61,000 hectares in 2002 to 59,600 hectares at the end of 2003. At 28,450 hectares, Bolivian cultivation levels are barely half the 52,900 hectares registered during the peak year of 1989. Peru's coca cultivation in 2003 fell to 31,150 hectares, the lowest level since the mid-1980's when we were first able to measure illicit crops with a high degree of accuracy. Since 1995, our programs have caused coca cultivation in Peru and Bolivia to drop by 73 percent and 42 percent respectively.

On a world scale, the United States remains a small consumer of heroin. U.S. addicts consume under five percent of the world's production. But, with the vast amount of international trade, commerce, and visitors crossing our borders annually, the U.S. is vulnerable to the illicit movement of numerous small shipments of heroin. Most heroin is still smuggled into the U.S. in quantities ranging from 1-5 kilograms, quantities easily concealed in luggage, on one's person, swallowed, hidden easily in trucks and automobiles, or "lost" in large cargo shipments.

Colombia and Mexico are the major sources of heroin consumed in the United States. Colombian heroin is produced by small, independent drug trafficking organizations and distributed to the United States via airline couriers and maritime traffickers. With U.S. assistance, Colombia has installed inspection systems in its international airports and has continued a major effort to eradicate heroin poppy. The key distinction between heroin and cocaine trafficking patterns is that heroin has traditionally been transported in much smaller quantities, making it much more difficult to find within the millions of private and commercial conveyences that cross our borders annually.

In 2003, Colombia aerially sprayed nearly 3,000 hectares of opium poppy and about 1,000 more were eradicated voluntarily in connection with alternative development programs. As of the beginning of June 2004, Colombia had sprayed about 1,600 hectares of opium poppy. Pure heroin production potential in Colombia has remained relatively constant at about 11 pure metric tons/year for the past five years, with a modest decrease noted in 2003.

Environmental Consequences of Illicit Coca Cultivation

Colombia's efforts against narco-terrorist organizations are undercutting the cocaine business which is directly responsible for major environmental destruction and loss of pristine rainforest habitat. Drug trafficking organizations encourage the massive migration of poor, landless individuals to lowland jungles and Andean forests, including Colombia's National Parks, to cultivate opium poppy and coca. Traffickers have concentrated their activities in areas that are particularly valuable from an ecological point of view, including the Orinoco and Amazon basins and Colombia's eastern plains. Colombia estimates that in the last 11 years, one million hectares of tropical forest and Andean cloud forest have been lost to illicit cultivation.

Working in remote areas beyond settled populations, coca growers routinely slash and burn virgin forestland to make way for their illegal crops. Tropical rains quickly erode the thin topsoil of the fields, increasing soil runoff, depleting soil nutrients, and, by destroying timber and other resources that would otherwise be available for more sustainable uses, decreasing biological diversity. The destructive cycle continues as growers regularly abandon non-productive parcels to prepare new plots. At the same time, traffickers destroy jungle forests to build clandestine landing strips and laboratories for processing raw coca and poppy into cocaine and heroin. Colombia estimates that for every hectare of coca produced, four hectares of jungle are destroyed.

Typical coca farmers in Colombia use three major categories of environmentally damaging and persistent chemicals: (1) various mixes of class I to III insecticides and fungicides (usually applied without safety protection), (2) gasoline and acids used by the farmers to produce their saleable coca base, and (3) various fertilizers and herbicides (including paraquat and tamaron). Most of these coca farming chemicals do not readily degrade into harmless by-products (like glyphosate does in 3-4 days), remaining in the soil and water for very long periods. Also, the toxicity of these chemicals is very different from glyphosate—many are extremely toxic for humans, birds, and other fauna and flora. Glyphosate, on the other hand, is a category IV chemical that degrades in the soil in 3-4 days into harmless by-products that do not affect the environment.

Interdiction

United States supported counterdrug efforts have increased the amount of cocaine interdicted in Colombia and in the transit zone. Colombian antidrug forces destroyed 83 finished cocaine (HCl) laboratories in 2003, surpassing their 2001 record of 63 finished cocaine labs destroyed. They also captured more than 48 metric tons of cocaine/cocaine base, 1,500 metric tons of solid precursors and 750,000 gallons of liquid precursor processing chemicals. The greatest amount of cocaine was interdicted at sea. In the last quarter of 2003, Colombian forces increased their success rate against "go-fast" boats, inexpensive high-powered vessels capable of carrying 500 to 3,000 kilograms per load. Go-fast boats can sustain speeds of more than 25 knots and are difficult to find at sea. One of our most important interdiction requirements is to be able to identify these vessels when they are underway and have maritime and helicopter assets in the area to bring them to a stop and arrest the operators.

As I reported in March to the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources, our success rate against go-fast boats has increased notably, especially against targets departing from the North Coast of Colombia. Taking advantage of improved cooperation with the United Kingdom and Colombia, it has been possible to interdict a high proportion of these boats as they depart Colombia. We believe it will be possible to further increase interdiction effectiveness by concentrating assets on maritime shipment in and near the Colombian littoral, and by working more effectively with the Government of Mexico to capture shipments that transit Mexico by land.

Achievements in Colombia

With the decline of the largest Colombian drug cartels, control of production of cocaine has largely passed to the illegal armed groups, while the Colombian criminal drug organizations still control most of the international marketing and distribution of cocaine. Our continuing support for the Government of Colombia is crucial as that country presses on two fronts to end drug-financed violence through military victory or negotiation. The Andean Counterdrug Initiative is well-designed to maintain an essential level of support in fiscal year 2005 and prepare Colombia to finish its task of expanding democracy and the rule of law throughout its national territory.

Colombia has also attacked drug trafficking organizations effectively. Under President Uribe, 104 traffickers have been extradited to the U.S., 68 in 2003 and 14 just this year. Indictments for the Rodriguez-Orejuela brothers were recently unsealed and we hope to see them extradited soon. The Government of Colombia has further disrupted the operations of many of the trafficking groups, including the FARC and AUC, by arresting or removing operational leaders, such as: a FARC General staff member, a FARC Cundinamarca Mini-Bloc commander and his replacement, and the accountant for the Cali cartel.

Under President Uribe, Colombia has reduced the number of human rights violations by weakening terrorist organizations and taking control of territory formerly controlled by narco-terrorist groups. From 2002 to 2003, kidnappings were down 26 percent, homicides were down 20 percent (the lowest rate since 1987), and massacres decreased 33 percent. Allegations of human rights violations committed by the military have dropped from in excess of 40 percent of all

allegations seven years ago to less than two percent of all allegations in 2003. While any human rights violation or willful collaboration with human rights violators by the military is unacceptable, Colombia has made remarkable progress and the military is winning back the trust of the people.

Colombia's military in the first phase of their Plan Patriota succeeded in driving the FARC from the Department of Cundinamarca and the area around Bogota. This left the citizens of that metropolis with a greater sense of security, and returned the most populous region of the country back to the people. Prior to Colombia's military operation, innocent civilians had been subject to kidnapping and extortion at FARC roadblocks, even on principal arteries, whenever they ventured out of the Bogota metropolitan area. If Bogota were Washington, it would have been as if residents could not drive beyond Centerville or Laurel without fear of attack.

In 2003, the FARC lost about twelve percent of their estimated fighting force, including 1,367 who deserted, according to Government of Colombia estimates. If Colombia is successful in removing the largest narco-terrorist organizations from the field as effective illegal armed groups, the counter-drug equation and economic equation will change dramatically. Foreign investment, which is already improving, should increase, and middle-class Colombians who left the country at the height of the terror, increasingly, will be motivated, both economically and for security reasons, to return. Colombia's capacity to unilaterally control illicit drug production will dramatically increase as central government authority and power grows and the expense of a military campaign decreases.

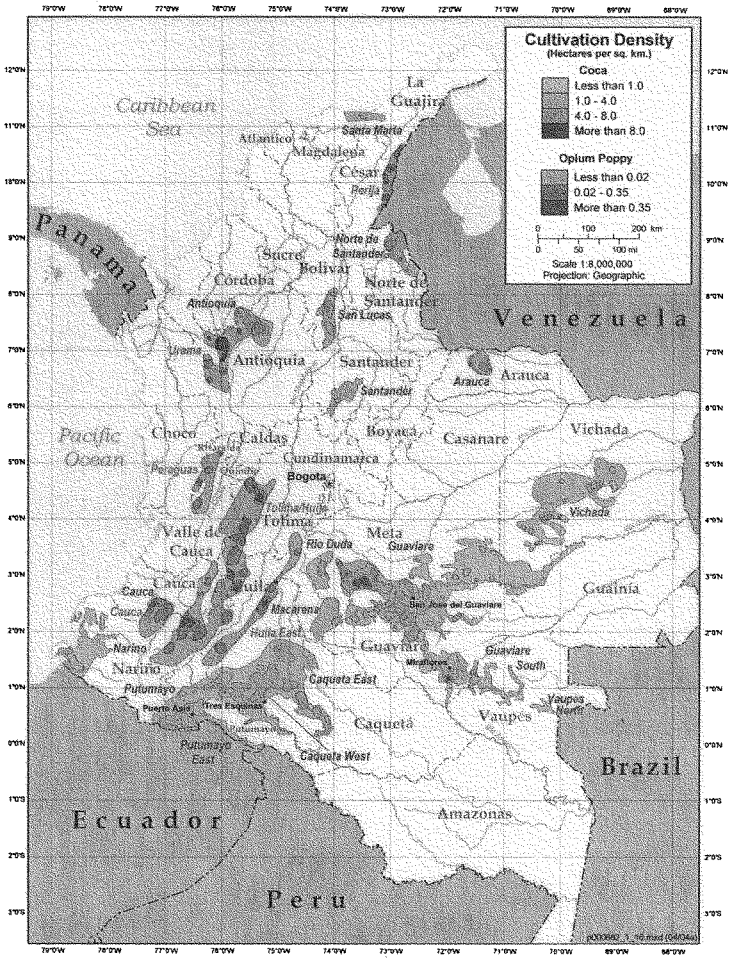
Conclusion

We have witnessed accelerated accomplishments under the Uribe Administration in strategic areas that will cause the cocaine industry to collapse in Colombia. If the eradication tempo is maintained, we will see a halving of the amount of cultivation from the peak in 2001. The FARC and AUC narco-terrorist organizations are under pressure from the military, and if that pressure is maintained, their viability as major narco-terrorist organizations is doubtful.

U.S. assistance in Colombia has been put to productive use as the government there is dedicated to bringing peace and democracy to the entire country and it understands the role that drug trafficking organizations play in supporting Colombia's two main terror threats. The government is strong, effective, and has overwhelming popular support. We do not frequently see such a convergence of factors that make possible a major and permanent disruption of the illicit drug industry.

It is important to maintain pressure so long as we have the opportunity to reduce the drug industry to the point that it cannot build itself back up. If we stop now, with viable infrastructure in the industry still operative, coca cultivation can be reconstituted. If we continue and truly break the industry, Colombia and its Andean neighbors can be in a position to sustain eradication and law enforcement with modest U.S. assistance. That would be a remarkable achievement and will cause a sharp reduction in the number of lives destroyed and families wrecked by cocaine abuse in our nation. We are truly grateful to Congress for allocating the necessary funding for the succeses achieved and ask that Congress sustain the current level of funding in concurrence with the President's Fiscal Year 2005 Funding Request.

Colombia: Narcotics Cultivation, 2003



6/17/2004

Colombia Coca Cultivation, 1998-2003

in hectares	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Guaviare (*includes Macarena	26,700	29,800	38,200	54,100	63,600	51,300
Rio Duda					2,200	1,300
Vichada				2,600	12,700	9,500
Caqueta East West	39,400 17,900 21,500	33,600 19,000 14,600	32,200 19,100 13,100	40,300 25,300 15,000	32,350 19,350 13,000	20,400 12,200 8,200
Putumayo	30,100	42,900	44,900	39,400	6,000	6,100
Putumayo E.	n/a	3,000	2,500*	2,600	2,200	1,000
Narino	n/a	n/a	no estimate	12,100	7,300	5,700
Norte de Santander	2,800	8,000	8,100	9,300	5,200	2,000
San Lucas	2,800	4,100	8,400	4,400	3,900	3,700
Arauca	n/a	1,100	1,900	3,800	3,800	5,700
Antioquia	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,200	4,600	5,400
Other (Santander, Amazonas, Santa Marta, Guainia, Cauca, Vaupes)					600	1,750
TOTAL	101,800	122,500	136,200	169,800	144,450	113,850

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Let me start the questioning. I heard Representative Kucinich's opening remarks. Is it possible that as we eradicate in Colombia, it's moving to other countries?

Mr. WALTERS. It is possible, and it is a great concern, and in the past this has happened, that cultivation was once much greater in Peru and Bolivia. It's been reduced dramatically. During that reduction, cultivation moved to Colombia. That's why we've tried to make sure that we continue the pressure working with the Governments of Peru and Bolivia. Fortunately, over the past 2 years, we have been able to sustain that reduction and we have not seen the spread.

And not to belabor the point, but as the New York Times reported on June 9, 2004, "The overall decline in coke in Colombia and the rest of the Andes is indisputable, and the strategy appears to have controlled the so-called balloon effect, the recurring phenomenon that once saw huge fields of coca pop up in one region after being stamped out in another." So we have our own estimates, we have the U.N. estimates, and we have the New York Times. They don't usually line up, all three, on such a point.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Could you share with me some of the links we've seen in the evidence that the administration has collected that detail the relationship between drugs and financing for terrorist groups in the Andean region?

Mr. WALTERS. Yes. Our current estimates, and we're trying to refine some of the dollar amounts, are that substantial operational resources are provided both for the extreme right and extreme left groups, the FARC, the ELN and the so-called AUC. The precise amount that they get from drug trafficking is hard to identify, but they could not operate at current levels without the resources they receive. They also take money, as you know, from kidnapping and from some other criminal activities.

But the bulk of that money, there's no question about it, has come from drug trafficking. We have various estimates of the relative amounts. But both for the violence that they cause in Colombia and the violence that we see through armed groups in Mexico, those organizations that are most dangerous and most violent make their money and remain under arms and remain able to put armed, dangerous people in the field because of what they make from the U.S. drug consumer.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Are there any other cartels or cabals or drug lords operating independently of the three groups you've described in Colombia?

Mr. WALTERS. Yes, there are. We have identified a number of organizational leaders that are facilitators, organizers, sometimes they use the armed groups and pay them for protection. Sometimes the armed groups in different areas provide certain levels of product for final processing and distribution. Basically the large scale distribution and shipment to the United States is not run by the armed groups, although there have been some of them involved in a few cases of distribution. But basically, those are run by trafficking organizations, both in Colombia and Mexico today, and they use both the Central American-Mexican route to move the drugs to the United States and the Caribbean.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. So let me just understand. What percent of the cocaine, let's talk about cocaine for example, and the coca crop, is controlled by the paramilitary groups and what percent by these other independent operators or cartels? Any idea?

Mr. WALTERS. I can't give you a precise percentage, because in some cases they're mixed.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Sub-contracting and everything else?

Mr. WALTERS. Yes. They are involved in out stages and later stages, yes. We're trying to get a better handle on that. We also believe frankly that some of what we've seen in the large number of desertions I referred to in my written testimony of the armed group participants are a result in difficulties of financing because of the magnitude of the eradication and the disruption of the market for cocaine.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I'm just trying to figure out, OK, we're going, the Colombian Government with help from us is going after some of the paramilitary groups down there now, and we wipe those out, there are still others standing that are going into the trade, is what you're saying?

Mr. WALTERS. Yes. They are working very closely together, and how it might transform itself in the future. Again, what happened was, the drug cultivation moved to Colombia and these armed groups became involved by controlling countryside, keeping government forces, the rule of law from that area so they could grow and produce cocaine. As the government takes control of the country, and I think that's important, we're not just eradicating, the Government of Colombia is systematically taking back the country, as you know, providing government presence and rule of law in all municipalities of the country for the first time in more than two decades.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. What do you think is the major obstacle and challenge that we face in Plan Colombia at this time?

Mr. WALTERS. Follow-through. We can and have and do make this problem smaller by pushing back. What happens is, we frequently don't stay at it. I think that everyone is rightly concerned that what are the limits of commitment. This is a large dollar amount, we know that. But when you look at the investment in terms of the $12.5 billion that we spend on drug control at the Federal level, and many times greater amounts that we spend in trying to pick up the pieces from the consequences of substance abuse, this is a cost-effective investment.

It obviously only is cost-effective if it makes a difference. I think that's what the historic opportunity is that the commitment and leadership of Colombia, where most of the effort is being applied, that the resources that we are supplying to support them there and in the other parts of the Andean region are making a difference and systematically shrinking in historic allotments the amount of cocaine coming into the country.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. OK. Thank you very much.

Mr. Tierney.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Walters, am I correct in understanding that $93 million in funding has been provided this year to protect the Colombian, to help the Colombian army protect the Cano Limon oil pipeline?

Mr. WALTERS. Yes.

Mr. TIERNEY. Can you explain to me how that expenditure is justified as part of a program whose primary priority mission is narcotics control?

Mr. WALTERS. Yes, we tried to work carefully with Congress in the original request over a year ago for these funds. It's designed to be a component to our effort to prevent terror organizations from destroying the institutions and economic opportunities in Colombia. The oil pipeline was systematically attacked, as you probably know, by the ELN and the FARC and a significant portion of both gross domestic product of the foreign earnings of Colombia, as well as a significant amount of the energy, some of this energy goes to the United States. What this allowed Colombia to do when protecting the pipeline is to maintain those earnings at a time when they are trying to grow the economy and for constructive ways.

Mr. TIERNEY. Explain for us, if you will, exactly how the protection is being provided. Who is providing it and in what manner?

Mr. WALTERS. Off the top of my head, I may not know all the details. We're essentially providing airlift and helicopters, and we're providing training to Colombian military personnel to be able to protect the pipeline at this point.

Mr. TIERNEY. And this is a private company's pipeline, am I correct?

Mr. WALTERS. Yes, it is.

Mr. TIERNEY. And what financial commitment are they putting into this?

Mr. WALTERS. I don't know what the company is putting into the program. In the past, we've worked on the basis of the concerns of the Colombia Government here, obviously.

Mr. TIERNEY. I'm concerned with that. It seems to me we're moving well beyond our, you know, Plan Colombia is the business of going after drugs and now expanding over to a pipeline, getting more involved, putting more money in there. That bothers me in terms of our exit strategy and our involvement growing on that.

Mr. WALTERS. If I may, if we didn't consult properly with your office, I apologize. But we were very careful when this proposal was initially made to make clear what it was specifically and to include it in the appropriations process. I want to make clear we did not intend to say we have a whole bunch of money over here and we're going to slide this in on the side. This was up front, because we knew there could be——

Mr. TIERNEY. I don't mean to imply that you did. I just want to address it as a policy question. I think we should consider whether this is wise policy and whether there is the kind of connection that should exist there, and whether or not we're getting into an expansion here that might not otherwise be somewhere we want to go or should go.

But changing the subject for a second, there was a recent New York Times article, June 9th of this year, last week in fact, and it basically was trying to put the 2003 coca eradication estimates into some sort of historical perspective. What they essentially said in the article was that although there has been a reduction this year, it gets us back to where we really were back in the 1990's, so that we're pretty much back to where we started.

Are you comfortable now or are you confident that this downward trend in cultivation is going to be sustained with the resources that you have?

Mr. WALTERS. Yes, if we follow through. What's happened is the cultivation grew after a decline, as a result of the decline in cultivation in Peru basically some in Bolivia, and the shift was to Colombia. We did have a balloon problem. What we've done is held the line in those other two countries and it looks like as Colombia eradicates at over 100,000 hectares a year, the ability to replant and reconstitute is broken and we begin to have systematic declines. That's what's happened.

Mr. TIERNEY. But there was part of that same article that talked about it being a race, it was a quote of one of the individuals, I think somebody from the State Department was saying that it's a race. We eradicate, they build somewhere else, we eradicate, they build somewhere else and we just try to get ahead of them. When it is that you think we'll get ahead of them to the degree that we can start to see some effect on the price and purity? I understand they're now currently as high as they've ever been.

Mr. WALTERS. We believe, the latest intelligence reports that we have just completed, that project and look at flow, we believe we will see a change in availability into the United States, on the streets of the United States in the next 12 months as a result of what happens here. It takes some time between the planting and the processing and the shipping and the dealing. We believe that will probably first appear in reductions in purity, because most of the market for this product, as you know, is dependent individuals. If you raise the price, they go into crisis.

Mr. TIERNEY. So a year from now?

Mr. WALTERS. Some time in the next 12 months. I can't tell you precisely, but I'm not saying it's going to be at the 12th month, I can't tell you it's going to be next month.

Mr. TIERNEY. Let me sneak in one more question, if I can, and that is on the fragmentation issue. What people are saying is instead of getting the balloon effect now, where we might see the crops moving over to Bolivia or elsewhere that in fact they're moving into some of the national parks and some of the other more difficult spots where you might not think, that the strains have become more resistant, and that's where it's going and it's going to be difficult for us to eradicate there. What do you find with regard to that issue?

Mr. WALTERS. There has been some increased growth in national park areas, and there's been a debate, as you probably know, about aerial spraying in the parks. We have I believe worked out an agreement with the Congress where the Government of Colombia, and we will certify spraying in these park areas as only a last resort. They are doing some manual eradication in those areas as well.

But obviously, we should not create safe havens. And we should also recognize, as I indicated at some length in my testimony, the environmental damage that is devastating is done by coca growth. It is what has stripped Colombia of an estimated million hectares of rain forest. In addition to the stripping of that rain forest and the delicate soil in the moving of this, the pouring of hundreds of

thousands of gallons of toxic chemicals into the delicate ecosystem as a result of processing through petrochemicals, acids and others.

We believe, I know people are concerned about the environment, especially in this area where we're concerned also about biodiversity. But the biggest damage to the environment is to allow the coca business to continue. It has been the destroyer of the land and the polluting of the watersheds here of the Amazon. What's happening is, those can be restored, but we have to again stay at it, we have to not let patches of protection be created as we begin to squeeze this down.

But the fact is, the real issue here is, President Uribe has said he is going to eradicate every hectare of coca and poppy in Colombia, and he has aggressively pursued that course.

Mr. TIERNEY. So is it your position that there is more environmental damage being done from the cocaine growing itself as opposed to the eradication efforts?

Mr. WALTERS. I believe if you look at this carefully, there is no comparison. What we're using for eradication is the same chemical that you can buy in a hardware store and many Americans use. It is used more widely in Colombia in agriculture settings. It is used massively in the United States in agricultural settings. It breaks down into harmless components in 3 days after use. The chemicals, the insecticides, the others that are being used, sulfuric acid, gasoline, kerosene and others that are being used by the thousand and thousand gallon lots in processing and in cultivation, there is no question, anybody that looks at this systematically, I know it sounds, because people say, well, isn't spraying always environmentally somehow damaging because you're killing something.

But this is a business that lives by killing triple canopy rain forest and dumping toxic chemicals into the Amazon watershed. When we stop that, when we reduce the cultivation, we save that pollution and give the forest a chance to regrow.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

The gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I didn't know you were going to come to me next. I do have a question. I went down to Colombia 4½ years ago with Chairman Spence on an Armed Service Committee trip. And I hate to be the skunk at the garden party, but we heard almost the exact same report that you've just given. It's nothing against you, but we heard all these wonderful statistics then. I don't remember all the exact statistics.

But it seems to me that the Colombia Government is on a permanent dole here. What I'm wondering about, 4½ years from now, are we going to have somebody else in your same position come here and give us all these same statistics again, but we're still going to be paying $4 or $5 billion a year and this problem is just going to go on forever? I mean, it's amazing how similar your statements are. I'm not criticizing you, because you're just giving us statistics that I guess you believe are reliable.

But we had the top three people from the Colombian Government that were in charge of the eradication program at that time, plus several of the U.S. military people, and they told us of the great

progress they had made, and had percentages just like what you have given us, and that was 4½ years ago.

Mr. WALTERS. If I may——

Mr. DUNCAN. And I'm sitting here, and it just makes me have to be skeptical about what you're saying. If you continue to make the progress that you're making, then this problem should be wiped out in 4 or 5 years. But I just have a strong feeling that's not going to happen. So how do you explain that?

Mr. WALTERS. Congressman, I do believe that cynicism about the drug problem generally, on both supply and demand, is our greatest enemy. That cynicism unfortunately has been earned in some cases. If people told you in Colombia 4 or 5 years ago that there were the kinds of reductions we're seeing today, they lied. It's that simple. We have numbers. The U.N. has numbers. The numbers did not show that 4 years ago or 4½ years ago.

But can we tell you that we have perfect knowledge here? No. But we can tell you that from multiple sources, we have the same information. There is a significant and measurable and massive reduction, a historic reduction in the production of cocaine in the world generally led by Colombia where over 70 percent of it is today grown.

Can we guarantee you or assure you that we're going to get to where you and I and everybody else wants to be? That is that we systematically reduce the drug problem. And I think the answer to that is, we can't guarantee it, because we've had a history of making progress, real progress. The drug problem today is, the number of users in the United States, I think it's important to point out, is half what they were at the peak in 1979 that we measured.

But it's still too high. It went to a low point in 1992, and teen drug use doubled between 1992 and the mid-1990's. When we forget about it, when we stop acting, when we don't do effective things, we get a bigger problem. But that's true of every problem.

Mr. DUNCAN. I'll tell you, I think that the Colombian Government is going to do everything they possibly can to make sure that they continue getting these billions and billions of dollars each year. And they're going to tell us that they've eradicated it a lot of places in Colombia, but they'll tell us that they've increased it someplace else or something.

I hope I'm wrong. I hope they get it wiped out in 4 or 5 years. And if these percentages that you're telling us today hold up, then it should be pretty well eliminated in 4 or 5 years.

Mr. WALTERS. I think it's important for us to be clear so we don't generate cynicism ourselves. Our estimate has been, and it's not precise, that the relative ability to reconstitute and replant following spray, again, it's important to lay some groundwork here. The coca is a bush, as you probably saw when you were down there. It takes an estimate, somewhere from between 6 months and 18 months for it to regrow to full productive capacity. So when you eradicate it, it has to be replanted, it has to be allowed to grow to be productive.

They can, with the magnitude of workers they have in the field now, we estimate reconstituted somewhere around 90,000, 96,000 hectares a year. That's why I think it's very important that we spray at the plus 100,000 hectare level as the Colombians have

done the last several years and begin to collapse that. A some of those workers move out of this business, the ability to reconstitute, we anticipate, will go down. But——

Mr. DUNCAN. What you're saying, though, and I can tell you, I spent 7½ years as a criminal court judge, trying felony criminal cases before I came here. And I'll tell you, I hate drugs. I'm scared to death of them. I tell all the kids that. I've seen horrible things. Almost every case that we handled was involved with drugs in some way.

But what you just said a few minutes ago, you said Colombia in spite of all the billions and billions and billions that we've poured down there over the last several years, that Colombia is still producing 70 percent of the world's cocaine, is that what you just said?

Mr. WALTERS. Yes. Seventy percent of a pie that's one-third smaller, and a pie that will be 50 percent smaller, we estimate, at the end of this year. So yes, that's why there isn't a balloon effect. If it was producing a smaller percentage, it would indicate that the movement of growth had gone to other countries.

So we have so far contained and shrunk that pie. We estimate that will produce reduced availability in the United States, as I said, within the next 12 months.

Mr. DUNCAN. Well, I'll tell you this, I hope in 5 years' time you can come back or somebody can come back and tell us it's all been wiped out, we don't have to keep sending all these billions down there.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

The gentlelady from Minnesota, Ms. McCollum.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Sir, if I understand your testimony, and some information that I have, it's correct that the coca farmers are growing in smaller plots in places like State parks, correct?

Mr. WALTERS. There are some. It's a small portion of the overall growth, but there is some movement to State parks.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Would you agree also with some information that I've read that the plants that the farmers are growing now actually produce more leaves per plant?

Mr. WALTERS. We have adjusted our estimate, not so much in leaf, but of the so-called alkaloid content of the cocaine substance that's extracted from the leaf. It's not necessarily more leaves, there have been adjustments up and down based on field tests in Colombia, so we get reliable estimates of what is being produced. But there has not been in the last couple of years——

Ms. MCCOLLUM. I think you answered my question. So you're saying that some of the plants can actually produce more?

Mr. WALTERS. Yes, there are different varieties of coca——

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you.

Mr. WALTERS [continuing]. But there has not been——

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you.

Mr. WALTERS. For the record, please, if I can answer the question——

Ms. MCCOLLUM. I only have a few minutes.

Mr. WALTERS. I'd like to answer the question, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. It's her time.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you. So you're saying that the amount——

[Power outage occurred 3:40: p.m. to 3:45 p.m.]

[NOTE.—A copy of the transcript held during the power outage follows:]

Chairman Tom Davis. Go ahead

Ms. McCollum. Would you say that the amount of coca coming into the United States is down?

Mr. Walters. We have not seen the flow change. We expect, based on intelligence estimates, to see the beginnings of that change in the next 12 months.

Ms. McCollum. Would you say that the amount of -- the by-product from the plant has increased in Europe and increased in use in Latin America?

Mr. Walters. Not over the last couple of years, but there has been growth over the last 5 to 10 years in consumption in Brazil, in Europe, and in some of the producing transit countries.

Ms. McCollum. Could you tell me if production is up in Ecuador and Peru and Brazil, then?

Mr. Walters. There has not been significant increases, as I referred to earlier, in Peru and Brazil. And we do not detect significant cultivation in Ecuador or any movement to Ecuador at this point.

Ms. McCollum. I was in Peru recently and people that I spoke with in Peru felt that it was up, but it was up in very remote areas ~~that is~~ which are very hard to detect. They are already seeing similar patterns to what they are using with growing the smaller plots right away, so it is not easily detectable.

Do we have relationships and programs, as this production

moves into other countries, to eradicate?

Mr. Walters. In the countries where there is the principal cultivation in Peru and Bolivia, we do. We also have some counternarcotics activity in Ecuador. I'm not aware that there is a significant amount of eradication going on, because we don't detect significant amounts of cultivation in Ecuador. But we are watching these countries and we take reports, even in countries that we are working with, of cultivation seriously and try to target our ability to observe and estimate on the basis of reports of growing in new areas.

Ms. McCollum. Mr. Chair, if I could, just two more quick questions. Because I know that the power went out and the lights went out.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your courtesy.

I have some information in front of me that six planes crashed in doing the spraying. Do you have any information on that? Were those U.S.-purchased planes? Contract planes that we have paid for indirectly?

Mr. Walters. I'm not sure over what period of time -- there have been -- some of the spray planes have crashed. One aircraft went down just recently. And essentially all the spray aircraft are part of the program funded by the U.S. Government. We have replaced some of them. I think we have a total of six aircraft being delivered this year. There certainly haven't been six aircraft over a brief period of

time; that would be over several years.

Ms. McCollum. I will show you the information that I have afterwards, or I will get it to your office. I have information that six spray planes crashed last year.

The contractors -- we have contractors that the United States Government is contracted with in this drug eradication. Who is responsible if those contractors are killed, permanently injured, or kidnapped?

Mr. Walters. Well we take care of our personnel as well as those who work for the United States Government. What we try to do first and foremost, obviously, is to protect the people working there from initial harm. We do have, as you know, three individuals who have been taken hostage by the FARC. We have made clear that we demand the release of these individuals. There is a $5 million reward for the individuals who are responsible for their kidnapping. There is also a reward for helping to aid in the release of these individuals. We are working to get their safe release.

They are being held, we believe, in very remote areas at this point and, of course, it is difficult to plan and execute safe release. We are continuing aggressively with the Colombians, as we have since they were taken, and we will continue. But our goal is their safe release.

Ms. McCollum. Well, Mr. Chair, I am concerned that we have -- for the families, for the individuals who have been

kidnapped, but we do not pay dollars to my knowledge when our service personnel, people who are in the Armed Forces as a career, we do not pay money for hostages, yet we do for U.S. contractors. Does that put them at a greater risk?

Mr. Walters. Let me be clear. We are not paying ransom for these hostages. We will never do that. We are not negotiating with the FARC for their release. We have a reward for the apprehension of the leaders of the FARC that are believed to be responsible for their kidnapping. We also have a reward program to encourage people to come forward and help in their release. But that is not ransom. That is through their work to try to get those individuals released through other means.

So we are not negotiating. We are not paying ransom. In fact, we want the people responsible apprehended and we want the individuals that have been kidnapped returned safe.

Chairman Tom Davis. Thank you.

Ms. McCollum. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Tom Davis. Did you want to add anything else, Mr. Walters?

Mr. Walters. Yes, I want to make sure there is not any misunderstanding. We do not have information that suggests in the last several years there has been a substantial change in the productivity of the coca varieties, or a substantial change in the output of the varieties that are there, such

that in the last couple of years -- such that the reductions that we are talking about with eradication are really superficial and undermined by a change in the agronomy of this. I want to make that clear. I do not want to leave the suggestion that somehow it looks good, but it's not.

There are, over time, have been changes in processing over the last 10 years. There have been changes in the use of different varieties. We monitor those as we produce our estimates for both output and we adjust for that. Those declines that we report are real declines, based on the most comprehensive knowledge that we can find.

Chairman Tom Davis. Thank you very much.

Mr. Souder?

Mr. Souder. I want to make a couple of points for the record and then I have a couple of questions. That we had a fairly steady decline in the Andean region in production, as you alluded to. In '92 to '94, when we had a dramatic reduction in resources, we had a surge such that we would have to have 10 years of 5 percent reductions -- which by the way we aren't getting -- to get back to where were in 1992. So it isn't an even up-and-down. We'll have periods where we go down, somebody will back off, it will surge back up, and then we have to bring it back down again.

Nevertheless, zero is not a realistic goal and we understand that, but controlling that and getting it down is the key.

In the process of trying to put the plan back together in a bipartisan way, working in particular with Mr. Delahunt and Mr. Farr who have been down there many times, we -- rather than just put the money to the military -- came up with criminal justice options, democracy support options, the Leahy Rule put human rights things in, and one of those was pipelines. Because without economic viability in the country, the argument was we are just putting money into the military. The pipelines generate $500 million. What does that mean? That means taxes from the oil companies to help pay for production as well. That was tax revenues combined with -- and they get a percentage as well, like Venezuela, of oil that comes through. Colombia was our eighth largest supplier of oil in the United States. After the FARC started punching the pipelines, they are starting to have to import rather than just export.

Mr. SOUDER. Part of this money we put in, the last time I was down there and talked with Occidental and other companies there, felt that the number of attacks were going down, They have minor protection, but they're like Pinkerton forces against armed forces.

But they can now hopefully start to explore this, because it's right near Venezuela, one of the richest oil basins in the world. If they can make their economy work, they can afford to pay their own military, and they can afford to buy their own Blackhawks. But if their economy doesn't work, their whole country will come crashing down and then, because of our drug problem, we have to go in and do it.

I have two questions. One is, we also, in addition to the coca problem, have a heroin problem, about to be dwarfed by Afghanistan, but nevertheless a heroin problem out of—I couldn't resist that—out of Colombia. It's high in the mountains, it's hard to get to. A recent FARC defector said that molasses is being put on the heroin and it's making it hard to aerially eradicate. This is one of the constant debates we've had, because in Bolivia, hand eradication worked very well.

You mentioned the national parks problem, which by the way is happening. We have the first coca in our parks in California. That is a challenge, even though it's the same thing we spray crops in our farmers' fields and in the farmers' fields elsewhere about aerial spraying. Have you seen that problem of molasses coating the heroin? Does that restrict air spraying, and do you see us moving more to hand eradication in those places if it becomes a problem?

Mr. WALTERS. I haven't heard about the molasses, but there are periodically accounts of ways of circumventing the spray, putting plastic bags over the plants, both poppy and the coca. The problem with almost all of these is they also inhibit the plant growth over any period of time. They're also labor intensive and they make it more difficult. None of them have been used, to the best of our knowledge, on a significant enough scale to undermine the eradication effort.

It is true, as you heard, we are looking at over 100,000 hectares of coca. We're looking at less than 5,000 hectares of poppy, and that's really a basis of figuring two crops on each plot. So that is less than 2,500 hectares. It's a much smaller problem, much smaller plots, as you know.

What we are doing, what the Colombians are doing, is mixing both spray with manual eradication, but that's not because of measures they're taking to prevent the spray, it's because some of these areas are very difficult to get to by aircraft. They are high in the mountains and sometimes it's hard to get an intelligence overhead read from an aircraft on where they are. Sometimes it's hard to get spray into the side of a mountain where a field may be because of the geography. So in that case, the Colombians are trying to move manual eradicators in.

In addition, we are trying to go after this problem with better intelligence. We're spraying everything we find. We're trying to kill one way or the other every plot of poppy that they can find. We are aware that because it's smaller and more dispersed there is a problem of finding it, and the DEA has put in more people. There is a program now of paying people for information about lots of

poppy, as well as organizations that are involved in it. So we've tried to go after the poppy problem, which you know we do take seriously, both in Colombia, in transit and in the movement inside the United States from its arrival in small amounts, frequently by aircraft, passengers on aircraft or in their baggage or on their person.

Mr. SOUDER. Part of our problem here is that almost all Afghan heroin is going to Europe and Europe hasn't been as great a help as they should be in Afghanistan. In Colombia, a high percentage is going to Europe. Even as we try to control our demand, our Colombia problem stays there because so much is going to Europe. Are you pleased with their help?

Mr. WALTERS. We have consistently asked the Europeans to do more. The British have been steadfast allies in this for more than a decade. We have had sporadic help from some other nations. But it's been small, especially as you point out, considering what they're suffering at this. When President Uribe went to Europe recently, there was, I believe, completely unjustified criticism of him by people whose nations are dearly suffering and should be thanking him for the progress and the possibilities he's allowed in the future.

I don't know of another nation in the world that has had as much progress as rapidly on human rights and safety of its citizens as Colombia has over the last several years since he's been in office. And instead, there are groups that are living in the past in Europe and some, frankly, I think in other places, that think that's not going on. They have to catch up with modern times. President Uribe's popularity in Colombia is based on the fact he's brought economic growth, safety and security. And that continues to be the case.

The military's popularity in Colombia is based on the fact they've stopped being the thugs that they were a decade ago, and through our help, largely through the leadership of Colombian officials, they've become more professional. They remain, we have to remain vigilant, we have to hold the standards, but they understand and we understand that the progress here requires that not to be a country that's a war zone, and not to be a country that's based on narco-dollars that will make it a war zone. The progress there has been historic.

Mr. SOUDER. Thank you.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you. The gentlelady from California.

Ms. WATSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm listening to the witness talk about the progress that's being made with Colombia, Plan Colombia, and I must commend the work that has been done that has gone into that. But the thought occurs to me when we talk about narcoterrorism, what are we doing on this end? It's the consumption of their product that creates the problems, and we have them listed as addiction, drug related crimes, deaths and a destabilizing of our societal core.

I am told that in countries such as Colombia, Afghanistan that the core of their economy is the growing of these plants. My question is, and you might not be able to answer but you might help us to think about it, what are we doing on this end, so the demand

won't be as large as it is where billions of dollars return back to someone's pocket or to the country? Conspicuous consumption, sub rosa consumption or whatever, the consumption is here.

Mr. WALTERS. Absolutely, and that is, I believe, one of the most important questions we can ask about this. It is why we have tried to emphasize in our national effort, is we have to have balance. The President has said, when he's met with us privately and he has said to foreign leaders, we're not asking other countries to do things that we should do in our own borders. That's why we've asked for a reorienting of the drug budget, as well as a strategy to establish that balance.

The President, as you know, over a year ago in the State of the Union, asked for an additional $600 million over 3 years for treatment through the Access to Recovery program, on top of the $2 billion block grant that we have. He asked us, how do we close the treatment gap. Our national estimate is that roughly 100,000 people a year seek treatment and are not able to get it, based on our national survey. The average cost of treatment figure for the Federal Government is $2,000 per episode. The $200 million he asked for for over 3 years is 100,000 people times $2,000. We offer to be an example of closing that gap at the Federal level.

We got from Congress last year the first $100 million. We just got applications for that money, 44 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and 20 Native American tribes applied. With some members, I'm not saying members at this table, of this body, we had trouble convincing them that we could use that money or be able to make this program work. I think the fact that we've had the applicants we are of the overall estimates of numbers that need treatment aren't sufficient indicates we need the full $200 million we asked for for the next year.

In addition, we have put in a series of programs that are designed to help to move people into treatment that need it. We have released moneys that will tie crucial health systems, I was at Ben Taub Hospital in Houston, in the Chicago area we have funded County Hospital in Chicago, to train all workers, as well as doctors and nurses, to screen those people who come into our emergency rooms, many of whom have accidents or are suffering from substance abuse, to screen them and to give them the training to provide them reliable ability to refer individuals to intervention or treatment for substance abuse.

In Houston, they will do 100,000 people this year. They will spread it to their satellite community clinic center and do a million people a year. We have 7 million people we estimate that need treatment. Many of them are in denial, as we know, every family suffered substance abuse directly or indirectly. The most pernicious part of this disease is denial. We need help to bring people in. We have asked for additional moneys to support drug courts where, when individuals come into the criminal justice system largely because they have an addiction, rather than allowing them to go down a path to jail, we use the supervision of drug treatment courts, as you know, to get them into treatment and to help them stay there, which we know is a key to their success.

We've had trouble getting those funds. Congress funded half our request.

Ms. WATSON. Excuse me, I'm going to ask you to yield before the Chair makes his——

Mr. WALTERS. Sure.

Ms. WATSON. This is explosive, but I've got to say it. If we could take the financial benefit out of it, and I'm just going to throw that out, and anyone in the audience, and then our panel can figure out what that means, but some way, No. 1, we've got to treat people who are already addicted.

Mr. WALTERS. Yes.

Ms. WATSON. But we have to take the benefit of people on the streets who sell this stuff. And somebody up on that 40th floor in the financial institution is involved. Too much money in it.

Mr. WALTERS. Yes.

Ms. WATSON. So we have to do several things at the same time. Certainly try to eradicate, and I don't think we ever do it, because I remember opium in the far east going back centuries. I understand that in Afghanistan today, there are farmers now growing the crop to support their families.

So we've got to work on the consumption over on this end and the business that surrounds it. Thank you very much. I appreciate your response.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you, Ms. Watson.

Mr. WALTERS. If I could just touch on that point, we're focused on the international programs. The international programs of the Federal Government, just to put it in context, because I think it is a point of emphasis, are a little over $1 billion total worldwide, 9.1 percent of the Federal drug control budget. Interdiction is a little over $2.5 billion at our borders, a little over 20 percent of the budget request. Domestic law enforcement is a little over $3 billion, or 25 percent.

Forty-five percent of the overall budget is prevention and treatment, 55 percent is supply control, including all those things. The single largest area of funding, at 29.4 percent, is the $3.7 billion we spend on treatment. We have made progress in prevention in the last 2 years. We want to treat people, because most of this cocaine, as you know, is going to dependent individuals, and we need to reduce that demand, and we need to do it through treatment at multiple points.

But we are not, I didn't mean to suggest forgetting to do law enforcement in the United States, and of the key component that Administrator Tandy, who will be on a subsequent panel has done, is every single case DEA does has a money component. Take the money out, find the money. We do not believe we're doing a good enough job against the money. But we are doing a better job against the organizations and the structures that fund this here and abroad. We've linked in a consolidated way the business of the drug trade and focusing intelligence and enforcement efforts against that business.

So we hope that in the future we will be able to both parallel what we are doing at home in what we're doing with other nations, as well as our partners in other parts of the world.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Mr. Van Hollen, any questions?

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. No, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. All right, I think that's all. Thank you very much.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Chairman, could I ask just two questions?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Tierney.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you for your patience. One is, I talked a little bit at the end of my questioning about reductions and the eradication and whether they affect price and purity. Can you tell me what the most recent price and purity data from your office is, what does it show?

Mr. WALTERS. We have not seen a change in price and purity in the national average over the last couple of years in any aggregate. What I said was, we anticipate, given what we're seeing with the magnitude of eradication and interdiction, worldwide we seized 400 metric tons of cocaine in source countries and in transit last year. That's a record. And we know that it takes, the estimate is roughly 18 months to 12 months for the floor from the pipeline in the fields to the streets of the United States. We expect to see that now, but we have not seen a change. I can give you the individual reports of price and purity for cocaine and supply those for the record.

Mr. TIERNEY. Would you do that, please?

Mr. WALTERS. Sure.

Mr. TIERNEY. And last, following up on the Ambassador's questions on that, the precursors that you mentioned earlier that go into the production of the drugs and the money, obviously, what are we doing with respect to the manufacturers of those precursors and the distributors and to the banks or other financial interests, what's our effort there?

Mr. WALTERS. Not to dodge, but some of the subsequent witnesses can give you more detail. Overall, what we have tried to do is identify key controllable precursors. Sometimes it's difficult because they are widely used, things like kerosene or some petrol products. There are some precursors that have been more critical in the refining process, and we've had efforts at various places to control them. In some cases, they have been forced to use less effective chemicals as a response and in some cases they've used new methods, so we tried to stay at it.

I think the most encouraging thing on the money side is the effort that Colombia and Mexico have made with us to go after the black market peso, the exchanges which we believe are a source of funding a great deal of this, where money comes back through a system that's been used in some cases to evade taxes even on a larger scale in Latin America than to launder drug money.

Now, we also know that there are instances where people move bulk cash out of the country, we seize it, we're increasing our efforts to focus on that as well. But what we have tried to do now for the first time, and I believe you will see cases, frankly, in the next 12 months, that begin to go after the larger volumes of money. But we have billions of dollars here. We consider it a weakness that we have not been able to do a better job.

Now, a substantial portion of that money is of course being pulled out at the local level where the money first turns from drugs into dollars. And it's being used to fund criminal activity and other activities in our own cities. There are people, I was just in Chicago, who believe we ought to call our urban drug traffickers urban ter-

rorist instead of drug traffickers, because of the violence, the shooting, the murder and mayhem that they cause.

