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THE WAR ON DRUGS: U.S. POLICY IN COLOMBIA

BY

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THE WAR ON DRUGS: U.S. POLICY IN COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

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For several years the U.S. policy in Colombia has been limited to providing assistance to the police forces. Through this assistance, the U.S. seeks to reduce the supply of illegal drugs that come to the U.S. by helping Colombia curb the narco-traffickers and reduce cocaine production. This study reviews U.S. policy in Colombia, assessing its adequacy in meeting the goal of curbing cocaine consumption in the U.S. Specifically, should U.S. policy support the Colombian efforts to defeat the insurgency in Colombia as an interim measure, in order ultimately to win the war on drugs in the U.S.? Information and insights presented at a recent USAWC symposium on this issue have contributed significantly to this study. The study concludes with recommendations on U.S. policy in Colombia, policy that seeks principally to reduce the flow of illegal drugs.

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THE WAR ON DRUGS: U.S. POLICY IN COLOMBIA

BACKGROUND

The United States Government has committed itself to supporting the current Colombian government as a means to fight and win the war on drugs in the United States. Colombia is the world's largest producer and distributor of cocaine, as well as a major source of heroin and marijuana.



Figure 1. Map of Colombia

Located at the crossroads of South America, with access to the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, Colombia has for many years been an ideal location for the cultivation, processing, and global distribution of cocaine. Its access to the East and West Coasts of the United States presents an advantage that has been exploited by the Colombian drug trafficking organizations. Additionally, proximity to unpopulated Amazon areas of Peru and Brazil and the Darien region of Panama also facilitates the growth and transportation of the illicit drug.

The new government of Colombian President Andres Pastrana, installed in August of 1998, has been working closely with the United States to dismantle the narco-trafficking organizations operating in Colombia. Pastrana also inherited the on-going problem of subduing the insurgency in Colombia, specifically the "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia" (FARC). The FARC is the larger of two guerrilla groups. It consists of approximately 20,000 full time combatants organized into more than 100 semiautonomous groups. The FARC and the other smaller guerrilla groups exercise a significant degree of influence, sometimes resorting to violence, in nearly 700 of the country's 1,073 municipalities. President Pastrana initiated a peace dialogue with the FARC and issued an "Integrated Drug Policy for Peace" that seeks alternative economic development in order to replace the country's profits from illicit

crops, much of which goes to support the insurgents.¹ In the long term this strategy, if successful, could break the link between the FARC and the narco-trafficker organizations. Pastrana has quickly demonstrated that he possesses the political will to defeat the drug industry. Without such resolve from its leaders, the Colombian drug industry will remain impregnable. U.S. policy supports President Pastrana to prevent drug interests from becoming entrenched by providing assistance in the form of training for the Colombian police and military forces.²

For several years, U.S. policy in Colombia has authorized such assistance to the police. This assistance seeks to reduce the supply of illegal drugs that come to the U.S. by helping Colombia combat the narco-traffickers and thus to reduce cocaine production. This study reviews U.S. policy and assesses its adequacy in conducting the U.S. war on drugs. Specifically, it asks whether the U.S. should support Colombian efforts to defeat the insurgency as an interim measure to ultimately win the war on drugs in the U.S. – even if such support will require considerably more assistance and perhaps deeper U.S. involvement into Colombia's civil affairs.

The study examines problem areas within U.S. and related Colombian strategies. It concludes with recommendations for an improved strategy that will help the U.S. win the war on drugs and will as well support a more democratic government in Colombia.

Some of the data and insights in this study were acquired during my attendance at a recent international conference at the Army War College. "War and Peace in Colombia: Strategy for Ambiguous Warfare" was conducted 11-13 November 1999. Scholars and government representatives from the United States, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Panama, Ecuador, and Holland participated. Information gathered from this conference is documented through reference to my personal notes on the proceedings.