But we need to do a better job on the money side of it. But it's also, you know, there aren't an enormous number of things we need to do. It's basically common sense. We need to collapse this business. We have to begin with demand, everybody agrees with prevention, we have to do treatment. We have to be able to go to where the source is, so they can't operate with impunity.

But we also have to do a better job at home. My office has begun to work with major metropolitan areas to bring together demand and enforcement. We've begun to work with our Federal partners to create a consolidated priority targeting list of major organizations. We want to go after the business as a trade, and I think your question is right on point, we need to accelerate that. But that is something we've learned I think in regard to terror we have to do. It's a small number of people, but we've got to find them because they do a great deal of damage.

Mr. TIERNEY. In the GAO report that came out of the Senate testimony back in June of last year, talked about a lack of adequate performance measures with respect to Plan Colombia. If I just turn that over a little bit and say, do you have any performance measures with respect to how we're doing against these manufacturers and distributors of precursors and the financiers?

Mr. WALTERS. I don't think we have a clear numerical goal on the precursors, simply because some of them are controllable, some of them aren't. We're not quite sure how much is being diverted. We try to put in diversion control programs in a variety of these countries that have had some effect. But because we don't entirely know how much they use, or it's hard to tell sometimes how much is being diverted from year to year. We have seen changes in the past in the aggregate quality of the product.

For example, Bolivian-produced, on average Bolivian-produced cocaine and cocaine base is of very low quality. It's largely, we believe, being sent to Brazil, because it's a fledgling market, where inferior product can be consumed. But it has not been able to maintain that. Some of that is because of chemical controls as well as the ability to control the market. So it does vary. It's hard to give you a precise answer, because we can't rack and stack the exact number of gallons that go in and get diverted in each place.

But let me try to get back to your staff and to the committee with the best information we have, because it is an important sector.

Mr. TIERNEY. I thank you for that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you. Mr. Souder, you have some followup.

Mr. SOUDER. I wanted to make an addition to Mr. Tierney's information request. Accountability is one of the most difficult things we have here. But when you respond with the price and purity figures, if you could also include any evidence on stockpiling, because we simply don't know what happened in some of this period, including how long is the shelf life of this cocaine when it heads out. We certainly have found piles of it different places that may have gone before the implementation of our plan. How long and what potentials are in that messes up our numbers? Because if you have

a 5-year shelf life, a 10-year shelf life, a 2-year shelf life, if we have stockpiles in Mexico or in places in the United States, that messes up our measures of effectiveness.

The second thing is on the signature program, because I've been perplexed by this for a long time, that we apparently depend on determining where the stuff's coming from a lot on the production method. And in watching the production method, as others copy Colombian methods, is it possible that some of this has moved to Mexico? Are we confident of the signature program and what are we doing with that?

Mr. WALTERS. I can answer two of those. On the shelf life, I'll get back to you on, because I want to give you accurate information. I am concerned about stockpiling as well. We have no evidence, concrete evidence of significant stockpiling. There have been theories that one of the reasons we haven't seen more of a reduction is that first of all, the FARC had stockpiles in what was the demilitarized zone, and when the Government of Colombia went in or ended that zone, they may have shipped those out.

There also has been some speculation that the right wing paramilitaries, the AUC, in engaging in these peace talks, may have taken stocks and moved them out of the country. We do not have concrete evidence to confirm that at this point. So we don't know whether there's——

Mr. SOUDER. What about Mexico?

Mr. WALTERS. We do not have evidence, to the best of my knowledge, maybe other witnesses will have something else, but we work pretty closely together on this, because we're trying to measure the flow of substantial and large stockpiles that would affect the overall measure in a strategic way.

On the signature program, we do use processing, you're absolutely right, of course. We are trying to develop another method that will allow us to determine where the product comes from based on where the plant is grown. We are funding this and it looks promising. We're trying to accelerate that as rapidly as possible with DEA's laboratory and we'll give you a full brief on that, and your staff, at a time convenient to you.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. OK, thank you very much. We're going to move to our next panel, we'll take a 2-minute recess. Thank you very much, Director Walters.

[Recess.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Again, I want to thank our witnesses for appearing today. Joining us on our second panel will be the Ambassador of Colombia to the United States, the Honorable Luis Alberto Moreno. Ambassador Moreno will provide the committee with an update on his country's ongoing fight against drugs and terror. Several important leaders in the administration who are key figures in the battle against narcoterrorism also join us. We welcome the Honorable Roger Noriega, the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs; the Honorable Robert Charles, who will be with us in just a minute, Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; the Honorable Thomas O'Connell, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict; General James T. Hill, the Commander of the U.S. Southern Command; and finally, last

but not the least, the Honorable Karen Tandy, the Administrator of the DEA.

We welcome all the witnesses and their testimony today. It's our policy that we swear you in before you testify. If you'll just rise with me and raise your right hand.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. I think you know the rules. Ambassador Moreno, we'll start with you. Thank you for being with us.

STATEMENTS OF LUIS ALBERTO MORENO, AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA; ROGER F. NORIEGA, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE; ROBERT B. CHARLES, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE; THOMAS W. O'CONNELL, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT; GENERAL JAMES T. HILL, U.S. ARMY COMMANDER, U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND; AND KAREN P. TANDY, ADMINISTRATOR, DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Ambassador MORENO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, ranking member and distinguished members of the committee. It is my distinct pleasure to appear before you today to discuss developments relating to Plan Colombia and the current situation in my country. I have a written statement that I would like to submit for the record.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Without objection. All of your written statements will be in the record, as will, I might add, let me just interrupt you, Mr. Souder has a statement he wants to put in the record.

Mr. SOUDER. This is an insertion about the Colombian conflict.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Without objection, that will be inserted.

[The information referred to follows:]

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The Colombian Conflict: Uribe's First 17 Months[1]

By

Jorge Restrepo
Department of Economics
Royal Holloway College
University of London
J.Restrepo@rhul.ac.uk

And

Michael Spagat
Department of Economics
Royal Holloway College
University of London
Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX
UK
M.Spagat@rhul.ac.uk

Abstract

Analysis of our new, 16-year dataset on the Colombian civil war finds under Uribe: guerrilla and paramilitary attacks dropping sharply to long-run averages since 1988, lower for April-December, 2003; government-guerrilla clashes at all-time highs, exceeding guerrilla attacks; civilian killings dropping sharply and continuously to all-time lows, mainly from decreased paramilitary attacks; combatant killings rising sharply to all-time highs; guerrilla tactics shifting toward indiscriminate attacking, forcing civilian injuries to long-run highs; government-to-guerrilla casualty ratios in clashes falling; government-paramilitary clashes increasing but still uncommon; paramilitary performance in clashes poor and worsening; guerrilla-paramilitary clashes dropping sharply; the ELN seriously weakened, mounting few attacks.

This version: 1 April 2004

[1] We base our analysis on a database which we built with the significant contribution of Juan Fernando Vargas. Malcolm Deas, Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, Madelyn Hicks, Michael Mandler, Eduardo Posada Carbó, Enrique López Enciso and Juan Fernando Vargas have all provided us with very thoughtful comments on a preliminary draft of the paper. Restrepo acknowledges financial support from Banco de la República. We thank the RSF fund of Royal Holloway for early funding of this work. All responsibility remains our own.

1. Introduction

Colombia is important, both for its 44 million people and for the wider world. Apart from the large human and economic toll the conflict imposes on Colombia, the country's illegal armed groups, left-wing guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries and narcotraffickers, are at the heart of the world cocaine trade. They have spawned a huge displaced person population, are a source of instability for the Andean region and have developed sophisticated arms trafficking networks.[2] Colombia received nearly $2.5 billion in US aid from 2000 through 2003, and the US commitment is expected to hold above $700 million annually over the next two years (Center for International Policy, 2004). Most of this aid has been aimed at combating the narcotics business but the US has been moving tentatively toward more direct counterinsurgency support. It is, therefore, vital to the US to understand what kind of a partner it has in the Colombian government and society. Domestically, there is great interest in assessing the security policy implemented by the present Colombian Government, as it constitutes the largest military offensive ever against the guerrillas waging war against the Colombian state.[3] From a purely academic point of view, it is interesting to study the responses of the armed groups in the country to this dramatic policy change.

Álvaro Uribe assumed the presidency of Colombia on August 7, 2002 riding a wave of general dissatisfaction with the country's increasingly violent conflict. The urban population was experiencing an unusually high level of personal insecurity and,

[2] Marcela (2003) and Cragin and Hoffman (2003) make persuasive cases for the importance of Colombia to the outside world. Nevertheless, we do not single out Colombia as the primary regional problem in the Andes as Council on Foreign Relations (2004) appears to do. If fact, one could argue that Colombia is currently causing less negative spill over for the region than most, and possibly all, of its neighbours.

[3] There is controversy regarding classification of the Colombian conflict and whether it is indeed a civil war. Posada (2001) is an interesting treatment of this question. We, however, follow conventional political science methodology and use civil war terminology since the conflict's killing rates and other characteristics fit those used that literature to define civil war.

after the failed peace process of the previous government, voters supported a hard-line stance against the illegal armed groups. Uribe forged a strong connection to voters with his tough approach, promising to take the fight to the enemy and produce results. Since election, Uribe's popularity has grown in Colombia where he enjoys a 79% approval rating, benefiting from a widespread perception that his government has made life safer and put the insurgent groups under fire (Invamer-Gallup, 2004).

Uribe's security approach is generally known as the *Democratic Security Policy*, an ambitious plan to gain control over lawless territories and provide security to all sectors of society based on an expanded military and police presence and the creation of networks of civilian support.[4] The core objective is to extend the rule of law to all parts of the country, even the most remote ones. Notably, the government views counterinsurgency as a task for the whole society, rather than a chore to be delegated to the military. Some specific policies, such as the rollback of conscription and the professionalization of the military, are extensions of previous reforms pursued over the last decade. But much is new. For example, the government has established National Police presence in all major townships, many of which lacked police for decades. The government expanded the number of rural police corps, created new battalions of peasant-soldiers who train and serve near their homes and built an extensive network of civilian informants.

The *Democratic Security Policy* is extremely popular with most of the Colombian population (Invamer-Gallup, 2004) and highly regarded in Colombian and American military circles (e.g., Marcella, 2003). Nevertheless, it has drawn some strong criticism. For example, ICG (2003) argues that Uribe's policy excessively

[4] The government's exposition of this policy in English is Presidency of the Republic and Ministry of Defence, 2003. Pizarro (2003a) is an independent and favourable evaluation and ICG (2003) is an unfavourable one. We are struck by the resemblance of Uribe's plan to recommendations made by military analysts (Nuñez, 2001, Spencer, 2001 and Marks, 2002), especially its emphasis on local and civilian participation.

emphasizes a military approach while neglecting poverty, inequality and human rights. Mass detentions of people suspected, based on local informants' statements, of supporting the guerrillas have created huge controversy and even a rebuke from the Procurator General (*El Tiempo*, 2004b). Some analysts have criticized the informant networks as generating spurious evidence against innocent people who then, after release, become potential targets of right-wing paramilitaries. Some also argue that the existence of locally based armed units exposes isolated communities to guerrilla retaliation. The Uribe government has faced particularly fierce censure from human rights organizations and has sometimes responded with angry rebuttals, including from Uribe himself.[5] We believe that this polemical environment has obscured some of the underlying facts about the conflict and we hope that our paper will contribute to more fruitful future discussions.

2. The Data Source

Our analysis is based on the dataset presented in Restrepo, Spagat and Vargas (2003). This is the first time-series dataset for the Colombian civil war that is detailed (close to 20,000 events), high-frequency and long. It allows analysis of the actions of all participants in the Colombian conflict over more than 16 years. Our database records a set of characteristics for each event: date; location (township and department); whether or not there was a clash; the groups involved; whether or not there was an attack; the type of attack; the group(s) responsible; killings; and injuries. We have now extended the database to include Uribe's first 17 months and are, therefore, in a unique position to assess the work of his government.

[5]See, for example, Human Rights Watch (2004), United States Institute of Peace (2004), Amnesty International (2003) and WOLA (2003). From Colombia see Comisión Colombiana de Juristas (2003) and the introduction and chapter 11 of Colombian Platform for Human Rights, Democracy and Development (2003).

Restrepo, Spagat and Vargas (2003) describes in detail the construction of our dataset so we will only summarize its main characteristics briefly here. We build the database using events listed in the annexes to the periodicals *Justicia y Paz* and *Noche y Niebla* published quarterly by the Colombian NGO'S CINEP and the Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz (hereafter, CINEP). CINEP uses this information in its reports, focusing on the measurement of human rights violations, violations to international humanitarian law and political violence, connected or not with the conflict. We, on the other hand, are interested in civil war dynamics. Therefore, CINEP's database organization and statistical analysis are entirely inappropriate for our purposes. Fortunately, the raw information they provide is so extensive that we can distil from it just its war-relevant components. Working from the detailed list of events published in the annexes to the reports, we identify and code events following our own criteria designed to include all conflict events and only those events.

In the original dataset and in our quarterly updates we follow a stringent quality control regime in cleaning the data that proceeds in four stages, covering both event inclusion and the coding of events. First, we randomly sample a large number of events and check against the CINEP source that they are properly included and coded. Second, we randomly sample events, look up these events in press archives and again verify our inclusion and coding. This is a test both of the transfer of information from the CINEP source to our database and of the quality of the CINEP raw information itself, which turns out to be high. Third, we find all the major events in the dataset and carefully investigate each one in the press record. Finally, we compare lists of significant events from other sources with our data, such as Human

Rights Watch and Colombian government reports, occasionally adding events after thoroughly investigating them ourselves.

We wish to stress three points about our data. First, the dataset is independent of government figures, since the primary source is CINEP periodicals. Some people accuse CINEP, and other NGO's that use their figures, of left-wing bias. In particular, some accuse these groups of discounting the violations of guerrilla groups and of overstating the violations of government forces.[6] In fact, we agree that many CINEP publications seem to interpret the Colombian government in a distrustful, suspicious manner. Nevertheless, our team has spent many months pouring over CINEP's raw data and performing extensive quality checks, and we are convinced of the integrity of this source. Moreover, since our numbers turn out to be rather favourable to the Uribe administration, any readers sceptical of our quality assurances should still remain confidant in our main findings.

Second, our data goes all the way back to 1988 so we are able to offer a long perspective on the conflict. This feature is important because several changes of the past year are dramatic when compared to the previous few years, but really just represent returns to long-run averages. A short-term view of the conflict, concentrating on annual rates of change of some criminality and armed-forces-operations variables, has pervaded press reports, government evaluations, editorial comment and the work of analysts in Colombia. This is understandable in the absence of long-term series, but gives an incomplete view of the conflict and its evolution that we hope to remedy with our work.

[6] See, for example, O'Grady (2004) which is based on a report from the US Embassy in Colombia. They argue that CINEP and other human rights NGO's overstate the true level of human rights violations and bias their figures against the government and in favour of the guerrillas, for example, by counting a single event as violating human rights multiple times and by following the legal convention of defining human rights in such a way that they can only be breached by a government authority.

Third, the data focus on the conflict narrowly defined and cannot give a full picture of Colombia and the conflict. In this paper we restrict ourselves almost exclusively to analysing our data since this is what we are uniquely positioned to do. We do not, however, wish to imply that the issues we address are the only important ones. For example, we do not assess overall changes in human rights or political liberties as a result of Uribe's policies. On the other hand, since our data focus on issues of life and death and the struggle for power we do think we are addressing some of the most important issues facing Colombia today.

3. Background

We now provide a succinct background on the conflict, including all the main actors in the dataset.[7] Apart from the *La Violencia* period (1946-66) in which the country was split along the lines of the Liberal and Conservative parties, fighting has been mostly between several guerrilla groups and government forces with the more recent participation of paramilitary forces also fighting against the guerrillas. The origin of the guerrilla groups can be traced back to leftist peasant self-defence organizations aligned with the Liberal party, even before *La Violencia*. There are two significant guerrilla groups currently active in Colombia. The Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC, in its Spanish acronym) was founded in 1964 after the government ordered an attack on one of the partisan self-defence agrarian movements that had originated in *La Violencia*. Today the FARC is estimated to have between 16,000 and 20,000 combatants, making it the largest guerrilla group in the world. The second largest guerrilla group in Colombia is the National Liberation Army (ELN), which was founded in 1965 with support from the Cuban government. The ELN faced a

[7] Rabasa and Chalk (2001) and Safford and Palacios (2002, ch. 14) give recent overviews of the conflict, including discussions of the origins and conduct of the main parties in our dataset.

profound crisis during the eighties but was reborn, thanks mainly to extortion of multinational companies trading in natural resources. The ELN is thought to have from 4,000 to 6,000 combatants. These guerrilla groups are largely rural and follow typical guerrilla tactics in a protracted conflict, attacking mainly fixed government positions and public infrastructure. On several occasions the FARC and ELN entered into peace talks with the government, most recently during a three and a half year period under the government of Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) leading to the demilitarization of a large zone in the south of the country known as the *Despeje*.

The paramilitary groups are for the most part gathered under the umbrella alliance United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia (AUC), which was formally created in 1997, although paramilitary groups and self-defence organizations can be traced back to the late seventies (Pizarro, 2003b). In the late eighties and early nineties these groups acquired notoriety due to strong links with the narcotraffic cartels. 1994 marked a turning point for the paramilitaries because that was when records indicate that they first began localized operations against guerrilla groups. Within a few years the paramilitaries became a major factor in the conflict. In December, 2003 the AUC declared a unilateral truce and later started demobilization talks with the government.

Government forces include the military (army, navy, and air force), the National Police (in charge of internal security and normal policing duties) and other small security corps like the security service (DAS). The National Police are in charge of what is known in military and security terms as "paramilitary" operations in which forces, usually armed with automatic weapons, conduct long-duration internal security operations, without large numbers of operatives and without the use of artillery. These actors must be distinguished from what we call "paramilitary" groups

in our data set as the latter neither belong to the institutional apparatus nor are under the command and control of the state.

Our dataset allows us to pick up the story in 1988. Although there is significant continuity of actors in the conflict going back to the 1950s, in terms of both intensity and qualitative characteristics the last 16 years can be considered a valid unit of analysis. Our dataset includes the hottest period of war while allowing a significant degree of historical perspective.

4. Summary Measures

We first explain a vital piece of our terminology: the difference between clashes and attacks. We define a clash as a direct encounter between two or more groups of armed individuals that results in armed combat. We define an attack as a violent event in which there is no direct, armed combat between two groups. In other words, attacks are one-sided events such as massacres of civilians, antipersonnel mine detonations, terrorist incidents, acts of sabotage such as blowing up a bridge or an oil pipeline and aerial bombardments. Clashes are fights involving at least two groups.[8]

One striking feature of the data is that there are very large changes in the variables during the period just before and just after Uribe's inauguration, reflecting the influence of several factors. First, violence levels were very high at the beginning of 2002. A large increase in the number of guerrilla attacks beginning in December 2001 was followed by the collapse of the peace process at the end of February, immediately leading to a big military offensive by the government into the *Despeje* zone. Second, in 2002 the guerrillas interfered extensively in the parliamentary elections in March, the presidential elections in May and the presidential inauguration

[8] For more details on our methodology and coding criteria see Restrepo, Spagat and Vargas (2003).

in August. Third, after inauguration the swift implementation of the *Democratic Security Policy* increased the morale of the troops and created a new, more offensive environment in the military. Finally, the paramilitary truce starting December, 2002 is reflected in the data.

Figure 1 gives the total number of casualties, i.e., killings and injuries, in the war. Following Restrepo, Spagat and Vargas (2003) we designate 1996 as the beginning of an "upsurge" period in the conflict. The line labelled "upsurge" in the figure ends when Uribe took office. We see a dramatic decline in killings under Uribe compared to the peak of early 2002. Table 1 shows monthly killings for time periods designated "Uribe", "late upsurge", "entire upsurge", "*Despeje*" and "previous to Uribe". Killing rates remain much higher than their long-run averages (i.e., previous to Uribe), somewhat lower than in the late upsurge period but above those for both the *Despeje* and the upsurge period as a whole. There is no contradiction between the strong decline in killings shown in figure 1 and the increase in killings in most of the comparisons from table 1, because the peak in early 2002, highlighted in the figure, was short-lived whereas the table averages over relatively long time periods. Figure 1 also shows wild fluctuation in the injury rate under Uribe. However, the average monthly injury rate is at a historic high under Uribe (table 1).

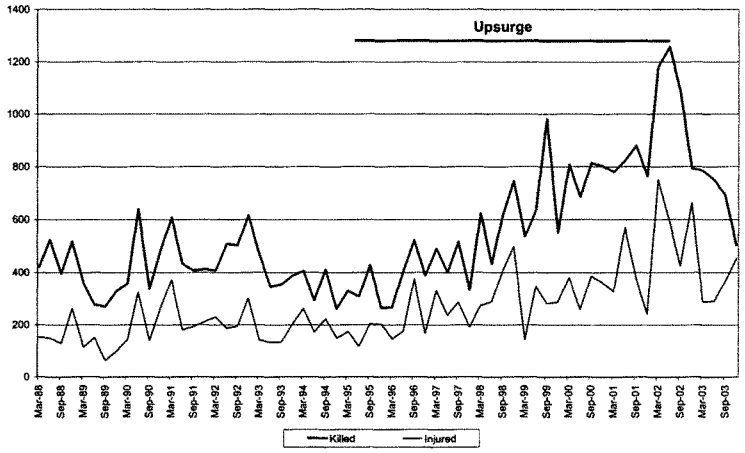

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Figure 1. Quarterly number of people killed and injured in conflict events

Table 1. Attacks and Casualties per Month by Period

	Periods				
	Uribe Government	Upsurge		"Despeje" period	Previous to Uribe
		Late	Entire		
	8/2002 – 12/2003	1/1999 – 7/2002	1/1996 – 7/2002	10/1998 - 2/2002	1/1988 – 7/2002
People Killed	259	269	219	255	175
People Injured	140	124	109	119	85
Guerrilla Attacks	54	76	65	71	53
Paramilitary Attacks	7	21	12	16	7

Guerrilla and paramilitary strategy both emphasize attacks while the government generally prefers clashes to attacks. Thus, the sharp drop in both guerrilla and paramilitary attacks under Uribe displayed in figure 2 is very good news. Government attacks have remained steady and at a low level.[9] Table 1 shows that under Uribe both guerrilla and paramilitary attacks have been much lower than in the late upsurge period and lower than the average for the whole upsurge period and for the *Despeje* period, when the government was negotiating with the guerrillas.

[9] Government attacks are mostly aerial bombardments and antinarcotics and antikidnapping operations that are usually unopposed.

Nevertheless, attacks remain around their long-run averages before Uribe. On the other hand, the strong downward trend of figure 2 clearly indicates that in the last three quarters of 2003 the attack rates for both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries fell well below long-run averages. This would be a breakthrough if it can be maintained.

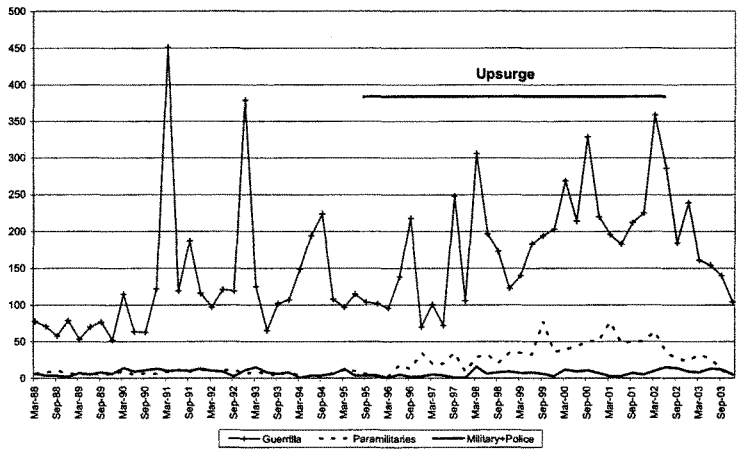

Figure 2. Quarterly number of attacks by group

Figure 3 shows the evolution over time of the number of clashes each of the three sides has participated in. Levels for the government and the guerrillas are holding near all-time highs while clashes involving paramilitaries have plummeted. Accordingly, the gap between government and guerrilla clashes has closed, as there must be at least two sides to any clash.

The combined effect of figures 2 and 3 could create a misperception that paramilitaries have been minor players in the conflict. However, we will show below that a disproportionately large number of people have been killed in the relatively small number of conflict events in which the paramilitaries have participated. So the paramilitaries are important.

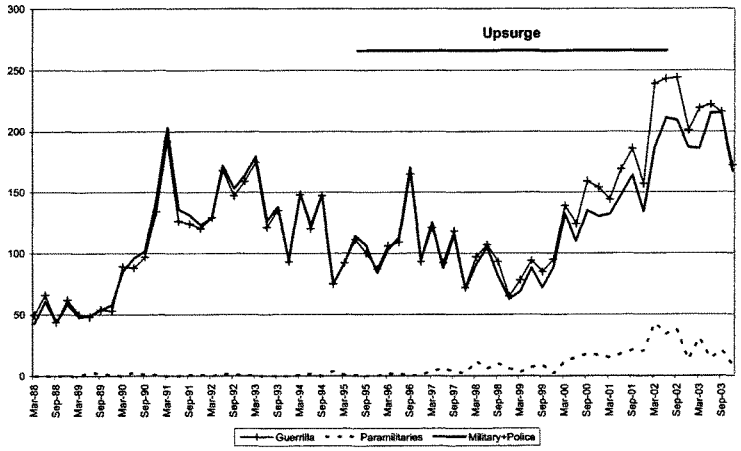

Figure 3. Quarterly number of clashes by group

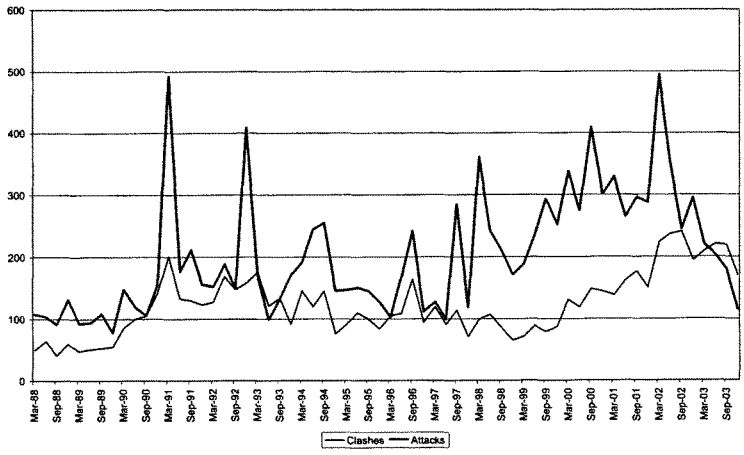

Figure 4. Quarterly number of clashes and attacks

Figure 4 shows that the Uribe government has managed to push the number of clashes to slightly above the number of attacks, a rare event since 1988. Table 2 assesses the impact of this change by listing the number killings and injuries in both types of events for the time periods from table 1. Killings in attacks and the number of attacks mirror each other quite closely between the two tables. Injuries per attack, on the other hand, are at an all-time high under Uribe. In fact, as the attack rate has reverted to its long-run average the injury rate has risen to more than double its long-run average. This reflects a strong rise in indiscriminate guerrilla attacks including urban terrorism and the use of crude gas-canister mortars and antipersonnel landmines. In clashes, the monthly killing rate under Uribe is at an all-time high while the corresponding injury rate has dropped to about its long-run average.

Table 2. Monthly Casualty Rates for Attacks and Clashes for Various Time Periods

	Periods				
	Uribe Government	Upsurge		"Despeje" period	Previous to Uribe
		Late	Entire		
	8/2002 – 12/2003	1/1999 – 7/2002	1/1996 – 7/2002	10/1998 - 2/2002	1/1988 – 7/2002
Killings in attacks	80	127	103	131	82
Injuries in attacks	95	74	62	72	49
Killings in clashes	68	58	50	54	38
Injuries in clashes	15	23	23	23	16

Figure 5 depicts the main series only from 1996 onwards, thereby magnifying recent movements. The extent of the decline in killings from its peak, the most important intensity measure for the conflict, is readily apparent here. The figure also draws out the fact that the slow but continuous increase in clashes faltered slightly since Uribe's inauguration. This is due, as we shall see, to the government not fully compensating for the decrease in paramilitary-guerrilla clashes. The almost continuous fall in the attack rate since the peak in March 2002 is also clear.

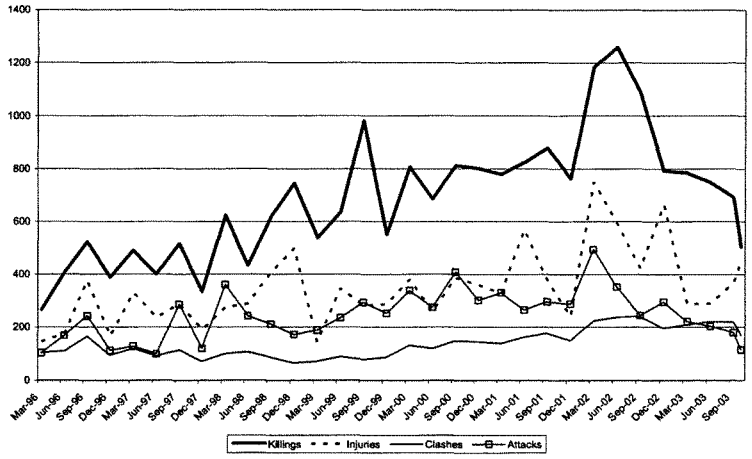

Figure 5. Quarterly conflict activity since 1996

5. Civilian Casualties

Figure 6 and Table 3 indicate that civilian killings have dropped sharply during Uribe's first months in office in comparison with all our categories, even to well below the long-run average before Uribe.[10] On the other hand, civilian injury rates are at all-time highs. This reflects the guerrillas' new practice of indiscriminately targeting civilians.

[10] One of the main strengths of our data is that it includes casualties of the war without mixing in ordinary homicides. Nevertheless, we note that the full homicide rate in Colombia has decreased by about 20% under Uribe following a trend that began in 1997 and to which the cities of Medellín and Bogotá have contributed significantly. Therefore, the improvement in war-related civilian killing is matched by a general improvement in the homicide rate. There have also been big declines in other key indicators such as kidnappings and forced displacement, but we do not integrate these statistics into our discussion because we have no new information on these phenomena.

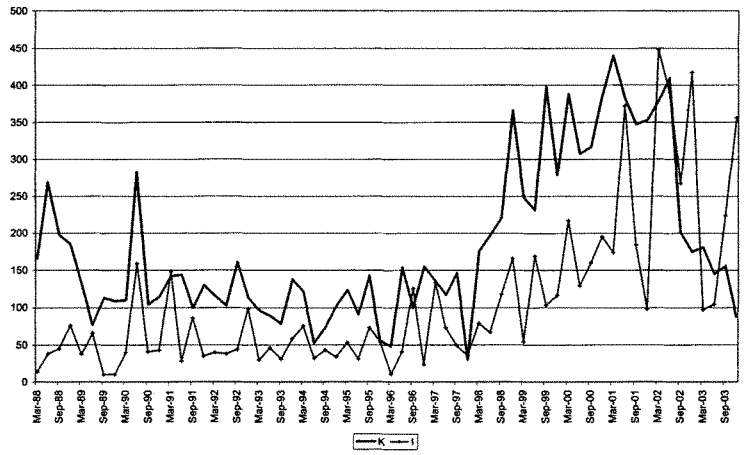

Figure 6. Quarterly number of civilians killed and injured in conflict events

Table 3. Monthly Casualty Rates for Various Time Periods

	Periods				
	Uribe Government	Upsurge		"Despeje" period	Previous to Uribe
		Late	Entire		
	8/2002 – 12/2003	1/1999 – 7/2002	1/1996 – 7/2002	10/1998 - 2/2002	1/1988 – 7/2002
Civilians Killed	52	114	85	114	62
Civilians Injured	82	63	46	57	31
Combatants Killed	207	155	134	141	113
Combatants Injured	58	61	63	62	54

Table 3 immediately yields another interesting fact; under Uribe Colombia has become safer for civilians but not for combatants.[11] Combatant casualties are running much higher even than during the late upsurge period and far above long-run averages before Uribe. This is entirely consistent with table 2, as most combatant casualties occur during clashes. To summarize, the war is hot, although the pressure on civilians has been reduced. Of course, many civilians are still being killed and injured, so we now pursue this issue further.

[11] The definition of combatant under international law is complicated but to a first approximation turns on proven membership in a conflict organisation or the wearing of an identifiable uniform or marking.

Figure 7 shows civilian killings organized by group involved. This picture must be interpreted with care because many conflict events involve multiple participants and, therefore, apportionment of blame is tricky, often requiring detailed information. For example, in a clash between guerrillas and paramilitaries in which civilians are killed some may have been killed by combatants on each side, the clash might have been initiated by guerrillas in retaliation for an earlier paramilitary attack and there may exist multiple credible but contradictory accounts of the event. Figure 7 avoids these complicated issues. The government curve simply records the number of civilians killed each quarter in events involving the government. Similarly the paramilitary and guerrilla curves represent civilians killed each quarter in events involving paramilitaries and guerrillas respectively. Thus, a civilian killed in a clash between guerrillas and government forces will appear in the curves for both the guerrillas and the government and the figure cannot be used to attribute definite blame to either side.

Figure 7 shows that civilian killings in recent years have occurred primarily in events involving the paramilitaries and secondarily in events with guerrilla participation. The government has always been rather disconnected from civilian killing. It is, therefore, not surprising to learn that the drop in civilian killing under Uribe derives mainly from decreased paramilitary involvement and secondarily from less guerrilla involvement in civilian killing. Decreased paramilitary activity makes sense since the AUC has been officially on ceasefire since December 2003. Nevertheless, the paramilitaries remain active, having involvement in 24 civilian killings per month from the beginning of the ceasefire period until the end of 2003. In fact, during the ceasefire there have been 856 conflict-related killings in events involving the paramilitaries. Subtracting off the 477 of these that were paramilitary

members, this averages out to 29 killings per month. These figures are not wildly inconsistent with the claim, widely circulated in February 2004, that the paramilitaries have killed 600 people since going on ceasefire.[12] Also, interesting is the breakdown of monthly killings in paramilitary-involved conflict events during the ceasefire: 37 paramilitaries, 24 civilians and 5 non-paramilitary combatants, not a picture of success.

Despite the violations, paramilitary activity really has decreased continuously during the demobilization discussions. This is in striking contrast with FARC behaviour when it negotiated with the Pastrana government while its attack rates were rising toward all-time highs. Isacson (2003) considers the possibility that the FARC might have been split with some potential peacemakers and others trying to sabotage peace efforts. We find this implausible, given the broad increase in FARC attacks during the peace negotiations, suggesting high-level FARC approval for the general trend. Recent AUC behaviour strikes us as a much better fit for a theory of split leadership: a strong decrease in overall activity but with numerous violations. As the demobilisation talks have consolidated, the reduction in killings has accelerated.

[12] See *El Tiempo* (2004a) and *El Colombiano* (2004). Without committing to a specific figure the United Nations also considers the paramilitaries to be in breach of the ceasefire: see Villelabeitia (2004). The government itself recently provided figures for paramilitary violations of the ceasefire and a summary of reports that it has received from third parties (High Commissioner for Peace, 2004).

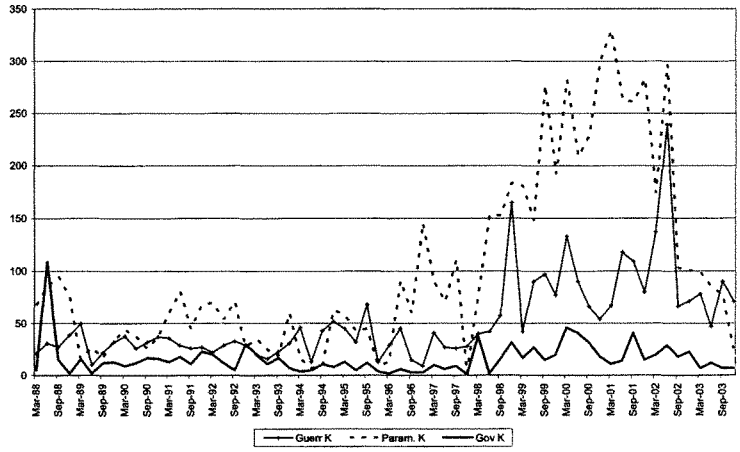

Figure 7. Quarterly number of civilians killed in conflict events by group involved

The paramilitaries injure relatively few people, a little-appreciated but vital fact about the Colombian conflict. Over the whole period of our data set the three groups have established the following ratios of killed civilians to injured civilians in events in which they have participated: 1.0 for the guerrillas, 1.1 for the government and 10.2 for the paramilitaries! We take this as an indication that most civilian casualties perpetrated by the paramilitaries are intentional killings rather than "collateral damage" of operations aimed at other objectives. This observation points to another reason why injuries have not followed killings in a steep decline under Uribe; the sharp drop in paramilitary activity does not translate into a big decrease in civilian injuries because the paramilitaries never were the biggest factor in causing civilian injuries.

In figure 8 we pursue the question of blame for civilian killings by presenting civilian killings in attacks by group, thus restricting ourselves to events with only a single participating group. The idea is that clashes involve at least two groups and,

hence, potential confusion over responsibility for casualties, but in attacks there is only one fighting group and responsibility is unambiguous.[13] Figure 8 is consistent with figure 7. Again, paramilitaries emerge as the biggest killers of civilians in recent years and the improvement in civilian safety derives mainly from the large and continuous decrease in paramilitary conflict activity. Note that guerrilla killings of civilians have not diminished at all in recent years.

Figure 9 gives injuries in attacks and differs significantly from figure 8. First, it shows the guerrillas as the main perpetrators rather than the paramilitaries. Second, while government-caused and paramilitary-caused injuries have decreased from low levels, guerrilla-caused injuries are running at extremely high levels.

The above discussion runs strongly counter to many reports of mushrooming human rights violations by the Uribe government (footnote 5). This is partly explained by our exclusive focus on killings and injuries during conflict activities while the human rights organizations consider a much wider range of rights during conflict and non-conflict related events. Vital for the thesis of an increase in violations is the classification of many mass detentions as human rights violations, a point that can be and has been argued, even by the Colombian Procurator General (*El Tiempo*, 2004b). But there are two further common practices of government critics that are difficult, in our view, to justify. First, they produce and stress a number for total human rights abuses that simply adds up different kinds of violations including killings and mass arrests on equal terms, distorting the overall assessment of government actions and its effects on the population. There can be no single correct way of balancing one type of human rights violation against another but it is hard to defend simply adding up killings and detentions as if they are equally serious

[13] Naturally, figure 7 omits many civilian killings so we have bought clear responsibility at the cost of comprehensiveness of coverage.

violations. Second, some NGOs (e.g., Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, 2003) also have been reporting huge increases in unverifiable indicators, such as the number of threats, under Uribe which could be true but must be treated with caution.

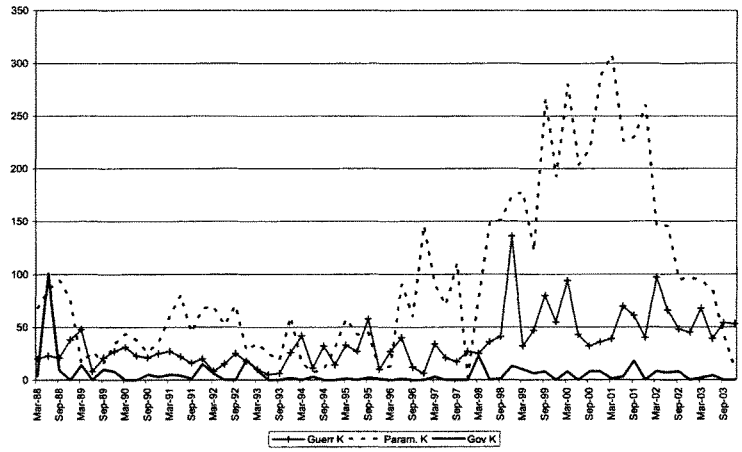

Figure 8. Quarterly number of civilians killed in attacks by group

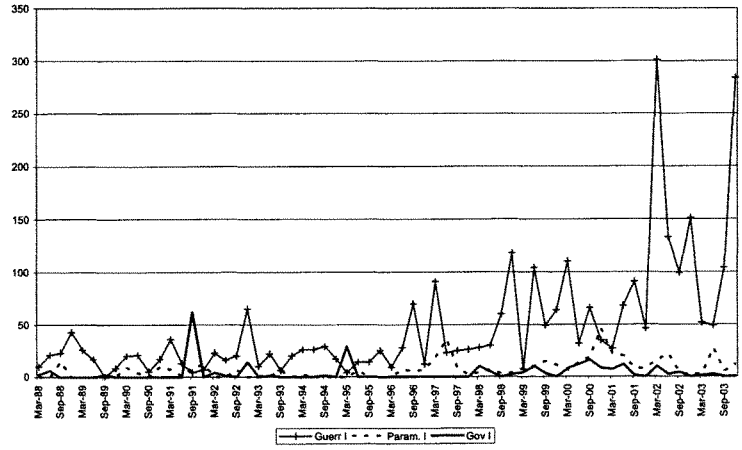

Figure 9. Quarterly number of civilians injured in attacks by group

6. Combatant Casualties

Figure 10 gives total casualties (killings plus injuries) in events in which the government has participated. It shows that, beginning several years before Uribe assumed office, government casualties began to decrease while guerrilla casualties have risen to long-run highs.

On the other hand, aside from an anomalous event in the middle of 2002, the paramilitaries barely register as a government target until an increasing trend appears during the last three quarters of 2003. This is partly explained by the fact that the paramilitaries have often simply surrendered to the government when challenged rather than fight. Nevertheless, in terms of military strategy, the government clearly does not treat the paramilitaries symmetrically compared to the guerrillas. It is, of course, not surprising that the government has always directed vastly more resources at fighting the guerrillas than it has at combating paramilitarism. After all, the guerrillas are working to overthrow the State whereas the paramilitaries, however unwelcome they may be, share the State's goal of preventing this outcome. In fact, Marks (2002) specifically recommends a counterinsurgency approach of first defeating the guerrillas before going after the paramilitaries. Nevertheless, given the paramilitaries record of killing civilians one could certainly argue that the government approach has been excessively lopsided. In this context, we are quite interested in the tentative trend for government forces to clash increasingly with paramilitary groups that are not respecting the declared AUC ceasefire.

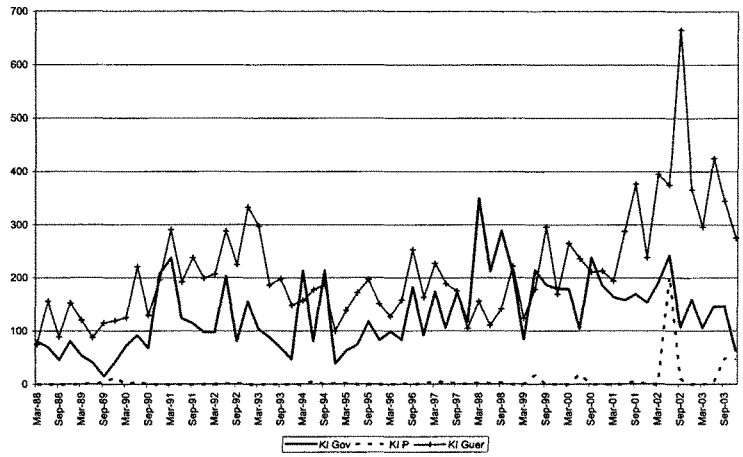

Figure 10. Quarterly number of government-related casualties

Figure 11 shows casualties by group in events in which the guerrillas participate. As previously noted, the guerrillas exhibit a marked preference for attacks over clashes. Of course, when there is no opposing side fighting back the guerrillas are unlikely to suffer many casualties. The government, on the other hand, strongly prefers clashes to attack. For this reason figure 11 is much more favourable for the guerrillas relative to the government than is figure 10 with long-run casualty figures very similar for the two groups in the former picture. Nevertheless, it is apparent that since the beginning of the Uribe administration guerrilla casualties have been consistently above those of the government, with a declining trend for both series. This is a rare and significant event in long-run perspective. There has never before been a period of sustained relative losses for the guerrillas in the events in which they participate. In fact, from mid 1997 until early 1999 the guerrillas were

definitely getting the better of the government in events with guerrilla participation.[14] Finally, since clashes between the paramilitaries and the guerrillas have decreased markedly under Uribe, paramilitary casualties in figure 11 drop sharply.

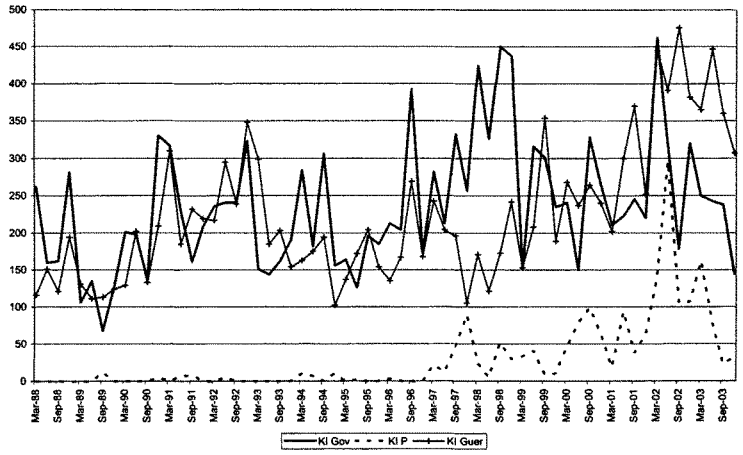

Figure 11. Quarterly number of guerrilla-related casualties

The corresponding figure for the paramilitaries confirms all statements involving paramilitaries in the last two paragraphs without adding new insights so we do not provide it. Instead, we give figure 12 that shows casualties by group in those *clashes* in which the paramilitaries are involved, overwhelmingly clashes with the guerrillas. Interestingly, a large number of civilians are also killed in these events. But the big story of the picture is the paramilitaries' great ineffectiveness as a fighting force. In all but one year the paramilitaries suffer more losses than they inflict on the guerrillas and paramilitary casualties are growing rapidly. The recent trend toward

[14] By this period the FARC had developed numerous large mobile companies that were overwhelming isolated Army bases. Marks (2002) describes how the Colombian military was able to increase its own mobility and turn the tables against the FARC. The use of airpower and aerial troop transport was fundamental for the successful response of the military to this challenge.

more clashes with the government only compounds the paramilitaries' problems. Even when they are not clashing with the government, the enhanced government presence in the Colombian countryside under the *Democratic Security Policy* is probably placing new restrictions on the paramilitaries' freedom of movement. Thus, the decline in paramilitary attacks and the paramilitary willingness to enter demobilization talks with the government seems sensible.[15]

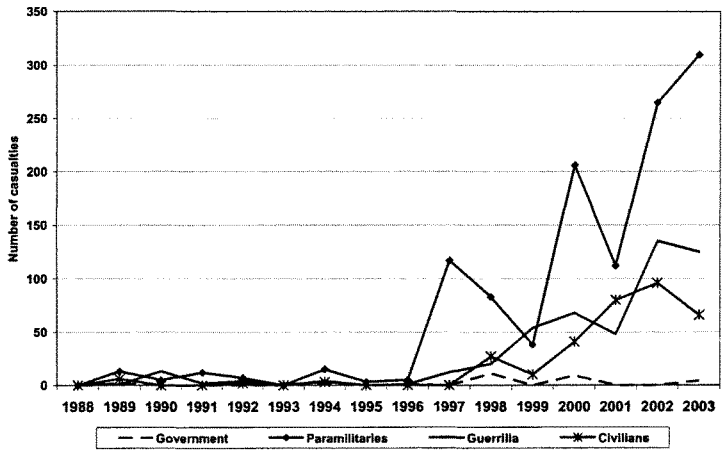

Figure 12. Annual number of paramilitary-related casualties during clashes

7. The FARC vs. the ELN

Figure 13 shows the series for both clashes and attacks for both the FARC and the ELN. Both attack series show very sharp declines, showing that this piece of good news about the guerrillas in general applies specifically to each of the two main sub-groups. Again we stress that the fighting technology of guerrilla groups relies heavily

[15] Another probable factor bringing the paramilitaries to the table is the US insistence that paramilitary leaders should be extradited to the US to face drug-trafficking charges. It is likely that paramilitary believe that the Uribe government might give them a better deal than its successor would and, in particular, might have the inclination and influence in Washington to allow them to avoid extradition.

on sneak attacks while clashes are generally disadvantageous. The number of clashes for both groups has decreased somewhat under Uribe, again reflecting the sharp decline of the paramilitaries. But for the first time, the number of clashes has surpassed the number of attacks for both groups. Note also that the ELN shows larger percentage decreases in both attacks and clashes relative to the FARC. Indeed, the ELN has almost disappeared as an attacking force. This continues a longer trend that began in 2000, two years after the death of Father Manuel Pérez, its able leader.

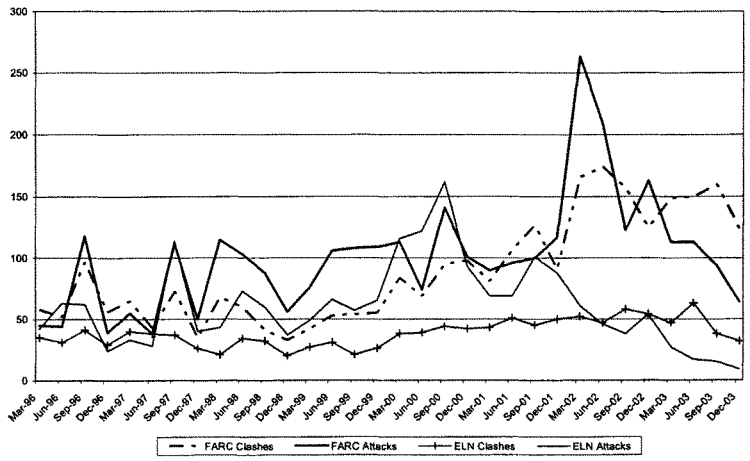

Figure 13. Guerrilla attacks plus clashes by group

8. Summary and Conclusion

Here, in brief, are our main findings. Attacks by both the paramilitaries and guerrillas have dropped sharply back to their long-run averages for the whole Uribe period but substantially below these averages for the last three quarters of 2003. Clashes involving paramilitaries have plummeted while those between the guerrillas and government forces are near all-time highs. Total killing rates have decreased from

their peak but remain well above long-run averages, masking a big divergence; civilian killing has dropped to even below the long-run average while combatant killing is at an all-time high. Guerrilla attacks have brought injury rates to record levels, largely due to the use of antipersonnel mines, gas canister mortars and urban terrorism, but again there is a divergence; civilian injuries are running at an all-time high while combatant injuries conform to long-run averages. Clashes have become increasingly lethal both for the guerrillas and for the paramilitaries. The paramilitaries have been the biggest killers of civilians and the decrease in civilian killing is mainly tied to strongly diminished, but still not eliminated, paramilitary activity. The paramilitaries are ineffective and getting worse in clashes. The government has improved its casualty ratios relative to the guerrillas and has started to clash more with the paramilitaries. FARC clashes with the government are near an all-time high but FARC attacks have dropped sharply. The ELN is in continuous and strong decline.

In short, most of the series show good or excellent progress with the civilian injury rate being a notable exception. In the context of an ongoing and unsettled conflict, the combination of more lethal clashing with the FARC and less killing of civilians is ideal for Colombia, and the two phenomena are probably connected with each other. Restrepo and Spagat (2004) provides statistical evidence based on our data set that paramilitary attacks increase when there is a combination of infrequent government clashes and frequent guerrilla attacks. In other words, paramilitary activity substitutes for government activity so when the government becomes more aggressive the paramilitaries tend to decrease their attacks. Thus, it is no accident that the government taking the offensive in the war is saving lives, even in the short run.

Of course, even more lives might be saved if in the long run the government offensive leads the guerrillas to negotiate earnestly for peace.

Such progress could not have been taken for granted in 2002. For example, Sweig (2002, p.1) argued that "If clear and tough demands are not put on the Colombian military and political elite to double tax revenues, double the defense budget, cut ties to the paramilitaries, send their sons to fight, return the internally displaced to their homes, and to enact other reforms, Colombia's precipitous decline will only continue." In fact, without such outside pressure Colombian democracy delivered a government that has prosecuted the war with a determination and success that nobody considered possible in August, 2002.

Despite the abundant good news, we observe in some circles a puzzling reluctance to acknowledge any recent improvements. In fact, there is a definite tendency to treat the Colombian government as an international pariah regime.[16] We suggest that admitting the existence of some real achievements should be a test of good faith for the critics of Uribe's policies. Much government policy is certainly open to criticism. For example, one might question the demobilization negotiations with the paramilitaries as possibly leading to impunity for grossly violent offenders. Or one might question the policy of mass detentions of suspected guerrilla supporters as a violation of human rights as the Colombian Procurator General has recently done (*El Tiempo*, 2004b). Perhaps some analysts can make a persuasive case that the gains of Uribe's year and a half will eventually be reversed under the pressure of various slow-acting mistakes with possible legitimacy and military costs for the government.

We believe that some caution is in order. We stress that paramilitary and guerrilla attacks over the whole Uribe period have only moved back to their historical

[16] There was much commentary along these lines during Uribe's February, 2004 visit to Europe together with vigorous protests and boycotts by some MEPs (*El Tiempo*, February 9-15). Representative of this point of view in English is Hilton (2004).

averages. It seems unlikely that military performance against the guerrillas has really improved to the point where a final defeat of the FARC is a near-term possibility. In fact, Marcella (2003) argues that the Colombian military is far from the superiority it would need to really win the war. Moreover, just sustaining present policies to consolidate the gains made against illegal groups will present a fiscal challenge after a series of tax hikes and expenditure cuts have already been used to finance a continuous military budget expansion. Casual inspection of our pictures suggests some degree of cyclicality in war intensity, suggesting that a new guerrilla offensive is not only possible, but likely. So whether the positive trends of Uribe's first year can be maintained remains an open question.

In fact, we perceive a danger that high expectations encouraged by recent successes might become a liability in the future. Over the next two years many people both in Colombia and abroad might become frustrated if the war has not clearly entered an endgame process. Our statistics do not suggest that the FARC has already begun a terminal decline. Maybe over the next few years war indicators will continue their rapid improvement. Or maybe they will simply get stuck near their long-run averages as complacency replaces the urgency of the present. Colombia has accomplished much within a short period of time but still faces a long and tough road forward. But for the moment the gains are there for all to see and should be acknowledged.

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Chairman TOM DAVIS. Go ahead.

Ambassador MORENO. Thank you.

Let me begin by thanking the U.S. Congress for its support in Colombia's ongoing fight against drugs and terror and express my appreciation to the House Committee on Government Reform for holding this hearing. It pleases me as Colombian ambassador to the United States to pay tribute to the chairman of both the committee and the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources Representatives Tom Davis and Mark Souder, for their personal commitment to the fight against the scourge of drug trafficking and their contribution to security and developing it in Colombia.

I am pleased to report today that the U.S.-Colombian partnership under Plan Colombia and its successor programs has proved a sound investment for both our nations. Now in its 4th year of implementation, Plan Colombia has played a significant role in combating terrorism and narcoterrorism, restoring economic growth and strengthening the rule of law, human rights and alternative development opportunities.

The illegal violent actors in Colombia's conflict have close ties with international networks that engage in drugs and arm trafficking, money laundering and other criminal activities. The United States is helping Colombia to cutoff the resources that these terrorist groups use to wage their war against Colombian society. Every day, thousands of Americans and Colombians work side by side, building a more secure and prosperous Colombia, and by extension, help advance U.S. strategic interests in the hemisphere.

In recent years, Colombia has seen dramatic results in the eradication and interdiction of narcotics. I don't want to burden you or the committee with figures, all of which can be found in my written testimony. But I want to stress that there have been advances on every front. As of December 2003, coca crops were reduced by 33 percent, more than 300 tons of cocaine with an estimated street value of $9.5 billion have been seized since Plan Colombia started, and more than 9 metric tons of heroin have been removed from the U.S. market in 2003 alone.

The current government's democratic security and defense policy, with key U.S. cooperation, has significantly enhanced the size, training and capabilities of Colombia's armed forces and police. More than 16,000 police officers have been added since 2000, with the result that today, every municipality has a police presence—a first for Colombia.

As for the military, we have added 52,000 plus combat ready troops since 2000, a 60 percent increase. In addition, our armed forces have greatly improved their ability to move rapidly to conflict areas, thanks to U.S. provided helicopters and other specialty aircraft. These assets have been critical in the success of the aerial spraying program, both for the actual spraying of illegal crops and protecting personnel engaged in this dangerous activity.

Enhanced military and police readiness has shifted the balance in the fight against narcoterrorist groups responsible for much of Colombia's violence and civil rights abuses to the government's advantage. As a result of Plan Colombia, the Colombian armed forces and national police have intensified military operations against

these organizations. This is shown by significant increases in captures and casualties of members of all illegal armed groups.

Importantly, with U.S. intelligence and training assistance, the Colombian military is being increasingly successful in going after high value targets in the terrorist leadership. In the last 5 months, two high ranking members of FARC have been captured. U.S. training and equipment have produced a new type of military force in Colombia: more professional, more efficient, more motivated, better equipped and more respectful of their obligation to human rights and international humanitarian law.

The U.S. Government has provided training in areas like anti-terrorism, anti-kidnapping, bomb disposal and protection for senior officials. Notably, in 2003 alone, 73,000 members of the Colombian military received intensive training in human rights and international humanitarian law. There was a significant decline of human rights violations in Colombia during the year 2003, including a 48 percent decrease in extra judicial executions. To cite an example, homicides of trade unionists fell by 57 percent during 2003, and were down a further 25 percent in the first 4 months of this year.

A vast program of judicial reform is underway in order to adopt the accusatorial system used in common law countries, a change that is expected to enhance the effectiveness of the administration of justice. To that end, 39 new oral trial courtrooms have been established with USAID, and training has been provided for 3,400 prosecutors, judges, magistrates and defense attorneys, as well as more than 700 community based conciliators.

Since the beginning of Plan Colombia, nearly 200 persons have been extradited to the United States for criminal prosecution, and in 2003, prosecutions for money laundering rose by 25 percent, while asset forfeiture cases increased by 42 percent. The United States and Colombia have successfully implemented alternative development and other social programs to help coca and poppy farmers' transition to legal activity and provide relief to other citizens affected by terrorism and crime. More than 45,000 hectares of legal crops are now in place, benefiting more than 34,000 families who have committed to give up the cultivation of illegal crops.

Plan Colombia has also successfully completed 835 social and economic infrastructure projects, including roads, schools, health clinics and sewer systems in the southern region of Colombia, where this development leads to reduced dependency on illegal drug cultivation and production. It has also provided assistance to more than 1.6 million internally displaced persons, individuals and families who have been forced to flee their homes and communities because of violence.

Additionally, U.S. support for military and social programs has enabled the Colombian Government to earmark the necessary resources for education and health care. This has translated into a substantial increase in the number of children enrolled in public schools and a significant enlargement in the reach of the public health care system.

A strong, growing Colombian economy is fundamental for stability and defeating drugs and terror. Plan Colombia has contributed significantly to restoring investor and consumer confidence and

fueled economic recovery in the country. GDP growth in 2003 was 3.8 percent, the highest rate since 1995, and more than 1.2 new jobs were created. Following the renewal of the Andean Trade Preferences Act in 2003, Colombia-U.S. bilateral trade grew 10 percent in 2003 to $10.1 billion, contributing to the creation of thousands of jobs in both countries. Building on that momentum, Colombia and the United States have just started free trade negotiations. A free trade agreement with the United States will significantly enhance Colombia's long term economic prospects and security, and create a positive and predictable environment for new foreign and domestic investment.

While significant progress has been achieved under Plan Colombia, the battle against narcoterrorism is far from over. Colombia and the U.S. need to consolidate the gains in terms of security, law and order and economic growth and begin to look ahead to ensuring lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the long term.

Some specific challenges ahead are as follows: sustaining the military offensive against narcoterrorist groups. As Colombia continues to take the fight to the terrorists, the country will need sustained U.S. assistance in the medium term. This assistance is vital to consolidate the security gains achieved so far and to ensure the success of ongoing military operations in remote areas of the country. Moreover, continued U.S.-Colombian cooperation on the counter-narcotics and transnational crime fighting fronts will help to starve narcoterrorist groups of the drug proceeds they need to maintain their fighting and logistical apparatus.

Consolidating economic recovery through an FTA with the United States expanding international trade and attracting foreign investment remain critical to promoting economic growth, employment and security in Colombia. An FTA with the United States will not only increase exports and promote job creation, but also help attract foreign direct investment to the country in such crucial sectors as oil and gas, where Colombia has enormous untapped potential.

While Colombia continues to exert military pressure on narcoterrorist organizations, the government has opened the door for talks with groups and individual combatants genuinely interested in giving up their arms. The government is determined to seek a peace agreement with these groups in accordance with our legislation and mindful of international standards. Within this framework, a peace process with the AUC is currently underway with international verification. And there is now a distinct possibility of negotiations with the ELN under the auspices of the Mexican Government.

As part of any agreement, demobilizing illegal combatants must be realized on a scale never before attempted in Colombia. Therefore, these processes will pose enormous challenges and require significant financial resources.

We must continue to provide help to thousands of Colombian families who have been displaced by terrorism and violence. This means returning them to their homes and communities, helping them find productive employment and generally enabling them to restart their lives. It is also imperative that we work to repair the damage done to our valuable rain forest ecosystems by terrorists

and drug traffickers, both in terms of forest destruction and the widespread dumping of precursor chemicals into the Amazon River systems.

Colombia looks forward to working on the consolidation of Plan Colombia, in order to build on the progress we have realized to date and to develop new, cooperative efforts to address the changing nature of the conflict. As President Uribe aptly put it during his recent visit to the United States, we are more now than ever determined to stay the course.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Moreno follows:]

Remarks to the House Committee on Government Reform
By Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno
Ambassador of Colombia to the United States
On Plan Colombia

June 17, 2004

Good afternoon. Let me begin by thanking the United States Congress for their support in Colombia's on-going fight against drugs and terror, and express our appreciation to the Committee on Government Reform for holding this oversight hearing on Plan Colombia's progress. Over the last years both the Committee and its Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources have shown a remarkable degree of interest with regard to this matter and it pleases me, as Colombian Ambassador to the U.S., to pay tribute to their respective Chairmen, Representatives Tom Davis and Mark Souder, for their personal commitment to these efforts.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to report today that the U.S.-Colombian partnership under Plan Colombia and its successor programs has been a sound investment for both our nations. Now in its fourth year of implementation, Plan Colombia has played a significant role in combating terrorism and narco-trafficking, restoring economic growth, and strengthening the rule of law, human rights and alternative development opportunities. In the spirit of burden sharing that Plan Colombia envisioned, the United States has provided more than $3.2 billion in assistance to date, while Colombian resources have totaled $6 billion.

Plan Colombia's integrated program of military equipment and training and social and economic assistance remains at the core of the U.S.-Colombia bilateral relationship. The Colombia–U.S cooperative effort to defeat terrorism and narco-trafficking is not only leading to a more peaceful and prosperous Colombia, but is enhancing stability and security across the Andean region.

The illegal, violent actors in Colombia's conflict have close ties with international networks that engage in drug and arms trafficking, money laundering and other criminal actions. Through Plan

Colombia, the United States is helping Colombia cut off the resources these terrorist groups use to wage their war against the Colombian people. Every day, thousands of Americans and Colombians work side-by-side building a more secure and prosperous Colombia, and by extension help advance U.S. strategic interests in the hemisphere.

The Eradication and Interdiction of Illegal Drugs

Under Plan Colombia, Colombia has seen dramatic results in the eradication and interdiction of narcotics. Here are some relevant statistics and facts:

- Colombia is on track to meet and surpass its goal of reducing the country's illegal coca crop by 50% from December 2000 levels in five years. ONDCP numbers showed a reduction of 33% in the country's illegal coca crop as of December 2003, while UN numbers for the same period show an even greater drop. The 50% reduction goal should be achieved this year, one year ahead of schedule. In 2003, 132,817 hectares of coca and 3,830 hectares of opium poppy were eradicated.

- Since the launch of Plan Colombia in January 2001 and through May of 2004, Colombian military and law enforcement have interdicted 317 tons of cocaine with an estimated street value of $9.5 billion. Seizures of cocaine were up 20% in 2003 and 50% in the first 5 months of 2004.

- Spraying operations have also targeted illegal opium poppy crops. In 2003, 2,995 hectares were destroyed through aerial spraying and a significant number were destroyed manually. This effort potentially removed approximately 9 metric tons of heroin from the U.S. market.

- Our efforts continue this year. During the first five months of 2004, 59,134 hectares of coca and 1,814 hectares of opium poppy were eradicated, 50 tons of cocaine were seized and 899 drug laboratories were destroyed.

Enhanced Military and Police Readiness

The Colombian Government's Democratic Security and Defense Policy, with key U.S. cooperation, has significantly enhanced the size, training and capabilities of Colombia's armed forces and police:

- In August 2002, 158 rural municipalities in Colombia had no police presence. Today, every municipality has a police presence – a first for Colombia. In total, 16,304 police officers have been added since 2000.

- In our effort to regain control over all of the Colombian territory, we have added 52,269 combat-ready troops since 2000 – a 60% increase. In addition, our armed forces have greatly improved their mobility and ability to move rapidly to conflict areas because of U.S.-provided helicopters and other specialty aircraft. U.S.-provided aircraft have been particularly critical in the success of Colombia's aerial spraying program, both for the actual spraying of illegal crops as well as protecting personnel engaged in this dangerous activity.

Progress against Terrorism

Enhanced military and police readiness has shifted the balance in the fight against narco-terrorist groups responsible for much of Colombia's violence and civil rights abuses to the government's advantage. These groups include a paramilitary group called the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the two guerrilla groups – the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). The AUC is responsible for the majority of human rights abuses in Colombia, and, together, the three groups are the worst violators of human rights in the Americas. As a result of Plan Colombia, the Colombian Armed Forces and National Police have intensified military operations against these organizations.

- Captures of members of guerrilla organizations were up by 85% in 2003, while captures of members of illegal self-defense groups increased by 133.5%.

- Guerrilla casualties reached 1,919 members in 2003, a 14% increase on 2002. Similarly, illegal self-defense groups casualties totaled 346 last year—an 85% increase over the previous year.

- Moreover, 1,841 members of guerrilla organizations and 1,739 members of illegal self-defense groups demobilized voluntarily in 2003.

- Progress on this front has continued this year. In the first five months of 2004, captures, kills and demobilizations of members of narco-terrorist organizations were up 49%, 34% and 62%, respectively, on the same period of 2003.

- Importantly, with invaluable U.S. intelligence and training assistance, the Colombian Military is being increasingly successful in going after high-value targets in the terrorist leadership. In the last five months, two high-ranking members of FARC have been captured.

Improved Security and Public Safety

The Government's aggressive campaign against terrorist organizations and its efforts to reestablish effective control throughout the national territory have translated into improved security for all Colombians.

- Kidnappings, which are used by guerilla and other criminal organizations as a source of funding and to create fear and terror, have declined by 53% since 2000—from 3,706 that year to 1,737 in the last twelve months through May 2004.

- Homicides have fallen by 25% since 2002 – from 28,837 in that year to 21,659 in the last twelve months through May 2004. In fact, Colombia's homicide level per 100,000 inhabitants is now at its lowest level of the last 17 years.

- Finally, there has been a significant decline in terrorist incidents in Colombia over the past two years. Incidents of terrorism declined from 1,645 in 2002 to 1,010 in the twelve months

through May 2004—a decline of 39%.

Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights

Improving Colombia's Judiciary System and ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights in the country is a central element of Plan Colombia and Colombian government policy.

- U.S. training and equipment has produced a more professional, efficient military. They are more motivated, better equipped and more respectful of their obligation to human rights and international humanitarian law. The U.S. Government has provided training for Colombia's national police and armed forces in a variety of specialized areas, including anti-terrorism, anti-kidnapping, bomb disposal and protection for senior political and government officials. Furthermore, in 2003 alone, 73,000 members of the Colombian military received training in Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

- A vast program of judicial reform is under way, in order to adapt the legal system to a major reform of the criminal codes, which is currently being discussed by Congress. When this amendment enters into force, Colombian criminal procedure will follow the accusatorial system used in common law countries, a change that is expected to enhance the effectiveness of the administration of justice. To that end, U.S. agencies like the Department of Justice and USAID have provided the means to set up 30 new oral trial courtrooms. Likewise, training has been provided for 3,400 prosecutors, judges, magistrates and defense attorneys, as well as 707 community-based conciliators.

- Since the beginning of Plan Colombia, nearly 200 persons have been extradited to the United States for criminal prosecution for crimes that include murder, kidnapping, money laundering, and drug trafficking. Money laundering prosecutions rose by 25 percent in 2003, while asset forfeiture cases increased by 42%.

- There was a significant decline of human rights violations in Colombia during 2003, including a 48% decrease in extra judicial executions. To cite an example, homicides of

trade unionists fell 57% during 2003, and were down a further 25% in the first 4 months of 2004. More than 100 significant cases against illegal self-defense groups, guerrilla organizations and Government of Colombia officials for human rights' violations were advanced in 2003.

- Under Plan Colombia, we are providing increased security for persons at high risk, including labor leaders, local government officials, journalists, human rights workers and NGO leaders. During 2003, special security was provided for 5,221 high-risk individuals, up from 880 in 2000.

Economic and Social Development Programs

As part of Plan Colombia, the U.S. and Colombia have successfully implemented alternative development and other social programs to help coca and poppy farmers transition to legal economic activity, and provide relief to other citizens affected by terrorism and crime.

- Since 2001 and through March 31, 2004, Colombia and the United States have cooperated to support the cultivation of 45,456 hectares of legal crops [more than 112,000 acres]. These efforts have benefited more than 34,348 families, who have committed to give up the cultivation of illegal crops.

- Plan Colombia has successfully completed 835 social and economic infrastructure projects. These include building roads, schools, health clinics and sewer systems in rural, isolated communities in the southern region of Colombia, where this development leads to reduced dependency on illegal drug cultivation and production.

- Plan Colombia has provided assistance to more than 1.6 million internally displaced persons in Colombia – individuals and families who have been forced to flee their homes and communities because of violence.

- Two additional statistics are particularly relevant to Colombia's social development: 1)

920,000 more children have been enrolled in public schools since 2000—increasing coverage to 85% of the population. 2) 2.4 million more people have been enrolled in the public health care system since 2000—bringing coverage up to 57.5% of the total population. While Plan Colombia did not fund these initiatives, U.S. support for other military and economic programs has enabled the Colombian Government to earmark the necessary resources for education and health care.

Restoring Economic Growth

A strong, growing Colombian economy is important for stability and defeating drugs and terror. While Plan Colombia was not designed as an economic growth initiative, it has contributed significantly to restoring investor and consumer confidence and fueled economic recovery.

- In 2003, Colombia's GDP grew by 3.8% - the highest rate since 1995. Growth continued at a similar pace in the first quarter of this year, and the Government is currently forecasting GDP growth in excess of 4% for 2004.

- More than 1.2 million new jobs were created in Colombia in 2003. Unemployment declined from 15.6% in December 2002 to 12.3% in December 2003.

- Following renewal of the Andean Trade Preferences Act in 2003, Colombia-U.S. bilateral trade grew 10% in 2003 to $10.1 billion, contributing to the creation of thousands of jobs in both countries.

- Last month, Colombia and the United States, along with Ecuador and Peru, launched free trade negotiations. A Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. will significantly enhance Colombia's long-term economic prospects and security, and create a positive and predictable environment for new foreign and domestic investment.

The Challenges Ahead

While significant progress has been under Plan Colombia, the battle against narcoterrorism is far from over. Colombia and the U.S. need to consolidate the gains in terms of security, law and order, and economic growth, and begin to look ahead to ensure lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the long-term. Specific challenges ahead include:

- **Sustaining the military offensive against narcoterrorist groups:** As Colombia continues to take the fight to the terrorists, the country will need sustained U.S. assistance in the medium term. This assistance is vital to consolidate the security gains achieved so far, and to ensure the success of ongoing military operations in remote areas of the country—which pose significant logistical and intelligence challenges. U.S. know-how and equipment will be crucial to the success of these operations. Moreover, continued U.S.-Colombia cooperation on the counter-narcotics and transnational crime fighting fronts will help to starve narcoterrorist groups of the drug-proceeds they need to maintain their fighting and logistical apparatus.

- **Consolidating economic recovery through an FTA with the U.S.:** Expanding international trade and attracting foreign investment remain critical to promoting economic growth, employment and security in Colombia. The Uribe Government strongly supports trade liberalization throughout the hemisphere, both through bilateral agreements and the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas. In this context, a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.—by far Colombia's largest trade and investment partner—is a critical component of the country's development strategy. An FTA with the U.S. will not only increase exports and promote job creation in Colombia, but also help attract Foreign Direct Investment to the country in such crucial sectors as oil and gas, where Colombia has enormous untapped potential.

- **Advancing peace talks and demobilizing illegal actors**: While Colombia continues to exert military pressure on narcoterrorist organizations, the government has opened the door for talks with groups and individual combatants genuinely interested in giving up arms. The

government is determined to seek a peace agreement with these groups, but not any peace agreement. Peace and reconciliation must be achieved in accordance with our constitutional provisions and be respectful of the demands of justice and international humanitarian law. It will also require the support of the international community.

Within this framework, a peace process with the AUC is currently underway. An agreement has been reached on a cease of hostilities and the concentration of AUC members in a small area located in the Province of Córdoba. The implementation of this agreement – due to start any moment now, will be subject to close verification by a Mission sent by the Organization of American States, pursuant to an agreement between the Colombian Government and this institution's Secretary-General.

On a different track, just last week the Mexican Government announced that it was willing to host and sponsor a negotiating process with the ELN guerrillas and the first steps are being taken in that direction. The Government believes that this group is genuinely interested in conducting peace talks and has already expressed its willingness to authorize it to hold a "National Convention", a longstanding demand made by its leadership.

As part of any agreement, demobilizing illegal combatants must be realized on a scale never before attempted in Colombia. Past demobilizations of the M-19 and EPL, as well as current demobilization efforts, involve only a small portion of the combatants that would be involved in comprehensive peace agreements. Therefore, these processes will pose enormous challenges and require significant financial resources.

- **Addressing the humanitarian and ecological challenges wrought by narcoterrorism:** We must continue to provide help to thousands of Colombian families who have been displaced by terrorism and violence. This means returning them to their homes and communities, helping them find productive employment and generally enabling them to restart their lives. At the same time, it is imperative that Colombia work to repair the damage done to our valuable rain forest ecosystems by terrorists and drug traffickers, both in terms of forest destruction and the widespread dumping of precursor chemicals into Amazon

river systems. The Uribe administration is developing reforestation programs to rehabilitate forestlands destroyed by drug traffickers and create employment for former coca peasants to manage these lands sustainably. U.S.-based environmental groups are providing assistance and technical support to repair the damage done to Colombia's environment

Colombia looks forward to working on the consolidation of Plan Colombia, in order to build on the progress we have realized to date and develop new, cooperative efforts to address the changing nature of the conflict, so that we may achieve true national reconciliation in Colombia. As President Uribe put it, during his recent visit to the U.S., we are determined to stay the course.

Thank you. I will be glad to answer your questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much, Ambassador Moreno.

Assistant Secretary Noriega.

Mr. NORIEGA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you and members of the committee for your continued leadership on U.S. policy toward Colombia, and in particular, on your willingness to engage with Colombian Government officials and to take congressional delegations to Colombia to see for yourselves the reality there. We believe that the engagement of the U.S. Congress, the leadership of the U.S. Congress on this issue is crucial to developing, implementing and maintaining momentum behind our policy on Colombia, which is, I think you will agree, paying solid dividends for our national interests. It is these common efforts between the Congress and the executive branch, and the bipartisan support that this policy enjoys, that make a big difference to our success and the prospects for meeting our objectives.

You see before you here, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, members of an interagency team here, that work together well in implementing this policy. There are many who you have met also in the field, in Colombia, led by Ambassador Bill Wood, members of the various agencies that are represented here who put their lives at risk, playing an important role in implementing our policy in Colombia. I want to recognize their great contribution.

Mr. Chairman, you and your colleagues know this integrated policy very well. We support the Colombian Government's efforts to defend and to strengthen its democratic institutions against the acute threat of narcoterrorism, to promote respect to human rights and the rule of law, to intensify counter-narcotics efforts, to foster social and economic development and investment, and to address immediate humanitarian needs that Colombia is confronting.

As several of you have seen for yourselves, Colombia is a vastly different country today than what it was just 5 years ago. Then, many feared that South America's oldest democracy could unravel to a failed narco-state. Today, Colombia is heading in a very different, very promising direction, consolidating itself as a stable nation that provides security and stability for its citizens. Today, Colombians have greater confidence and optimism for the future. Today it is the narcoterrorists who are on the defensive.

Colombia's economy is growing and investors are again looking to tap the rich entrepreneurial spirit of the Colombian people, the private sector. The Colombian people overwhelmingly support President Uribe's leadership and in establishing democratic security for all of Colombia's people. In addition to providing vision, determination and a sense of urgency, President Uribe has accorded 16 percent of Colombia's national budget now to national defense.

While serious challenges remain, the news from Colombia over the past several years tells a story of steady progress. Since 2002, the Colombian national police supported by the United States, has sprayed close to 760,000 acres of coca and coca cultivation has declined dramatically each year. Opium cultivation declined by 10 percent in 2003, and we are always seeking new ways to find that crop and kill it.

With the expanded authority provided by the U.S. Congress, we've been able to assist Colombia's counter-terrorism efforts

against the 30,000 people who make up three guerrilla groups, the FARC, the ELN and the AUC, each of which have been designated a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. Government. The Colombian military, in concert with the national police, is taking the fight to these terrorist groups like never before, significantly stepping up defensive operations and arrests.

At the same time, President Uribe continues to hold out the possibility of a peaceful settlement to these conflicts. Both the AUC and the ELN have demonstrated an interest in such a process in recent weeks. However, President Uribe has insisted, I think wisely, that irregular groups observe an immediate cease-fire and end their illegal activities as preconditions for this process moving forward.

The recent massacre of 34 coca farmers in the northern town of La Gabarra is proof that the FARC guerrillas have yet to forego their use of violence and their involvement in the drug trade. While we support the peace process as part of President Uribe's strategy for defeating terrorist groups and imposing the rule of law, we have made clear that any settlement must hold criminals accountable for their crimes. In particular, we have stressed that we will continue to press for the extradition of Colombians indicted by the United States.

President Uribe's Plan Patriota has put the FARC on the defensive. Last year, the Colombian military effectively cleared the province around Bogota of terrorist fighters. This year, they have expended operations in south central Colombia, deploying troops into the traditional FARC stronghold, reclaiming municipalities that have long been in the hands of that organization, disrupting important lines of communication that are important to the terrorist threat and also to the narcotics trafficking.

These efforts have produced real results, extending a permanent security presence into all of Colombia's municipalities. Internal displacement is down by 50 percent. Fifty key terrorists and their financiers have been killed or captured just since July 2003. Colombian defense spending is up, and the attacks on the vital Cano Limon oil pipeline is down dramatically in the last several years.

Our human rights goals complement our policy. We consider Colombia a committed partner in promoting human rights, but we also leverage the human rights conditionality of our assistance program to push the Colombian Government to sever all paramilitary-military ties, and to bring to justice military officials involved in human rights violations, or involved with paramilitarism. We will continue to treat the protection of human rights as an essential part of our policy. Frankly, the Colombian Government can and must be even more proactive in identifying and remedying weaknesses in its human rights record.

The human rights of our own citizens are at stake, too. We are now at about a 16 month mark for the captivity of three Americans who were part of our programs there, Keith Stencil, Mark Gonsalves and Thomas House. We are doing everything that we possibly can to arrange for their safe return.

Mr. Chairman, our counter-drug efforts in Colombia are complemented by our programs in neighboring states where the illicit drug trade presents a historic problem. Our strategy is not to push

coca cultivation from one country to another or from one part of a country to another, but to hammer away at every link in the drug chain in all of the countries concerned. We have made steady progress in reducing illicit crops in both Peru and Bolivia, as well as securing greater cross-border cooperation from Colombia's neighbors. We also recognize that trade and economic interaction must be part of our strategy, so that Colombia and, for that matter, its neighbors have the resources to carry on this fight and defend their sovereignty. That's why the trade talks that we are having with Andean countries is clearly very important.

Mr. Chairman, skipping ahead, President Bush is committed to maintaining a robust partnership with Colombia, and we appreciate greatly Congress's abiding bipartisan leadership on the subject. It is important to note that the Colombian people themselves have shown the political will and have shared the financial burden to win the war and eventually to win the peace. We thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I'm prepared to answer any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Noriega follows:]

STATEMENT BY
ROGER F. NORIEGA
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS
BEFORE
THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUNE 17, 2004

U.S. POLICY AND PROGRAMS IN COLOMBIA

Good morning. Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, allow me to first express our appreciation for your ongoing interest in and support for our policy toward Colombia. Your willingness to receive Colombian government officials here, and your continued interest in sending Congressional delegations to Colombia, help sustain crucial support for our Colombia strategy.

U.S. policy toward Colombia supports the Colombian Government's efforts to defend and strengthen its democratic institutions, promote respect for human rights and the rule of law, intensify counter-narcotics efforts, foster socio-economic development and investment, address immediate humanitarian needs, and end the threats to democracy posed by narcotics trafficking and terrorism.

This policy reflects the continuing bipartisan support received from the Congress for our programs in Colombia.

My colleague Bobby Charles will be addressing in detail our counternarcotics policy in Colombia. I would like to offer an update on the current challenges narco-terrorism is posing to Colombia, provide you a picture of the progress President Alvaro Uribe is making in confronting those challenges and outline our efforts to help him attain peace and strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Colombia.

Colombia remains central to our counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism goals and, indeed, is important to achieving every goal we have in the hemisphere. Ninety percent of the cocaine, and a significant percentage of the heroin, in the U.S. comes from Colombia. Close to 30,000 well-armed, drug-financed terrorists still operate in Colombia, affecting the government's ability to provide security and services to its citizens. Colombian narco-terror impacts its neighbors in the Andes,

Brazil, Central America, Mexico, and the island nations of the Caribbean. Regional instability resulting from Colombia's internal wars undermines our efforts to strengthen the Inter-American community and foster regional partners who are democratic, stable and prosperous.

All who have met with President Uribe in Washington or Bogotá and know the great progress he has made in the past two years also recognize the unique, reliable partner we have in him. His strength of character, courage and vision provide the foundation for his record of success and popularity in the past two years. Latest polling shows his approval rating at more than 80 percent. These numbers also underscore the widespread popularity of Plan Colombia and the U.S.-Colombian partnership.

The news from Colombia over the past two years is a story of steady progress.

While Bobby Charles will discuss in more detail our counter-drug effort, I want to highlight it as a major success story. For the second year in a row, the U.S. and Colombia have sprayed more than 300,000 acres of illegal coca. Since 2002 close to 760,000 acres have been sprayed. We have every reason to believe we and our Colombian partners can spray all coca acreage currently under cultivation this year - which is not to say we will solve the problem once and for all in 2004. Coca growers are busy replanting, and we still face a multi-year effort.

On the counter-terror front, with the expanded authority provided by Congress, we have been able to assist Colombia's war against the FARC, ELN and AUC. Our support for Colombian efforts to safeguard the essential Cano Limon pipeline has resulted in a precipitous drop in the number of attacks on the pipeline from 2000 to 2004. President Uribe continues to pressure all three terrorist groups, significantly stepping up attacks and arrests, while seeking to negotiate peace with those who accept an immediate ceasefire as a precondition for peace talks. More than 14 FARC commanders have been killed or captured since October 2003. Two were key players in drug trafficking, hostage-taking and other criminal acts against the United States.

President Uribe's Plan Patriota has put the FARC on the defensive. Late last year, the Colombian military effectively cleared the area around Bogotá of terrorist fighters. This year, they have expanded operations into south-central Colombia,

deploying troops into the traditional FARC stronghold, reclaiming municipalities that had long been in the hands of that organization and disrupting important lines of supply and communication.

The military services are working together better than ever to mount joint operations and continue to hit the FARC hard. More than 3,600 terrorists have deserted their organizations since President Uribe took office. Those who have deserted report deteriorating living conditions and plummeting morale among their former comrades. It is becoming harder to recruit new fighters into the ranks and internal discipline is enforced with harsh measures. The FARC has proven to be a tenacious force over the decades and the Government of Colombia will need to maintain pressure on this group in coming years, but clearly it is gaining the upper hand.

These successes have come at a cost and many Colombian lives have been lost. Americans too have lost their lives and been taken into captivity. This past February, we marked the one-year anniversary of the seizure of three American contractors when their plane went down in FARC territory, as well as the murder of their American pilot and Colombian colleague. We greatly appreciate the efforts made by the Colombian government over the past year to recover the three hostages.

Despite loss of Colombian lives, President Uribe and his government have been unwavering in their support and have fully cooperated in ongoing search and rescue efforts. Uribe has been supportive of all actions we are undertaking to secure their release. In December 2003, we implemented the Rewards for Justice program in Colombia, which offers up to $5 million to individuals who provide actionable information leading to the death or capture of FARC commanders implicated in the seizing and holding of the hostages. We are in constant touch with the families of these brave men to keep them apprised of our ongoing efforts.

While our assistance in support of Colombia's counter-terror operations has strengthened the government's hand, the Colombians have taken ownership of this battle and are substantially increasing the resources they commit to it. President Uribe has made good on his promise to President Bush to devote a greater share of his budget to security. Overall, real spending on defense has increased every year under Uribe. According to the most recent Ministry of Defense and Ministry of

Finance figures, Colombian spending on defense has grown over 30 percent since 2001.

President Uribe also is advancing his efforts to end the threat posed to Colombian stability by the second largest terror group, the United Self-defense Forces or AUC. Peace negotiations with the AUC have been long and difficult, but not without a measure of success. More than 1,000 paramilitary fighters have been removed from the field of battle through negotiated demobilizations.

Last month, AUC leaders accepted, in principle, group concentration in a special zone while further negotiations toward a final peace settlement take place. The Organization of American States established a monitoring and verification mission in Colombia to verify their compliance with this commitment and assist other aspects of the peace process. The Colombian Congress continues to debate the issue of how to hold accountable those leaders and members of the terrorist groups who have been accused of serious criminal offenses, including human rights violations.

The road to a final peace settlement with the AUC has been marked by setbacks and delays. Events such as the possible assassination and disappearance of AUC leader Carlos Castaño call into question the good faith of those within the organization who are compromised by their participation in the illegal drug trade. However, the Government of Colombia is fully aware of the risks of pursuing a peace agreement with terrorists. The Colombian military continues to pursue paramilitary forces that have not entered into peace negotiations as well as those who have not complied with their commitment to cease violent, criminal activities.

From the beginning of the peace process, the United States Government has made clear to the Colombian government that it should do nothing to undermine the excellent extradition relationship our two countries enjoy. Indeed, extraditions are at record levels. More than 115 requests have been granted during President Uribe's tenure. President Uribe shares our commitment to bringing any terrorist or criminal to justice who has been, or may be, indicted for crimes against the United States and U.S. citizens. He has pledged to take no action that precludes extradition of such leaders and has offered no guarantees in the negotiating process. We also have made clear that we want justice for Colombian victims of violent crimes and

human rights abuses, as well as a transparent, verifiable demobilization process.

We have seen reports in recent weeks that the third largest Colombian terrorist organization, the National Liberation Army or ELN, may be considering direct discussions with the Government of Colombia. We call on the ELN to end its attacks on civilians, stop kidnapping and murdering, give up its involvement in the illegal drug trade, and commit itself to a peace process. We also welcome the supporting role that the Government of Mexico has offered to play in a potential peace process between the Government of Colombia and the ELN.

President Uribe's approval rating - and the Colombian public's appreciation of U.S. support for Plan Colombia - remain high because of our joint efforts to enhance the personal security of Colombian citizens. I am happy to say that U.S. assistance has had a positive influence in the creation of an environment conducive to protecting and promoting human rights. We are helping President Uribe's administration implement programs designed to consolidate state presence throughout Colombia, by training and equipping "Carabinero" squadrons, which are rural, mobile police forces. These police officers provide backup for the Colombian National Police units now deployed in every single municipality in Colombia, fulfilling a key commitment undertaken by President Uribe at the outset of his administration.

U.S. assistance also has contributed to the Colombian government's progress in protecting human rights, supported the work of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights in Colombia, protected at-risk labor and human rights leaders, strengthened and expanded the reach of the national Human Rights Unit by establishing mobile satellite sub-units throughout the country and leveraged needed reforms within the Prosecutor General's office. Reinforcing the Colombian government's own commitment to improving human rights and personal security in Colombia, these efforts are paying off. The country's overall homicide rate dropped by 20 percent in 2003. Kidnappings dropped by 39 percent. Terrorist incidents dropped by close to 49 percent, as did the number of Colombians internally displaced by armed conflict and the number of murdered trade union officials.

Colombia still suffers the highest rate of kidnapping in the world; over 2,000 such crimes were committed in 2003. In response, Colombia's U.S.-supported Anti-kidnapping Initiative

was inaugurated in August 2003 and has trained and equipped military and police anti-kidnapping units. These units already have conducted several successful rescue operations, freeing hostages and dismantling kidnapping rings. This initiative complements other U.S. Government counter-terrorism assistance.

Our on-going human rights dialogue with the Colombian government, as well as Colombian and U.S.-based human rights NGOs, together with our support to further develop Colombia's judicial system, and human rights infrastructure will continue in order to sustain these improvements and bolster the rule of law in Colombia. We continue to leverage human rights conditionality to encourage the Government of Colombia to take necessary steps to sever military-paramilitary links and bring to justice military officials involved in human rights abuses and paramilitarism.

President Uribe is looking ahead, already mapping out a strategy to build on the successes of Plan Colombia, originally envisioned as a six-year plan that ends in 2006. We hope to bring to bear increased Colombian resources to the task of ending nearly a half-century of violence and lawlessness. He and his successors will need the continued support of the United States to carry it out.

This year, we are seeking a modest increase in the number of U.S. support personnel in Colombia. In 2002, this body, recognizing the sinister interplay between the illegal narcotics trade and Colombian terrorism, granted the Administration expanded authorities to allow equipment and resources that have been provided for counter-narcotics programs to be used for counter-terror operations. However, the existing caps on the number of U.S. civilian and military personnel contractors allowed in Colombia at any given time are proving too restrictive and in some cases, the ceilings have constrained us from the full implementation of already funded programs. We believe that an increase in the military and civilian contractor support provided to the Government of Colombia during the next two years is essential to maintain the current progress being made by our programs in Colombia. Also, some of the original Plan Colombia programs are only now reaching full implementation. There also are new programs developed since the ceilings were established, such as the anti-kidnapping initiative and the training of prosecutors and judicial police in preparation for the constitutionally-mandated transition to an accusatorial criminal justice system with oral trials, as well as the re-started Air Bridge Denial program.

lay the ground work for increase regional cooperation in law enforcement and security. To be sure, Colombia's neighbors have begun to pull their weight in helping fight this transnational threat and help a sister democracy defend her institutions against narcoterrorism.