THE U.S. STRATEGY

The National Drug Control Strategy proposes to reduce illegal drug use and its availability by half by the year 2007. The strategy provides general guidance and identifies specific initiatives. It focuses on prevention, treatment, research, law enforcement, protection of American borders, and international cooperation.³ A specific initiative seeks to reduce the supply of illegal drugs by targeting illegal cultivation and production, by dismantling drug trafficking organizations, and by providing military assistance to the government of Colombia to interdict drug shipments and eradicate coca cultivation and processing. The policy thus assumes that elimination of the cultivation of the coca and opium plants in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia offers an effective way to reduce the supply of illegal drugs into the United States. Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia have for years been the largest producers of coca leaves, which are the raw material essential to cocaine production. Indeed, over the past four years this initiative has served to greatly reduce the cultivation of coca in Peru and Bolivia. However, in Colombia the cultivation of coca over the same period has increased by 250 percent. Today Colombia is the largest producer and

exporter of cocaine into the United States. Eighty percent of all cocaine that comes into the U.S. comes from Colombia.⁴ Regarding counter-drug activities in Colombia the administration's strategy cites four major goals: Enhancement of intelligence capability, eradication and alternate development, interdiction, and strengthening of Colombia's judicial system.⁵ The U.S. is currently providing substantial economic help and military assistance to the government of Colombia to combat illegal drugs in order to achieve President Clinton's strategy.

- **REDUCING DEMAND:**
 - Testing in the Workplace
 - Treatment
 - Education
 - General Law Enforcement
 - Civic Action
 - Use of Mass Media
- **CURTAILING SUPPLY:**
 - Crop eradication
 - Interdiction
 - Control of Precursor Chemicals
 - Crop substitution
 - Rural economic development
- **SUPPRESSING TRAFFIC:**
 - Disruption of illegal networks
 - Extradition
 - Sequestration of assets
 - Improvement of techniques

Figure 2, U.S. Efforts in the war against drugs, National Drug Control Strategy, 1999

Figure 2 depicts overall U.S strategy to reduce demand, to curtail supply, and to suppress traffic of illegal drugs. U.S. strategy in Colombia focuses on curtailing the supply of cocaine by eradicating crops, interdicting traffic, monitoring producers' access to precursor chemicals, supporting growers efforts to find and nurture substitute cash crops and further supporting overall economic development in rural Colombia.

According to Barry McCaffrey, Director of the National Drug Control Policy, Colombia is a main source country, and its internal ability to control drug production is threatened by armed terrorist groups that control over 40 percent of Colombia's countryside and derive their funding from the drug trade. McCaffrey in a summary statement indicates that "The situation in Colombia is an emergency requiring broad U.S. support because it undermines U.S. efforts against the war on drugs and democratic Colombian institutions."

While the U.S. has already spent a lot of money in support of the counter drug mission, it seems the drug industry remains unaffected and continues to be strong. The Colombian drug trafficking organizations continue to meet the demand for drugs in the U.S. market.