Thank you again for your interest, and for your commitment to help us help Colombia confront the daunting challenges it still faces. If the recent past provides a guide to Colombia's future, the country's long-term prospects are excellent. Our near-term task is to help consolidate the significant gains made and help Colombians face the challenges that remain. This concludes my formal statement, and I am ready and eager to answer your questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Charles, I have to swear you in. You were not here for the swearing in.

[Witness sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. The light will go on after 4 minutes, try to sum up after 5. Your entire statement is in the record, and we appreciate the job you did with the Speaker's Drug Task Force before you came here and now with the administration. Thanks for being with us.

Mr. CHARLES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I really sincerely want to thank you for holding this hearing and for frankly becoming so engaged in Plan Colombia and the Andean Counter-Drug Initiative. I think it's saving lives by the thousands and I think leadership by the U.S. Congress makes a huge difference. So I wanted to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Chairman Souder and frankly, the Republican and Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives and Senate.

Oddly enough, I think we are also at a unique, almost unprecedented moment. I think we are aligned. That leadership, your leadership in this chamber and in the Senate is aligned with a remarkable administration team that sees eye to eye with mutual respect, including Secretary Noriega, Secretary O'Connell, General Hill, Administrator Tandy. If you had us off microphone, we would be agreeing as fully as we will agree with you probably on the things we have to say today.

I also think that is aligned with a third star element which is the U.S. ally, Colombia, and the extraordinary leadership of President Uribe and Ambassador Moreno. This is a unique time, and it is in that spirit that I want to offer you my thoughts, which will be abbreviated. Again, I want to thank you for inviting us.

Plan Colombia, complemented by our regional efforts in the Andes, represents a significant investment by the American people and the Congress to fight the flow of drugs responsible for ending thousands of young lives each year in America, to fight powerful and entrenched terrorists in this hemisphere and to protect democratic rule across the Andean region. The success in Colombia over the past few years would not have been possible without strong leadership from President Uribe, who took office in 2002. His administration has taken an aggressive position against narcoterrorism, which enables our Colombia programs to work. It is again my pleasure to testify with my colleagues today, all of whom are leaders in their own right.

In a sound bite, you have given us the power to make a difference, and in fact the investment in our national security is paying off. Generally, Congress has a right to look not only for sound policy and well managed implementation but also for a measurable return on the American people's investment. While measuring the shift of tectonic plates can be difficult, I believe we are seeing real and one may hope lasting change.

In short, your investment is paying off in numerous ways, and you've heard the statistics, so I'm not going to go through them again. What I will say in real broad brush strokes is you have drug cultivation in Colombia down for a second straight year. By the

way, the only time that has happened in the last 14 years, and a double digit reduction at that, as Mr. Walters indicated.

Second, you have, despite recent killings by the FARC, you have violent crime and terrorist attacks down and falling. Third, you have a respect for rule of law expanding in palpable, measurable ways and putting tap roots down in places we never had the rule of law. And finally, we're providing meaningful, often innovative alternatives to poverty level farmers, titling land, giving them opportunities they never had before by the thousands. The Andean Counter-Drug Initiative, as you know better than I, is a multi-front effort that does not begin and end with counter-narcotics. It is a robust effort, yours as much as ours, at creating a sustainable, regional, deep-seated and democratically faithful alternative to the destruction in terror on personal, national and hemispheric levels that comes from drug trafficking and drug funded terror.

In short, what we do in places like Colombia has a direct effect on us here in the United States, whether it's Fairfax County or Fort Wayne, IN, or any of the other locations represented, it is directly affecting the security and the safety of hometown America. Our policy and our commitment, our aim is to wipe out narcoterrorists. We will never fully eliminate drugs from this hemisphere, but we can get them down to a level where they are de minimis and where those organizations are completely taken off the face of what we worry about day to day. Also to help Colombia seize their assets, strengthen Colombia's institutions and increase legitimate economic opportunities for those who wish to live free from drugs and terror.

Central to the larger Andean Counter-Drug Initiative is restoring, preserving and sustaining the rule of law in cities, towns and the countryside in Colombia. Strong congressional support will be critical to reaching the end game, to consolidating the gains that you have heard already talked about and no doubt will elicit from us.

So what is the end game? It's a hemisphere in which drug funded terrorism and corruption of struggling democracies by drug traffickers, by drug violence and by drug abuse on the streets of Bogota, but also back here at home in Mr. Cummings' district in Baltimore and all over this region, are simply reduced to a point where if they're not de minimis, they're dramatically down. And they are manageable at that lower level.

As Assistant Secretary at INL, I have put a premium on management of these programs. INL is working with Congress, OMB, GAO, the State Department, IG's office and others in the executive branch to ensure the accountability that you require of us and that we should require of ourselves, that it is front and center and that every American taxpayer dollar that you give us to spend is actually achieving the purpose that you intend. For example, INL is working closely with the State Department's Bureau of Resource Management and with OMB to develop outcome measures much talked about earlier today that have in fact been front and center during the OMB-led program assessment rating tool process. We aim to make our programs models for performance based management.

Since time is short, I'm going to jump right to my conclusion. That is that you will get from us the full promise to work together as a team, and you will get from me the dedication that INL will be trying to lead its programs toward the kind of conclusions you put in legislation and expected of us. Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Charles follows:]

U.S. Policy and Colombia

Robert B. Charles
Assistant Secretary
for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Testimony Before Chairman Tom Davis and the
House Committee on Government Reform
Washington, DC
June 17, 2004

Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to discuss Plan Colombia and the State Department's continued efforts during this critical time in Colombia's history. Plan Colombia, complemented by our regional efforts in the Andes, represents a significant investment by the American people and Congress to fight the flow of drugs responsible for ending thousands of young lives each year in America, to fight powerful and entrenched terrorists in this Hemisphere, and to protect democratic rule across the Andean region.

The success in Colombia over the last few years would not have been possible without the strong leadership of President Uribe who took office in August 2002. His administration has taken an aggressive stand against narcoterrorism, which enables our Colombia programs to work. It is my pleasure to be able to testify before you today, with my colleagues Roger Noriega, Karen Tandy, and Director Walters; in a sound bite, you have given us the power to make a difference, and this investment in our national security is paying off.

Generally, Congress has a right to look not only for sound policy, and well-managed implementation, but also for a measurable return on the American people's investment. While measuring the shift of tectonic plates can be difficult, I believe we are seeing real -- and one may hope lasting -- change. In short, your investment is paying off in numerous ways: First, drug cultivation in Colombia is down for the second straight year. Second, despite the recent tragic killings in Norte de Santander, violent crime and terrorist acts are down and falling. Third, respect for the rule of law is expanding and measurably putting down tap roots in new places. Fourth, we are providing meaningful, often innovative, alternatives to poverty-level farmers.

The Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI), as you all know better than I, is a multi-front effort that does not begin and end with counternarcotics. It is our robust effort -- yours as much as ours -- at creating a sustainable, regional, deep-seated and democratically faithful alternative to the destruction and terror -- on personal, national, and hemispheric levels -- that comes from drug trafficking and drug-funded terror. In short, what we do in places like Colombia has a direct effect here, in the United States. Our policy and our commitment aim to wipe out narcoterrorists, and help Colombia seize their assets, strengthen Colombia's institutions and increase legitimate economic opportunities for those who wish to live free from drugs and terror. Central to the larger Andean Counterdrug Initiative is restoring, preserving and sustaining the rule of law, in cities, towns, and the countryside.

Congress empowered the State Department, and the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) in particular, with this task. We work closely with the Colombian government and agencies across the U.S. government in this effort. Let me be clear -- when I say "we" today, I am not only referring to the various actors in our government, but also in the Colombian government. Because, in our solid commitment, we make progress possible. As today's hearing illustrates, coordination is a priority for all of us. Strong Congressional support will also be critical for reaching the endgame. And what is the endgame? A hemisphere in which drug-funded terrorism, and corruption of struggling democracies by drug traffickers, drug violence and drug abuse from the streets of Bogotá to the streets of Baltimore, are reduced dramatically. A hemisphere in which drugs and the costs they impose are not gone -- but are reduced to such a degree that their influence is *de minimus*, or nearly so.

Management of the Andean Counterdrug Initiative

As Assistant Secretary of INL, I have put a premium on management of these programs. INL is working with Congress, OMB, GAO, the State Department IG's office, and others in the Executive Branch to ensure that accountability is front-and-center; that American taxpayer dollars are well and consistently husbanded. For example, INL is working closely with the State Department's Bureau of Resource Management, and with OMB, to develop accurate outcome measures during the OMB-led Program Assessment Rating Tool process. We aim to make our programs models of performance-based management.

As custodian of these dollars, I have also been methodically pursuing a top-to-bottom program review of diverse INL programming. Within the past nine months, our initiatives have included putting sizable penalties in government contracts, moving from cost-plus to performance contracts, tying contract bonus justifications to performance, and adding new performance measures. We have also worked toward a strategic plan for and proper capitalization of the INL Air Wing. Added oversight is intended to ensure that tax dollars directed to Colombia, a total of $463 million in Fiscal Year 2004, and other INL accounts are focused, well-administered, and effective. They must be making gains in yardage -- or hectarage -- a reality, palpably helping to stop drug production and drug-funded terrorism before those twin menaces arrive on U.S. soil, before they can do violence in our schools, communities, states or nation.

To implement policy and programs in support of the Colombian government, INL works closely with the U.S. embassy in Bogotá. The Ambassador and his Country Team, with senior representatives from all key USG agencies involved in counternarcotics, have a standing working group chaired by the Ambassador. It meets at least weekly. It acts as a forum for exchanging strategic and tactical intelligence, as well as coordinating programs with the Colombian government. When needed, this group also ensures that there is no conflict between counternarcotics and counterterrorism missions. Finally, the Ambassador also chairs regular implementation meetings.

Each section of the Country Team, whether it is the Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) of INL, the U.S. Military Group of DOD, USAID, DOJ or DEA, has substantial USG direct hire and

contract personnel assigned in-country to advise and train counterpart Colombian personnel, as well as to oversee the use and maintenance of USG-provided equipment (helicopters, communications, vehicles, buildings, etc.). The Country Team is tasked with providing information to assist the interagency community in Washington. This information relates to funding, training, equipment requirements, and political and economic events bearing on conduct of USG-support for Colombian counternarcotics efforts. These efforts now result in a mission program and bureau performance plan.

INL also works closely with the Defense Department on training programs for the Colombian Counterdrug Brigade and helicopter pilot training. We work with the Department of Justice on Administration of Justice programs, with DEA on law enforcement intelligence and interdiction, and USAID in areas such as strengthening democratic governance and alternative development. By way of example, in addition to funding, coordination and oversight, within the last year, the Department of State and USAID established a Joint Policy Council, which has, among others, working groups on security and stability assistance. The group also addresses regional issues in the Western Hemisphere and seeks regularly to assess and increase coordination on Colombia programs and the Andean Counterdrug Initiative. Complementing this, INL works with the Department of Homeland Security, intelligence community, ONDCP, and other USG entities on these programs. I believe that these relationships are vital to -- and largely responsible for -- the marked progress that is being recorded by the Andean Counterdrug effort, especially in Colombia.

Counternarcotics Achievements in Colombia

The bird's eye view on the Andean Counterdrug Initiative, and Colombia in particular, is encouraging. The commitment of Congress and the effective implementation of our programs are paying off. Drug production is down in Colombia; traffickers are being arrested and extradited and their proceeds are being taken; drug seizures are up; legitimate jobs are being created; Colombian institutions are stronger; and the rule of law expanded.

Eradication

In 2003, INL and the Colombians, working closely together, sprayed 127,000 hectares of the coca crop at 91.5 percent effectiveness, for a net of 116,000 hectares of coca eradicated. At the same time, alternative development programs in Colombia resulted in the manual eradication of an additional 8,441 hectares. Similarly, we sprayed 2,821 hectares of opium poppy while 1,009 hectares were manually eradicated. In 2002, these efforts reduced coca cultivation by 15 percent, and, in 2003, by 21 percent -- for a double-digit decline for the second straight year -- a first time accomplishment. The 113,850 hectares under cultivation this year represents a 33 percent reduction from the peak-growing year in 2001 when 169,800 hectares of coca were under illicit cultivation. Riding on the success of Colombia reductions, Andean production of coca dropped for the second straight year -- this time by 16 percent.

The Colombian government, with USG support, is also making similar progress on opium poppy. In 2003, the Colombian government reduced opium poppy cultivation by more than

10 percent, building on the success in 2002, which had resulted in a 25 percent reduction in cultivation. These efforts have reduced Colombia's opium poppy by 33 percent, or from 6,540 hectares in 2001 -- to 4,900 in 2002 -- to 4,400 in 2003. With Colombian heroin victimizing children from Florida to Illinois, New York and Maine to points West, we must make its eradication a priority.

This year our spray goal for coca and opium poppy is ambitious: 130,000 hectares of coca and all opium poppy growing in 2004. To date, we are ahead of schedule on both of these eradication milestones. As of June 16, we have sprayed over 61,000 hectares of coca and 1,600 hectares of poppy. Because opium poppy is an annual flower, all of last year's remaining 4,400 hectares of poppy died last year and have already been replaced by new crops. We have worked out this spray program in full coordination with the Colombian police and armed forces.

Our aerial eradication fleet presently consists of seven OV-10's, five AT-802's, and four T-65's. Despite recent setbacks, additional aircraft will soon be arriving: one OV-10 in June, two AT-802s in September, and two OV-10s in November. Foremost among my concerns is security for our air fleet and pilots - who put their lives on the line every time they undertake a spray mission.

In 2003, INL aircraft took more than 380 hits, and we lost 4 planes. To date this year, we have lost one aircraft in Colombia, but have only taken 79 hits as compared to 142 hits for the same period in 2003. These ground-fire hits are now at the lowest levels in nearly two years.

This reduction is a reflection of our improved planning, changing tactics, increased intelligence coordination, and protective measures that make sure each spray mission is as safe as humanly possible.

In fact, coordination and cooperation between Colombian law enforcement and military elements have also significantly improved in response to events in 2003. That said, as we are progressively successful on the eradication front, new threats may emerge. Currently, the Operational Readiness rate of U.S.-supported Colombian security forces' aircraft is higher than most comparable U.S. Department of Defense OR rates. We need to keep these OR rates high on our aircraft so that we can continue at this pace.

We take environmental concerns very seriously and have sought to be very responsive to members of Congress and non-governmental organizations who have understandably expressed concern about the effects of aerial eradication on human health and the environment. As you all know, we provide environmental certifications to the Congress. To date, all toxicology tests show that the herbicide mixture used in spraying, in the manner it is being used, does not pose any unreasonable risks of adverse effects for humans or the environment. The accuracy with which the herbicide is applied makes negligible any damage to licit crops grown separately from narcotic crops.

We have increased efforts to track reported health complaints and to investigate any possible connection between spraying of illicit crops and damages alleged in such occasional complaints. We have initiated what amounts to a farmer's "hot line," a channel for any

complaints and way to compensate farmers who can demonstrate any harm to health of legal crops caused by spraying. This well-publicized initiative has, as expected, spurred interest. As of May 31, 2004, the Embassy has received a cumulative total of nearly 4,700 complaints. Because the overwhelming majority of the complaints are caused by events unrelated to spraying, NAS Bogotá has only been required so far to compensate 10 persons. Simply put, when investigations verify that a farmer's allegations are true, we compensate them. In most cases, the allegations are false.

Last month, when Colombia's major newspaper *El Tiempo* published an article that quoted farmers alleging that their alternative development crops might have been sprayed, we set up a verification mission with people from the Colombian government. This involved the Complaints Committee and others involved in checking out these claims. Bottom line -- the article was grossly inaccurate. Due to prompt response from our Embassy, the Colombian government's manager of the alternative development program immediately sent NAS Bogotá a letter thanking them for the verification and assistance.

Alternative Development

Consolidating gains and sustaining progress requires that those who grow coca or opium poppy be not only discouraged from involvement in the drug trade, but encourage to enter legitimate markets. Accordingly, done right, alternative development complements interdiction and eradication programs by increasing legal economic opportunities for former producers of coca and poppy. These USAID programs, initially concentrated in Putumayo

and Caqueta, areas of Colombia's densest coca cultivation, have expanded into other departments with high incidence or threat of coca cultivation. This year, INL-coordinated efforts have already supported more than 7,000 hectares of legal crops, for a cumulative total of 45,000 hectares since 2000. These activities have benefited more than 34,000 families and resulted in the manual eradication of 22,000 hectares of illicit crops. These numbers are not insignificant; they corroborate a sea change or tipping point in the overall effort.

But alternative development is more than alternative crops. Such activities improve Colombia's rural infrastructure so that licit crops can be transported and marketed. The ripple effect means new sharing of technologies, processing, credit, and marketing assistance to legitimate producer associations. Last quarter alone, 188 infrastructure projects were completed for a cumulative total of 835 since 2001. This includes more than 90 schools, 40 water systems, 80 municipal buildings -- ranging from homes for the elderly to business centers and community centers. Projects completed also included 195 sewage drains and 35 roads. In addition, as one more indication of democracy and legitimate, accountable businesses are taking root, more than 20 citizen oversight committees were formed last quarter, for a cumulative total of 212.

USAID-sponsored alternative development projects in Putumayo and elsewhere are reinforcing the core functions and values that underpin Colombia's increasingly civil society. Program beneficiaries are uniting and forming associations to ensure progress achieved continues after USAID funding has ended. The Association "Building a Future," for instance, comprised of 14 small farmer organizations, representing 388 families from Mocoa,

recently gained national attention when they were invited to speak at a forum in Bucaramanga sponsored by the influential Colombian non-governmental organization, *Planeta Paz*. The President of the Association, Libardo Martinez, when speaking with other local leaders, stressed the importance of community work and organization. According to Martinez, "...the Putumayo experience has become the reference point for progress for the other departments and for the rest of the world." Colombians are increasingly proud of the future they are creating, using rule of law and the legitimate economy as a pivot point.

Interdiction

Interdiction efforts are central to the continuing and measurable success of Plan Colombia. We work closely with Colombia's armed forces and the police. As a result, Colombian forces reported seizures of 145 metric tons of cocaine and coca base in 2003. If sold on U.S. streets, we estimate an additional 1.75 billion dollars would have reached drug traffickers and the narcoterrorism they support. Since President Uribe took office in August 2002, Colombian forces have seized nearly 1,200 kilograms of heroin. INL has worked hand-in-glove with DEA, including support to DEA's Operation Firewall, a maritime interdiction effort off the North coast of Colombia. In addition, we support the DEA Heroin Task Force in Bogotá, made up of over 50 DEA and Colombian National Police officials, that targets heroin trafficking organizations, especially those with regional and international implications.

Another good news story seldom written or talked about is Colombia's effective Air Bridge Denial program (ABD). This program was re-started in August 2003 and is proving to be a

highly effective deterrent. Since its resumption, the program has sorted thousands of flights, and forced down and/or destroyed over 26 suspected narcotics trafficking aircraft. As of March 1, 2004, the Colombian Air Force and its regional partners had seized roughly a metric ton of illicit drugs through the ABD program. Countless are the flights deterred, deflected or delayed. In 2003, the program resulted in 6.9 metric tons of drugs seized regionally. But the key here is not the number of planes destroyed. To be clear: Our goal is to effectively deter the use of Colombian airspace by traffickers, while protecting civil aviation. Nine months into the program, narcotics trafficking patterns are beginning to measurably change in response to the Colombian Air Force effort. Building on success, we need to establish at least one, and perhaps two, new forward operating locations to cover new areas used by traffickers.

Other Success in Colombia

I would be remiss if I did not point out other equally important achievements. Recently, the Colombian law enforcement authorities, in cooperation with the United States, Canada, and Mexico completed investigations resulting in charging the leaders and members of two international criminal organizations from Colombia with violations of U.S. laws. The first, *Operation White Dollar*, targeted the financial service providers working in the black market peso exchange scheme, who facilitate international narcotics trafficking. The second, resulted in the charging of the leadership and major players in the Norte Valle cartel with racketeering offenses. The defendants are charged with engaging in a racketeering organization responsible for shipping tonnage quantities of cocaine to the U.S. with furthering the work of the organization by murdering witnesses, and threatening and corrupting members of the

Colombian Congress and more. In both cases, the defendants are being sought for extradition to the U.S. These are two examples of the fact that we are hitting the traffickers and their accomplices hard.

As we are undermining the narcotics industry, we are methodically, unremittingly and decisively extending democracy and strengthening security throughout Colombia's national territory. We are truly witnessing, I believe, the "tip" of a national and perhaps regional tipping point. We have helped fund the establishment of police in 158 municipalities, many of which had not seen any government or security presence in literally decades. As a result of the Colombian government's "police reinsertion program," for the first time in the recorded history of Colombia, there is now a state presence in all 1,098 of Colombia's municipalities. This is an enormous step forward for the people of Colombia and their democratically elected government. As John Locke might say, where there is security and a stable social compact, people will abide the law and mix their labor with the land in a legitimate, lasting way. Due in very large measure to the foresight of this body -- the U.S. Congress -- in creating, funding and nurturing this pivotal first phase of what was once called Plan Colombia, and now the Andean Counterdrug Initiative, we are seeing real success.

Other developments underscore that we are making unprecedented -- but not yet institutionalized -- progress: In 2003, Colombia's murder rate dropped by 20 percent, to its lowest figure since 1986. Also in 2003, kidnapping declined by 39 percent from 2002. Finally, forced displacements of persons were cut by 49 percent -- a decline for the first time since 1999.

Training of Colombian Nationals

High among our priorities is training Colombians so that they may bear increasing responsibility for programs. This is the natural evolution of programs -- a successful seeding and supporting a widening democracy and the rule of law. Accordingly, INL has developed a growing cadre of Colombian professionals to replace USG contractors in flying and maintaining aircraft assets. We have trained 99 pilots and 154 mechanics and crew chiefs since 1999, meeting our own initial training objectives. Due to the increasing size of INL's Air Wing since training targets were first created, we have updated our goals to reduce the number of personnel contracted by the USG involved in operation or maintenance of helicopters. We have recently submitted to Congress a plan entitled *Training of Colombian Nationals for Helicopter Operations and Maintenance Programs*, which will reduce the number of contractor pilots and maintenance personnel in half -- from 394 in 2004 to 195 by 2007. We further plan to reduce the contractor presence to 56 by 2009 and 25 by 2010, respectively. In short, as we fight to impose on ourselves real and meaningful management reforms, and move the ball upfield for the American people on both counternarcotics and counterterrorism, we are also cognizant of the need to make the goals more ambitious.

Democratic Institution Building and The Rule of Law

To improve the rule of law, USG projects also have assisted the Government of Colombia in establishing 37 Justice Houses (*casas de justicia*), which increase access to justice for poor

Colombians. Make no mistake: this is not a small victory or goal -- it is at the very heart, in our view, of sustainable progress and U.S. support. So far, these *casas de justicia* have handled over 2.2 million cases, easing the burden on the over-taxed, inefficient judicial system. Remarkably, the Department of Justice and USAID "Administration of Justice" initiatives have also established 30 new Oral Trial courtrooms and trained over 10,000 lawyers, judges and public defenders in new oral legal procedures designed to reduce impunity and quicken the judicial process. The new accusatorial criminal justice system will be open to public scrutiny and is expected to be more efficient and effective, and thus more worthy of public confidence. Similarly, a so-called "Early Warning System" is up and running. This system monitors potential conditions that might trigger human rights violations in order to provide warning of impending threats. In addition, 11 new mobile satellite units of the national human rights unit have been arrayed around Colombia to provide a more immediate response to allegations of human rights violations in the most remote areas of the country. Together, these projects are creating a civil and human rights protection infrastructure -- a climate of respect -- so that the Colombian government may be able to prevent or be more responsive to human rights violations.

Also on human rights, the overall Colombian government "protection program" has been expanded to include reliable protection for mayors, local human rights officials, council members, municipal human rights workers, medical missions, journalists, and former mayors. This is -- as all of you know -- another sea change. In the second quarter of FY 2004, more than 200 individuals received protection measures for a cumulative total of nearly 3,500. During this quarter, six additional offices are in the process of being armored, for a

cumulative total of 83 offices protected as of June 2004. Further, a professional police corps has been trained and equipped to protect judicial personnel, witnesses, and government officials. By providing protection to these individuals and offices, we are playing an increasingly important role in ensuring the ability of Colombia's leaders, including human rights defenders and local officials, to conduct their activities in as secure an environment as possible. With our feet on the ground -- but no absence of effort, we are of the view that if conditions for advancement are sustained, the legitimate economy and democracy will grow; build it, and they will come.

Through the office of the Vice President, we are also working with Colombia's local authorities to design and implement Departmental Human Rights Plans. Participatory Planning Workshops have been held already in Cartagena, Bogotá, Cali, Valle del Cauca and Santander de Quilichao. Municipal and departmental planning teams participated in each one of these workshops through a strategic planning exercise.

This is a mosaic -- a team effort, both between the United States and Colombia, but also among bureaus and agencies. Besides assisting in placing police around the country, we are funding other initiatives that extend security throughout Colombia's territory. For example, on March 31, the National Police launched a new country-wide initiative called Departamentos y Municipios Seguros, supported by USAID through Georgetown University's Colombia Program. The program is aimed at strengthening President Uribe's Democratic Security Policy through a complementary strategy of security plans oriented at

the prevention of violence and criminal acts, and implemented by mayors and governors in coordination with the Colombian National Police.

In Colombia, INL also funds a key program, the "Culture of Lawfulness" -- a public school-based program that teaches ethics to thousands of children in junior high school. If we can help mold these young people, we can help foster a civic belief that drugs and corruption are wrong. Again, this is a measure of progress. Cultural education and trust in a stable, drug-free future will take time.

Finally, we provide emergency and longer-term assistance to so-called "Vulnerable Groups," particularly Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This assistance, administered by the State Department's Bureau for Population, Migration, and Refugees and USAID, includes food, shelter, psychosocial assistance, physical and mental health services, community strengthening, income and employment generation, urban assistance (shelter, water and sanitation) education, and the rehabilitation of ex-child combatants. It also strengthens the Colombian agency responsible for IDP coordination, protection and border monitoring. Working with a municipal focus, the program runs more than 300 projects in 25 departments and 200 municipalities throughout the country.

Last quarter, IDP programs collectively aided more than 190,000 persons for a cumulative total of over 1.6 million persons since 2001. During the same time period, more than 3,800 jobs were created for IDPs and other vulnerable persons, such as youth at risk of displacement or recruitment by illegal armed combatants. To date, IDP programs have provided vocational

and skill development training for more than 21,000 IDPs and created over 52,000 jobs, (primarily micro-enterprise, cottage industry, and small farmer activity). Equally important, access to education was increased during the last quarter for more than 29,000 displaced and other vulnerable children for a cumulative total of 163,900. Finally, more than 700 families who were willing and able to safely return to their original communities, were assisted last quarter, for a cumulative total of 18,090 families, or over 90,000 individuals since 2001. The IDP Program also assisted nearly 350 additional child ex-combatants during the last quarter. By providing viable life and employment options, the program discourages families from taking up cultivation of illicit crops.

Concluding Remarks

We all know the facts, but they bear repeating -- because the U.S. Congress has been in the lead on these understandings. Drugs, violence and crime undermine democracy, rule of law, and the stability required for economic development. The drug trade continues to kill our citizens -- nearly 21,000 Americans last year, most of whom are unwitting children. The bulk of the drugs arriving in the United States come from Colombia. Let me be bold, unforgivingly clear and unambiguous on another point: The drug trade funds terrorists and violent criminal groups in the Hemisphere and elsewhere. If we want these evils to stop, we must be resolved to halt them now and on foreign soil. For, if we do not, we will most assuredly see them again -- on our own doorsteps and street corners. Violence on our television screens against our friends and allies to the south is difficult to bear; but violence in

our very midst imposes a burden far heavier on our hearts and lives. INL, and others here today, are determined to hit these threats hard.

Plan Colombia, the centerpiece of our Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) program, is producing results and many success stories. INL's efforts in Colombia have helped reduce drug cultivation in Colombia in 2002 and 2003, after nearly a decade of consecutive increases, increased the effectiveness and coverage of drug interdiction programs, strengthened the presence of the state, the rule of law and the judiciary's ability to prosecute, put traffickers behind bars in the U.S., seized their illegally-gained assets, and expanded economic opportunities for the poor. We continue to build upon our eradication, interdiction, and alternative development results and will stand by the Colombian government in its efforts to topple the drug cartels as it delivers a lasting blow to narco-terrorists.

In short, we need to consolidate our gains and sustain this pace. In FY 2005, our counternarcotics programs in Colombia and the six other countries encompassed by the ACI will continue to pursue vigorous eradication and interdiction efforts to disrupt and destroy the production and transport of drugs destined for U.S. and other markets. Our request will sustain funding for programs that build strong government institutions capable of detecting, arresting and prosecuting processors and traffickers as well as the terrorists that thrive with them. We intend to increasingly turn over responsibilities to host nations, including counternarcotics training, and operation and maintenance.

On balance, the USG and the Colombians are on track to dismantle narco-terrorist organizations by seizing their current and future assets in all manners possible. We will face challenges in the coming years that, if not addressed aggressively, have the potential to reverse some of these gains. In particular, the undetermined outcome of Colombia's peace process will affect our operations. We must also keep up our support for other allies in the Andes to make sure that the Colombian criminal organizations do not export their processing methods to other countries.

Our basic goals remain: Eliminate the cultivation of drugs, break up narcoterrorist groups by disrupting their routes and seizing their profits, and provide real alternatives to those caught in the illegal trade. As we all know, sustained support for President Uribe's unprecedented efforts is essential. Here is -- I will say it -- one of the most courageous leaders in the modern history of this hemisphere. I appreciate this Committee's strong commitment to our efforts and look forward to exchanging views on how to carry this effort into the future.

Let me close by offering you this assurance: I am making sure that our assets are being used in the most effective manner and that performance criteria for projects are strengthened in order to better measure results. INL continues to make progress in combating illegal drug production, through partnerships with our foreign allies and with the many federal agencies involved in these efforts. We are committed to fight the scourge of narcotrafficking and narcoterrorism in our hemisphere. Full stop.

Thank you.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. O'Connell, thank you for being with us as well.

Mr. O'CONNELL. Chairman Davis, distinguished members of the committee, it's my honor to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Defense programs and policy that support that National Drug Control Strategy, and provide a current assessment of this strategy's effectiveness in Colombia.

The Department appreciates the support Congress provides, and it's critical to our efforts in fighting narcoterrorism in Colombia. In fact, last week, sir, I had the honor of spending a solid afternoon with Representative Souder's staff over here, in a very instructive exchange on a wide range of issues. We do, sir, appreciate the congressional interest and support that we get.

Over 75 percent of the world's coca is grown in Colombia, and nearly all the cocaine consumed in the United States is produced and shipped from Colombia. This coca is primarily grown in remote areas of Colombia where there is little government control. Colombian narcoterrorists receive large majorities of their funds from protecting, taxing and engaging in this illegal drug trade. These narcoterrorists seek to overthrow the freely elected Colombian Government, the oldest democracy in Latin America.

The Secretary of Defense has promised Colombian President Uribe increased support for the Colombian counter-narcoterrorist effort. Under President Uribe's leadership, Colombia is regaining control of areas long held by the narcoterrorists. It has made exceptional progress in fighting drug trafficking and terrorism, while improving respect for human rights. Colombian security policies have diminished, the ELN put the FARC on the defensive and pushed the AUC to come to the negotiating table. The Colombian Government and its people are committed now more than ever to save their country.

With only a few years left in office, the continued leadership of President Uribe offers Colombia a unique window of opportunity to preserve democracy. This administration supports President Uribe against FARC and other narcoterrorists by providing resources in support of Colombia's Plan Patriota. In order to maintain the momentum achieved thus far by the Colombians, Congress provided expanded authority in fiscal year 2004 to support Colombia's counter-narcoterrorist efforts. In the same year, expanded authority has been crucial to leverage our resources both against narcotics and terrorism. We thank Congress for supporting our request to extend that expanded authority to fiscal years 2005 and 2006, and in the fiscal year 2005 defense authorization bill.

The Department asked Congress for reprogramming authority of $50 million during this current fiscal year and I'm pleased to report that the Department will be able to increase our efforts in Colombia in fiscal year 2005 by some $43 million.

In the coming year, as the Colombian military will be conducting full scale operations across the country, the personnel cap will begin to have a deleterious effect on Colombia's counter-narcoterrorism mission. The current troop cap limits the U.S. presence in Colombia to 400 military personnel and 400 contractors under most conditions. SOUTHCOM manages this on a daily basis, often canceling or postponing personnel travel to Colombia. While

U.S personnel will not be directly on the front lines, more training and planning assistance will be required for the Colombian military, who will be directly engaged on a broader front to defeat the narcoterrorists.

We should support this effort with manning that bolsters increasing Colombian military needs. Consequently, the administration requested an increase of the personnel cap to 800 military and 600 contractor personnel. The administration's request of 800 military personnel and 600 civilian contractors is part of a well-defined, well-phased plan. The administration's plan was developed with the government of Colombia to maximize the impact of its Plan Patriota. The Department urges that the administration's request be supported.

As an aside, sir, I'd like to pay tribute to my administration colleagues here at the table. This is a tough and hard working administration team that works well together and realizes the challenges we're up against.

As a last thought, sir, I've had the opportunity to be both on the ground 20 years ago as a U.S. officer, fighting terrorism in Colombia, and I've had the opportunity to stand with Secretary Rumsfeld and President Uribe. Those 25 years have seen a remarkable change and I look forward to being able to answer your questions later today.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. O'Connell follows:]

STATEMENT BY
THOMAS W. O'CONNELL
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
108th CONGRESS

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD JUNE 17, 2004

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COUNTERNARCOTICS IN COLOMBIA

Chairman Davis, Representative Waxman, and distinguished members of the Committee, it is my honor to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Defense programs and policy that support for National Drug Control Strategy and to provide a current assessment of this strategy's effectiveness in Colombia. The Department appreciates that the support Congress provides is critical to our efforts in fighting narcoterrorism in Colombia.

DoD'S Role in the National Drug Control Strategy

The Office of Counternarcotics is the focal point for DoD's counterdrug activities, which support the National Drug Control Strategy. The Department's counternarcotics missions include detection and monitoring, demand reduction, support to domestic and host nation law enforcement and/or military forces. The Department carries out these activities by acting as the lead federal agency to detect and monitor the aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs toward the United States; collecting, analyzing and disseminating intelligence on drug activity; and providing training for U.S. and foreign drug law enforcement agencies and foreign military forces with drug enforcement responsibilities.

In the international arena, the Department of Defense provides much of its counternarcotics support through deployments and programs to train, equip and furnish intelligence and operational support for drug detection, monitoring, and interdiction operations conducted by partner counterdrug forces. These countertrafficking methods aim directly at disrupting the terrorist drug trade and finance networks and includes

cooperative military-to-military programs in which countries grant access to our military operators and enable access to target areas.

We are increasingly aware of linkages between terrorist organizations, narcotics trafficking, weapons smuggling, kidnapping rings, and other transnational networks. Some terrorist groups, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Colombia, partially finance their operations with drug money. The Department of Defense, with our counterparts in the Department of State and other government agencies, seeks to systematically dismantle drug trafficking networks, both to halt the flow of drugs into the United States, and to bolster the broader war on terrorism effort.

Colombia

Over 75 percent of the world's coca is grown in Colombia and nearly all of the cocaine consumed in the United States is produced and shipped from Colombia. This coca is primarily grown in remote areas of Colombia where there has been little government control. Colombian narcoterrorists receive a large majority of their funds from protecting, "taxing" and engaging in this illegal drug trade. These narcoterrorists seek to overthrow the freely elected Colombian government, the oldest democracy in Latin America.

The aggressive leadership of President Uribé offers Colombia a unique window of opportunity to preserve Colombian democracy. Under President Uribé's heroic leadership, Colombia is regaining control of areas long held by narcoterrorists. The Colombian military has made exceptional progress in fighting drug trafficking and terrorism while improving respect for human rights. Colombian security policies have

diminished the National Liberation Army (ELN), put the FARC on the defensive, and pushed the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) to come to the negotiating table. The Colombian government and its people are more committed now than ever before to save their country.

This Administration supports President Uribé's continued struggle against the FARC and other narcoterrorists by providing resources in support of Colombia's Plan Patriota. In Fiscal Year 2004, Congress provided expanded authority to support the momentum President Uribé had obtained through successes against the counternarcoterrorist targets. Expanded authority has been crucial to leverage our resources both against narcotics and terrorism. We thank Congress for supporting our request to extend that expanded authority to Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006 in the Fiscal Year 2005 Defense Authorization bill.

We request your continued support in addressing the troop cap limit. The current troop cap limits the U.S. presence in Colombia to 400 military personnel and 400 contractors. SOUTHCOM manages this on a daily basis, often canceling or postponing personnel travel to Colombia. However, in the coming year as the Colombian military will be conducting full-scale operations across the country, the personnel cap will begin to have a deleterious effect on the mission. While U.S. personnel will not be on the front lines, more US-sponsored training and planning assistance will be required for the Colombian military - - who will be directly engaged on a broader front than in previous years in order to defeat the narcoterrorists. We should support this effort with manning that bolsters increasing Colombian military needs. Consequently, the Administration has

requested an increase to the personnel cap to 800 military and 600 contractor personnel. The Administration's request of 800 military personnel and 600 civilian contractors is part of a well-defined, phased plan. This plan was developed with the Government of Colombia to maximize the impact of its Plan Patriota. The Department urges that the Administration's request be supported.

The Secretary of Defense has promised Colombian President Uribé increased support to the Colombian counter-narcoterrorist effort. Using expanded authority and acting within the congressionally approved personnel ceilings, the Department of Defense has provided United States military assistance teams to help the Colombians fuse intelligence and operations, and we intend to expand this program this year. In general, we focus our joint programs on developing, equipping, and training of strategically-focused units within the Colombian military. These units include the Colombian Counternarcotics Brigade, the Rapid Deployment Force (FUDRA), the National Urban Assault Unit, the Marine Riverine Units, and the LANCERO and COMMANDO Battalions of the Special Operations Command.

The Counternarcotics Brigade provides security for eradication operations and conducts raids on drug labs and facilities. This unit has been extremely successful in the Southern region of Colombia and has now expanded their operations throughout the country. Last year, Colombian eradication efforts resulted in coca cultivation estimates showing a 33% reduction from the peak growing year of 2002. This is the lowest level of coca production in the Andes since 1986, when our coca crop estimates began. Opium

poppy in Colombia also dropped last year by more than 10%, building upon a 25% reduction in 2002.

The other Colombian units have been similarly successful. The Colombian Rapid Deployment Force conducts immediate offensive operations as the situation in Colombia dictates, and will be a key combat unit in Plan Patriota. The National Urban Assault Unit is a highly trained anti-terrorism force that conducts hostage rescue and apprehends personnel in urban and semi-urban areas. It is directed by the Colombian Joint Chiefs of Staff. Riverine Combat Elements patrol the vast river network in Colombia that is used for drug trafficking. US military training of the Counter Narcotics Brigade, as well as the COMMANDO Battalion, to pursue enemy leadership has already produced results.

Department of Defense - funded infrastructure allows these specially trained units to deploy forward and to apply their training and equipment directly against narcoterrorists. In order to support these new forces, we are assisting both the Colombian Army and Air Force by providing them with aviation training, logistics, and maintenance support. Department support for the Colombian C-130 Air Force fleet has increased their operational readiness by over 60%. Training continues for helicopter pilots and mechanics, and is supporting a coordinated nationalization plan. This year, we will be consolidating the Colombian helicopter logistics and maintenance under a joint program, allowing the Colombian military to increase their operational readiness by having a centralized repair parts inventory and a pool of qualified mechanics. We also have increased support to the Colombian Navy by providing infrastructure, interceptor boats, and fuel. We provided a command and control system, linking the Colombian Navy,

Marines, Police, and U.S. law enforcement personnel along the north coast of Colombia. We plan on replicating this system along Colombia's west coast.

President's Budget for FY 2005

To accomplish this and other missions, the Defense Department's portion of the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2005 includes $853 million for Drug Interdiction and Counter-Drug Activities. A total of $366.9M will support efforts in the SOUTHCOM AOR, including detection and monitoring operations to assist U. S. law enforcement agencies to counter the flow of drugs in transit into the United States, and supporting nations (such as Colombia) in their fight against narcoterrorism. A total of $173.0 million is for detection and monitoring platforms and assets; $142.5 million is for operational Support; and $51.4 million is for AOR command and control support, including Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S).

Also, the Department asked Congress for reprogramming authority of $50 million during this current fiscal year. I am pleased to report that the Department was able to increase our efforts in Colombia in FY05 by $43 million.

Conclusion

Almost half-way into his four-year term, President Uribé has made Colombia safer and more stable economically. Under his leadership, the Army is helping to regain control of urban neighborhoods long since held by narcoterrorists. President Uribé has raised taxes to provide greater resources to his nation's security forces. Though much remains to be done, I believe we are on the right path in Colombia. Our continued support to President Uribé is critical. If we do not keep up the pressure and momentum

we will lose the progress that has already been made. Although there are many pressing concerns in other regions of the world, we must keep in mind that Colombia is a close ally within this hemisphere.

The Department appreciates Congress' continued support of our counter-narcoterrorism initiatives in Colombia. The initiatives you support play a great role in our efforts to aid a key ally in their fight against narcoterrorism. I thank you, Chairman Davis, Representative Waxman, and the members of the Committee for the tremendous support you have provided. I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

General Hill, welcome.

General HILL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Chairman Souder. I'm honored for this opportunity to appear before you today to provide my assessment of Plan Colombia.

I greatly appreciate the support of the committee for the U.S. Southern Command and to soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, Coast Guardsmen and the civilian personnel I am so privileged to command.

As I mentioned in my written statement, Colombia is at a decisive point. Although there is much work to be done, our country's significant investments in Plan Colombia and the Andean Ridge Initiative are beginning to show substantial results. The trends are generally positive. The Colombian economy is growing, major categories of criminal activity are down, narcotics production is down, terrorist attacks have been cut almost in half. Desertions and demobilizations by the narcoterrorist organizations are increasing.

The military has grown into a professional, competent force that respect human rights and the rule of law and has gained the strategic initiative. I am therefore guardedly optimistic that President Uribe and his government can bring security and stability to Colombia. Over the past 22 months, I have traveled to Colombia 26 times, and will go again next week. I have worked closely with President Uribe, Minister of Defense Uribe and his predecessor, Minister Ramirez, along with General Ospina, the Chief of the Armed Forces, and his predecessor, General Mora.

I have seen these strong and determined leaders in action. I have visited all corners of Colombia and witnessed the tremendous cooperation between our armed forces. I have seem the professionalism and increased capabilities of the Colombian military. I have also been inspired by the dedication of the Colombian soldiers in their daily fight to defend Colombian democracy against vicious narcoterrorists.

I have observed Colombia's leaders inculcate the government and armed forces with an aggressive spirit. The Colombian people believe they can win the war against the narcoterrroists and end the violence. They are operating in an established governmental presence in areas of the country they have not been in in decades. They have built and are executing an extensive and aggressive campaign plan to systematically break Colombia's narcoterrorists' will to fight.

Fully understanding that the problems of Colombia do not have a simple military solution, President Uribe and his administration are building the political, social and economic systems that will eventually return Colombia to the ranks of peaceful and prosperous nations. However, as it currently stands, President Uribe has only two more years in office, which coincidentally will mark the end of Plan Colombia.

Consequently, it is important that we sustain the progress that has been made under Plan Colombia, and that he gets our steady support to set all of his long term initiatives firmly into place. As one of the oldest democracies in this hemisphere, a key trading partner and supplier of oil, a staunch ally and only 3 hours from

Miami, a stable Colombia is important to our national security interests.

Thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Hill follows:]

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UNTIL RELEASED BY THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF

GENERAL JAMES T. HILL, UNITED STATES ARMY

COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

BEFORE THE 108TH CONGRESS

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

17 JUNE 2004

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

UNTIL RELEASED BY THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman, Representative Waxman, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the United States Southern Command's role in assisting Colombia with its battle against narcoterrorism. Every day your soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and civilians at Southern Command are working hard and employing their skills to accomplish our missions in this vital endeavor. We are shoring up our own national security by addressing this challenge at this time and in this place. Simultaneously we are laying the groundwork to promote and maintain future security and stability.

Colombia is at a decisive point in their fight. I have been to Colombia twenty six times over the last 22 months, and I am seeing significant progress. I continue to be optimistic that President Uribe and his administration will establish security and stability in that country. Much of my optimism stems from what I've personally seen him do since he became President. He is inculcating his government and his armed forces with an aggressive spirit and belief they can win the war against the narcoterrorists and end the violence. But the momentum he has built and the progress Colombia has shown is reversible. Consequently, we must maintain our steady, patient support in order to reinforce the successes we have seen and to guarantee a tangible return on the significant investment our country has made to our democratic neighbor.

To outline United States Southern Command's efforts in this endeavor, I will discuss the status of Southern Command's support of Plan Colombia, the progress we are seeing in Colombia, and the way ahead. Assisting Colombia in their fight continues to be in our own best interest. A secure Colombia will benefit fully from democratic processes and economic growth, prevent narcoterrorist spillover, and serve as a regional example.

Conversely, a failed Colombia, serving as a safe haven for narcoterrorists and international terrorists, would be a most unwelcome regional model. While this is primarily Colombia's fight to win, we have the opportunity to tip the balance by augmenting their efforts decisively with our unwavering support.

U.S. Southern Command's Support to Plan Colombia

Plan Colombia is a six-year plan designed to defeat the threat the Colombians face. This threat continues to come from the three largest illegal armed groups in Colombia, all named on the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations and two named on the President's list of drug kingpins: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or FARC, the National Liberation Army or ELN, and the United Self-Defense Forces or AUC. While these groups may retain fragments of their founding philosophies, they appear to have jettisoned ideology in favor of terrorist methods and narcotrafficking.

Narcoterrorism and its connection to the drug industry threaten the stability of several nations in Latin America and the Caribbean and erode the very fabric of democracy by spawning terrorism, corrupting public institutions, promoting criminal activity, undermining legitimate economies, and disrupting social order. The violence and corruption not only threatens our neighbors, it poses a direct national security threat to our homeland. The latest Center for Disease Control statistics indicate that over 21,000 Americans die each year as a direct result of drug related causes. This staggering number does not take into account the second and third order effects on families, the lost productivity of those lives cut short, or the additional thousands of Americans we lose to indirect drug related causes. Illicit drug abuse is certainly a multi-faceted problem, but

our support to Plan Colombia is effectively addressing one of its most critical components.

Our role at Southern Command is to support implementation of the military aspects of the plan. The plan addresses the entire depth of Colombia's complex problem, however, and is by no means envisioned as a simple military solution. As you know, various other U.S. government agencies and departments received funding to support both military and non-military aspects of Plan Colombia.

Colombia is in its fourth year of this six-year plan. The first phase of three focused on the Putumayo and Caquetá Departments of Southern Colombia where approximately half of Colombia's coca cultivation took place and lasted from December 2000 until December 2002. Southern Command was responsible primarily for training and equipping a Counter Narcotics Brigade, fielding Blackhawk and Huey II helicopters and also training pilots and crews during the first phase. Secondary efforts provided for infrastructure upgrades, riverine training, and counterdrug intelligence support. In Phase II, the Colombians are expanding the size of the armed forces, working with neighboring countries for combined operations, building forests where coca once grew, and creating units comprised of campesino soldiers to help guard towns where government presence was formerly lacking. Additionally, the government has mounted an extensive campaign plan to regain control over territory and establish governance in areas controlled by the narcoterrorists for decades. These initiatives support continued drug eradication and interdiction, to include Colombia's Air Bridge Denial Program. Since resumption of air bridge denial operations in August 2003, the Colombian Air Force has destroyed 16 aircraft, arrested one Colombian pilot and stopped eight metric tons of cocaine from

reaching U.S. streets. Phase III of Plan Colombia culminates the entire plan by expanding the government presence and control nationwide. While it is still too early to predict the exact end state of Plan Colombia, the progress we are seeing is a positive development that promises to complete that plan and institutionalize its successes.

Counter Narcotics Brigade

The Counter Narcotics Brigade (CN Brigade) headquarters and its three battalions are the best-trained and equipped conventional units in the Colombian Army. U.S. military personnel conducted staff and light infantry training for almost 2,300 troops. In accordance with Plan Colombia, the CN Brigade was originally designed to operate in southern Colombia. The CN brigade had impressive results during drug interdiction operations in that part of the country by destroying coca processing labs, providing security to eradication operations, and seizing chemical precursors and coca leaf. The Colombian military synchronized the deployments of the Counter Narcotics Brigade (CN Brigade) in Phase I with Colombian National Police and Department of State eradication efforts. The Office of National Drug Control Policy found that Colombia's coca cultivation decreased by 21 percent in 2003 from 2002. Additionally, as narcotraffickers began pushing cocaine labs away from southern Colombian cultivation areas, the Colombian police and military have found it easier to track and disrupt their illicit actions. Because of its success in the Putumayo and Caquetá Departments, this brigade is now also being used beyond its original scope in other parts of the country, most notably the Nariño Department. We continue to provide sustainment training to the CN Brigade. In 2003, this unit transformed its organizational structure to become more flexible and deployable to plan and conduct ground, riverine, and air assault offensive operations

against narcoterrorist organizations and targets throughout the entire country. Most recently, the CN Brigade captured Nayibe Rojas Valdarrama, aka "Sonia" Chief of Finances and Logistics for the FARC Southern Bloc. Her capture has led to numerous other related arrests and has degraded the FARC's ability to conduct narcotrafficking and launder its proceeds.

Helicopters

Since December 2000, the United States has provided air mobility to the first CN Brigade using a company of 28 UH-1Ns with a combination of Colombian and Department of State contracted pilots. The UH-1N aircraft are based in Tolemaida with the Colombian Army Aviation Battalion and are forward deployed to Larandia for operations. The current operational focus remains providing air mobility support for counterdrug operations. Delivery of the 25 Plan Colombia Huey IIs was completed in September 2002. These helicopters are also based at Tolemaida and currently focused on supporting pilot training and infrastructure security. All fourteen UH-60L Blackhawk helicopters procured under Plan Colombia for the Colombian military began operations in January 2003 after a thorough program of pilot training. These helicopters also support the CN Brigade, pilot training, and infrastructure security. While the Department of State is responsible for program oversight and funding for operations and contract maintenance for all of these helicopters, quality control is provided by a U.S. Army Technical Assistance Field Team. The Department of Defense retains responsibility for training Colombian Army pilots, crew chiefs and aviation unit maintenance personnel to fly and maintain Blackhawk and Huey II helicopters. The maintenance programs are

supplemented by a safety initiative that integrates risk management planning into air operations and is working towards the establishment of a Colombian Joint Safety Center, modeled on the U.S. military's safety centers. Overall, these helicopters have given the Colombian military unprecedented mobility although they are still lacking sufficient lift assets. This mobility allows an increasingly well-trained Colombian Army to maneuver across a rugged landscape, in parts of the country they have not operated in for years, resulting in greater operational effectiveness against the narcoterrorists.

Engineer and Infrastructure Support

The Plan Colombia supplemental appropriation allowed us to complete large-scale infrastructure improvements that greatly accelerated the development of increased operational capabilities for Colombia's forces. In subsequent years, we have continued to provide necessary facilities to support our training and equipping programs. Among our more significant engineer projects were the expansion of both fixed-wing and helicopter facilities at Tres Esquinas, the establishment of a comprehensive helicopter pilot training school at Melgar and Tolemaida, improved port facilities at Buenaventura, development of riverine support and maintenance facilities at Tres Esquinas and La Tagua, and the development of helicopter operational and support facilities at Larandia. We are moving now to develop the logistics infrastructure needed to support Colombian forces as they move outward to re-establish government control throughout Colombia. We recently completed and turned over a hangar that will directly improve the operational rate of the Colombian C-130 fleet by improving their maintenance program. Additionally, in September 2003, we awarded contracts to establish logistics support centers, motorpools

and maintenance facilities. As a direct result of the completion of these facilities, Colombian forces will be better able to conduct and sustain forward operations.

Professionalism and Human Rights

Embedded within the training Southern Command and U.S. forces provide under Plan Colombia is the institutionalization of human rights and the respect for law by the Colombian military. Our military legal assistance projects in Colombia, which include developing a Judge Advocate General (JAG) school as well as legal and human rights reform, continue on track. The initial JAG school courses began in February 2002 in temporary facilities. The permanent JAG School opened on July 29, 2003, and provides courses on military justice, international law, and operational law. We have worked closely with the Colombian military to establish and build a Military Penal Justice Corps. 320 military, police, and civilian lawyers received continued professional legal education beyond that provided at the school. The Colombian military legal corps, similar to the method used by our armed forces, is also becoming embedded with the field units of the Army in order to provide legal advice to commanders during operations.

United States Southern Command continues to support Colombian efforts to extend human rights training throughout its ranks. Colombia is fighting its illegal armed groups justly, in accordance with democratic values and human rights. This is instrumental in what we are collectively striving to achieve. The Colombian government is not resorting to rural concentration camps, peasant roundups, massacres, disappearances or other tactics used by their enemies. According to the latest Department of State Colombian Human Rights Report, the vast majority of allegations of human rights abuses, over 98

percent are attributed to Colombia's illegal armed groups, primarily the three-narcoterrorist groups, and not to government forces. This report clearly demonstrates the institutionalization of human rights by the Colombian government, whose forces as recently as the mid-1990s were accused of 50-60 percent of human rights abuses.

The Human Rights report finds that, "the government has an extensive human rights apparatus coordinated by the office of the President's Advisor for Human Rights. That office coordinates with local human rights groups. Most notably, it established a special 'momentum' committee to advance judicial resolutions of 100 key human rights cases." Over 290,000 members of Colombia's security forces have received specialized human rights training since 1996, conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Colombian Red Cross, the Roman Catholic church, foreign governments, and other government offices and agencies. I am convinced the Colombian government is serious about human rights and will continue to promote them aggressively.

The Uribe Administration's Progress

Plan Colombia predates President Uribe by two years and will end coincidentally when he is scheduled to leave office in 2006. While he has firmly embraced the plan, he has also brought to office new initiatives and a long-term vision that extends well beyond that six-year plan. President Uribe won a landslide victory by running on a platform of aggressively hunting down the terrorists in his country and asserting government control of national territory. After years of failed attempts to negotiate with illegal armed groups, to include a bold experiment that gave the FARC a safe haven in the southern part of the country, the people of Colombia had finally had enough of terrorist groups, especially

after seeing how the FARC had used their safe haven to plot terrorist acts and establish drug base camps instead of developing their notional politics into a concrete reality.

President Uribe faces enormous challenges, but he is using his mandate to put deeds behind his words. The signs of his progress, which have built upon our support to Plan Colombia, are already evident. Colombia developed a comprehensive national security strategy that directs all the tools at the government's disposal toward a common end of defeating the terrorists. The Colombians now spend more than 4 percent of their GDP on defense. President Uribe has levied a war tax on the country's wealthiest citizens. He is increasing police end-strength to supplement those already planned for the military. The government has developed a plan to protect travelers along the major roadways. He is pushing the military and the police to gain control of areas and neighborhoods dominated by the narcoterrorists. In those areas where the government is gaining control, they are taking governance to the people by providing more robust social services and the rule of law to support those who previously suffered most from their absence.

The military has had growing operational success against the narcoterrorist organizations across the country, particularly against the mid-level leadership, and all indications are that they will continue to take the fight to the illegal armed groups over the next year. The firm resolve of the Uribe administration, backed by aggressive military operations, has resulted in increased desertions by enemies of the state. These desertions are promising, especially since the government provides a program under which those who leave the FARC voluntarily are put in protected housing and receive health care, education, and work training.

Our forces have trained the staff and soldiers of Colombia's best units, giving these units an added edge of operational effectiveness that is paying dividends. The Colombian Army has established its own Special Operations Command to coordinate and oversee difficult and complex operations against the most sensitive targets. The establishment and training of a Commando Battalion, modeled on our own Ranger battalions, has given the Colombians a unit that can strike high-value targets including enemy leadership. The Colombian military is also in the process of establishing a Joint Special Operations Command that will synchronize special operations among all branches of the Colombian military. U.S. Southern Command's Special Forces component, Special Operations Command South, will provide training to this new unit. Currently, U.S. military forces are conducting deployments in fourteen different locations in Colombia providing training to nine major Colombian military units. Additionally, Planning Assistance Training Teams are assisting the Colombian army's mobile brigades in operational planning. We have also trained the Colombian urban counter-terrorist unit and continue to upgrade their capabilities and equipment.

We are currently supporting the Government of Colombia's campaign plan to regain territory previously controlled by the narcoterrorists and working with the inter-agency and Congress to fund the plan. The funding will allow us to provide timely training, equipment and logistic support to the Colombian Armed Forces. With this critical support, the Colombian Armed Forces will be able to continue taking the fight to the traditional FARC leadership centers deep in the jungles of southeast Colombia. This area not only is the home of the FARC leadership, but is also the primary source for FARC finances due to its major coca production. This is a historic execution of a strategic plan

and is the first time the Colombian Armed Forces have deployed this large of a force against the FARC center of gravity.

U.S. Special Forces also trained Colombian Armed Forces in Arauca to protect a portion of the 772-kilometer oil pipeline that had been a frequent target of FARC and ELN attacks. This training was just one part of a nationwide Infrastructure Security Strategy that protects critical facilities and reestablishes control in narcoterrorist influenced areas of the country.

We continue to train Colombia's helicopter pilots, providing their forces a growing ability to perform air assaults that are key in the battle against dispersed enemies. We deploy intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets in country that have provided timely, actionable intelligence to Colombian units. We are training their staffs with Planning Assistance Training Teams that increase their ability to plan and execute intelligence driven operations against illegal armed groups. We are working with Colombian Marines to establish two Mobile Training Teams that will work with the Riverine Brigade to raise proficiency for riverine interdiction. We contracted logistics to help the Colombians maintain their own C-130 fleet. Toward that end, we are looking forward to establishing long term solutions to readiness issues with the establishment of a National Maintenance Point for Colombia's helicopters, and a Logistical Automation System that will integrate supply and fiscal management for parts and materials for the Colombian military and National Police. We are also assisting in the training of the Colombian National Police Carabineros (Rural) with the goal of reestablishing governance throughout the country.

We also provide medical training and assistance to help the Colombian military improve their health services support to their combat troops. With our support, the Colombian military now has a well-established "Combat Life Saver" training course.

In civil-military operations, we are helping the Colombians to build a civil-affairs capability that will be implemented in the Arauca Department to bring humanitarian aid and functioning institutions to previously terrorized areas. In the past year, with our support, the Colombian military has written and adopted a civil affairs doctrine that allows them to minimize the impact of their military operations on the civilian population, while at the same time synchronizing humanitarian assistance with their operations. In the departments of Arauca, Cundinamarca, Caquetá, and Guaviare – portions of the last three are in the former despeje – the Colombian military has provided basic medical care to over 20,000 civilians and rehabilitated a number of educational and medical facilities. Similar events are planned in conjunction with other Colombian ministries in the months ahead. In addition, our Civil Affairs forces have worked with the office of the Minister of Defense to develop mechanisms that synchronize the inter-agency planning requirements needed to re-establish governance in previously ungoverned spaces. To this end, the Government of Colombia established a Coordination Center for Integrated Action. This incipient inter-agency body – consisting of representatives from the office of President Uribe, the ministries of defense, interior, education, and others – has been tasked with developing policies and plans to ensure that as the Colombian military successfully reclaims narcoterrorist controlled areas that the other bodies of government rapidly respond, establish presence, and provide the

population with the government services they did not have while under control of the illegally armed groups.

Beyond our coordinated military efforts, President Uribe has sponsored political, economic, and judicial reforms. These measures will assist the Colombian economy as well as free up resources for increased security measures. President Uribe aims to reduce the government bureaucracy, eliminate corruption, and enact fiscal reform. Economically, President Uribe's stance and the promised reforms have buoyed the country's confidence. The government of Colombia has collected 18 percent more taxes compared to last year. Further, tax collection (as a percentage of GDP) rose from 16 percent in 2002 to 19 percent in 2003. Colombia has raised over one billion dollars via bonds since the new administration took office, and its stock market has increased by 50 percent this year. Likewise, President Uribe has sought to stamp out corruption and bolster judicial reform.

This list is just a partial highlight of the coordinated effort the Colombian government is making to solve its own problems. President Uribe has infused his government with energy, organization, and a sense of purpose. He understands that this is primarily a Colombian problem, one which Colombia must solve, yet he still needs our help to make his efforts ever more effective. President Uribe stood by us as a member of the Coalition of the Willing in Operation Iraqi Freedom, a stance unpopular with the Colombian public. He is providing the strategic leadership that Colombia needs to move ahead. Recent polls show public confidence in him and the military remains strong. However, there are already some indications that the FARC will exercise strategic patience and attempt to wait out President Uribe and Plan Colombia. Failure to assist the Government

of Colombia at this critical juncture could very well facilitate the necessary conditions for the FARC to regain the strategic initiative.

Under President Uribe, our country's significant investment in Plan Colombia and the Andean Ridge Initiative are showing substantial results. He is fully adhering to Plan Colombia and already looking well beyond it. Most notably a subsidiary campaign plan provides a long-term strategy and has been coordinated across the Colombian services, the interagency and our military. This campaign plan details the systematic defeat of Colombia's narcoterrorists. He is building the systems that will eventually return Colombia to the ranks of peaceful and prosperous nations. President Uribe has only two more years in office. Consequently, it is critical – especially this year and next – that he gets our unwavering support to set all his long-term initiatives firmly into place.

Way Ahead

We are seeing the pendulum swing in Colombia, and we will continue all of our planned training and support as well as seeking new opportunities to increase that support at this critical juncture. Colombia is the linchpin in the narcoterrorist battle, but we must be careful not to win the battle in Colombia and lose the war in the region. As the Colombians make progress, their success will push narcoterrorists to seek safer areas in which to operate. Already, the FARC, ELN, and AUC operate across the porous borders of Colombia's neighbors, and the remote nature of many of these areas makes them ever more attractive as safe havens. While we are seeing increased coordination and cooperation among most of Colombia's neighbors, some of those countries also lack the resources to maintain territorial sovereignty in these ungoverned spaces. Thus, across the

Andean Ridge, we are working with the bordering nations to increase cooperation further, fortify borders and strengthen capabilities.

Recognizing that we are at a critical and decisive point in our support to Colombia, I have reorganized an element of my staff to focus exclusively on current operations and long term planning for Colombia. I have reorganized our personnel operating in Colombia to maximize the support we can provide and gain every possible efficiency while operating within the mandated cap on military and civilian personnel.

The current personnel cap limits the U.S. presence in Colombia to 400 military personnel and 400 contractors. We manage the cap on a daily basis, rigorously remain under the ceilings, and frequently must cancel or postpone planned personnel travel to Colombia, request aircraft to reduce crew size, create complicated work-around schedules for aircraft flights, or simply cut back on training. The Administration has requested an increase of the personnel cap to 800 military personnel and 600 civilian contractors in Colombia in support of Plan Colombia.

The request to seek an increase in the personnel ceilings is a change from our previous belief that we could continue our programs efficiently under the previous ceilings. The progress made by President Uribe and Colombia have led us to conclude that there is a real opportunity, with only a small increase in U.S. personnel, if we are to achieve our policy goals in Colombia. I would emphasize that we do not seek to change the prohibition on U.S. involvement in combat.

To date the impact of the personnel cap has been small. In the coming year, however, as the Colombian Military conducts full-scale operations across the depth of the country, the personnel cap will begin to have a deleterious effect on the mission. While U.S.

personnel will not be directly on the front lines with the Colombian troops, more training and planning assistance at a variety of headquarters is required since a greater portion of the Colombian Military will be directly engaged on a broader front in operations to defeat the narcoterrorists. We should reinforce success this year rather than constraining ourselves with a cap number that made sense at the beginning of Plan Colombia, but has not been adjusted for the current and future situation on the ground.

As the lead Department of Defense agent for implementing military aspects of U.S. policy in Colombia, U.S. Southern Command will continue to maintain a priority effort against narcoterrorism. Key in most of our recent endeavors has been approval by the U.S. Congress of Expanded Authority legislation. This legislation has allowed us to use funds available for counterdrug activities to provide assistance to the Government of Colombia for a coordinated campaign against the terrorist activities of its illegal armed groups. The granting of Expanded Authority was an important recognition that no meaningful distinction can be made between the terrorists and drug traffickers in our region. All three of Colombia's terrorist groups are deep into the illicit narcotics business. Trying to decide whether a mission against a FARC unit was a counterdrug or counterterrorist one was an exercise in futility and hampered operational effectiveness on the ground. Expanded Authority has eliminated the time consuming step of first evaluating the mission based on its probable funding source and now allows us to bring to bear all our assets more rapidly. As just one example, it will allow assets controlled by JIATF-South to continue being used to their full potential to provide real-time, actionable intelligence that is key in conducting effective operations against the narcoterrorists. Additionally, JIATF-S will take an increased role in counter-illicit trafficking, as many

materials other than narcotics use the same transit routes through our area of responsibility. Expanded Authority for FY05 and beyond is the single most important factor for us to continue building success in Colombia. While our efforts are, for good reason, Colombia-centric, we are not letting others fall behind to become the next targets for terrorist groups. The cooperative counter narcoterrorist groundwork we are laying today will further our national security for decades to come.

Conclusion

The future security and stability of Colombia and the United States, indeed all of Latin America and the Caribbean as well, are now, more than ever, tied inextricably together. Latin America and the Caribbean are important to the United States strategically, economically, and culturally, and our ties will only grow stronger over time. Many of the region's countries are consolidating democracies, however, that will take time to mature. Meanwhile, these countries face uncertainty, whether from weak institutions that have yet to undergo multiple cycles of free elections or from disappointment that liberal market reforms have not yet produced sustained improvement. It is upon these inherent vulnerabilities that criminal organizations prey. Illegal armed groups foster corruption, greed and instability and undermine the best efforts of dedicated public servants and honest citizens. Corruption and instability create safe havens for not only narcoterrorists and drug traffickers but also for other international terrorists.

It will be up to those nations to demonstrate their ability to govern, enforce the rule of law, implement judicial reform, and develop a profound respect for human rights. These fundamentals provide the stable and secure environment necessary for economic growth – growth that will improve the quality of life for ordinary citizens. Southern Command

plays a crucial role in assisting the development of security forces that help provide the ability to govern throughout the region, particularly in Colombia.

We are at a critical time in Colombia's history. The elected government of President Uribe enjoys unparalleled approval ratings approaching 80 percent. Under his leadership, the military and police are helping to regain control of areas long held by narcoterrorists. Colombia's citizens are taking a more active role in their nation's defense and providing actionable intelligence to the Colombian Armed Forces. There is a renewed sense of momentum, commitment, and hope as the Colombian people struggle to save their country, but there is also a finite window of opportunity beyond which public opinion and support will wane without significant progress.

I am optimistic about the progress we are seeing in Colombia, though there remains an enormous amount of work to be done. We are at a critical point where the progress in eliminating conflict, reducing tension, and establishing democracy throughout the region could be at risk if we are not steadfast in our efforts. While our attention is drawn to another region of the world, we must keep in mind that we live in this hemisphere, and its continued progress as a region of democracy and prosperity is paramount to our national security.

I would like to thank the Chairman and the Members of the Committee for this opportunity and for the tremendous support you have provided this command. I can assure you that the men and women of the United States Southern Command are working to their utmost to accomplish their missions for our great country.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Ms. Tandy, thank you for being with us, last but not the least. We appreciate the job you're doing.

Ms. TANDY. Thank you, Chairman Davis. It's a privilege to be last before you today and also Chairman Souder. And certainly an honor to discuss with you today the Drug Enforcement Administration's counter-narcotics role in Plan Colombia.

I want to thank you first for your strong leadership and support of DEA's work worldwide, and certainly specifically in Colombia. Few tasks are more critical to the security, peace and prosperity of the western hemisphere than dismantling and disarming Colombian drug cartels and their terrorist associates. Both the FARC and the AUC depend on drug trafficking as the primary means to support their terrorist activities. Plan Colombia's integrated strategy to combat the narcotics industry is working, and it is crucial to sustaining the progress that we have achieved to date. Plan Colombia and the courageous leadership of President Uribe have provided critical support to a number of coordinated and hugely successfully Colombian national police and DEA investigations.

As you noted, Mr. Chairman, 6 weeks ago, we announced the indictments of nine leaders of the Norte Valle cartel. As you noted in your opening statements, this cartel is responsible for exporting more than $1.2 million pounds of cocaine to the United States since 1990, that value in excess of $10 billion. The cartel has been estimated to be responsible for a third to a half of the cocaine brought into this country, and it paid the AUC to protect its operations and its members. The indictments against the Norte Valle cartel are made possible through Plan Colombia.

While the plan provides limited direct support to DEA, its impact in bolstering Colombian institutions and the rule of law has created a climate favorable to law enforcement. The justice sector reform program in particular has strengthened law enforcement institutions and infrastructure and directly supports two DEA programs in Colombia. First among these is the Bilateral Case Initiative. That initiative undertakes investigations of drug trafficking and money laundering organizations outside the United States for prosecution inside the United States. Under this program, we have built prosecutable cases in the United States that have led to more than 50 convictions.

The second Plan Colombia supported program that DEA is involved in is a communications interception program that's funded by almost $5 million from Plan Colombia as part of the justice sector reform money. This wire intercept program enables the Colombian national police to gather intelligence through judicially authorized communications interceptions. Effectively carrying out these kinds of enforcement actions requires strong coordination with U.S. law enforcement and diplomatic communities and with our Colombian counterparts. And within Colombia, DEA consults on most U.S. counter-drug programs and coordinates with the Department of State and with other Federal agencies. And I am especially proud of the effective working relationship that DEA has cultivated with the Colombian national police, Colombian prosecutors and other Colombian law enforcement counterparts of ours.

Within this cooperative framework, DEA continues a number of our own initiatives that are critical to our success in Colombia. Our Sensitive Investigation Unit, which we refer to as SIUs, take the lead in operations against the consolidated priority target organizations and other related targets. The specialized financial investigation groups that we have set up have focused on divesting traffickers of the proceeds of their crimes, and we're working to interdict the flow of drugs to the United States by targeting go-fast boats leaving Colombia, and in the last year, we have almost doubled cocaine seizures through Operational Firewall.

We are also working in Colombia's airports to stop heroin and cocaine couriers. Our strong partnership with Colombia and the programs that I've just described have led to major enforcement successes. For example, Operation White Dollar dismantled a massive international money laundering ring responsible for laundering millions of drug dollars through the black market peso exchange. It resulted recently in 34 indictments and the forfeiture of $20 million in the United States.

These are victories, these are successes for Colombia, but these are victories for America. When we dismantle drug cartels, we eliminate criminals responsible for bringing in massive quantities of poison into our own neighborhoods and reciprocally, we know that violence, instability and terrorism in Colombia are fueled by American drug consumption. Our successes strengthen Colombia and ultimately protect Americans from the misery of drug abuse.

I thank you again for your continued support of DEA's work, and I'm sure I can speak for all of my colleagues and good friends on this panel that we are all very pleased now to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Tandy follows:]

Remarks by

Karen P. Tandy
Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration
United States Department of Justice

Before the

House Committee on Government Reform

Regarding

Plan Colombia

June 17, 2004

Note: This is prepared text and may not reflect changes in actual delivery.

Statement of

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June 17, 2004

"Plan Colombia"

Chairman Davis, Congressman Waxman and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and your strong support for the work of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) worldwide. Plan Colombia and the tireless commitment of President Uribe have provided critical support to DEA and Colombian National Police (CNP) investigations that have proven their success through the ultimate measure of results. While there is always more work to be done, the recent major indictments of the leadership of the Norte Valle Cartel and their protectors in the AUC terrorist organization, who together have exported in excess of $10 billion worth of cocaine to the United States, are among the successes demonstrating that we are making a difference in Colombia. I look forward to discussing our efforts with you this afternoon.

Plan Colombia Facilitates Law Enforcement

Mr. Chairman, while Plan Colombia provides only limited direct support to the DEA, the program's impact in bolstering Colombian institutions and the rule of law has created a climate favorable to law enforcement activities and close partnerships with our counterparts in Colombia. Our efforts seek to disrupt and dismantle major Colombian international drug trafficking organizations and their financial operations at every step, from cultivation and production of cocaine and heroin to the streets of America. By doing so, we are also acting against narcoterrorist organizations such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia (AUC), who are inextricably linked to the drug trade and have come to depend on drug-derived proceeds to finance their wars against the Government of Colombia.

The key element of Plan Colombia in this respect is the Justice Sector Reform Program, which has assisted the Colombian government to develop and sustain a modern, effective and efficient criminal justice system through training of police, prosecutors, and judges, support of asset forfeiture and financial investigations, along with other initiatives which have trained over 10,000 police, prosecutors, judges, and others. In addition to bolstering law enforcement institutions and infrastructure, the program has provided direct support for two DEA programs that have a special relationship to Plan Colombia.

Bilateral Case Initiative

The Bilateral Case Initiative supports investigations of the operations of drug trafficking and drug-related money laundering organizations outside the United States for prosecution inside the United States, sending a strong message to major traffickers worldwide that they cannot hide from prosecution. Under the program, the Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Section of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, the Special Operations Division, the CNP, and the DEA's Bogota Country Office have gathered evidence overseas to build prosecutable cases in the United States leading to over 50 convictions. The majority of the indictments obtained have been against high level Colombian FARC, AUC and cartel members, including members of the Attorney General's Consolidated Priority Organization Target (CPOT) list. Plan Colombia provided support for detailing a second Justice Attaché to the Embassy, training and related equipment for Colombian prosecutors necessary travel and other related support.

Communications Interception Program

Another program, funded by $5 million in Justice Sector Reform money, gives the CNP the ability to gather law enforcement intelligence by intercepting communications within Colombia with appropriate judicial authorization. Resulting leads and information are shared with DEA domestic offices through the Special Operations Division to pursue and expand investigations in the United States and play a critical role in investigating major drug trafficking, money laundering and precursor chemical organizations. Operation Encore began with wiretap intercepts relating to a major heroin trafficking organization in Pereira, Colombia, expanded to wiretaps in New York, and ultimately led to 31 arrests in the United States and Colombia and the dismantlement of the organization.

Law Enforcement Leadership and Programs

In addition to the programs supported by Plan Colombia, the DEA also has primary responsibility for all U.S. drug law enforcement matters in Colombia and carries out its own programs there to address key priorities.

The Committee expressed a specific interest in how the DEA works and coordinates with other counterdrug and law enforcement agencies from both the United States and Colombia. As an integral part of the Embassy country team under the authority of the U.S. Ambassador, we consult on most U.S. counterdrug programs and coordinate with the Department of State's Narcotics Affairs Section and other federal agencies. In addition, the DEA coordinates all drug investigations conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Immigration and Customs Enforcement relating to Colombia or Colombian traffickers operating in the United States or third countries. We also attempt to pass appropriate information from the DEA's domestic investigations that relates to Colombia to those agencies and the CNP.

Over the course of several years, the Bogota Country Office has cultivated a strong working relationship with the CNP, other law enforcement agencies, and prosecutors, often assigning DEA Special Agents and Intelligence Analysts to work hand-in-hand with our Colombian counterparts in support of investigations. An important example of this cooperation is the Bogota Heroin Task Force, made up of 9 DEA personnel and approximately 40 CNP officers who target major organizations distributing significant quantities of heroin to the United States.

Before moving on to tell you about the many successes that have arisen from these programs, I would be remiss if I did not briefly mention a few of our other initiatives in Colombia that address areas of interest to the Committee. DEA's Sensitive Investigative Units (SIUs), made up of 161 Colombian law enforcement personnel trained, equipped, screened and guided by the DEA, take the lead in operations against CPOT and priority target organizations. In addition, we have established specialized financial investigation groups within both the SIU and the Bogota Country Office to carry out my vision of recommitting the DEA to hunt and remove the proceeds of the illicit drug trade – an especially important goal in Colombia given the well-established ties between drug trafficking and terrorism.

Finally, we are working to interdict the flow of drugs to the United States. Operation Firewall, developed by the Cartagena Resident Office, targets "go-fast" boats departing the North Coast of Colombia along with the CNP and the U.S. Southern Command and has come close to doubling cocaine seizures in the area over the past year. In Bogota and Cali, the DEA operates airport interdiction programs to screen passengers who may be drug couriers bound for the United States. In 2003, our efforts in Bogota led to the seizure of 426 kilograms of cocaine and 93 kilograms of heroin, an increase from the seizure of 376 kilograms of cocaine and 88 kilograms of heroin in 2002.

DEA Successes and Plan Colombia

Our strong cooperation with the Government of Colombia and the programs I just described have led to several major law enforcement successes related to Colombia even since I became Administrator last August. I would like to emphasize for the Committee that these have not just been successes for Colombia – they have been major successes for America because they have targeted organizations moving massive quantities of illicit drugs to our cities and towns. It has often been pointed out that violence, instability and terrorism in Colombia is fueled in significant part by American drug consumption – not only do our actions to prevent one prevent the other, they ultimately protect Americans from the consequences of drug abuse.

As Attorney General Ashcroft announced last month, our most significant recent success has been the indictment of nine leaders of the Norte Valle cartel, three of whom are CPOT targets. The cartel has been one of Colombia's most powerful drug trafficking organizations and exported more than 1.2 million pounds (or 500 metric tons) of cocaine to the United States between 1990 and the present, which we have estimated to be worth in excess of $10 billion. Moreover, it used and paid the terrorist AUC to protect its drug routes, laboratories, members and associates. We believe that the Norte Valle cartel has been responsible for bringing a third to half of all the cocaine that reaches our shores into the United States. Our intention is for these indictments, obtained by the Department's Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Section working together with several U.S. Attorney's Offices, to accomplish the most meaningful result of all and put them out of business like the Medellin and Cali cartels before them. The Sensitive Investigative Unit I mentioned made up of our partners in Colombian law enforcement seized $200 million of the cartel's assets, contributed a significant amount of information to these indictments and continues to make every effort to apprehend the leaders of the cartel. I think it is fair to say that these results would have been a lot more difficult, if not impossible, without the direct and indirect support provided by Plan Colombia.

Our work with Colombian law enforcement has also led to two recent successful financial investigations. Operation White Dollar resulted in a coordinating dismantling of a massive international ring that laundered millions of Colombian drug dollars in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom through the "Black Market Peso Exchange," which has been one of the primary methods by which Colombian traffickers launder their funds as well as one of the most difficult to detect. This Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation was coordinated by the DEA and resulted in indictments against 34 members of the ring and the forfeiture of $20 million in laundered funds. Another financial investigation, Operation Double Trouble, targeted and disrupted key Colombian drug and money brokers operating in both countries, resulting in the seizure of over $12.8 million. The SIU and the programs I described helped to gather critical evidence for both of these investigations.

Other, similar, cases have grown from our work in Colombia, although time does not permit me to share their details this afternoon. I hope that these compelling examples will demonstrate for you, however, the significance, success, and meaningful impact of the work of the DEA in Colombia, which is one of the cornerstones to which many of our most significant enforcement efforts around the world can be traced. Our successes would be far less possible without the support and assistance provided by the United States in Colombia.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate very much the opportunity to testify today and the bipartisan support the Committee has demonstrated for the DEA. I strongly encourage your continued support of our work in Colombia and would be glad to answer any questions.

Mr. SOUDER [assuming Chair]. I thank you all, and I'm going to start the questioning, then Chairman Davis will be back to do some additional questions.

First let me thank each of you and through you, all the people who work for you for their valiant efforts. With all the news focused on Iraq and secondarily Afghanistan, it's often forgotten by many American people that far more people are dying per month because of drug abuse than we're actually losing over the whole period of the Iraq war, and that Colombia is one of our, certainly even if you take Iraq and Afghanistan, the Indian expression would be, you can count them on one hand and have enough fingers left to bowl.

In other words, there are very few countries that get as much money in foreign aid and in direct assistance as Colombia. As Congress, we have to have a lot of oversight on that and a lot of focus, and we can't lose track either of the deaths in the United States, the battles going on in Colombia, or the hot war in what's happening financially as we go through our budget.

I also want to, even though we've had some very interesting conversations and I can't say how glad I am to see that Mr. O'Connell is in your position at the Defense Department. You're in a very critical position not only to back up SOUTHCOM but help CENTCOM, as well as Mr. Charles, having both Iraq and Afghanistan in his portfolio.

It's important that people in your position understand that there is an interrelationship which you can really see in Colombia between the terrorists and the drug money. We're seeing that around the world and having people who are working all those simultaneously, even if the general public doesn't understand we've actually learned a lot in Colombia that now is applying in other areas.

And how we stand up and how we work with that information, is very important because you're in positions with which to transfer that. And now with DEA on the ground and Afghanistan as well, we can kind of take those worldwide experiences, and secondarily, that you haven't forgotten about Colombia. Because while we're working on those highly visible things on television, the key thing is that it's still the primary supplier of cocaine in the world, and our major supplier of heroin and other things along with Mexico.

With that, I have a couple of particular questions. I wanted to make sure I asked General Hill a question, Mr. O'Connell made some statements about the 800 military advisors that are proposed in the President's budget. I wonder if you could elaborate on that a little bit, why you think that's necessary.

General HILL. Succinctly put, I need a lot more flexibility to support the Colombian Plan Patriota. About a year ago, they briefed me on this well thought out, conceived campaign plan, not a one-time military operation, but a campaign plan to retake the country. Specifically in the old Despye area, where they have not operated in 20 years.

Today, they have the better part of two divisions and nine brigades, along with the joint task force out there conducting that fight daily. And they're having some wonderful success. What I need to be able to do is put enough planning assistance teams in there, logistical planners, operational planners, to assist them in

carrying out this very valuable fight. I think all of us across the table have mentioned to you that we are at an increasingly closing window given President Uribe's time in office and for the end of the existent Plan Colombia. They will coincide together in 2 years.

We need to take every opportunity to ensure that our already significant U.S. investment pays off. I believe that we can offer militarily a great deal of planning support to the Colombian military effort that I'm not able to do right now underneath the cap.

Mr. SOUDER. I may do a followup to this, but I wanted to directly ask you this question. A number of years ago, General Wilhelm, when he was head of SOUTHCOM, said he was even micromanaging how planning and control, command and control systems were working on the ground, because the Colombian military was so in effect disorganized. It seemed as we first visited in the 1996, 1997 period, Ambassador Moreno would know, because he's kind of been the continuity of the Colombian Government and the voice and the picture of Colombia here in the U.S. Congress, and we really appreciate his continuity.

But somewhere in there, when we started to go down, it seemed like the Colombian military never won a battle. In fact, we'd visit a place and then the next year we'd go down and we couldn't go there because it had been overrun. There are areas of combat, but what progress have you seen to respond to Mr. Duncan's concerns earlier? Have you seen changes in the Colombian military? Are the military advisors having that impact on the military?

They certainly seem to be taking casualties. They seem to be taking some victories. Could you talk about that from a commander's sense? Because General McCaffrey, when he was there, was saying, look, this is going to be a long effort to rebuild this, to get vetted units, to do the human rights. Then General Wilhelm, General Clark and others.

General HILL. Well, I think the work of my predecessors and the work of the Colombian military is in fact, it has made them a substantially better unit. They are a substantially more competent, capable force than when I assumed command 2 years ago. I have watched them. I took over command about the time that President Uribe came into office, within days of each other. He has inculcated in them a spirit of aggressiveness and they have responded. He's provided them the political support along with the Colombian people, and they have responded. They have moved out of the barracks. They are out in the field in the fight.

Yours and the American people, through the Congress, substantial investment in Plan Colombia, the ability with the helicopter support that allows them to move rapidly around the battlefield, around the country in effect, take on the battle. So in just pure operational sense, they've improved significantly.

I don't believe 2 years ago when I took command that you would have said to me, they're going to develop this Plan Colombia, Plan Patriota, excuse me, and then they're going to go out into the old Despye area and they're going to stay out there, not for 18 days, but for 18 months and conduct a campaign. I would have said there's no way they can do that. They're out there doing it today. And we are out there with them, helping them in a very meaning-

ful way with advice, logistics and operational sustainment. This is not an easy military problem, and we're out there doing it.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. O'Connell.

General HILL. Could I have one point, Mr. Souder?

Mr. SOUDER. Yes.

General HILL. The other thing that they're doing I think that's very important, and it should not go unnoticed, they have established a center for coordinated and integrated action. What is that? That is when an office that says, when we retake an area militarily, we will flow in directly behind it in a coordinated, integrated manner in order for those other elements of governance to ensure that we can stay the course in that village, and they've done a wonderful job of it.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. O'Connell, in your written testimony you had, I believe, stated that you were going to work for additional forward operating locations. Because one of the problems was when the FARC particularly moved over to the eastern side of Colombia and where we suspect they may have our kidnapped Americans, it's very difficult to move, because it's Amazon basin, it's parks, it's jungle. How are we going to deal with that, and do you have particular plans in the budget?

Mr. O'CONNELL. Sir, on that, on the tactical operational side, if you don't mind, I'll defer to General Hill.

General HILL. What the Colombian military has been able to do is very early on in the fight, under Plan Patriota, they reclaimed several major airfields in that area. Then they had flown in logistics behind them and it allowed them to both sustain the fight and to take their own aircraft, either helicopter, rotary wing or fixed wing and conduct operations out of there.

Mr. O'CONNELL. Sir, when you referenced forward operating locations, with respect to those FOLs that we're concerned with outside of Colombia, as you know, the closure of Roosevelt Roads has posed some financial difficulties that we had not anticipated. And you and I have discussed those before and what demands on other accounts that we just——

Mr. SOUDER. So you were talking about the in between, on the way in and out of Colombia?

Mr. O'CONNELL. Yes, sir.

Mr. SOUDER. As opposed to inside Colombia, where we also have a given problem?

Ambassador Moreno, my impression is, and I know this was in the written testimony, but if you could expand on it now. You certainly alluded to it and had some detail on a number of towns where they actually have mayors now and have city councils up and running. There was not an understanding that until you get order and security, who wants to be a mayor? Could you talk a little bit about that, and then how you see that progressing into some of the zones where we still don't quite have functional control?

Ambassador MORENO. These are very important questions, Mr. Chairman. Let me begin by saying that about 5 years ago, about 30 percent of the municipalities in Colombia did not have the kind of military or police presence that we have today. Today all the municipalities have, the municipalities in Colombia have them. So inasmuch as this has been a policy of gaining the upper hand from

the law enforcement side, from the eradication of coca, from the alternative development and the institutional strengthening, it has also been a battle for control of the territory in Colombia. Because without that, or absent that, it's impossible to really do the success that we require in terms of drug eradication.

Certainly, for instance, when President Uribe came into office there were a number of mayors who had basically given up and resigned because there was either no security or simply because they didn't feel they were capable of doing their jobs under those circumstances. Today, increasingly with the help of General Hill, we're doing a lot in the way of planning, and integrated planning between both the military operation as well as the civilian side. Because I think we need the hearts and minds of the people in many of these municipalities. You require not only to have the security, but also to have the government be able to deliver services.

Some of the things we have found, many of these municipalities that basically, the only thing that happened was the production of coca, or perhaps not viable the way they used to be. So it would require much more good work on the side of the government. But this is precisely the phase in which we're in right now.

Mr. SOUDER. I thank you, and I want to mention two other things before I yield the Chair back to Mr. Davis. We really appreciate the efforts, Director Tandy, on-going after the financial and the money situation and what you've done to break up some of these big networks and follow through. And that I never really fully understood, until we got into the Afghanistan question, that even for DEA to be able to work on the ground, you must have some semblance of order. Because the DEA agents aren't the military. It is important to be able to infiltrate the different networks and to be able to move out farther, as the military establishes those zones, and then the DEA can move in, as we're attempting to do in Afghanistan, and start to break up the financial network.

It's fine to talk about how we have to break up the financial networks, but if you can't get to the sources, because you're afraid of being blown up, it is a very difficult job. I appreciate the recent efforts. Do you have any specific requests of where you think Congress should focus more on DEA related to Colombia?

Ms. TANDY. We have a number of issues with technology in terms of keeping pace with the changes in technology to support our ability to continue our partnership with the Colombian national police and the Intercept program. And it is the interception of communications that is key to our collection of intelligence to determine who is moving the billions of dollars derived from the American drug consumer. That is at a rate of about $65 billion a year, and to date, in the past, we have only successfully seized, and I say we, that's all Federal, State and local law enforcement, less than $1 billion.

We have a long way to go. We have restored that priority within DEA, it was lost over the last number of years. And it is the No. 1 priority in DEA, because we will never effectively dismantle these cartels if we have left their money in place. To that end, as part of our right-sizing proposal, which has cleared the House and is in the Senate, we will be, once that is approved, if it is approved, we will add a money laundering task force to Bogota to complement

our SIU that we have with DOS in Colombia that is currently focused on the money.

We have challenges in that regard of simply having the necessary funds and boots on the ground to go after the money.

Mr. SOUDER. Thank you very much. I will yield back to Chairman Davis. I know there are other questions I have. I want to thank you for that.

I also want to make sure we have adequate radar coverage in all parts of the country, and we'll continue to talk about parts of Colombia where I have concerns, and also the ability to track. There is a sophistication where communications networks get better. And also, I'm pleased that we're able to work together with some of the private sector people who weren't particularly helpful for a while.

Chairman TOM DAVIS [resuming Chair]. Let me just say thanks again to all of you. It really has been a team effort, as I think several of you have said in your testimony. Mr. Ambassador Moreno, let me ask you a question. The hero of today, which is the Colombian army, which is I think taking unprecedented steps to go into FARC controlled areas and other areas, do you think they have the staying power to defeat the FARC and the ELN? Do you think they're helping to bring the ELN to the conference table? Talks are going on, they're starting to sustain some heavy casualties. This is really a new test. Can you give us your appraisal of that? And then I'd like to hear from General Hill on the same thing.

Ambassador MORENO. Yes, Mr. Chairman, clearly there's an opportunity with the ELN, the Mexican Government has been very cooperative. In fact, recently they named their Ambassador to Israel to begin the initial contacts with the ELN leadership to see if we can get to a situation where a negotiation can proceed. President Uribe from the beginning has always stated that our big condition for any pace process is that of a cease-fire and ceasing of hostilities that would permit any process to go forward. I think it's too early to tell.

My sense is from what I hear, and I would like to hear, of course, from General Hill, who is closer to the military on these issues, that the relative of the ELN progressively has been losing some of their strength as a result of clearly the better campaign that the military is doing with success, especially on territory controlled throughout the country. As that campaign under their control is successful, any group, any terrorist in Colombia will have a harder time going about its business.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. What's the, in terms of the casualties and everything else that the army is taking on, any kind of ratios? What's happening with the FARC and the ELN as we go into some of these areas? What kind of resistance? Are we hitting them and they're running? Try to give me a feel for what's happening.

Ambassador MORENO. I will try to give you some. Again, I would like to be complemented by General Hill.

In terms of the number of both casualties and deserters, the numbers are very impressive. I mean, the last numbers that I've seen are around 7,000 in the last year between FARC, AUC and ELN, between people who have lost their lives on the field and those who have deserted. Clearly, the push on desertion has been working very well. This we have done again with some U.S. fund-

ing, especially for child soldiers. The number of combats, which I think is a very important denominator, has increased significantly, meaning that the army more and more is doing combats on the field. This is a very deep change from what it was as recently as 2 years ago.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. General Hill, what's your appraisal?

General HILL. Let me take that from a couple of different angles, Chairman Davis. One is in military parlance, which is the close fight, and the other is the long fight, or the deep fight. On the close fight, not only what they're doing with Plan Patriota, but they're standing up a special operations command, they're improving their ability to operate jointly, they're doing a lot better in terms of intelligence sharing. And that has allowed them to conduct tactical military operations that they were simply incapable of doing 2 years ago, both in terms of major combat operations and in terms of specialized operations, going after the heads of the organizations.

Ambassador Moreno mentioned combat actions. In 2003, they were involved in 2,312 distinct combat actions. That's a 73 percent increase from 2002.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. And that's it. The government's initiative, not a reaction, for the most part?

General HILL. Yes, absolutely. Because if you would look at the results of Plan Patriota in the early stages, the first 2 or 3 or 4 months of it, what we're seeing is a delaying action by the FARC in the sense that they are putting out a lot more anti-personnel mines, they are trying to fight in smaller organizations and they are trying to avoid major combat. That was to be expected.

The problem for them, however, is they will not be able to avoid that forever. Because the military is not going to go away. They are going to continue to push the fight. That's near term.

Let me talk about one thing just in terms of long term. The one thing that separates the U.S. military from most militaries in the world, and if you brought in anybody in uniform and said, what's the one thing that makes you different or better than anybody else, and the answer is, non-commissioned officers. Non-commissioned officers and the responsibility that we give to non-commissioned officers.

I had a long discussion about a year and a half ago with General Mora, who was then the chairman of their Joint Chiefs, and General Ospina, the head of the army. And along this professionalization, they wanted to professionalize the Colombian NCO corps. So my Command Sergeant Major and several senior NCOs from SOUTHCOM went down, began working with the Colombian Army, and they have built a non-commissioned officers sergeant major academy, started the first class with us teaching it, only Army. Second class, mutual teaching, included some Marines. Third class includes all services. They did a scrub of their senior sergeants major and opted about 30 percent of them to retire, and have changed the role of the sergeant major from an admin role to a combat role. This will put them, long term, in a much better stand.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. When they go out on these missions, are they accompanied by American advisors?

General HILL. No, sir. We are prohibited from being any, in a direct combat role. We stay on secure bases only in a planning assistance role. And in my request for the CAP increase to 800, those rules of engagement do not change.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Do you have any idea how many Americans are currently held captive by the different groups, contractors or——

General HILL. Sir, there's three.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Just the three?

General HILL. Yes, sir.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. OK. Let me ask Secretary Charles, is it still your position that the Colombian air wing program is best left where it is? There's a lot of debate about moving the program to a law enforcement agency. Have you been able to identify and assess any existing problem areas with air wing at this point?

Mr. CHARLES. I think it belongs where it is. But the second part of the question is a very important one. And the answer to it is that since the 9 months I've been there, one of the focal points has been evaluating the air wing.

In a nutshell, that air wing has run on a shoestring for a long time. And God bless them every one for having been able to achieve what they have to date. But the air assets need support. And one of my missions, in addition to putting performance measures on the contracts and penalties in place for contractors and contractor oversight is also to look at the capital account of that air wing.

You're talking about an air wing around which the environment has changed, and which is responding very well to the changed environment. But nevertheless, in 2002, you had about 194 hits on that air wing. The next year, 2003, you had about 383 hits on it. Even this year, while there's been a reduction in hits, the risk environment is very high. It complements exactly what General Hill has been talking about, and Ambassador Moreno. As you get closer and closer to the burning ember of the FARC, the heat is felt by everybody. And it's being felt here.

That's good, in the sense that we're having an impact. And it will be good as we capitalize that account and make sure they know how to do their job there and frankly elsewhere in the world. That air wing also operates in Pakistan and other locations for other purposes. But the short answer is, I'm very confident that it belongs there, that it is functionally and operationally where it belongs. But it is also true that proper management of the air wing is an imperative, and I'm working on it.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Do you know how the Colombian Government will use the recently acquired DC–3 airplanes for opium poppy eradication efforts? These planes, will they make it easier to find and eliminate the hard to reach or concealed fields of opium poppy?

Mr. CHARLES. As you may or may not know, I am a strong advocate of that particular decision.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. That's why I asked you.

Mr. CHARLES. I appreciate it. I know you are, too. I think this is again an example of the U.S. Congress working closely with the administration. And I think we all know that the heroin that shows up on the eastern seaboard, whether it's Congressman Cummings'

district in Baltimore or whether it's the 352 deaths outside of Chicago, Speaker Hastert's, or whether it's anywhere is chiefly coming on this side of the continent from Colombia. That means we have to be very aggressive about addressing it.

What those DC–3s do is they give us the opportunity now to get the altitude with manual eradicators and to complement other programs. Let me just tell you how important we think, I think and I think this entire table thinks heroin is. Frankly, the leadership for this also comes as much from the Colombian Government as it does from the American government, from the U.S. Congress; 1,200 kilograms of heroin seized last year, DEA has an entire operation that is affecting it, Operation Firewall, significant maritime interdiction, together with other efforts. DEA runs the Heroin Task Force in Bogota, 50 DEA and CMP members, very aggressive on it. We're targeting heroin organizations, which never occurred before.

In the last 2 years on eradication, in 2002, we talk a lot about coca. But let's not forget the significant impact of heroin. In 2002, there was a 25 percent reduction, in 2003, there was a 10 percent reduction. What do we mean by these reductions? Why do they count? Why do they matter? They matter because they are deterrents.

Just like in the cold war, aggressive, continuous, consistent, sustained effort ended in victory in every reasonable sense of the word. The same thing is what we're shooting for here. We're looking for an end game that puts deterrents in place, so that if you destroy those crops again and again and again, people say, the heck with it, the risks are too high, the prosecution too high, police are now in every district.

The short version of this is we're doing good things. We've also got a rewards program. Heroin will not go away soon, but we are aggressively tackling it, and the DC–3s are a big part of it.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Mr. Cummings.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Just picking up where you left off, we've spent 4 years there. It seems like we're not—well, what's your vision?

Mr. CHARLES. My vision for Colombia, my vision is really the President's vision and this table's vision. I think it's shared, if you ask that question of all of us, more or less in the same way. I think we are blessed by extraordinary leadership right now in Colombia. I don't think that will last forever. It never does anywhere in the world. But I think we have a moment, a window of opportunity.

I also think objectively we're at a tipping point. You've heard me use that phrase before, but I believe it with all my heart. We are at a point where if we do right at each of the missions that we have here, if we stay in our lanes and get it done right, what we will end up with is a dramatic reduction in both heroin and cocaine production. We cannot give up on prevention and treatment. They are central to what we're doing. But we will make those, as I think Director Walters said, manageable.

As I think Chairman Souder also said and as you've said before, you can't do those things unless you get the supply down. Because supply of addictive drugs not only destabilizes the country, not Colombia in this case and its region, not only feeds terrorism, but it creates its own market. Addictive substances create their own mar-

kets. So if you bring supply down, you make manageable the rest of the demand reduction side. The vision is that we will never get rid of drugs completely in this hemisphere or in the world. Human beings are weak and they have faults and they become addicted.

However, what we can do, we never got rid of crime in Los Angeles, never got rid of crime anywhere in the world. What we will do is reduce it to a manageable level, where people can breathe better and safer and feel both in this country and across the hemisphere that they are not being constantly victimized by major narcotrafficking, and frankly, also narcoterrorism organizations.

Mr. CUMMINGS. So how you measure your progress?

Mr. CHARLES. You always have three or four measures that you work with. You've got your inputs, and we're putting them in there and you're putting them in there. That matters. You've got outputs. We're getting direct outputs. We're seeing that hectarage is coming down. We're seeing that prosecutions, interdictions, extraditions, all the key things that you're looking for that way are going up.

And then you have outcomes. That's how many kids do we see not being victimized ultimately by these drugs. How many families are not destroyed in this country by this menace. And I think we will see, as Director Walters said, in the next year to 2 years, next 12 to 24 months, you should see some impact, probably first on purity, because that's where it will typically show up first, and then ultimately on price. And you'll have to see it metropolitan area by metropolitan area. The DEA collects a lot of this data. You've got the Stride data and other data is collected metropolitan, you should see Dawn data eventually change.

We have one real, really unusual advantage when we talk about the drug war. We have done this before successfully. Some things, when SARS came up and other things, these are brand new. How to tackle them is not clear. We try against a new event.

But in this case, between 1985 and 1992, cocaine use in this country dropped by 78 percent. The number of marijuana users, regular 30 day marijuana users, dropped from 21 million to 8 million. Heroin purity was back at about 7 to 10 percent. It can be done. With this kind of team and your support, it will be done.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I want to just zero in on Colombia. As you've heard me say many times, people in my district, deal with terrorism on our streets every day. The neighborhood I live in, we have terrorists on the corners. And 300 people dying a year, and probably about 500 or 600 being saved from death because we have one of the best shock trauma units in the world, and a lot of that having to do with drugs.

I guess what I'm trying to figure out is, the people in my neighborhood say, we don't have any planes. We don't have any boats. And when they see money going into interdiction, the question is, well, how does it even get into our neighborhoods. And I try to explain it to them. It's hard, though. It's hard. And there are a lot of people that almost believe that, not almost believe, believe that we are not putting forth our best efforts, and that's putting it lightly, in this war on drugs.

I don't feel that way, because I get a chance to hear all this. But I can tell you that this 4 years we've spent—about how much money have we spent in Colombia? Do you know?

Mr. CHARLES. Well, Plan Colombia is a 5-year plan at about $3 billion, give or take.

Mr. CUMMINGS. $3 billion. And it just seems to me, the reason why I asked you about the vision, and the reason why I asked you about how do you measure success, is that I think that all of us want to make sure that our tax dollars are being spent effectively and efficiently. No matter which side of the aisle you're on, that's what you want.

And I guess, I just want to make sure that as we go about the business of spending money in Colombia, and I understand how, you know, it moved from Colombia, and I'm saying everything you just said about eventually it showing up in weaker forms on the street and all that, that's very significant. But I just want to make sure we're doing something that's effective and efficient. That's why I asked you about the vision. There are a lot of people who basically wonder, in my district, whether we are truly being effective.

Mr. CHARLES. I never forget, Mr. Congressman, that you live on a block that you've lived on for many, many years.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Twenty-three years.

Mr. CHARLES. Twenty-three years, goes up by 1 year every year. And on that same block is a crack house, or was a crack house. That story has never left me. I know that we will only truly be showing success downstream when we have done all of the pieces of the drug war right, and when it shows up your street corner.

That's the end game. I come from a small town, but the principle is the same. In order to get there, we have to get this stuff out of the system. It takes time. People ask, what about price and purity. The answer is, we don't know how much excess capacity there is in the system right now. I think Director Walters said it well, we are tackling this, we are shrinking the overall production environment. That has to go hand in glove, I know you were just in that shock trauma unit. And we have to go hand in glove to make sure that the treatment is effective and real and captures the people that need it.

The same thing is true with the kids. We've got to reduce demand by preventing them from making the worst decision of their life. We've got to educate the parents, so that they not only know that piece of it's happening, but that the rest of this expenditure is very real. It's a weapon of mass destruction in its own way. And we've got to keep it out of this country. And it will simultaneously stabilize the rest of the hemisphere, which allows people to have incomes elsewhere outside of drugs.

But I am very sensitive to the point you make which is that it's got to show up here in America in a meaningful way on your street corner. And we are all, I think, at this table committed, every one of us, to that mission.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Administrator Tandy, how are we doing with regard to justice in Colombia? You and I have had this discussion before with regard to, I guess it was Afghanistan, about making sure that we don't have, you know, corruption is reduced and all that. How are we looking over there in Colombia? Because we've had our corruption problems.

Ms. TANDY. Corruption goes with drug trafficking like disease with rats. It doesn't limit itself to Colombia. It is, as you know, an

issue everywhere there is drug trafficking. Obviously there are corruption issues in Colombia which President Uribe, and under his leadership has been very aggressive in tackling the justice sector reform. Part of Plan Colombia also has focused on corruption as part of its training of now over 10,000 police, prosecutors and judges and technical assistance in that justice sector piece of Colombia.

The rooting out of corruption is one of the key elements to our success. It is something that we are constantly focused on. It is a constant issue, and it will remain one for all of us. But I am confident that it is a shared concern of the Colombian Government and leadership with the United States.

Mr. CUMMINGS. As far as the money that we spent over there, how is that money used to minimize corruption? In what ways? Are you following what I'm saying? In other words, I assume that you've got to have, you've just got to have good people, right? I'm talking about over there, the people that live there, and the people that are in the armed services and whatever. A lot of people say you've got to pay folks more money. I don't know whether that's a part of the formula or not. How do you make sure, how do you maximize the probability that you're going to have minimal corruption? How do we do that as a country, us?

Ms. TANDY. Within the United States, part of that clearly is the selection process of our members in law enforcement and all of the other associated members of law enforcement, such as the analysts and those people with access to information, limiting access.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I think you may misunderstand my question. I'm sorry——

Ms. TANDY. In Colombia?

Mr. CUMMINGS. Yes, in Colombia. In other words, how do we——

Ms. TANDY. I understand.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Yes, here we are, we're spending $3 billion, corruption is a major, can be a major problem. You can fight all you want, but if you've got people being paid off, you're going backward really. And corruption can lead to so much damage, it can lead to loss of life, if the wrong information gets into the wrong hands.

So I was just wondering, I just want to make sure that we're doing what we can with some of our dollars to make sure that we minimize the corruption. I know it's going to be there. I'm just wondering what are we doing, if anything.

Ms. TANDY. I can tell you what we are doing. I would defer to Ambassador Moreno for what the country of Colombia is doing on a more broad basis. But within our relationship in Colombia, Representative, we start with the sensitive investigative units where we carefully select the members of those units, we vett them, we conduct urinalysis, we do background investigations on those people to ensure that we are working shoulder to shoulder with people who share our same goals and are not corrupt.

The payment, the salaries and benefits for those people I will leave to Ambassador Moreno to discuss. We have had issues and continue to have issues with corruption despite that. Part of rooting that kind of corruption out is dependent on the collection of intelligence and knowing where our potential leaks are. We have had those situations and we have shared those issues and that intel-

ligence with select members of the Colombian Government. And the Colombian Government has acted swiftly to eliminate those individuals who were at issue.

That is in a nutshell, in a very small sum way how we try to prevent it and then how we address it once it surfaces.

General HILL. Could I add to that, Mr. Cummings?

Mr. CUMMINGS. Yes.

General HILL. On the military side, we assisted the Colombian military in developing a JAG school, a Judge Advocate General, JAG school and the standup of a JAG corps. That helps them in terms of operationalizing investigations of possible abuse or human rights violations, and also gets at the idea of having an operational lawyer on scene with their units. The other piece of it is that we only train and work with units which we have vetted, both in terms of corruption and in terms of human rights allegations, through the U.S. embassy and the State Department.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. NORIEGA. Mr. Chairman, if I could add one last point.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. We have to move to our next panel, but that's fine.

Mr. NORIEGA. The democracy and human rights and rule of law programs amount to about $200 million of that $3.3 billion, including at training of prosecutors, support for the Colombian judicial system, and teaching a culture of lawfulness, starting from the municipal local level all the way up to training of prosecutors at the highest level. Especially developing security for prosecutors so that they're not afraid of enforcing and imposing the rule of law against corruption when it's detected.

Mr. CHARLES. Could I add one refinement to that, Mr. Chairman? Very short.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Yes, you may.

Mr. CHARLES. Exactly what Secretary Noriega described in many ways is a microcosm, this is a robust program, anti-corruption is a very big part of it. The numbers of lawyers, 10,000 lawyers, judges and public defenders have been trained collectively between, with us in support of the Colombian Government. Training isn't perfect, people get disbarred every day.

But the reality is, it's significant if it has the right components. It complements the military, the human rights component, the police have vetted units. There is an intense effort not only in the near term to look at anti-corruption, but the culture of lawfulness is a program that goes into all the public schools and talks about the ethics of what a civil government is all about. Frankly, we need more of it here, too.

But the reality is, that is a long term strategy and it's complemented by vetted units, and that's all.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Ambassador Moreno.

Ambassador MORENO. Very quickly, for Congressman Cummings, basically, aside from all the vetting, both in human rights and for purposes of law enforcement and specialized units in the attorney general's office in Colombia. The whole issue of corruption the President of Colombia takes very seriously. There is a task force

that is directed by the vice president of Colombia which basically goes to look at all levels of government, at the local level, the state level and the national level with 800 numbers, with ways for people to make demands as to very specific things in terms of contracting, having things electronic government, e-government, so that people can talk about bids, if there's a problem with a bid they can immediately address this issue.

So there's a whole host of things that are built around a program of anti-corruption at the level of the vice president of Colombia. Is there corruption? Unfortunately, yes. Director Tandy said clearly there is, when it's associated with drug trafficking and drugs. And that's why for Colombia, it is not a choice if we destroy enough drugs, for us it's an obligation to rid our society, to rid a generation that has been full of these problems for years, to have our children live in a country that will be much better as a result.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to ask you if I could answer to both what Congressman Duncan and Congressman Kucinich, who I thought was going to be here, but I see that he didn't come back to answer some of the questions and to put in written testimony if you don't mind.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. That would be fine, without objection.

Thank you all very much. It's been very, very helpful to us. We're going to take a brief recess before the start of our third panel. We're going to be setting up a screen so that one of our witnesses is shielded from the cameras. As the media knows, this gentleman can't be filmed or photographed. We're in recess.

[Recess.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. We want to welcome our third panel, Mr. Carlos Plotter, and for him, translating we have Ms. Patricia Cepeda. I'm going to have to swear you both in. Mr. Plotter is a former member of the FARC. He'll discuss the time he spent with the FARC, why he chose to voluntarily turn himself in to the Colombian national police after serving 10 years as a guerrilla. His testimony will provide a valuable inside guerrilla perspective on the peace process between the Colombian Government and the guerrilla groups in an effort to restore authority and control of the Colombian Government in areas of the country where the government control was lacking.

We are just very appreciative of your taking the time to be here today and sorry we've delayed you. You can stay seated, would you raise your right hand?

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let the record show he said I do. Muchas gracias. You may begin, thank you.

We'll allow Mr. Plotter to speak and then you can translate for him. Thank you very much.

STATEMENTS OF CARLOS PLOTTER, FORMER POLITICAL COMMANDER, REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA (FARC); MARC W. CHERNICK, PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT AND SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY; AND ADAM ISACSON, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS, CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Mr. PLOTTER. [All remarks of Mr. Plotter are given in native tongue through an interpreter.]

Ms. CEPEDA. First of all, I want to express my thanks to you for your invitation and for hosting me in this honorable room.

As you mentioned before, I spent 10 long years with the FARC.

My process of re-entering civil society was part of a very important stage, both in my country, in Latin America and internationally.

I am a man from the provinces, and I was raised with very strong Catholic convictions.

In that same capacity for analysis, in that same feeling that I was raised with in the Catholic church, led to a deepening of my social responsibility feelings.

At age 16, I entered the National University of Colombia to study engineering. And then I entered a period of exposure, not just to the academic world of the exact sciences, but also to a deepening of my feelings of social responsibility by doing community service in the popular neighborhoods of Bogota.

That interaction I had with people from needy communities deepened in me the feeling that I had to put into practice what I believed and thought in feeling.

This was the period when the Berlin wall was falling and when there was the crisis of socialism, and this combined with the reading of the theories of Francis Fukuyama, the End of History, led in me a desire to be more conscious of putting into practice what I thought and felt.

So I joined the Communist Youth in Colombia.

In that international context, there were also some very local political contexts in Colombia which had to do with the ideological crisis of the left.

What was happening in Colombia was that there was starting to be process of demobilization of armed groups, such as the M–19, parts of the ELN and the EPL. But what was becoming obvious was that there was lots of aggression against parties like the UP and the Communist party that were trying to participate in the political processes.

Among, in the middle of all that context, I became aware that I sort of needed to put into practice what I believed, the love of the people around me and the care for those that needed it the most. So I put into practice things I had grown up with in Catholicism.

I was looking for an organization that wanted to build a new society toward socialism, and I wanted also an organization that would protect the work with the gun, so I joined the FARC.

In 1993, I started looking for a way. And this way was unfortunately the one that was most painful for my country. I participated in guerrilla activities in various spaces of our national geography.

In those 10 years that I spent with them, I saw how the FARC went from being a political-military organization with a clear ideo-

logical north to—it became an armed, just an armed group isolated from a political aim or context, purely militaristic and with a commercial component.

The lure of easy money, which came by the cultivation, the processing and the sale of narcotics, made the organization lose its political route, and went from being an organization that we thought was a mass organization, a revolutionary people's organization.

Colombia lacked at that moment the guarantees for development of social and economic conditions that we all wished for.

But the fact is that we have a new reality in Colombia. There are conditions now that allow for those of us who might think differently to set out our ideas in a democratic framework.

There's now an opportunity for the word to win the war over the gun.

I think democratic spaces are now open for us to oppose a guerrilla force that is fueled by drug money and will not be able to conquer the hearts and minds of the people.

We Colombians are now trying to have an opportunity to resolve our differences through discussion.

It is a democratic moment where even though some people say that the Uribe government is a government of the right, but this is when the opposing forces of the left have achieved a democratic security to participate in society.

I left the FARC because, simply, theory did not meet up with practice.

The moral imperative of a revolutionary fighter was simply substituted for the economic imperative.

There was a qualitative sea change. There was no work done that would add anything to the local populations. The actions that we were taking simply lessened the local populations.

We are living a historical moment now where we have an opportunity to lay aside the guns and have an opportunity for discussion and negotiation in a democratic framework for us to enter civil society.

I believe that we now have a possibility to win the war of ideas with political and social investment and not try to win the war in the military terrain.

In this last phase of the struggle, I believe it's now time to turn to see how Plan Colombia has affected this last phase.

I repeat, I do not believe in an armed resolution to the conflict. But I do believe that the military help that has come through through Plan Colombia has given the army new initiative, and it has also given it increased operational capacity in the terrains that are dominated militarily by the guerrillas.

The military component, especially in the area of aerial interdiction, has helped in both stopping the influx of dollars, the outflows of drugs and components and armaments for the guerrillas.

The guerrilla needs the commerce of narcotrafficking. And narcotrafficking is now the fuel that motors the barbarism that is taking place in our country.

But I do believe a social component is important for Plan Colombia, one that has the guarantees that crop substitution, that there will be a market for the crops that are substituted, so there is a guarantee of livelihood for our peasants.

The war in our country is essentially a war between two factions of poor people. Because there are a lack of guarantees for the crops that our agricultural workers raise, they are forced in fact to raise coca. If there was solid investment, planning and some guarantee that the products they raise have equal access and participation in markets, this will go a long way toward closing the spaces for coca growing.

What we are looking for is some justice and equity in the negotiations for market processes. But in our economic relations, there's some kind of interest in restricting the protectionism in North America for our products and some kind of equity of access to their markets that are demanding of us that we open our borders.

In a world that's every day more interdependent, we now believe that the democratic processes are the guarantees that we will be part of some important decisionmaking that takes place internationally, and that there will be equality, fraternity and solidarity for us also.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Plotter follows:]

TESTIMONY BY "CARLOS ALBERTO PLOTTER", FORMER MEMBER OF THE FARC GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION

When I was a member of FARC, with the Bloque José María Córdoba, I went under the name "Carlos Alberto Plotter".

I am in the middle of a rehabilitation process, making every effort to return to society, because of several reasons:

In the first place, because FARC has been undergoing a process in which the military conception is paramount and the political perspective has been abandoned. The gap between theory and praxis is wider everyday and the hard liners within FARC have imposed their view in the handling of armed confrontation, which privileges violence above all other elements. The original revolutionary conception, according to which it is for the population to seek and move forward the necessary changes to achieve a better society is all but forgotten.

At the present time, not only in Colombia but in Latin America, the general trend is towards finding concerted ways to promote new societies. Latin America is living a political time in which the only way to achieve desired changes is through civilized confrontation through democratic institutions. The armed struggle is just not any more the right way.

The process of demobilization is necessary because the nation is in need of its men. Rehabilitation and reinsertion to civil life represent the proper way ahead in order to build the Colombia we all want, a Colombia in which everybody fits.

I surrendered myself to the constitutional forces, in particular to the National Police, which I think is that institution entrusted with the task of protecting the rights of the citizens and one that over these 10 yeas I have been confronting Government forces has shown seriousness and commitment. I chose the

municipality of San Luis because it offers good conditions to those members of FARC and ELN who are willing to surrender their weapons.

In the second place, I quit FARC because of my family. Family values and traditions are crucial for every Colombian and revolutionary life within FARC leaves no place whatsoever for that, given that everything is absorbed by the armed confrontation. Family ties are in the essence of any human being and this is a very strong element that may encourage combatants to return to civil life.

In the third place, I was simply tired with this war in which brother is killing brother. It has become a fratricide confrontation in which members of the same family are often fighting for and against the State. It is a protacted conflict that has produced three generations of people suffering and dying and at this pace it will never be able to generate a true popular revolution. At the current levels of violence, the time will come when there is simply nobody to fight with. The more you are in the mountains the more you deteriorate yourself physically, morally and spiritually.

I am a first hand witness that the Government and the Police is willing to provide the necessary guarantees and safeguards for those who want to surrender their weapons and engage in a confrontation of ideas, within the framework of the rule of law.

I call upon every combatant, every layman fighter, every commander, every person who dreams with building a new country, to enter into an analysis of the realities of revolutionary life, and I am sure he will come to the conclusion that the way of the arms is the wrong one.

It is the war of ideas we should pursue. Ideas are an engine for development and a thriving force for change. Machine guns only leave blood-soaked lands.

I echo what a FARC leader and ideologist, Jacobo Arenas, used to say : "The fate of the nation cannot be that of war". I Therefore extend an invitation to all

combatants to abandon this conflict and pursue change by pacific means, so we can build a better, kinder and more just country in which the Colombian people can live in peace.

For over ten years I was a witness and actor in the confrontation. I was in charge of political and military actions and in that capacity I gave everything I am and everything I have. And at the end of this period I realized I had not achieved anything different from increased pain and hatred. What I did was to distance myself of political processes that I once had considered as important pieces of the development of Colombia. Ten years of conflict that in the end provided nothing at all; ten years of struggle, of history past, wasted and forgotten with the cruelest of legacies: the legacy of pain.

The motivations that at a given moment I considered valid to warrant revolutionary armed struggle were devoid of purpose. The daily life of revolutionary fighting brought about only the displacement of innocent people, the bleeding of communities and huge loses in the nation's economic, social and political system.

It is not enough to repent and ask for forgiveness, Everybody has to take a stand and come up with actions relevant for building a lasting peace with social justice within a democratic framework. In today's interdependent world, more than ever, there is general agreement on the need to pursue peaceful solutions for lasting conflicts. War has never been a solution and it only exacerbates problems and increase hatred. What is needed then is that all combatants and members of revolutionary groups put into practice their revolutionary ideary: the revolution is made with ideas, not with arms.

I extend an invitation to all members of armed groups active in Colombia to abandon the armed struggle and enter into a rehabilitation scheme. To all those who shared with me the hard life inside FARC, who lived through the pain and anguish, I call to submit to the rehabilitation and demobilization processes offered by President Alvaro Uribe as part of his open arms policies. This is the road to harmony and peace and it is a road open for everyone.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much as well. We also have Dr. Mark Chernick and Mr. Adam Isacson, well credentialed in this area. Will you raise your right hand with me?

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you.

Let me note for the record your entire testimony is in the record. We're expecting votes in about 10 minutes, so if you can get through, we'll try to get to some questions. Once the bells go off, we'll have a couple of minutes, but I want to get you each going. I'll start with you, Dr. Chernick and then to Mr. Isacson.

Mr. CHERNICK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank you very much for inviting me to participate in this important meeting.

I just wanted to briefly begin by discussing how we got here, because there's not a lot of clarity about the origins of Plan Colombia. Because Plan Colombia in its initial formulation was a $7.5 billion Colombian strategy developed by President Andres Pastrana 5 years ago, with the assistance and the urging of the Clinton administration to address Colombia's multiple crises. It was to be funded by the United States, the European Union, multi-lateral development banks, and the Colombian Government.

President Pastrana, when he took office in 1998, originally spoke of a Marshall Plan for coca-growing regions. He thought that a negotiated peace with the FARC would enable the state to cerate a legitimate presence in areas largely abandoned by the state, and would allow the state to promote alternative development away from dependence on drug related crops. For Pastrana, the peace process was viewed as an effective anti-narcotics strategy. To this end, he hoped to enlist the support of the United States.

This original formulation of Plan Colombia was received with great skepticism in Washington. By the time Congress approved the $1.3 billion supplemental appropriation in June 2000, the formula had basically been turned on its head. For the United States, peacemaking and state building was not seen as viable anti-narcotic strategy. Rather, anti-narcotics was viewed as the basis for pacification and peace.

As such, the approval of the original assistance strategy to Plan Colombia needs to be viewed from two perspectives: the anti-narcotics strategy, and second, its impact on peace. And I want to discuss both of these.

From the anti-narcotics perspective, Plan Colombia represents the continuation of a succession of strategies dating back to the mid-1980's of attacking production at its source. This can be seen in the initial operations in the Bolivian coca fields under Operation Blast Furnace in 1986, in the efforts to destroy the Colombian cartels, what was known as the kingpin strategy in the late 1980's and early 1990's, and the airbridge strategy that effectively cutoff the Peruvian and Bolivian coca fields from the producers in Colombia.

In each of these cases, the immediate objectives were achieved. The kingpin strategy effectively dismantled the Medillin and Cali cartels. The airbridge strategy led to declines of up to 85 percent in coca production in Peru and Bolivia. However, in every case, new patterns of trafficking emerged. Instead of large cartels, small cartels appeared in Colombia, as well as new large scale drug syn-

dicates in Mexico. And the great reduction in coca production in Bolivia and Peru led to massive increase in coca cultivation in Colombia.

What has happened with Plan Colombia? Massive aerial fumigation by the United States and Colombian Governments finally has led to a modest decrease in overall production. But as would be expected, the available evidence is that the market has adjusted. New producers have entered the market and new techniques have been forged, including agrinomical advances that allow coca production at lower elevations, effectively opening up the entire Amazon Basin and not just the foothills of the Andes. The available evidence is that production is moving into micro-plots scattered throughout Colombia and into newer areas that do not have a historical relationship with coca production.

But the impact of Plan Colombia was perhaps even more devastating for the peace process. The FARC viewed the development of Plan Colombia as an effort by the Colombian and U.S. Governments to undermine the peace process and to promote a military solution. One can be skeptical about the sincerity of the FARC in engaging in talks. There were clearly divisions among their senior leadership, and they too increased their military actions during the period of negotiations.

However, the United States basically sent a signal that it was not interested in the peace strategy. In so doing, it also alienated other members of the international community, particularly the EU, which refused to endorse or support Plan Colombia.

After September 11th and beginning in mid-2002, Congress lifted the previous restrictions that required all military aid and assistance to be dedicated to anti-narcotics. The action has brought the United States more directly into Colombia's internal armed conflict, something that it had previously attempted to avoid. The new posture of the United States converges well with the policies of the Uribe administration, elected in 2002 on a hard line platform following the breakdown of the peace talks. Current policy is to confront militarily the FARC and to increase the military and police presence throughout the national territory.

The Uribe government has also initiated negotiations with the right wing paramilitaries, the AUC. This is a new strategy. It is one I support. The AUC has been the largest violator of human rights in the country and the most destabilizing element in the conflict. However, negotiations will be difficult. The AUC is extensively involved in drug trafficking, it is fragmented, it is undergoing a leadership change following the disappearance of its nominal leader, Carlos Castano.

Successful negotiations with the AUC will not lead to peace. The conflict with the FARC will continue. However, a durable accord that removed the AUC from the conflict would clarify the nature of the war between the state and the FARC. Eventually, removing the AUC from the conflict might clear the way for a negotiated settlement with the FARC. However, this will not happen in the short term.

To conclude, the war in Colombia has endured in one form or another for 58 years. The war antedates the drug boom. It is deeply rooted. For 20 years, the situation can be characterized as an esca-

lating military stalemate. Both sides, government and guerrillas, have escalated their capacities and neither side is likely to defeat the other.

Under these conditions, I am convinced that there is no military solution to the conflict. This dose not mean that the Colombian Government does not have the legitimate right to defend itself. Yet peace will take more than battling the FARC or pushing coca cultivation into different corners of the country. The United States can potentially play a major role in ending this conflict. A stable Colombia is in the interest of the United States. But it will require a rethinking and reprioritizing of the component parts of the U.S. assistance program to Plan Colombia, balancing needs of development assistance, human rights, humanitarian assistance, judicial reform and peace promotion with the more visible policies of counter-terrorism and anti-narcotics.

For starters, one might want to look at the original $7.5 billion Plan Colombia, the original Plan Colombia, developed by the Colombian Government in 1999. It presents a more balanced approach.

Again, let me thank the committee for its time, and I'll be happy to answer any of your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Chernick follows:]

Georgetown University
Washington DC

Testimony from Professor Marc W. Chernick, Department of Government and School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

I thank you for inviting me to participate in this important hearing. I have been studying the issues of violence and drug trafficking in Colombia for more than twenty years. I also have had the opportunity to witness the evolution of Plan Colombia from it inception

I want to share briefly with the committee a small part of the history of Plan Colombia as I believe there is not great clarity about this. Plan Colombia grew out of the efforts of former Colombian president Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) to achieve two fundamental objectives: first, improve relations with the United States following the crisis of relations that existed in the bilateral relationship during the presidency of his predecessor, Ernesto Samper (1994-1998), and second, to enlist U.S. and international support for his proposal to seek a negotiated settlement to Colombia's longstanding armed conflict with the country's two principal guerrilla organizations, the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and the ELN (National Liberation Army).

Plan Colombia, in its initial formulation, was a 7.5 billion dollar Colombian strategy developed with the assistance and at the urging of the Clinton Administration to address multiple aspects of the Colombia crisis: human rights and the humanitarian emergency of internal refugees, the longstanding armed conflict that had endured in one form or another for over 50 years, the economic crisis that the country experienced beginning in 1997, and the tremendous rise of drug trafficking since the early 1980s. Plan Colombia was to be funded by the United States, the European Union, multilateral development banks and the Colombian government. Its principal objective was to stabilize the country and end the country's armed conflicts.

Pastrana when he took office originally spoke of a "Marshall Plan" for the coca growing regions. He thought that a negotiated peace with the FARC, then the principal authority in the coca producing zones of Putumayo, Caquetá and Guaviare, would enable the state to create a legitimate presence in these largely abandoned zones and would allow the state and international community to promote alternative development for the farmers who lived in these areas. For Pastrana at the outset, the peace process was viewed as an effective anti-narcotics strategy. To this end that he hoped to enlist the support of the United States.

Pastrana successfully restored the historically close bilateral relationship between the two countries. However the original formulation of Plan Colombia – negotiations and peacemaking with the leftwing guerrillas who effectively dominated the coca zones would serve as an effective anti-narcotics strategy – was received with great skepticism in Washington. By the time, Congress approved the 1.3 billion dollar supplemental appropriation in June 2000, this formula had basically been turned on its head. For the U.S., peacemaking would not be the basis

for an anti-narcotics strategy. Rather, an anti-narcotics strategy would become the basis of a pacification and peace strategy. The view from Washington was that by reducing the financial resources available to the guerrillas, particularly the FARC, the guerrillas would be weakened and the state would carry more leverage into negotiations. It also served the U.S.'s primary interest of directly reducing the production and flow of drugs to the United States.

The approval of the original assistance strategy to Plan Colombia needs to be viewed from several perspectives: first, as an anti-narcotics strategy, second, in terms of its impact on the peace process, and third, the reaction of the international community.

From an anti-narcotics strategy, Plan Colombia represents the continuation of a succession of strategies dating back to the mid-1980s of attacking production at its source, reducing or eliminating producers, and watching new configurations of growers, producers and traffickers emerge in the resulting vacuum. This can be seem in the initial operations in the Bolivian coca fields under Operation Blast Furnace in 1986; in the efforts to destroy the Colombian cartels --the kingpin strategy—in the late 80s and early 90s; in the airbridge strategy that effectively shut off the Peruvian and Bolivian coca fields from the producers in Colombia. In each of these cases, the immediate objectives were successful. The kingpin strategy effectively dismantled the Medellín and Cali Cartels. The airbridge strategy led to declines of up to 85% in coca production in Peru and Bolivia.

However in every case, new patterns of trafficking emerged. Instead of large cartels, small cartels –cartelitos -- appeared in Colombia as well as new largescale drug syndicates in Mexico. And the great reductions in coca production in Bolivia and Peru led to a massive increase of coca cultivation increase in Colombia. The anti-narcotics strategy of Plan Colombia was basically designed to address this phenomenon.

What has happened with Plan Colombia? Massive aerial fumigation by the U.S. and Colombian governments finally led to a modest decrease in overall production. But as would be expected, the available evidence is that the market has adjusted. New producers have entered the market and new techniques have been forged, including agronomical advances that allows coca production at lower elevations – effectively opening up the entire Amazon Basin and not just the foothills of the Andes. The available evidence is that production is moving into micro-plots scattered throughout Colombia and into newer areas that do not have a historical relationship with coca production.

But the impact of Plan Colombia was perhaps even more devastating for the peace process. The FARC viewed the development of Plan Colombia as an effort by the Colombian and U.S. governments to undermine the peace process and to promote a military solution. One can be skeptical about the sincerity of the FARC in engaging in talks. There were clearly divisions among their senior leadership and they, too, increased their military actions during the period of negotiations. Both sides had agreed to negotiate without a ceasefire; the result was that each side sought to increase their political leverage at the negotiating table by increasing their armed actions.

Yet my view is that the United States could have played a more constructive role in facilitating peace –as we did in Northern Ireland and we attempted to do in the Middle East during this period. Instead, the U.S. sought a largely military, anti-narcotics strategy that diminished incentives on both side to pursue a negotiated settlement.

Finally, it should be noted that much of the international community, particularly the European Union, refused to support Plan Colombia once the U.S. defined its role. The EU stated that they would support peace but not a militarized anti-narcotics strategy. After dragging their feet for several years, they developed a program of supporting what they call "Peace Laboratories" and have currently dedicated approximately 200 million Euros to peace and development efforts in some of the most violent areas of the country.

The US assistance program to Plan Colombia was not only an anti-narcotics strategy. There were programs to promote human rights, local governance and judicial strengthening. Indeed I did some work on the design of the human rights and the judicial assistance programs. I believe that the human rights program in particular has had some success in its immediate aims of protecting human rights workers and other threatened groups and in strengthening government and non-governmental human rights institutions. The judicial program has been more problematic, largely because of the great institutional deficits but also because of a de-emphasis on pursuing military and other officials with alleged links to paramilitary forces. However, my general impression has been that the web of assistance programs authorized by Congress reflected the multiple concerns -- from anti-narcotics to human rights-- of the individual members, committees and parties. Collectively the authorized funding does not necessarily form a coherent package of policies and assistance programs. I recognize that this critique can be make of practically all US foreign policies and assistance programs, yet its seems particularly evident in this case.

As you understand very well, after September 11th and beginning in mid- 2002, Congress lifted the previous restrictions that required all military aid and assistance to be dedicated to anti-narcotics. The action has brought the United States more directly into Colombia's internal armed conflict, something that it had previously attempted to avoid. The new U.S. policies converge directly with the policies of the Uribe Administration. Uribe was elected in 2002 on a platform of getting tough with the illegal armed groups, particularly following the breakdown of the peace process in February 2002. The current policy is to confront militarily the FARC and to increase the military and police presence throughout the national territory.

The Uribe Government has also initiated negotiations with the rightwing paramilitaries, the AUC (United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia). This is a new strategy. It is one that I support. The AUC has been the largest violator of human rights in the country and the most destabilizing element of the conflict. However, negotiations will be difficult. The AUC is extensively involved in drug trafficking at all levels and its leaders are concerned about extradition to the US; this issue alone could undermine the talks. Moreover the AUC is fragmented and undergoing a leadership change following the disappearance of its nominal leader, Carlos Castaño. Further, the state, despite the recent expansion of its security forces, cannot adequately fill the vacuum that would be left by the AUC's withdrawal, leaving large areas of the national territory vulnerable to guerrilla attack.

President Uribe claims that some police presence has been restored to all of Colombia's 1098 municipalities. Yet it should be noted that the United Nations still warns that over 209 municipalities remain highly vulnerable. The continued assaults of recent months –including a major offensive by the FARC this past week --underscores this fact.

Successful negotiation with the AUC would not lead to peace. However, a durable accord that removed the AUC from the conflict would the clarify the nature of the war between the state and the FARC, and could pave the way for an eventual negotiation with the FARC. This is not likely to happen in the short-term. There are currently no conditions or prospects for a peace process with the FARC beyond the intermittent discussions of a possible prisoner exchange, one that could include three American contractors being held hostage.

There is a possibility that talks will be renewed with the ELN. However the ELN is relatively small and if they were to hand in their arms, many of their fighters and many of their areas of influence would fall under control of the FARC.

To conclude, the war in Colombia has endured, in one form or another, for 58 years. The war antedates the drug boom. It is not simply a terrorist or narco-terrorist conflict. The situation can be characterized as an escalating military stalemate – both sides have escalated their capacities and neither side is likely to defeat the other. Under these conditions, I am convinced that there is no military solution to the conflict. This does not mean that the Colombian government does not have the legitimate right to defend itself. Yet peace will take more than battling the FARC or pushing coca cultivation into different corners of the country. It will ultimately require a negotiated settlement and the construction a legitimate state presence that provides services, administers justice, promotes economic development and provides security. Current policy prioritizes security. It is a necessary but insufficient formula. Progress in confronting political violence, terrorism, and drug trafficking will only be made when the broader concerns are addressed and the illegal armed actors are re-incorporated into the political system after more than a half century of war.

The United States can potentially play a major role in ending this conflict. A stable Colombia is in the interests of the United States. But it will require a re-thinking and re-prioritizing of the component parts of the U.S. assistance program to Plan Colombia. For starters, one might want to look at the original 7.5 billion dollar –the original Plan Colombia -- developed by the Colombian government in 1999. It presents a more balanced approach.

Again, let me thank the committee for its time and I will be happy to answer any of your questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Isacson.

Mr. ISACSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to congratulate the committee for holding a hearing on Plan Colombia, it is absolutely crucial that Congress closely oversee the U.S. strategy in Colombia. And I thank you for staying this late to hear my testimony.

We've heard a lot of glowing statements today about Plan Colombia, including Colombian Government statistics showing less violence and less coca. I don't have alternative statistics, how can I cover the whole country? But in the last year, I have interviewed dozens of local officials, religious and community leaders in Colombia, and I've heard a lot of skepticism. People on the ground have seen little change in violence or drug crop cultivation.

A prime example is Putumayo. Putumayo is a province in southern Colombia about the size of Maryland. Putumayo was the main focus of Plan Colombia when it began in 2000. I visited there in March 2001 and I was there again 8 weeks ago, in April. In the 3 years in between, the United States has paid for the fumigation of at least 100,000 hectares of Putumayo, and we funded a dramatic expansion in Colombian military and police capabilities there. Conservatively estimating, we spent $1 billion in and around Putumayo in 4 years.

I did see less coca in Putumayo than there was 3 years ago. But even after wave upon wave of fumigation, it's still very easy to find coca there. I took this picture within a quarter mile of Putumayo's only paved road. It shows a pretty commonsite, a small plot of new coca bushes, about knee high, growing in a field that had been fumigated some months before. Replanting in Putumayo is common, and several people I interviewed said that seeds and nurseries are very booming industries right now.

Three years ago, Putumayo was full of large plots of coca. They would go all the way to the horizon, it seemed. Nobody does that any more, because it's too much of a target for the spray planes. But there's still a lot of coca, and today the plots are different. They're smaller, they're more widely scattered.

But even more disturbingly, everybody I asked there, and I asked several times, said that the price of coca leaves and coca paste has not changed since before Plan Colombia began. A kilo of coca paste still sells for about $800 in Putumayo, the same as it did before the year 2000. This would seem to violate the law of supply and demand. If fumigation were actually making coca scarcer, the price should rise. But that has not happened. There is no tipping point yet.

A gram of cocaine sold on our streets goes for about $25 to $150, depending on the city. That was as of January of this year. That's the same as the studies ONDCP was carrying out in 1995, and they say there's been no change in purity. Supply is meeting demand as well as it ever has. This means that the traffickers are adapting yet again to increased fumigation.

To counter this, we can't respond just by fumigating even more. If you want to reduce drug supplies, we have to start thinking about real governance. There's no substitute. Eventually, Colombian Government civilians are going to have to be able to look growers in the eye in places like Putumayo and tell them, what

you're doing is illegal, but we're committed to providing you the basic conditions you need to make a legal living.

So far we're nowhere near there. The United States has given Colombia $3.2 billion since 2000, but of that, only 2 percent has gone to civilian governance or economic aid, even though 8 out of 10 rural Colombians live below the poverty line, creating a very strong incentive to grow coca. The rest of our aid is going to guns, helicopters and spray planes. Even with all this military aid, including the creation of all these new vetted units, Putumayo is still a very dangerous place.

In April, I had to take a canoe across the Guamues River where the main road had a bridge going across it, but there was no bridge. Late last year, the FARC was perfectly able, at complete liberty to bomb out this and several other bridges along the main road. This was part of a larger wave of violence in Putumayo at the end of last year. The guerrillas also launched dozens of attacks on Putumayo's oil infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the paramilitaries are heavily present still in the towns of Putumayo. Bodies show up on the streets and roadsides nearly every day. There's no peace talk, cease-fire in Putumayo. The paramilitary attacks on civilians haven't let up at all. The paramilitaries are also very easy to find. I came across a dozen of them in full uniform on the outskirts of one of the main towns.

Meanwhile, everyone there takes for granted that the military and the paramilitaries help each other and don't fight each other. When I asked local officials, religious leaders whether military-paramilitary collaboration is still a problem, they looked at me like I was an idiot. They said, of course it is.

Violence and coca persist in Putumayo, despite all of our investment there. We have to learn from this as we hear about ambitious new plans to aid military offensives like the Plan Patriota that was discussed in the last panel. The last several years in Colombia are full of examples of massive military offensives, there have been many, with no long term results.

This is a familiar pattern. Here's what happens. Thousands of troops rush into a guerrilla stronghold, and as we heard in the last panel, the guerrillas don't fight back much, they melt away into the jungle. Maybe there's an occasional encounter or ambush, but nothing much more. The soldiers then stay in the zone for a few weeks, even a few months, but they can't stay forever. When they eventually have to go back to their bases, we find that nobody made any effort while they were there to bring the rest of the government into the zone. There are still no judges, cops, teachers, doctors, road builders or any of the other civilian government services that every society and economy needs in order to function.

When the soldiers leave, armed groups simply come back and fill the vacuum. The former FARC demilitarized zone, much of it, I'm afraid, is still an example of this. There was a huge military offensive there in 2002, but today the rural part of the demilitarized zone is again dominated by the FARC. Whether you call it Plan Patriota or Plan Colombia II, if we're going to help Colombia govern its territory, we have to remember that military power is only a small part of doing that. A government gains authority by providing its citizens the basic conditions they need to make a living in

peace. Both of our governments are going to have to spend much more than to insert civilian government institutions, not just the military, but the rest into Colombia's owned governed areas. We can pay of a lot of this by diverting money away from our fumigation program and our huge military aid program.

In conclusion, this sort of non-military aid doesn't just neglect security needs. In fact, development aid is security aid, because Colombia won't have security without it. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Isacson follows:]

Center for International Policy
1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW- Suite 801
Washington, D.C. 20036
PHONE: (202) 232-3317
FAX: (202) 232-3440
E-MAIL: cip@ciponline.org
WEB SITE: www.ciponline.org

Testimony of Adam Isacson
Director of Programs, Center for International Policy

Hearing of the House Government Reform Committee on
"The War Against Drugs and Thugs: A Status Report on Plan Colombia Successes and Remaining Challenges"

June 17, 2004

Let me begin by thanking the Committee for holding a hearing on the status of Plan Colombia. It is absolutely crucial that Congress perform close oversight over our strategy in Colombia, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to offer input. I know that this has been a long session with many witnesses, and I thank you for staying to hear my testimony.

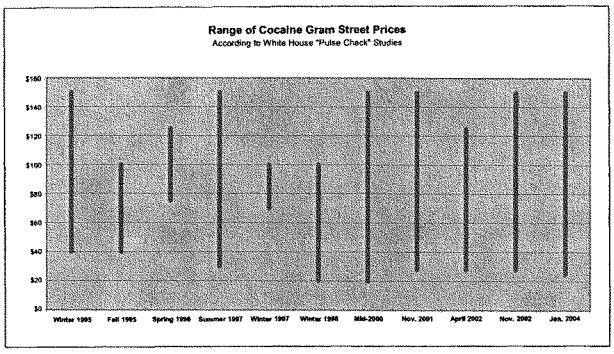
Today, we have heard many glowing assessments of what Plan Colombia has achieved so far, and many optimistic predictions about the near future. Colombian government statistics are indicating less violence and reduced coca cultivation. I have no way of disputing these data; no organization has the ability to take their own measurements. However, my own recent interviews with local officials, religious and community leaders in Colombia have revealed a lot of skepticism about these indicators. People on the ground have seen little change in violence or drug-crop cultivation as a result of Plan Colombia or President Uribe's security policies.

I would like to talk about the example of Putumayo, a department or province in southern Colombia, about the size of Maryland, that was the center of Colombian coca-growing and the main focus of Plan Colombia when it began in 2000. I visited Putumayo in March of 2001, and returned there for a few days in late April, seven weeks ago. In the three years between my two visits, the United States funded the aerial fumigation of at least 100,000 hectares in Putumayo, and supported a dramatic expansion in Colombian military and police capabilities. USAID spent tens of millions on alternative development programs to help some peasant families to make a living in the legal economy.

I saw less coca in Putumayo than I did three years ago, but even after wave upon wave of fumigation, it was still easy to find coca. This picture, which I took within a quarter-mile of the main road, shows a pretty common sight: a small cultivation of new coca bushes, growing in a field that had been fumigated recently. Replanting is common, and several people I interviewed said that seeds and nurseries are very booming industries in Putumayo. (According to the UN, our satellites can't detect newly planted coca bushes, so the official estimates of coca cultivation may be missing a lot of new planting.[1]) Three years ago, Putumayo was full of large, multi-acre plots of coca; fumigation has now made that impossible. Cultivation continues, though, only now the plots small and scattered. Some locals spoke about increased success growing coca in shade, where it can go undetected. Meanwhile, new coca continues to pop up in new parts of Colombia that didn't have any before.

Most tellingly, everybody I asked both in Putumayo and the neighboring department of Nariño said that the price of coca leaves and coca paste has not changed since the fumigations began. A kilo of coca paste continues to sell for roughly 800 dollars. This would appear to violate the law of supply and demand: if fumigation were making the product scarcer, the price would be expected to rise. But that has not happened.

Similarly, even though the State Department's statistics tell us that coca acreage has been dropping since 2001, the price, availability and purity of cocaine in U.S. cities is unchanged. ONDCP has been collecting data on drug prices in the United States since 1995 as part of a series of studies it calls "Pulse Check." The last Pulse Check study notes that the price of a gram of cocaine on U.S. streets varied between 25 and 150 dollars in January – the same range of prices as in 1995. Supply is meeting demand as well as it ever has.



This should tell us that the traffickers are adapting, yet again, to increased fumigation. To counter this, we will have to do something else than just fumigate more. Sending planes to spray

people overhead won't do it: if you want to eradicate drugs, there is no substitute for governance. There is no substitute for a civilian government presence, with officials who are able to look people in the eye and say "what you are doing is illegal, but we're committed to providing the basic conditions you need to make a living" – which is the role every government has to play.

So far, we're nowhere near there. Of the 3.15 billion dollars the United States has given Colombia since 2000, only 20 percent is aimed at improving civilian governance or alleviating poverty - even though 82 percent of rural Colombians live below the poverty line.[2] The rest of our aid has gone to guns, helicopters, and spray planes.

And the U.S.-funded military buildup is very evident in Putumayo. Here, we have helped Colombia create a new army brigade, a new navy brigade, and strengthened all existing military and police units. Despite all of this, though, Putumayo is still a very dangerous place.

In April, I had to take a canoe across the Guamués River because there was no bridge: late last year the FARC, apparently unaffected by the military buildup, was able to bomb out this and several other bridges along the main road. This campaign of violence included dozens of attacks on Putumayo's oil infrastructure, including a few Gulf War-style oil well fires. The paramilitaries, meanwhile, continue to maintain a heavy presence in the towns, and bodies show up on the streets and roadsides nearly every day. The paramilitaries are also easy to find: I came across several of them, in full uniform, on the outskirts of one of the principal towns.

Certainly, the *pattern* of violence had changed in response to the military buildup. A greater security-force presence has forced guerrillas out of town centers and away from the main roads, so that road travel was considered safer than it had been three years ago. Paramilitaries were present, but much less obvious, in the town centers. But I received numerous reports of a greatly deteriorated security situation in the rural zones, further from the main roads, where the armed groups are able to act with complete freedom and are fighting over profits from the coca trade. Populations are caught in between, and it is considered very risky to travel from the guerrilla-heavy rural areas to the paramilitary-dominated town centers, even to buy food or to get health care.

So violence continues and cocaine persists in Putumayo, a zone that was the original "ground zero" of Plan Colombia. This is a very disturbing outcome, and we have to learn from it as we hear about ambitious new plans to aid military offensives like "Plan Patriota."

The last several years in Colombia are full of stories of supposedly successful military offensives. The pattern is familiar: thousands of troops rush into a guerrilla stronghold, the guerrillas offer minimal resistance and retreat into the jungle. The troops stay a few weeks, or even months, but the Colombian government doesn't commit any resources to bringing the rest of the government into the zone. The soldiers can't stay forever – and since they operate with virtual impunity, that's not always bad news for the civilians in the zone. When the military eventually has to go back to its bases, though, we find that no moves have been made to bring in judges, cops, teachers, doctors, road-builders, or any of the other civilian government services that every society and economy needs in order to function.

When the military leaves, they leave nothing behind but a vacuum. Sometimes, the paramilitaries fill that vacuum. (Just in the past couple of years, we've seen that in the Comuna 13 neighborhood of Medellín, Nariño's Pacific coast, northwestern Cundinamarca department, and southern Arauca department, among other zones). On other occasions, the vacuum gets filled once again by the guerrillas. We should recall two years ago, when Colombia's military swept into the former demilitarized zone where peace talks had been taking place with the FARC guerrillas. Today, the zone's rural areas have returned to undisputed FARC control.

If we keep pursuing an unbalanced, overly military strategy – call it Plan Patriota or Plan Colombia 2 – we will continue to reap the same frustrating result. As I've said in this committee before, our aid program must achieve more balance and must be prepared to do a lot of things at once.

If we're going to help Colombia's government achieve authority over its territory, we have to remember that military power is only a small part of that. A government gains authority by guaranteeing its citizens the basic conditions they need to make a living in peace. A government has to adjudicate disputes, issue and respect property titles, educate children, fight disease, and make transportation and communications possible. A government also has to punish officials who are corrupt or commit abuses. Colombia's government has never done this in places like Putumayo or other insurgent-dominated zones. U.S. aid hasn't contributed either. As a result, violence and drug trafficking persist.

I know it seems odd for me to be calling for a fundamental change in direction after you've heard several officials testify about the supposed success of the current strategy. But I hope the contrary evidence I've presented in these few minutes is enough to make clear that victory is far from around the corner. In fact, if we continue on the present path, the next phase of Plan Colombia may well be a long, slow slog.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

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[1] UN Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention, Censo de cultivos ilícitos en diciembre de 2002 & Estimado intercensal en julio de 2003, September 2003 <http://www.unodc.org/pdf/colombia/colombia_coca_report_2003-09-25_es.pdf>: 51.

[2] Fernando Millán, "La tierra, comienzo y fin del conflicto," El Tiempo (Bogotá, Colombia: October 12, 2003) <http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/coar/estostienesalida/ARTICULO-WEB-_NOTA_INTERIOR-1282804.html>.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you all very much. I've been to Putumayo. What alternative crop would you suggest for these farmers? That's the difficulty.

Mr. ISACSON. Well, there are crops and there are products that will make money. Juice concentrates are showing some promise.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. They'll make money, but it's nothing near what they're getting.

Mr. ISACSON. Actually, it wouldn't be that far off. A coca grower who has three hectares, after they make their payment to the paramilitaries and to the guerrillas in the area, after they pay for all their inputs, two hectares will probably give you a net of about $300 or $400 a month, which, Colombia's minimum wage is only $110. But you could probably make that with hearts of palm or something like that.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. They could use some of our ag programs where they pay you not to grow, you'd probably do better down there.

Mr. Plotter, let me ask a couple of questions. What was it like on a day to day basis being a guerrilla? What was the quality of life like? Did you have running water? Were you living out there in the jungle in tents? What kind of food did you get? What was the quality of life compared to going into the city and living a normal civilian life?

Mr. PLOTTER. [All remarks of Mr. Plotter are given in native tongue through an interpreter.]

Ms. CEPEDA. It was a drastic and a radical change. I grew up in the provinces, but I always, up to the moment I went into the guerrillas, lived in urban centers.

In my 10 years as a guerrilla, I was always in the geographical regions of either the big mountain range or the jungle.

The conditions maybe satisfied the military struggle, but they didn't satisfy human needs.

We never get used to war. We just become resigned to living in those conditions.

Our basic sanitary services, for example, are what nature provides.

When the FARC started getting money and when they started getting more comfortable in the demilitarized zone, those of us who were outside the zone wanted to copy those bourgeois kinds of accommodations.

What happened was the sacrifice and the personal giving oneself up to the revolutionary or guerrilla——

[Power outage occurred 6:15 p.m. to 6:25 p.m.]

[NOTE.—A copy of the transcript held during the power outage follows:]

Chairman Tom Davis. Keep going. We can hear you.

Ms. Cepeda. -- was substituted. The march along the jungle or along the mountain ranges was substituted for travelling in a Toyota 4x4.

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. But the guerilla that in the FARC is really a peasant man --

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. Lives like a snail, carrying its house on its back constantly.

Chairman Tom Davis. Let me ask, how do you recruit people to live under those conditions or were they conscripts, many of the new people coming in?

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. Today, those that enter the FARC, in the words of Che, a social transformation agent, are really the minority.

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. The FARC takes advantage of the conditions and the reality of the conditions that people live in. The majority of the recruits come from the countryside and the biggest majority is 15 to 22 years old.

Chairman Tom Davis. Do they come voluntarily or do they come at ~~the point of a gun~~ gun point?

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. At the beginning, it's a psychological pressure. You start telling the young boys, you're almost at the age of coming in. Almost, pretty soon, you'll join us. That's the beginning.

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. There was -- what we would call a national directive that arrived lately and said that those in the guerilla areas -- it was an obligation. They had to join up or else they should leave. This is happening in the clandestine Communist party and in the Bolivarian militias.

Chairman Tom Davis. I thank you very much. Somebody must be getting rich with all of the drug money that's coming in there. Somebody has got to be living the high life somewhere I would expect. Are there any people at the top of the FARC chain that are living palatially or taking vacations? I know they have caught some of the paramilitary leadership in other countries vacationing. Does he have any knowledge of that?

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. The phenomenon does not show up in that particular way in the FARC.

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. The way it shows up among the FARC is the influx of capital as the profit from the drug war has created a whole set of false needs in the guerilla commanders.

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. The guerilla that, in the past, used to wear a pair of rubber boots that cost 10,000 Colombian pesos, now wants a brand name boot that costs 150,000 pesos.

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. They want to have a watch that does not merely tell time, but one that has a global positioning satellite.

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. Through this whole set of false needs, they are now in a situation where both at the middle range and then at the commander range, everybody wants something more and everybody wants something better -- the needs and goods that aren't really necessary in the armed struggle.

Mr. Plotter. [Remarks given in native tongue.]

Ms. Cepeda. There is also a need for more and more economic profit. With this comes a lessening of mobility of the guerilla, which was essentially a mobile force, now it's tied to the areas of narcotic production.

Chairman Tom Davis. Thank you. I am going to cut it and allow questions from the other side. Ms. Watson, I'll start with you.

Ms. Watson. Just following up, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much. I can't see you, so I will be leaning over this way, too. Mr. Plotter, is this a social structure that has become

generational more so than trying to change government into a Communist kind of government? I mean, ~~do~~ have you ~~lose~~ lost sight of what your original goal was?

Ms. WATSON. I mean, do you lose sight of what your original goal was?

Mr. PLOTTER. [All remarks of Mr. Plotter are given in native tongue through an interpreter.]

Ms. CEPEDA. There needs to be a distinction between what was the central objective, which was the taking of power and the methods and scenarios where these objectives are trying to be developed and reached.

The taking, a Colombian expression famously said, do you want to take power, for what. And my question is, do they want to take power and have power over the ruins of a country?

But we now have the chance to nullify the power of the gun, because we have democratic mechanisms and democratic scenarios where there can be divergence of opinion, divergence of ideas and there can also be dissent. So we do not have to take recourse in a fratricidal war.

And this war among brothers has its fuel in drugs and the drug business.

Ms. WATSON. Just let me say this, and then we'll all have to go. Was it the narcotics that fueled the revolution in terms of financially, or could there be another kind of way of keeping a stable democratic government other than the proceeds from narcotics? And then that goes over to this group, however, we're not going to have time.

Mr. PLOTTER. [All remarks of Mr. Plotter are given in native tongue through an interpreter.]

Ms. CEPEDA. No, it was not always like this. Before drugs fueled the armed struggle, there was from the part of the guerrilla a really partisan, committed ideology based on the population and based on looking, and the search for a better society.

The qualitative jump in the characteristics of the FARC is that now they have a much better, much improved arsenal as a product of drug profits.

Ms. WATSON. Muchas gracias.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Dr. Chernick and Mr. Isacson, how could we better use our money? You heard what I said a little earlier. We spend a lot of money, and everybody here, all of us, we want to be effective and efficient. How do you see, what do you see as a better way of using our money, assuming we want to use it to reduce drug production in Colombia? How would you approach it? Apparently you don't feel too good about the way we're doing it right now.

Mr. CHERNICK. My feeling, and I think most people who have looked at the drug war, as they call it, over the last 15 to 20 years, is that the current strategy is not successful. We continue to move it around and we show no results, zero results. Something else should be done.

You can change the circumstances in a particular country. We've done that in Bolivia and Peru, and we are changing things in Colombia, change, not lowering, changing politically, changing the war, changing the political actors, changing the social movements. But what we're not doing is stopping the flow of drugs. So I think something else needs to be thought on the drug side, and it probably means placing a lot more baskets on the demand side.

Even then, you must remember, the United States is not the only country fueling the demand for drugs. Brazil is now the second largest consumer of cocaine, and Europe is close behind. So that there is a growing global demand. And that's going to be met. That's simply economics. That's supply and demand.

And the drug war shows, you can send all the planes and helicopters you want, and you will simply push it around, you will not alter the laws of economics, of supply and demand. If you understand that, you need to think of a new way to approach the drug problem.

Second, a separate problem is the issue of the war in Colombia, and what is the impact of a war on drugs and the war in Colombia. My contention is that the U.S. drug war now collapsed into a war on terror is simply fueling the war. The United States should be on the side of the democratic side of democratic security, of promoting development, of dealing with humanitarian crises and dealing with human rights. And it should be putting its money and its diplomatic and its political weight on that side. It could go a long way.

But one should not collapse the drug war and Colombia's internal war. One should deal with Colombia's problems and one should try to address the issues of Colombia's armed conflict through some sort of negotiated settlement.

Mr. ISACSON. Very quickly, right now the United States gives Colombia about $750 million a year. I don't think any of us dispute that amount. I think we all endorse that. That is a good investment if it's done right. Our problem is that is 80 percent going to the security forces. And it's not looking at the reasons why people grow drugs, why people have no choice but to join the guerrillas and paramilitaries if they happen to live in the rural part of Colombia, which is a vast area.

It's hard to even imagine from here, but these are zones where most people have come within the last 30 years, cut down some jungle and tried to make a living and their government never followed them there. If somebody tries to take your land, you can't go to a judge and get it adjudicated. You can't get a land title, which means you can't get credit. There's no road for you to take your legal crops to market. And there's no cops to settle any dispute. Your kids can't go to school so they end up unemployed and probably joining one of the armed groups.

There's a whole lot of other needs that our aid really isn't meeting. But we certainly have no problem with the amount or the level of commitment.

Mr. CUMMINGS. So in other words, if the economic and social problems aren't addressed, you're going to continue to have these problems and we're going to continue to pour money into Colombia, and it's just going to be a bottomless pit.

Mr. CHERNICK. Mr. Plotter mentioned that the FARC are able to, are very freely able to recruit like crazy in the areas under their control. Why? Because there's a lot of people there with nothing to do. And as long as those social conditions are there, you've got this reserve army of drug growers and future guerrillas and paramilitaries. That's absolutely true.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you very much.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me just ask, the Homestead Act, President Lincoln did so much to develop the west here and the gold rush and everything like that. Would something like that be conceivable for Colombia?

Mr. CHERNICK. I think so. Actually, a lot of the places we're talking about, like Putumayo, some of the people that came in the 1960's and 1970's came at the behest of the Colombian Government as what they called colonization plans. But the Colombian Government didn't followup.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. They didn't have Wyatt Earp following it up.

Mr. CHERNICK. That's exactly right.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. No cavalry and everything else.

Mr. CHERNICK. No Pony Express, either. Nothing.

Mr. ISACSON. Could I just add something? There is a problem here. It is true that Colombia has this really hundreds of years process of colonization of what they call the agricultural frontier. It's like the Homesteading Act. The problem is with most of the areas of homesteading, it's not only that they don't have title to the land and therefore the state doesn't have infrastructure, no roads to market and all that, but most of this area is not suitable for agricultural production. Most of this is very fragile rain forest that does not lend itself to agricultural production.

You asked, what else can you grow? In most places, nothing. And that is, one really needs to think about it. I in fact worked with the World Bank on a project of creating alternative poles to development. Because it's not only alternatives crops, it's in fact alternative poles of development that would draw populations out of the forest. Because one can't think of simply continuing the colonization zones. They've thought about that in the past. Half the country is basically unpopulated.

But it's not suitable for habitation. And one needs to think of a different relationship of the population in that lands. The alternative development question hasn't even begun to address that issue.

Mr. CHERNICK. That's true.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you. Well, our votes are on, and I don't want to hold you while we go over and do them, but it's been very helpful. We appreciate all of your perspectives, as we put this in the record and as we move forward.

So, Mr. Isacson and Dr. Chernick and Mr. Plotter, and also for you, Ms. Cepeda, thank you very much for being with us today. This has been very, very helpful to us. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 6:40 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

[The prepared statement of Hon. John L. Mica and additional information submitted for the hearing record follows:]

Statement submitted for the Record by Congressman John Mica

Since John P. Walters was sworn into the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) on December 7, 2001 as "Drug Czar", our nation has made significant strides under his leadership in the fight against cocaine and heroine production in Colombia.

The success Plan Colombia has experienced is not only a result of John Walters' work, but also due to the strength of our relationships with President Uribe, the Colombian military and police forces. Only a few years ago Colombia was in danger of being lost to drug lords and terrorist groups. Today, Colombia has dramatically increased the scope of the rule of law by increasing economic output, reducing unemployment and eradicating drug crops as they have surfaced.

At the beginning of 2003 approximately 145,000 hectares of coca had been planted in Colombia. In large part to Mr. Walters' support, over 127,000 hectares of mature coca were sprayed and eradicated in that same year. This effort has resulted in a 21% decrease in pure cocaine production potential with a decrease from 585 metric tons in 2002 to 460 metric tons in 2003. With this years planned eradication, Cocaine production will continue to drop to 323 metric tons representing a 54% decrease since Mr. Walters took office in 2001.

Eradication is only one aspect of the success of Plan Colombia since Mr. Walters assumed responsibility. With US support, Colombian counterdrug forces also interdicted and destroyed a record 83 cocaine laboratories in 2003. They also scored the largest drug capture at sea by seizing 48 metric tons of cocaine, 1,500 metric tons of solid precursors and 750,000 gallons of liquid precursor processing chemicals.

Mr. Walters' efforts to disrupt the market production of cocaine and opium in Colombia have contributed significantly to the US' goal of decreasing cocaine consumption 25% by 2006. As Drug Czar, Mr. Walters has initiated significant changes to the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign by connecting drug profits with the support of terrorist activities.

Not only have we increased eradication and curtailed drug trafficking, we have stemmed the violence that has been spawned by narcoterrorism. Murders, kidnapping and violence have dramatically dropped in Colombia. The economy of this great South American nation is being restored. Those who previously blocked and delayed implementation of Plan Colombia should be ashamed of the death and destruction they failed to stem.

The strong relationship between the United States and Colombia that Mr. Walters has led is evidenced by the increasing pressure on drug trafficking organizations. Under President Uribe, Colombia has arrested and extradited 104 drug traffickers to the United States. Colombian criminal and terrorist organizations continue to threaten the safety of the American people. Although there is much work to be completed, John Walters has made Plan Colombia work and I am confident that his determination will only lead to more successes in partnerships with our friends in Colombia.

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

June 28, 2004

VIA FACSIMILE AND FIRST CLASS MAIL

His Excellency Luis Alberto Moreno
Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary
Embassy of the Republic of Colombia
2118 Leroy Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

RE: Additional Questions for the Hearing on Plan Colombia

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

On June 17, 2004, the Committee on Government Reform in the United States House of Representatives convened a Full Committee hearing on Plan Colombia to inquire into the status of the efforts of our Government and those of the Government of Colombia to meet the program's objectives. Based upon Committee rules and practice, I am submitting the following questions to you to clarify some positions which you stated during your participation in last week's hearing. These questions and your responses will be entered into the Committee's record for the Plan Colombia hearing.

1) I understand that President Uribe made a statement on June 15, 2004, in which he maintained, among other things, that Amnesty International "legitimates" terrorism and has demonstrated "political affinity" with guerrilla groups. I am sure that you appreciate the seriousness of these allegations. What is the basis for these assertions against Amnesty International, a well respected international human rights organization with over forty years of experience around the world?

2) President Uribe's June 15 statement is the latest comment in a series of public denunciations by him against Colombian and international human rights organizations. There is a growing concern that these statements are part of a deliberate strategy to de-legitimize the work of human rights organizations which operate in Colombia. What role does your Government envision for human rights organizations operating in Colombia? How does this role relate to your Government's "Democratic Security and Defense Policy?"

3) I understand that the Government of Colombia, through a Presidential Directive, has ordered government officials to refrain from questioning the legitimacy of human rights organizations and their members. What concrete steps is your Government undertaking to implement this Directive?

4) On June 18, 2002, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordered that the Government of Colombia implement a series of Provisional Measures that would help ensure that the human rights of members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó are respected. These Provisional Measures, I understand, were recently ratified by Colombia's Constitutional Court. What concrete steps is your Government undertaking to implement these Provisional Measures, particularly the measures to protect the lives and the right to humane treatment of all members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó?

Due to Committee requirements, I would greatly appreciate it if you could respond to these questions by July 9, 2004. Please refer all inquiries regarding this letter to Paul Oostburg Sanz, my Democratic Deputy Chief Counsel on the Committee on International Relations. He can be reached at 202-225-5416 or through his email address, paul.oostburg@mail.house.gov.

Mr. Ambassador, I appreciate your dedication and service to the people of Colombia, and welcomed your participation in the Plan Colombia hearing of the Government Reform Committee. I look forward to your written response to my questions.

Most Cordially,

TOM LANTOS
Member of Congress

9 July 2004

To the Honorable Representative
TOM LANTOS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Additional Questions for the Hearing on Plan Colombia

Honorable Representative:

In reference to your letter dated June 28, please find below the written response to the questions you raised, regarding the June 17 Hearing on Plan Colombia.

Question # 1

We believe that the best way to guarantee the necessary protection for civilians threatened by illegal armed groups is by recovering the legitimate powers of the State, making sure that the institutional Armed Forces exercise territorial control. Colombia is a case in point: Under the current Government all violence indicators have significantly decreased. Between 2002 and 2003 alone, forced internal displacement of persons fell by 48%, massacres by 37%, attacks to towns and villages by 80% and homicides by 20 %, to name but a few examples.

The President's statement of 15 June 2004 took place just a day after the FARC had committed an atrocious massacre in a place called La Gabarra, during which 34 innocent peasants were beheaded. The President was appalled by the fact that NGOs like Amnesty International failed to comment or react in any way to this incident. The Government is convinced that our country requires the active presence of human rights NGOs in Colombia, but, at the same time, it feels entitled to expect that they be truly impartial.

Question # 2

Colombia is open to international visitors, observers and relief workers. The Government's stance with regards to NGOs remains unchanged: Everything will be done to provide guarantees for their work and protection for their members, but whenever their representations and reports fail to portray the country's real situation or whenever they include subjective judgment on the Government's actions and policies, we reserve the right to differ.

The Government does not pretend to be always in the right but it asserts its right to express its opinion and that of those sectors of Colombian society that endorse them, as well as the right to defend the country's democratic institutions.

The Government of Colombia is concerned with the proposition that the mere fact of dissenting with what an NGO's spokesperson states is enough to put its members at risk. After all, debate and dissent are the rule in any democratic country.

President Uribe's Policy on Democratic Defense and Security is all-inclusive and does not exclude any group or sector of society. Within the framework of this policy, a major goal is to provide security for every person living in Colombia, with no exceptions. In pursuance of this, the Government has sought to develop several strategies, one of which is a special "Protection Program", conducted by the Ministry of the Interior. This Program focuses on vulnerable groups, including social leaders and activists and in particular members of movements of political opposition; ethnic, social and community organizations; union and peasant associations and human rights NGOs. In Fiscal Year 2003 alone, this Program was funded with resources from the National Budget and international cooperation, amounting to some US $ 12.5 million, out of which $ 1.8 million were provided by USAID.

Question # 3

The document in question is Permanent Directive # 07 of September 9, 1999, regarding the support and interaction with NGOs active in humanitarian matters in Colombia. This order has been widely distributed among all public servants, particularly those of the Public Forces.

Pursuant to this Directive, the Ministry of Defense adopted its own "Policy of the Ministry of Defense with Regard to the Protection of Rights of Union Leaders and Human Rights Defenders". The Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares, by means of a Permanent Directive issued on 30 December 2003, and the Dirección de la Policía Nacional, by means of a Special Order, have internalized these measures. These documents contain specific instructions with regard to the protection of, interaction with and support to union leaders, human right defenders and NGOs, and they provide for enforcing disciplinary action in case of their non-observance.

In addition to that, training programs have been devised for all members of the Public Force on the role NGOs, social organizations, unions and human right defenders play in society. These programs are aimed at underlining respect for the work of these organizations within a democratic State and the contribution they make to our democratic society.

Likewise, Permanent Directive 800 of 4 February 2003, set up the "Plan for the Full Integration of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law" in the Military and Police Doctrine. As a result, currently every course of training, promotion or specialization within the Armed Forces and the Police have a component on humanitarian issues. The Ministry of Defense also has agreements with academic institutions, both national (Universidad Javeriana and Universidad Externado de Colombia) and international (Inter-American Institute of Human Rights of Costa Rica and International Institute of Humanitarian Law of San Remo).

Furthermore, the National Police has been implementing a program of training in International Law of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, which is addressed to all "Seccionales" of Police Training. They have also produced a valuable "Teaching Handbook on International Humanitarian Law".

Following express instructions from the President, Vice-president Santos has conducted regional meetings aimed at ensuring that local authorities are committed to the protection of vulnerable persons and legitimizing the work of opposition groups, unions and NGOs. Special inter-agency meetings called "Committees on Regulation and Assessment of Risk" have taken place in Popayán and Valledupar, followed by meetings with local authorities.

The Office of the Vice-president has also established a permanent interaction and exchange with representatives of civil society, by means of regular meetings with the NGOs community. Last 24 June a meeting of this kind took place with the participation of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. In that occasion, the Government suggested adopting a comprehensive agenda of sensitive subjects, which ought to be addressed by high ranking officials, with the aim of maintaining an effective relationship between the Government and concerned NGOs. A permanent coordination committee was set up in parallel, composed of representatives of NGOs and the Office of the President's Program for Human Rights. It will look for innovative ways to address matters of common concern.

Lastly, pursuant to one of the recommendations made by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia, several actions have taken place in order to finalize the National Action Plan on Human Rights. In the design phase for this Plan, NGOs will be afforded a prominent role.

Question # 4

The entities concerned with carrying out provisional measures indicated by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights are the Office of the Vice-president, the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, the Ministry of Defense, the National Police, the Procuraduría General, the Attorney General, the Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsman) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Several meetings have been held in Bogotá and in the Comunidad de Paz itself, with the aim of advancing in the protection and security of the persons involved. These meetings have included local authorities and have resulted in the setting up of mechanisms of inter-agency coordination, in order to meet the needs of the Comunidad, with emphasis on protection.

It has to be noted that the responsibility of the State with regards to the implementation of these provisional measures is conditional to its ability to secure the presence of the authorities in the Comunidad. This has been objected by the very persons that the Court's order is addressed to protect, given that they have made a "declaration of neutrality". However, the National Government has stated in several occasions that, under the Constitution and the legislation in force, every government body must assume and exercise its powers within the territorial jurisdiction of San José de Apartadó. The Government respects the existence of the "Comunidad de Paz", but it cannot relinquish the exercise of the State powers and functions in any part of the national territory.

As for the carrying out of the measures on a day-to-day basis, the Ministry of Defense has informed that there is now permanent surveillance in the main road connecting Apartadó with San José de Apartadó, thus ensuring the regular movement of persons in the region in order to get food and medical supplies. Likewise, the Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsman) makes weekly visits to the Comunidad de Paz, monitoring the implementation of the provisional measures of protection. As for the decision by the Constitutional Court, the Procuraduría General de la Nación has reported that one of its officials made a visit to the area and verified that the "Operative Handbook" referred to in paragraph 3 of the Court's Order was already finished. The said document was sent to the persons concerned in a meeting held last 23 June. The Procuraduría General also paid a special visit to the premises of Batallón Bejarano, as a result of which it concluded that what the decision provides for with regard to security for the members of the Comunidad de Paz is being observed.

I appreciate your permanent interest in matters related to Colombia.

Cordially,

Luis Alberto Moreno
Ambassador of Colombia

jjq/mcg

9 de Julio de 2004

Honorable Representante
TOM LANTOS
Congreso de los Estados Unidos
Cámara de Representantes
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Preguntas adicionales - Audiencia sobre el Plan Colombia

Honorable Congresista:

En respuesta a su carta del 28 de Junio, me permito suministrarle la respuesta escrita a las preguntas formuladas por usted con relación a la audiencia relativa al Plan Colombia:

Pregunta # 1

Colombia cree que la mejor manera de asegurar la adecuada protección de los civiles amenazados por grupos armados ilegales es la recuperación de la autoridad legítima del Estado democrático, asegurando el control territorial por parte de las Fuerzas Armadas institucionales. El ejemplo de Colombia es claro. En lo que va corrido de este gobierno, las cifras de desplazamiento, masacres y ataques contra poblaciones, han disminuido de manera significativa. Es así como entre el 2002 y el 2003 el desplazamiento forzado de personas disminuyó en un 48%, las masacres en un 37%, los ataques a poblaciones en un 80%, y los homicidios en un 20%, para citar sólo algunos ejemplos.

Las declaraciones del Presidente de la República del 15 de junio se produjeron un día después de que las FARC habían cometido una atroz matanza en el sitio de La Gabarra, en la cual fueron degollados 34 campesinos inocentes. Su intervención tuvo lugar luego de registrar con sorpresa que ante un hecho de esta naturaleza las ONGs como Amnistía Internacional no hubieran reaccionado ni emitido ningún pronunciamiento. El Gobierno está convencido de que el país requiere de la presencia y actividad de las ONGs de derechos humanos, pero se siente con el derecho a esperar que actúen con imparcialidad.

Pregunta # 2

El Gobierno de Colombia mantiene abiertas las puertas a visitantes, observadores y cooperantes internacionales.

La posición del Gobierno Colombiano respecto de las ONG's permanece inmodificable: garantías para su trabajo, protección para sus miembros y controversia cuando sus apreciaciones e informes no reflejen la verdadera situación del país o hagan señalamientos subjetivos a la política del gobierno. No pretende el gobierno tener siempre la razón, pero sí el derecho a expresar la opinión del mismo y la de los diversos sectores de colombianos identificados con su acción, así como el derecho a defender al Gobierno democrático.

Preocupa al Gobierno de Colombia la tesis de que el solo hecho de disentir de lo que expresan voceros de las ONG's coloque en riesgo la vida de sus miembros. Lo normal en un país democrático es que exista debate.

La Política de Defensa y Seguridad Democrática del gobierno del presidente Alvaro Uribe Vélez no excluye a ningún grupo o sector de la sociedad. En el marco de esta política se busca brindar seguridad a todos los habitantes en Colombia, sin excepción alguna. Desde esa perspectiva, el Gobierno Nacional ha desarrollado varias estrategias, dentro de las cuales debe destacarse el Programa de Protección. Este programa opera bajo el liderazgo del Ministerio del Interior y Justicia y tiene como objeto grupos vulnerables, entre los cuales se cuentan dirigentes o activistas de grupos políticos y, especialmente, miembros de grupos de oposición; de organizaciones sociales, cívicas y comunales; de agrupaciones gremiales, sindicales o campesinas; de grupos étnicos y de ONG's de derechos humanos.

Durante la vigencia fiscal de 2003, a este Programa se le asignaron recursos no sólo del presupuesto nacional sino también de la cooperación internacional, por un monto cercano a los U.S. $ 12.5 millones, de los cuales U.S.A.I.D. ha suministrado 1.8 millones.

Pregunta # 3

Se trata de la Directiva Permanente número 07 de septiembre 9 de 1999, referente al respaldo, interlocución y colaboración del Estado con las organizaciones no gubernamentales que desarrollan actividades humanitarias en el país. Este documento ha sido difundido ampliamente entre todos los funcionarios públicos y en especial entre los miembros de la Fuerza Pública.

En desarrollo de esta Directiva, el Ministerio de Defensa expidió la Directiva 09 del 8 de julio de 2003, sobre atención y protección a defensores de derechos humanos y sindicalistas. El Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares, mediante Directiva Permanente del 30 de diciembre de 2003, y la Dirección de la Policía Nacional, a través de un Instructivo, particularizaron estas órdenes. En estas disposiciones se imparten instrucciones concretas en relación con la protección, respaldo e interlocución con sindicalistas, defensores de derechos humanos y ONG's, y se prevé de manera específica la posibilidad de tomar las medidas disciplinarias que sean del caso a aquellos que la contravengan.

Como complemento a lo anterior, se han desarrollado programas de capacitación dirigidos a los funcionarios de la Fuerza Pública sobre el papel que desempeñan las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales, las organizaciones sociales y sindicales y los defensores de derechos humanos, con el propósito de mantener el respeto por la labor que desempeñan en pro de un Estado de derecho y fortalecimiento de la democracia colombiana.

Así mismo, a través de la Directiva Permanente 800-4 de febrero de 2003, se estableció el Plan de Integración de los Derechos Humanos y el Derecho Internacional Humanitario en la Doctrina Militar y Policial. Como resultado de este, en el momento actual todos los cursos de formación, ascenso o especialidad dentro de la fuerza pública tienen incorporada la temática humanitaria en sus contenidos. El Ministerio de Defensa tiene también convenios con respetadas instituciones académicas internacionales (como el Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos de San José de Costa Rica o el Instituto Internacional de Derecho Humanitario de San Remo, Italia) y nacionales (como la Universidad Javeriana y la Universidad Externado de Colombia).

Por su parte, la Policía ha implementado un proceso de formación en materia de Derecho Internacional de los Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario, dirigido a todas las Seccionales de Formación Policial. Así mismo, se elaboró un "Manual Pedagógico Orientado a la Enseñanza del Derecho Internacional Humanitario".

Por instrucciones expresas del Presidente, el Vicepresidente ha encabezado reuniones regionales en varias ciudades del país con el fin de comprometer a las autoridades locales en la protección de personas vulnerables y legitimar la acción de grupos de oposición, ONGs y sindicatos.

En desarrollo de esto se han realizado "Comités de Reglamentación y Evaluación de Riesgo", en las ciudades de Popayán y Valledupar, complementados con las correspondientes reuniones con las autoridades locales.

Igualmente, a través del Vicepresidente de la República, el Gobierno ha entablado un diálogo permanente con representantes de la sociedad civil, el cual se desarrolla a través de reuniones de contacto directo con la comunidad de las ONGs. El pasado 24 de Junio se celebró una reunión del Vicepresidente con diversas ONGs de derechos humanos, con la participación de funcionarios del Gobierno Nacional y la comunidad internacional, incluyendo a la Oficina del Alto Comisionado para los Derechos Humanos de las Naciones Unidas. En dicha reunión el gobierno propuso elaborar una agenda detallada sobre temas sensibles, que deberán ser abordados por funcionarios de alto nivel y lograr así una interrelación más efectiva entre el gobierno y las ONGs. Se creó paralelo a esto un Comité de Interlocución conformado por representantes de ONGs y la Oficina del Programa Presidencial para los Derechos Humanos, el cual busca lograr mayor entendimiento sobre temas y preocupaciones comunes.

En desarrollo de las recomendaciones contenidas en el informe del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Colombia, se desarrolló una dinámica de acercamientos con diversas ONGs, tendientes a establecer una metodología para la elaboración concertada del Plan Nacional de Acción de Derechos Humanos. En la fase de diseño del Plan se tiene prevista la apertura de espacios para el consenso, en los cuales se espera contar con la participación activa de las organizaciones no gubernamentales dedicadas al tema de los derechos humanos.

Pregunta # 4

Las entidades competentes en relación con el cumplimiento de las medidas provisionales ordenadas por la Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos son la Vicepresidencia de la República, el Ministerio del Interior y de Justicia, el Ministerio de Defensa, la Policía Nacional, la Procuraduría General de la Nación, la Fiscalía General de la Nación, la Defensoría del Pueblo y el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores.

En este marco, se han celebrado reuniones en Bogotá y en la propia Comunidad de Paz, con el propósito de avanzar de manera directa en la protección y seguridad de los beneficiarios de las medidas. Estas reuniones han contado con la participación de las

autoridades locales, estableciendo mecanismos de coordinación interinstitucional con el fin de atender de manera oportuna las necesidades de la comunidad, haciendo un especial énfasis en el tema de protección.

La responsabilidad del Estado frente a la implementación de las medidas depende en primer lugar de la presencia estatal en la Comunidad, la cual ha sido cuestionada por parte de los mismos beneficiarios, con fundamento en el hecho de que han formulado una "declaración de neutralidad". Sin embargo, el Gobierno Nacional ha señalado en diferentes oportunidades que constitucional y legalmente cada institución debe asumir sus competencias en la jurisdicción territorial de San José de Apartadó. El Gobierno respeta la existencia de la "Comunidad de Paz", pero no puede abdicar el ejercicio de las potestades del Estado en ninguna parte del territorio nacional.

El Ministerio de Defensa ha informado que en la actualidad se cuenta con vigilancia permanente en la carretera que de Apartadó conduce a San José de Apartadó garantizando el normal desplazamiento de los habitantes de la región para adquirir sus víveres y medicamentos. Así mismo, la Defensoría del Pueblo adelanta visitas semanales a la Comunidad de Paz, en el marco del cumplimiento de medidas de provisionales de protección. En cuanto a la decisión de la Corte Constitucional, la Procuraduría General de la Nación, en cumplimiento del numeral 3° de la providencia, informó que se realizó una visita a la zona donde se comprobó que ya fue elaborado el "Manual Operativo" allí ordenado, el cual fue puesto en conocimiento de los peticionarios y beneficiarios en reunión celebrada el 23 de junio. En el mismo sentido, la Procuraduría General de la Nación realizó una visita especial al Batallón Bejarano, de la cual se concluyó que se está cumpliendo con lo que ordena la sentencia en lo relacionado con la seguridad de los miembros de la Comunidad de Paz.

Le agradezco su permanente interés en las cuestiones relacionadas con mi país.

Cordialmente,

Luis Alberto Moreno
Embajador de Colombia

Colombia Progress Info Sheet 1 April 2004 Update

UNCLASSIFIED

Economic & Other Results

- Production from the Guando oilfield, located between Melgar and Boqueron, has increased from 8,000 to 23,000 barrels a day. [1]
- Colombian Petroleum Enterprise (Ecopetrol) had profits of 1.58T pesos (US$589M) in 2003, of which nearly 1.1T will go to the government as dividends alone. Overall, Ecopetrol accounted for 5.7T pesos (US$2.11B) in transfers to the GOC via royalties and taxes paid. [2]
- COL forces seized 202 properties owned by northern Valle del Cauca cartel member Hernando Gomez Bustamante, alias 'Rasguno,' and four of his henchmen, who are responsible for an estimated 30-50% of cocaine exiting COL for the US. The properties, totaling approx 5,000 hectares and assessed at over 270B pesos (US$100M), will be subject to asset forfeiture proceedings. They include 68 rural estates, 13 apartments, 8 warehouses, 37 houses, 6 garages, 14 sales outlets, 24 offices, 17 parking lots, and 17 businesses. [3]
- COL and US Governments signed an MOU earmarking $13M gleaned from asset forfeiture proceedings, to strengthen Colombia's justice system. Twelve (12) projects will be implemented with these funds, including purchase of computer systems for intelligence work, improvements to the prisons, Police, and Prosecutor General facilities, training for policemen, and human rights promotion. [4]
- Colombia Telecomms Inc (CTI) will invest 100B pesos (US$37M) this year, earmarking 50% to recovering the infrastructure affected by terrorist attacks. CTI had profits of US$169M in 2003, reversing 2002 losses of US$174M. [5]

Source: [1] Bogotá *La Republica*, 8 Mar 04; [2] Bogotá *Portafolio*, 10 Mar 04; [3] Bogotá *El Espectador* & Medellin *El Colombiano*, 11 Mar 04; [4] COL Govt news agency *SNE*, 15 Mar 04; [5] Bogotá *La Republica*, 12 Mar 04.

Counter Narcotics Results

Eradication	Feb02-Jan03[1]	Feb03-Jan04[1]	% CHG
Coca (ha)	129,812	138,817	+7%
Seizures			
Cocaine (MT)	99.2	111.0	+12%
Coca Base (Kg)	20,966	32,781	+56%
Marijuana (Kg)	95,264	122,386	+29%
Traffickers	34,286	45,832	+34%
Drug Labs	1,304	1,547	+19%

- Coca cultivation dropped 21% in 2003 compared to 2002 (113,850 hectares, down from 144,450 in 2002 and 169,800 in 2001). This crop could produce an estimated 460 metric tons (MT) of pure cocaine, down from an estimated yield of 585 MT in 2002 and 700 MT in 2001. [2]

Source: [1] COL Min Nat Def, SIDEN Rpt, "Public Forces Operational Results-Violence and Criminality-Terrorism", 10 Feb 2004, http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/fuerza/res_op.html; [2] Office of National Drug Control Policy, 22 Mar 04, http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/press04/032204.html.

Economic & Other Results

- State-run oil company, Ecopetrol (Colombian Petroleum Enterprise), plans to spend $117M on oil exploration this year. This is nearly triple the amount spent on exploration in recent years. [1]
- COL National Customs and Tax Directorate (DIAN) collected 3.35T pesos in taxes this January (US$1.24B), an increase of 18% compared with the 2.84T pesos (US$1.05B)collected in January 2003. The 3.35T pesos was 44.3B more than was expected due to strong retail sales in December. [2]
- 735 forest ranger families from the rural area near Santa Marta received their first payment for eradicating 600 hectares of coca plants. UN inspectors confirmed the coca was eradicated. [3]
- Colombian Petroleum Enterprise (Ecopetrol) recorded $887M in sales of refined products in 2003, a 29% increase over 2002. Ecopetrol exported 32M barrels of refined products, 8.6% more than in 2002. [4]
- COL Defense expenditures rose 8.4% (US$1.85B to US$2.15B) in 2003, while expenditures in other GOC sectors rose only 3.3%. [5]
- Tactical operations (OPTEMPO) by the COL MIL went from 4,523 in 2002 to 10,730 in 2003 (an increase of 137%), whereas charges by the Attorney General's Office against Public Forces for alleged violations fell sharply (92%). [6]
- COLAR reports "effectiveness" rose 32% percent Jan-Feb 2004 compared to Jan-Feb 2003. In Jan-Feb 2004, 2259 terrorists were neutralized (including 468 KIA) during a total of 319 clashes. The KIA: 246 FARC, 101 ELN, 112 AUC, and 9 other, including 10 major terrorist leaders. COLAR disarmed and destroyed 890 explosive devices, 115 mined fields, 10 car bombs, 441 gas cylinder bombs, and 6 tons of ammonium nitrate fuel oil, ANFO, and R-1 explosives. COLAR seized 630 long arms, 812 handguns, 12 MG, 6 rocket launchers, 32 grenade launchers, 32 mortars, 1150 hand grenades, and 207,000 rounds of ammo during Jan-Feb 2004. [7]
- State-owned Electrical Interconnection Inc (ISA) reported net profits of 81.453B pesos (US$30.17M) for 2003, 240.5% more than for 2002. [8]

Source: [1] Medellin *El Colombiano*, 24 Feb 04; [2] Bogotá *La Republica*, 24 Feb 04; [3] Barranquilla *El Heraldo*, 24 Feb 04; [4] Bogotá *Portafolio*, 2 Mar 04; [5] Bogotá *La Republica*, 2 Mar 04; [6,7] Bogotá *El Tiempo*, 5 Mar 04; [8] Bogotá *La Republica*, 5 Mar 04.

Overall Crime Reduction Results

	Feb02-Jan03[1]	Feb03-Jan04[1]	% CHG
Homicides	28,386	22,675	-20%
Massacre Events	119	71	-40%
Massacre Victims	700	393	-44%
Kidnappings	2,972	2,087	-30%
Illegal Road Blocks	189	71	-62%
Road Block Kidnappings	706	271	-62%
Extortion Kidnappings	1,877	1,380	-27%
Car Thefts	16,947	12,887	-24%
Motorcycle Thefts	12,627	9,887	-22%
Bank Robberies	245	162	-34%
Highway Robberies	1,368	1,333	-3%
Business Robberies	12,134	11,710	-4%

- The 2003 homicide rate (52 killings/100,000 people) is lowest rate recorded since 1987. [2]

Source: [1] COL Min Nat Def, SIDEN Rpt, "Public Forces Operational Results-Violence and Criminality-Terrorism", 10 Feb 2004, http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/fuerza/res_op.html; [2] COL Min Nat Def, SIDEN Rpt, "Positive Balance in 2003", 5 Jan 04, http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/politica/min_uribe_echavarria20040105balance_operational_2003.html.

Counter Terrorism Results

Terrorists	Feb02-Jan03[1]	Feb03-Jan04[1]	% CHG
Captured	5460	9839	+80%
WIA/KIA	1872	2187	+17%
Demob/Deserters	1502	2597	+73%
Firearms Seized	4677	7046	+51%
Grenades Seized	3908	7729	+98%
Ammo Seized	569,251	1,528,058	+168%
Terrorist Attacks on:			
Electric Pylons	425	320	-25%
Commo Towers	57	18	-68%
Aqueducts	10	3	-70%
Towns	24	6	-75%
Bridges	98	29	-71%
Roads	261	99	-62%
All Attacks	1576	827	-48%

Source: [1] COL Min Nat Def, SIDEN Rpt, "Public Forces Operational Results-Violence and Criminality-Terrorism", 10 Feb 2004, http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/fuerza/res_op.html.

POC: Dr. Robert L Hannan, USSOUTHCOM

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CAN SMARTY PULL A SEABISCUIT?

SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 2003

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many as 1 50 die m stomach pling

obese people see gastric urgery as their only hope, ıths are reported. Story by er, Page 22A

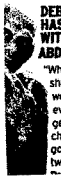
D-RAISER SUSPENDED FIGHTER

rsy follows help for co-worker racist language. Page 3A

CASE

IS 'BORN' AGAIN

favorite alt-rock group sues of identity on its latest Ghost is Born." Page 1D



DEBRA PICKETT HAS LUNCH WITH KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR

"When I stand to shake his hand, I wonder why I've even bothered to get out of my chair – he's still got more than two feet on me."

HEROIN'S DEADLY PATH

A Guambiano Indian hacks down poppies, the heroin-producing plant, in Silvia, 230 miles southwest of Bogota, Colombia. –AP FILE PHOTO

COLOMBIA'S KILLING FIELDS CLAIMING LIVES IN CHICAGO

BY FRANK MAIN
Crime Reporter

BOGOTA, Colombia — Ask Alejandro what guerrillas here think of Americans, and an uncomfortable smile spreads across his baby face.

"We wanted to kill the gringos," the 18-year-old said.

He chuckled at the irony.

Alejandro was a soldier in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, a 40-year-old group that grows and sells much of the cocaine and heroin that make their way to Chicago's neighborhoods and suburbs.

But FARC's leaders — narco-traffickers less interested in communist ideology than in women, cigars and whiskey paid for with U.S. drug money — hate Americans because

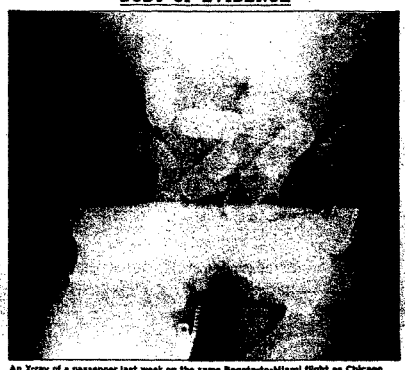
STORY CONTINUES ON PAGES 16-17A

METRO CHICAGO SUN-TIMES • SUNDAY, JUNE 6, 2004

'If you want to change life in the streets of America, one of the places you do it is Colombia'

Drug team hunts Chicago's heroin source

BODY OF EVIDENCE



An X-ray of a passenger last week on the same Bogota-to-Miami flight as Chicago area cops showed he had swallowed 78 plastic-encased pellets of heroin – about three-quarters of a kilogram. -U.S. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

From Page 1A

we have provided the Colombian government with billions of dollars to fight the drug war here.

"They talked about equality in Colombia, but they really are looking for money for themselves," said Alejandro, whose life is in jeopardy because he defected from the 18,000-member guerrilla army.

The irony is not lost on U.S. Rep. Henry Hyde, either.

Hyde (R-Ill.) is alarmed that the Chicago area has ranked No. 1 among U.S. cities in heroin deaths and emergency room visits. He also is alarmed that money from drug sales in Chicago is returning to Colombia, where U.S. citizens and Colombians alike are targets of FARC and other terrorist groups.

So Hyde organized a fact-finding mission to Colombia for cops from Chicago and DuPage County. They flew to Bogota last week to huddle with U.S. drug agents and Colombian police. They visited a telephone surveillance operation across a valley from drug lords' *fincas* in Cali. And they stood at the bedside of officers who have lost limbs in FARC attacks.

"It's a war on both continents," said John Risley, head of the Chicago Police Narcotics and Gang Investigation unit.

Risley said he was struck by the vast number of couriers flying from Colombia to New York and Miami with drugs in secret luggage compartments, in their shoes and in plastic-encased pellets that they swallow.

In fact, the Chicago area cops were at El Dorado Airport in Bogota waiting for their flight home through Miami when Colombian police stopped a suspicious man and put him through an X-ray machine. It confirmed he had swallowed 78 pellets of heroin — three-quarters of a kilogram. The man had been booked on the same flight as the cops.

An estimated 20 couriers leave the Bogota airport every day.

G.P.H. TRIBUNE

Risley said he wants to work more closely with the New York police to identify those couriers bringing Colombian dope from the East Coast to Chicago. He plans to boost efforts to catch them at O'Hare Airport.

"I think it is at a higher level than we thought," Risley said.

Terror cells

Bogota is perched 9,000 feet atop a plateau. Planes struggle to climb over the cloud-shrouded mountains that encircle the city of 9 million people. It is a city where Americans stay on their guard.

One night, Risley and the rest of the Chicago contingent drove into the hills of Bogota in armored sport-utility vehicles to the U.S. ambassador's residence, a sprawling white estate overlooking the lights of the city.

The capital was jittery because FARC was celebrating its 40th anniversary and attacks were feared. Safe in the heavily protected mansion, the gathering dined on empanadas and sipped whiskey as reports came in about two bombings in Bogota and a "mini-riot" in Cali.

No matter where you are in Bogota — even in the ambassador's house or at an upscale restaurant — the terror cells financed by the FARC are a constant threat.

Last year, FARC members tossed grenades into the Bogota Beer Company and Palce de Moguer pubs in the swank Zona Rosa, where embassy employees, off-duty soldiers and journalists hang out.

The attack killed one person and wounded 72, including an American Airlines pilot from Florida.

Kidnappings are a constant worry. But under hard-line President Alvaro Uribe, they are happening less frequently, along with political killings and attacks on villages by FARC and the illegal paramilitary groups that view FARC as a mortal enemy.

Life in FARC

FARC's drug pipeline to Chicago starts in camps where soldiers like Alejandro live. He joined FARC three years ago when he was 15. A buddy recruited him.

He learned to use a .50-caliber machine-gun and an assault rifle, and he fought against the military. In jungle camps in the southwest part of the country, where cocaine is the chief industry, he was tutored in Marxist ideology.

"All they talked about was the inequality of society," said Alejandro, whose last name is not being used to protect his identity.

But life in FARC was decidedly unequal. "Julian," commander of FARC's 29th Front, lived in a house packed with conveniences. He was fond of lounging on a cabin cruiser "with girls on it all the time,"

Buying a high on W. Side starts with trip out of jungle

Much of the drugs that end up in Chicago come from the lush jungles and cloud-shrouded spires of Colombia.

Cocaine is extracted from coca leaves. The pods of red poppy flowers, which flourish at more than 10,000 feet, contain a milky gum that is turned into heroin.

The gum from poppy pods is worth up to 1 million pesos a kilogram — or $3,700.

"We would send it to Cali in vehicles and on mules," said Alejandro, an ex-soldier with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, which grows poppies and coca to fund its operations.

By the time Colombian heroin reaches Chicago by Mexican shipping and trucking routes — or by couriers traveling to U.S. airports — it's worth at least $76,000 a kilogram (2.2 pounds) wholesale. Coke is worth up to $22,000 a kilo.

Almost all heroin leaving Bogota goes to the United States, while most of the cocaine leaving the capital winds up in Europe. The trends are different in Cali and other cities, officials say.

Colombian heroin is so pure compared with heroin from Afghanistan and Mexico that U.S. teens have begun to snort it instead of shooting it into their veins with a needle.

Police in DuPage County say affluent high schoolers drive to the West Side to score heroin. Some get hooked and overdose.

The latest U.S. statistics on drug abuse show there were 220 heroin-related emergency-room visits in the Chicago area in 2002 and 352 heroin-related deaths in 2001 — the most in the country. One reason: Chicago is the Midwestern drug hub. Baltimore was a close second with 349 deaths and 203 emergency-room visits. New York had the third highest level of hospital visits, with 173.

Though drug agents think most heroin coming to Chicago is from Colombia, they are closely watching Asia, too.

"They are storing tons of heroin in Asia," said Richard Sanders, special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration in Chicago. "I think that is the next big problem for Chicago."

Frank Main

Naperville Police Chief David Dial inspects dried poppy pods. The pods contain a milky substance guerrillas convert into heroin.

Alejandro said, adding that Julian sent his family to Venezuela where they would be safer.

FARC soldiers like Alejandro cultivated drug plots and transported raw materials to drug labs, but never were invited into Julian's home. They lived in tents.

He grew to detest the leaders, who orchestrated kangaroo courts that handed down death sentences against his friends.

One day, he mustered the courage to escape. He walked to the home of a woman who gave him civilian clothes.

It took him 12 hours to hike to the nearest town in Nariño province, where he surrendered to police.

"They didn't believe me," he chuckled. "My weapon was in a bag on my back. I said, 'Hello, how are you?' and he said, 'Who are you?' and I said, 'I am a guerrilla.' And he said, 'What in the world are you doing here?' "

Two FARC guerrillas were ordered to kill Alejandro, but they decided to escape, too. They were killed trying. Another guerrilla who escaped passed on the news to Alejandro, he said.

The aerial war

Soldiers like Alejandro often came into contact with Colombian police through the U.S.-backed aerial drug eradication program.

Planes piloted by the Colombian National Police and U.S. contractors spray a chemical used in the popular herbicide, Roundup, onto coca leaves, from which cocaine is extracted, and onto fields of poppies, which contain the opium used in making heroin.

Alejandro recalls spreading molasses on the coca leaves to protect them from the spraying.

"We would shoot at them but never saw them drop," he said of the planes, adding that he was soaked with herbicide a few times while standing in the coca fields.

Often, however, the guerrillas' aim is true.

Three U.S. contractors — Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell and Thomas Howes — have been held captive by FARC guerrillas for more than a year.

Authorities believe FARC shot down their single-engine Cessna as they searched for illegal drug activity in the jungles of southern Colombia.

Their photos are on display in the lobby of the U.S. Embassy in Bogota with a banner that says, "You Are Not Forgotten." But U.S. officials say they are not negotiating with FARC for the pilots' release because the government does not deal with terrorists.

Colombian National Police aircraft frequently are shot at by FARC members and by paramilitary groups that also control territory where coca and poppy fields are cultivated.

Col. Carlos Malavar, head of the Colombian National Police aviation operation in Bogota, pointed out bullet holes that have riddled the wings of one of his DC-3s. The holes have been patched with sheet metal.

"I've stopped counting," Malavar said when asked how many times his planes have been struck.

The Chicago area cops met Capt. Jairo Carrera at a Colombian police hospital in Bogota where he has been recovering after crashing his helicopter into a mountain.

Carrera was flying a mission over poppy fields when FARC guerrillas shot him down. Another chopper rescued him, and he has spent the last 1½ years recuperating.

"I will fly again," said the 28-year-old officer, whose wife flies an airplane for the Colombian National Police.

The Colombian military also fights the FARC, but drug trafficking is not the focus of its efforts.

Cutting down the fields

Planes sprayed nearly 7,400 acres of poppies last year, and more than 2,200 more were destroyed by hand — more than in 2002 or 2001, according to U.S. estimates. But more than 22,800 acres were destroyed in 2000, the peak of poppy eradication efforts.

The coca-spraying program is much larger: The coca acreage destroyed last year was almost 35 times larger than the eradicated poppy crop. Coca destruction is increasingly successful, U.S. officials say.

"We're beyond the tipping point," said James K. Foster, a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Bogota. "We're winning the war."

Still, Hyde, chairman of the House International Relations Committee, sent a letter Nov. 5 to the U.S. drug czar, John P. Walters, arguing the United States should do more to destroy poppy fields by hand.

Hyde told Walters that heroin was a crucial problem facing his constituents, noting sky-high heroin abuse figures in the Chicago area.

Aerial spraying for poppies is difficult because they are grown in small patches high in the mountains under almost constant cloud cover — as opposed to coca, which is grown in large plots in jungle clearings.

Hyde said he supports a plan to put FARC defectors like Alejandro to work cutting down poppy fields with weed trimmers and machetes. More than 4,000 members of FARC have "demobilized" in recent years, and the Colombian government is training them to return to legitimate society.

"I will go back into that area on any operation for the government," said Alejandro, who faces death if he is ever caught by FARC operatives.

Hyde is fighting to supply three DC-3 aircraft — which only need a runway as long as a football field — to the Colombian National Police to ferry officers and FARC defectors to remote mountain areas where they can cut down poppy fields.

Another front

The United States, which has provided more than $2.5 billion in aid to Colombia since 2000, also is fighting to seize drug shipments, destroy drug labs here and dismantle the cartels sending drugs abroad.

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents, under threat of assassination, are paired with Colombian National Police officers to screen passengers and cargo leaving major airports here for Miami, New York and Europe.

Three of the agents here are former Chicago Police officers. They all plan on coming back some day.

"Nothing will faze us," said one of them, a former Belmont District patrol officer.

Another DEA agent — stationed on Colombia's rugged west coast where traffickers load "go-fast" speed boats with dope and deliver it to fishing trawlers bound for Mexico — said he cannot take the roads there because of the risk of being kidnapped or killed at a FARC checkpoint.

"It is deadly," said the former Los Angeles cop, who only travels to the coast by small aircraft or helicopter.

The DEA's efforts in Colombia have led to a major U.S. indictment unsealed in May against the Norte Valle Cartel, a collection of small drug rings based in a valley between Cali and Medellín.

Among the fugitives charged in the indictment are Wilbur Alirio Varela and Diego Leon Montoya-Sanchez. Varela, reputed to have killed 250 people, is now at war with Montoya-Sanchez for control of the empire, officials here said.

Colombia is facing a fourth generation of drug traffickers following the marijuana cartels of the 1970s, the murderous Medellín cartel that the late Pablo Escobar ran in the 1980s, and the Cali and Norte Valle cartels that were more discreet in their use of violence, said Col. Oscar A. Naranjo Trujillo, director of the Central Judicial Police in Colombia.

"There is no showboating anymore," he said. "It's all business."

U.S. Ambassador William B. Wood, at the party for the Chicago area cops at his Bogota residence, said the fight against Colombian drug traffickers is critical for U.S. cities like Chicago.

"If you want to change life in the streets of America, one of the places you do it is Colombia," Wood told the Sun-Times. "In 2001, more American citizens died from drugs coming from Colombia than died in the World Trade Center towers. That is why we have the largest embassy in the world here. We have a strong ally in Colombia, and we are crazy if we don't take advantage of it."

Maj. Fernando Buitrago talks to John Risley (left) of the Chicago Police and Sgt. Larry Weiss of the DuPage County sheriff's office at a police memorial outside Colombian National Police headquarters. Each "leaf" on the "tree" behind them is a badge of a fallen officer. –PHOTOS BY FRANK MAIN

Naperville chief honors wounded cop over VIPs

BOGOTA, Colombia — Naperville Police Chief David Dial traveled here with a handful of city pins he planned to bestow on the VIPs he met here. On a visit to a Colombian National Police hospital, he changed his mind.

Instead, Dial gave his first pin to Juan Alape, a 20-year-old Colombian cop who lost his legs in April when he responded to a car bombing in the capital. When Alape got close to the scene, terrorists blew up a second bomb.

"I brought these to give to important people, but there are no more important people than these guys," Dial said.

Dial and a contingent of Chicago area cops were stunned by the courage police officers here display in the face of 358 cop-killings last year alone in Colombia.

The trip took on a somber tone on a flight last week from Cali to Bogota in a DEA-owned King Air 350. The pilot walked into the cabin and handed a phone to Richard Sanders, special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration in Chicago.

"I have some bad news for you," he said.

Sanders turned stone-faced as he learned one of his DEA agents in Chicago, pilot Terry Loftus, was killed when he crashed a DEA plane in Will County. Loftus had hauled more than 30 kilograms of cocaine to the Chicago DEA laboratory and was flying the plane to DuPage County Airport, where it was based.

The next day, at a dinner with Colombian Police aviation officers, Cook County Sheriff's Deputy Chief Thomas Kinsella stood and asked for a moment of silence for the hundreds of Colombian cops who have died, and for Loftus.

Back in the United States, as he prepared to attend Loftus' wake, Sanders — an ex-DEA pilot — put the trip in perspective.

"It brought home to everyone the sacrifices paid on both continents," he said.

Frank Main

THE BARR REPORT

on

PLAN COLOMBIA

AND THE WAR ON DRUGS

JANUARY 2003

Bob Barr
Immediate Past Vice Chairman
House Government Reform Committee
U.S. Congress

-EXECUTIVE SUMMARY-

The "War on Drugs" is the longest war in our nation's history. It is fought day and night on many different battlefields ranging from our neighborhoods and schools to our borders and far beyond. Today, Colombia, the source of most of these illegal drugs that come to America, is a battlefield that just won't go away. Fighting illegal drugs at the source and supporting democracy are key to our national security. That's why on October 17, 2002, I briefed President George W. Bush that Colombia is "ground zero" in this worsening conflict in which the U.S. government has invested over $2.2 billion of taxpayers money. From what I've seen, it is not going well. Colombia is in our own backyard, and the performance of our efforts in "PLAN COLOMBIA" thus far, requires a comprehensive re-examination.

This report is being submitted to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and the Speaker's Drug Task Force, upon clearance from Congressman Dan Burton, immediate past Chairman of the House Government Reform Committee. It is the result of my long-standing interest and involvement in the largest U.S. foreign aid program in our hemisphere. The effectiveness of this aid, and the strategy that has been the rational for these taxpayers expenditures, are examined as a function of the oversight responsibilities of the House Government Reform Committee. As I depart the U.S. Congress, it is my sincere hope the 15 findings of CODEL BARR, will receive further examination by the Speakers Drug Task Force, and as a result, action by the Bush Administration.

Today, there are more illegal drugs entering the United States than ever before. Heroin and cocaine from Colombia are flooding the United States, according to emergency room doctors, local law enforcement officials, and DEA veterans I've interviewed. The drug-funded violence from Colombia is spreading to Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Venezuela. This drug-fueled war is no longer localized within Colombia's borders; it is a growing hemispheric problem. Repeated reports of large quantities of arms moving through Venezuela for narco-terrorist guerrillas and disclosure of IRA involvement in the recent terrorist bombing campaign requires congressional investigation.

In early September 2002, Chairman Dan Burton asked me to conduct a fact-finding mission to the Republic of Colombia, to assess the level of progress achieved in the U.S.-funded portion of "PLAN COLOMBIA." As Vice-Chairman of this oversight committee, I led Congressional Delegation – BARR (CODEL BARR) to Colombia, October 11–16, 2002. Accompanying me on this fact-finding mission were Rep. Ben Gilman (R-NY) and Rep. Brian Kerns (R-IN). Additionally, House International Relations Committee Chairman Henry Hyde graciously detailed Chief Investigative Counsel John P. Mackey to accompany the CODEL, due to his experience in foreign aid matters and international anti-drug issues. Government Reform Committee Staffers, Pablo Carrillo and Marc Chretien, were led by Professional Staff Member Major Gil Macklin USMC (Ret.), who had served as a military advisor in Colombia.

The CODEL found the security situation in Colombia, this hemisphere's second oldest democracy, has continued to deteriorate in the past decade. In just the past year the chaos has increased markedly. The dire nature of this crisis is borne out by the murder of almost 50,000 Colombians to drug-fueled violence since 1990 (twice the number killed in the Balkans, which resulted in an armed intervention led by the United States). In 2002, nearly 30,000 murders were reported by the Colombian National Police, making Colombia one of the most dangerous countries in the world. Nowhere in our hemisphere has such unabated violence continued at such a pace. In the past year alone, over 1,000 Colombians were casualties of random terrorist bombings. Like those bombings, the casualty count on drug deaths is racking up record numbers in the United States. Illegal drugs are a weapon of mass destruction. Last year alone, nearly 21,000 Americans died due to illegal narcotics (seven times the number killed on 9-11). In the past decade, over 200,000 Americans have died from illegal drugs, most of which originate in Colombia. According to a veteran DEA agent: "these substances are just as deadly as the threat of smallpox or anthrax that we possibly face from Iraq."

The Colombian people, its economy, culture, and the rule of law are threatened each and every day. During our CODEL, a terrorist offensive was launched in the northern city of Medellin, resulting in the deaths of dozens of innocent citizens. The security situation is worsening by the hour and American citizens as well as Colombians are in the increasingly lethal crossfire. Today, Colombia, like it or not, is the linchpin in a volatile region of northwestern South America. The events now unfolding in Venezuela and the political instability in Ecuador, Peru and Brazil, do not bode well for the Andean region.

The huge narcotics trade in Colombia has made two guerrilla movements and a once minor paramilitary force, the three most deadly armies in our hemisphere. As an example of this unabated violence, during the five days of the CODEL visit, over 100 people were killed in drug-financed guerrilla and paramilitary violence. Unfortunately, this sort of mayhem is now the norm rather than the exception in this threatened democracy. With billions of taxpayers dollars invested in "PLAN COLOMBIA" there is no active peace process today, and the drug-funded killing continues at a disturbing pace.

The progress in "PLAN COLOMBIA", as heralded by the U.S. Embassy in Bogota is full of cheery good news, but does not appear fully justified or entirely accurate. It may very well be that at least some current State Department officials, now preparing to depart the U.S. Embassy in Bogota and their positions in Washington, D.C., are more concerned with writing their own report card than submitting their decision-making, actions and performance to the rigors of objective analysis. The U.S. taxpayer deserve an accounting on their investment, and the U.S. Congress must ensure it is done. The U.S.-funded "War on Drugs" in Colombia requires much broader, consistent and closer congressional oversight. CODEL–BARR submits this report to reflect an objective assessment for the U.S. Congress to consider and act upon. The stakes are high by any measure and involve the longest war we have endured, and the blood and treasure of the United States of America is at risk. For the citizens we represent and their children, we can do no less.

-INTRODUCTION-

I have traveled to Colombia many times, both as a member of Congress and as a private citizen. As a matter of public record, I lived in Colombia as a youth and I know her geography, culture, commerce, natural resources, and most importantly, her people. I have witnessed the ever-increasing drug-fueled violence that is bringing this Andean nation to its knees. I have great respect for Colombia's attempts at fighting a two-pronged war against drug trafficking and a drug-financed guerrilla conflict. Since U.S. support has increased in the past five years, American citizens residing in Colombia have been targeted for kidnapping and murder by narco-terrorist organizations. Since 1990, over 80 U.S. citizens have been taken hostage; and since, 1995, 12 have been brutally murdered. (more than were kidnapped and killed in Beirut Lebanon in the 1980s). As a result of the increased U.S. participation in "PLAN COLOMBIA", I am advised by both Colombian and U.S. security officials that the situation will only get worse.

I believe the recently installed Uribe government has developed a sound, rational strategy; but it requires consistent and reliable U.S. assistance in order to accomplish the objectives of fighting terrorism and defeating drug trafficking in the source zone.

The CODEL itinerary and scheduled meetings are reflected in *Enclosure* (1), non-scheduled meetings and briefings are reflected in *Enclosure* (2), and a map of Colombia reflecting our site visits is included in *Enclosure* (3). The findings from this and other, related congressional visits are submitted to the Speaker's Drug Task Force for your consideration and action. Currently, there is an active GAO investigation being conducted on the two-year old U.S. aid program to the Colombian government under "PLAN COLOMBIA." The optimistic results voiced by the State Department thus far on this $2.2 billion aid program, has certainly been more rhetoric than reality. Although the efforts of the Colombian government under former President Andres Pastrana have been disappointing, much of the problem in execution of the U.S. policy resides at the United States Embassy in Bogota. It is my hope the new Uribe government will not be burdened by the same bureaucratic difficulties.

The findings are based on the actual, "on the ground" assessments I have made, in conjunction with information gathered by Congressional staff members, human rights organizations, and proven data from various private foundations. My own personal relationships with Colombian officials, legislators, former guerillas, members of the National Police and Colombian military, dating back to my service with the Central Intelligence Agency, have provided me a unique perspective on the situation. I have also personally studied this worsening phenomenon for the better part of two decades now, and as a longstanding member of the Speaker's Drug Task Force, I am compelled to present this report to my colleagues. The statements and the opinions I present, reflect my assessment of the situation. This Government Reform Oversight Report (BARR REPORT) is in no way connected or associated with the current GAO Investigation on U.S. Aid to Colombia.

-BACKGROUND-

The history that brings us to this congressional examination of "PLAN COLOMBIA" is one that is convoluted and quite troubling. In 1996, Rep. Denny Hastert, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security, International Relations and Criminal Justice questioned President Clinton's benign neglect in dealing with a country in our own backyard that produces 85% of the cocaine and 75% of the heroin that hits our streets. The U.S. State Department was choking off aid to our friends who were doing the fighting and dying in the jungles and mountains of Colombia. The wheels were put into motion by Congress, to change a short sighted policy in dealing with drug-tainted President Ernesto Samper's administration. Congress forced the State Department to provide critical U.S. assistance to the heroic Colombian National Police, under the command of the man who destroyed the Medellin and Cali cartels, the legendary Gen. Rosso Jose Serrano. Stalwarts of the Speaker's Drug Task Force -- Reps. Hastert, Gilman, Burton, Ballenger, Mica and Souder, led the charge.

With the 1998 election of Andres Pastrana and his promises of destroying drugs before they were shipped to the United States, starting a peace process with insurgents and enforcing the rule of law, U.S. aid was increased. During the four years of the Pastrana administration, U.S. assistance steadily grew. Unfortunately, Pastrana was naïve in seeking such a give-away strategy with terrorist groups. In the end, he failed to live up to the promises made to the Clinton White House in fighting drugs, and his much heralded, but hopelessly naive peace process failed miserably. History will view the Pastrana years as a period which actually allowed the narco-guerrillas and paramilitaries an opportunity to strengthen and grow in numbers. What we see today is the tragic and deadly result.

"PLAN COLOMBIA" was developed initially as a $1.3 billion emergency response to what former Clinton Drug Czar Gen. Barry McCaffrey called a "Flipping Nightmare." This frank assessment was rendered in late summer 1999, following the murder of three American Indian Rights workers by the FARC and five soldiers, when a U.S. Army spy aircraft was lost in southern Colombia. During this time, FARC and ELN attacks were proving their ever increasing muscle. Gen. McCaffrey's assessment was more than a day late, and millions of dollars short. At that time, the intelligence projections for processed Colombian cocaine and heroin were off the charts. The Clinton administration was finally forced to act on this long-neglected disaster to our south. Since then, two Ambassadors have been in Bogota and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs has been a revolving door to migrating diplomats. This situation alone illustrates the lack of importance associated with bilateral relations with Colombia as yet another Ambassador prepares to depart Bogota.

In hindsight, the initial assessment on "PLAN COLOMBIA" by the Clinton administration was flawed and the response was cobbled together as a makeshift effort to jump-start the war on drugs ignored by the Clinton White House and to buy time for President Pastrana's anemic peace process. Today, both efforts have failed.

Two years after "PLAN COLOMBIA" began, it has not kept pace or evolved with the changing circumstances on the ground; where success will ultimately be decided. "PLAN COLOMBIA" has many parts, and at times, competing interests. It has assumed a patched quilt-like quality in the past two years as a result of the many stops and stutters in the program. The lack of experienced and qualified personnel to provide continuity at the U.S. Embassy is one very important component. State Department officials have ignored this critical issue in favor of putting a happy face on their efforts. The static strategy of engaging the coca crop eradication program at the expense of other dynamic targets, such as targeting the narco-guerrilla leadership and eradicating opium poppy, bears this out.

According to DEA veterans, the focus of U.S. interest today must be of laser-like quality on stopping the drugs that fuel this increasingly bloody conflict. Unfortunately, it has not been that way in the past. From the bloody days of kingpin Pablo Escobar, the destruction of the Medellin and Cali cartels to today's rise of the paramilitaries and Marxist narco-guerrilla forces, two truths have become obvious. First, more drugs are coming to the United States today, and secondly, the drug-fueled war is growing larger with every drug shipment that departs and every arms delivery that arrives. The CODEL found that the growing conflict is punctuated almost daily by every bomb that is detonated, randomly killing hundreds of innocents. The bombings, unfortunately, are increasing.

-THE THREAT-

The growth in size and military capability of the violent actors in Colombia today, can be directly traced to the increase in the illegal drug trade. When the monolithic drug cartels in Medellin and Cali were destroyed in the early 1990s, the guerrillas and paramilitaries were no direct threat to the central government. As the violent actors turned to the drug trade, their military capabilities exploded on the scene. When the Clinton administration decertified Colombia due to President Samper's involvement with the Cali cartel, the much needed military to military assistance was cut off. This served to weaken the Colombian state at the very time when the guerrillas and paramilitary groups were becoming even stronger. The reality is plain, simple, and irrefutable ... the growing violence on Colombia's horizon is funded by illegal narcotics, and without a concentrated, focused, and sustained joint effort by the US and Colombia, it will only worsen.

The number one consumer of these Colombian narcotics are the people in the United States. The hard truth is that U.S. citizens who purchase these illegal drugs are funding this growing violence in Colombia. This did not just happen last year or the year before. It has been a growing threat that has been ignored by our diplomats and the "so-called State Department experts" for the better part of the decade of the 1990s.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush recognized the clear and present danger of drug cartels associating with violent political revolutions. His policies assisted the Colombian National Police and the DEA in hunting down notorious drug king-pins and bringing them to justice. His policies and assistance were working when they were abruptly

cancelled in 1993 by the Clinton White House. The bold, even arrogant narco-terrorist organizations we see today are the result.

The threat from the approximately 19,000 member Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the 5,000 strong National Liberation Army (ELN) and the paramilitary United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) roughly numbering 15,000 gunmen, has placed Colombia at great risk. They all profit from illegal drugs and they are too much for the Colombian security forces to handle alone.

Yet, what Colombia and the entire region are facing today appears to be a surprise to the U.S. State Department. However, this was predicted in a special report presented to the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee by the National Defense Council Foundation on February 14, 1997. See *enclosure* (4).

President Uribe who has faced assassination in the past, was welcomed into office on August 7, 2002 by a massive mortar attack on the Presidential Palace in Bogota. That bombing killed 21 innocent civilians and injured over a hundred more. This set the scene for what has continued since. President Uribe declared a state of emergency as random bombings increased. As an example of this violence, during CODEL-BARR's week in Colombia, over 100 people were killed by terrorists.

A critical point here: today, the more than 33,000 American citizens (AMCITS) residing in Colombia are clear targets of this growing violence. Since 1990, over 80 AMCITS have been taken hostage, and 12 of those have been brutally murdered. In a meeting with the U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, she informed the CODEL that more terrorist acts against AMCITS was "a matter of WHEN ... not IF." This high-risk situation will continue until Colombian terrorists groups have been neutralized by Colombian Security Forces and the rule of law has been established once again.

CODEL BARR FINDINGS

1. There are more illegal drugs from Colombia entering the United States now than ever before, yet today there is no workable peace process in this Andean nation. Recognizing a mistake is the first step in finding a workable solution. "PLAN COLOMBIA" as it has been approached and administered thus far, by the State Department and the Bogota Country Team (BCT) has been just that; a mistake.

2. Today, there is a heroin crisis in the United States like never before. ONDCP won't even commit that heroin eradication should be a specific goal for "PLAN COLOMBIA." DEA country office in Colombia estimates that at least 76% of the fully processed heroin (from opium poppy) on the streets of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Atlanta and Miami originates in Colombia. In the face of this staggering statistic, the BCT ceased U.S.-funded opium poppy aerial spray operations last year to focus on coca plant eradication. No logical explanation has been given by the U.S. Ambassador or the BCT for this change in strategy.

3. Due to the complexity in helping Colombia fight a two pronged war against drugs and terrorism, U.S. assistance administered by the BCT has been shot-gunned, in such a fashion there is no central controlling point in utilizing the aid for optimal strategic effect. After hearing presentations from BCT officials, I am convinced there is no unifying effort to make the Colombian National Police and the Colombian military work together. The Colombian military's operational cooperation, in those few occasions where it has existed has been complicated by the fact that the Colombian Military reports operationally to the Commander of the Armed Forces (A Colombian Army General), while the Colombian National Police (CNP) report directly to the Minister of Defense. Small National Police outposts throughout Colombia are routinely attacked and usually annihilated due to the delays in the arrival of Colombian Army (COLAR) forces (if they in fact, arrive at all). There appears to be no unifying effort to make the Colombian military provide prompt and effective support to National Police units under attack by narco-terrorist groups. The BCT has provided no reasonable explanation for a lack of progress on this issue.

4. The BCT, particularly, the Narcotics Assistance Section (NAS) at the U.S. Embassy, lacks the tactical acumen, technical knowledge, professional experience and continuity in country to administer effectively the law enforcement and military assistance under PLAN COLOMBIA." The internal administration of this aid is questionable. The U.S. Ambassador has been aware of these shortcomings in lacking experienced personnel, yet, so far has not acted to correct the situation in her two years in the post. There have been three NAS Directors in the past five years, resembling a musical chairs scenario resulting in a decided lack of consistent leadership and sound management.

5. The NAS is responsible for a massive aviation support program for the CNP and the COLAR. Knowing that tactical mobility is the key to the counter-drug strategy in "PLAN COLOMBIA," the management and supervision of the NAS leaves much to be desired. Planned and programmed maintenance has not met the operational needs of the CNP or COLAR aviation efforts. Little, if any, corrective action has been taken since this problem was reported in a GAO report in August 2000. The investment of billions of dollars by the U.S. taxpayers deserves a much better effort.

6. During an inspection of the CNP airwing facility at Guaymaral, for example, it was found that the eight UH-60 BLACKHAWK helicopters were being operated on dangerous combat missions using 50-year old, .50 cal ammunition for the GAU-19, self defense weapons systems. When the pilots were questioned, they reported that the weapons had jammed on numerous occasions because of the old ammunition. These incidents happened during life-threatening situations when the helicopters and crew were under fire. The UH-60 BLACKHAWK helicopter is a $16 million-a-copy investment by the U.S. taxpayers. The cheap, unreliable, ammunition purchased by inexperienced personnel at the NAS is just another example, coupled with many others, of poor performance. When questioned, the

U.S. Military Group personnel said they were not aware of the ammunition problem and had not been consulted by the NAS personnel.

7. It will be years before the COLAR's air wing will be capable of supporting the plan presented to CODEL-BARR. Currently, there are not even enough Colombian Army pilots to fly the 73 helicopters delivered under the two year old "PLAN COLOMBIA." The lack of tactical mobility for COLAR to counter terrorist threats is of critical importance. The demonstrated ability of the narco-terrorists to retain the tactical initiative is the direct result.

8. The CNP have repeatedly requested a twin-engine, fixed wing flight simulator and HUEY II and UH-60 flight simulator for several years now. After reviewing State Department data, which reveals that 19 USG-titled aircraft were lost due to pilot error in the past five years, many questions arose. One must wonder why State Department has promised, but has not provided the CNP with additional Frasca simulators. The issue of simulators has been a topic before the Government Reform Committee since Speaker Hastert's visit to Colombia in May 1997. These same flight simulators were requested again by CODEL-BARR in October. When questioned, U.S. Embassy personnel did not consider it a priority. This problem cuts to the core of the nationalization issue, where U.S. contractors could and should be replaced by Colombian personnel.

9. During the CODEL's inspection of U.S. supplied helicopters at various sites, serious shortfalls in aircraft logistics management, operations and maintenance were noted. There is no reliable computer-assisted system to track, organize and identify the dynamic supply needs of these many different aircraft. The systematic upkeep of the UH-60 BLACKHAWKS, UH-1N and UH-1, "HUEY" helicopters needs to be addressed immediately. In the past year alone, five U.S.-supplied helicopters have been lost, at an estimated cost of $1[illegible] million in taxpayers dollars. In the past five years, at least 26 aircraft have been lost at an estimated cost of $50 million. It appears to be a forgotten fact that currently there are approximately 110 U.S.-supplied helicopters in Colombia, funded by the U.S. taxpayers. Our DEA agents and their Colombian counterparts fly in these very helicopters each and every day. The accountability of this issue must be investigated.

10. U.S. contractors revealed to the CODEL the cost for flight hours was way above what State Department personnel had presented earlier. Upon further investigation, it was found the cost to keep a UH-60 BLACKHAWK in flight was nearly $3,000 an hour, nearly twice what NAS personnel presented to Congressional staff. The CODEL left with the impression that there was a shell game going on with these very important programs. The "projected cost" and "actual cost" argument needs to be reconciled before any more monies are sent to that program.

11. The much-praised State Department aerial eradication program is constructed around three different types of spray aircraft. It is a maintenance nightmare, with three separated logistical sources of spare parts and many different electronic components that are not standardized for a fleet of aircraft. The T-65, OV-10 and AT-802 air frames require costly and unique logistical pipelines to support their operation. There is no standardization in this costly effort. U.S. aviation logistics experts can only shake their head on this matter.

12. The Colombian Air Force has not been able to sustain its fleet of ten, C-130 transport aircraft. These aircraft are the backbone of tactical mobility for the entire Colombian military. Unfortunately, historical data shows that less than 20% of these aircraft are in full flight ready status. Yet today, the State Department and the BCT is pushing to add another C-130 to the fleet. The introduction of another C-130 to the fleet will further strain the maintenance and supply system now in place. This decision to add another C-130 was reported made by the BCT, yet no one at the U.S. Embassy could explain why they would want to reinforce a program that has a long standing profile of failure. Experienced U.S. and Colombian aviation experts report that scarce resources should be focused on the upkeep of the current C-130 fleet.

13. Following the breakdown of former President Andres Pastrana's so-called "Peace Process," the U.S. Embassy alternatives to supporting the application of military force in dealing with narco-terrorist organizations were naive and short-sighted. Colombian security forces were unable to seize the initiative because U.S. provided helicopters were not allowed to conduct anything other than anti-narcotics missions. Reportedly, BCT dragged their feet in streamlining the process to allow helicopters to support counter-terrorist actions. Under the "Expanded Authority" this issue should not be a problem, but BCT has been slow to answer CNP and COLAR requests.

14. Colombia is the most dangerous country in the Western Hemisphere. Force protection for U.S. Military and contractors now serving under "PLAN COLOMBIA" is inadequate. In the past five years, six contractor personnel have been killed in efforts to assist the Colombian National Police in anti-narcotics operations. Additionally, a DEA Special Agent was shot to death in October 1998. Five U.S. Army personnel were killed in a plane crash in July 1999. These 12 American citizens are a dozen reasons why the guidelines for force protection of AMCITS must be re-examined and improved by the U.S. Embassy in Bogota. Little shot of reality here: today in Colombia, the FARC has a bounty on the heads of Americans working with the Colombian National Police and military. It involves over 80 DEA, FBI, ATF and Customs Special Agents and over 400 U.S. Military personnel and approximately 500 contractors. They are all targets. With the continuing pattern of random terrorist bombings, it is only a matter of time before more AMCITS will become casualties.

15. The Air Bridge Denial Program is a critical and clearly successful part of stopping illegal drugs before they leave Colombia. The suspension of this important program is approaching two years now, and the BCT cannot provide answers to our questions on why it has not been reinstituted. The one tragic but accidental shoot down of a missionary aircraft in Peru, resulting in the unfortunate deaths of two AMCIT missionary personnel in 2001 caused the suspension of the program. The BCT's current Air Bridge Denial Officer is a former U.S. Navy officer with little to no experience in aviation-related interdiction operations. Today there are more questions than answers about what will happen next.

CODEL CONCLUSIONS

1. The congressionally-authorized and appropriated funds for aid to Colombia have not been administered by the BCT in a optimal fashion. The status of "PLAN COLOMBIA" should be examined in detail by the Speaker's Drug Task Force.

2. The U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) and the U.S. Embassy in Bogota (BCT) should present a complete and full accounting on U.S. assistance that has been provided to the Government of Colombia since 1998.

3. The direction of further United States assistance should be matched with the Uribe government's goals and objectives before additional aid is authorized and appropriated by the U.S. Congress.

CODEL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Speaker's Drug Task Force convene an Andean Region Working Group for the oversight of democracy, trade, immigration and all narcotics matters.

2. That the Speaker's Drug Task Force initiate a comprehensive review of congressional actions and the execution of U.S. aid by the Department of State.

3. That the Speaker's Drug Task Force conduct a investigative CODEL to Colombia.

4. That the Speaker's Drug Task Force specifically address heroin poppy eradication and provide that it is a congressionally mandated and funded activity.

AFTERWORD

This oversight report is submitted in the sincere hope that a clearer focus and a more comprehensive effort is realized in fighting illegal narcotics and terrorism. I would like to recognize the efforts of Chairman Dan Burton and the Government Reform Committee in this regard.

Chairman Burton has been a stalwart in the war on drugs and protecting our youth from the menace posed by illegal narcotics. To that end, he has held numerous oversight hearings, and has taken nothing for granted in prosecuting an oversight campaign on this issue. The Office of National Drug Control Policy, DEA and the State Department have all benefited from his dedication to serious oversight on this issue. He has sought out and recruited uniquely qualified talent to staff the Government Reform Committee in order to monitor and study the growing threat from drugs and terrorism. From his days as Chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee (1995), he has identified Colombia as the "center of gravity" in this growing struggle against narco-terrorism. In the end, I can honestly report he saw clearer and further than most of his colleagues in this body.

Today the source zone area of the Andean region is at great risk. Supporting the Colombian government of President Alvaro Uribe against the drug-financed storm growing in the Andes clearly is in our national interest. With the number of deaths growing from drug-fueled violence, and the more than 2 and ½ million displaced people in Colombia today, the signs are convincing to even the most cynical observer. My visits to the Colombian National Police hospitals, forward operating bases and to all the front lines of this war, paint a very clear picture. "PLAN COLOMBIA," after two years has not shown the progress promised by the Clinton Administration. The results thus far do not match the rhetoric of the U.S. State Department. The sooner we act to further examine and correct this situation the better.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a privilege and an honor to serve the people of Georgia's 7th Congressional District, and especially to serve under your superb leadership. I will now take my leave, Sir.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Barr
Immediate Past Vice Chairman
House Government Reform Committee
U.S. Congress