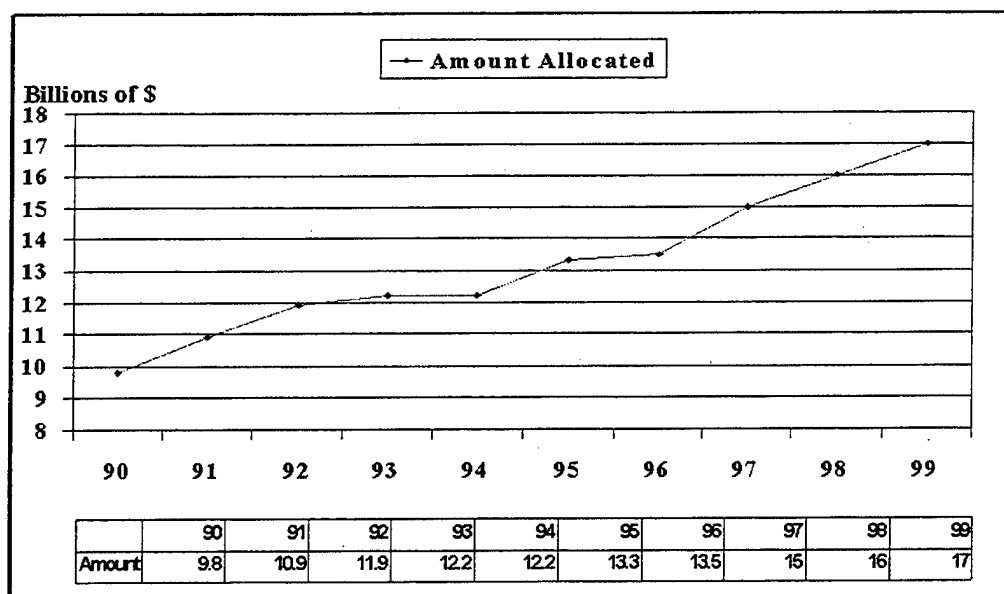


Figure 3, U.S. Budget against drugs, National Drug Control Strategy, 1999

As shown in Fig 3, the U.S. anti-drug budget has grown from 9.8 billion dollars in 1990 to 17 billion in 1999, an increase of 74 percent. Yet the production of cultivated coca in Colombia has grown by 250 percent over the same period (Fig 5). At first glance, it appears the illegal industry has invested twice as much as the U.S. has to counter the effects of the anti-drug efforts.

So we must question whether the United States effort has correctly identified the drug industry's center of gravity in Colombia? More significantly, have the correct priorities been established in the war against drugs? According to experts that have been following the illegal drug industry for many years, the drug trade has evolved into a complex network that is self reliant and sophisticated. It continues to grow as a result of unregulated international markets of chemicals and globalization of many banking and financial markets.⁶ Further, the 1999 U.S. counter-drug budget allocates only 34 percent to fund programs of education and prevention (Goal 1). A well-funded long-term education and prevention program introduced at every level of school would perhaps change attitudes and lead eventually to a reduction in demand for the illegal drugs in the U.S. However, a short-term, balanced approach would attack the drug industry at its sources and at the borders. Combined with a strong education and prevention program at home, this balanced approach would provide long term positive results. Figure 4 indicates that 52 percent of the FY99 resources are being spent in law enforcement activities, but only 34 percent support education and treatment programs in the United States.

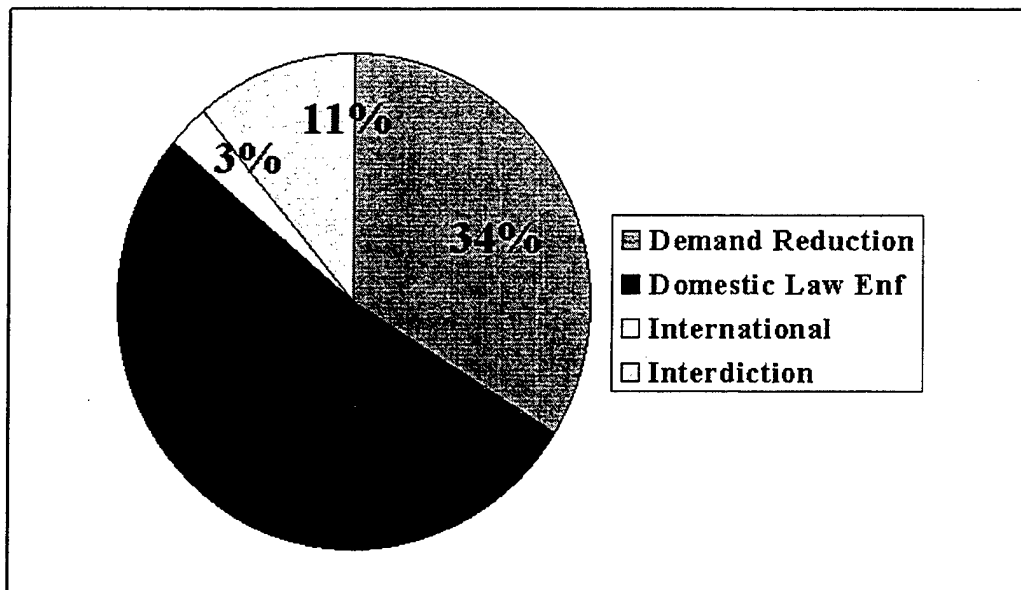


Figure 4, US Budget by Function FY99, National Drug Control Strategy, 1999

THE COLOMBIAN STRATEGY

The President of Colombia, Andres Pastrana, has developed a 7.5 billion-dollar plan to help reduce coca production, which he announced at the General Assembly of the United Nations on 21 September 1999. To support this program, the Pastrana administration is seeking at least 3.5 billion in international aid over the next three years to carry out a wide-ranging strategy to deal with the insurgency, the drug industry, and the faltering Colombian economy.⁷ He recognizes Colombia's need for transnational support. His negotiations with the FARC are an integral part of his strategy because he knows that this 40-year conflict has destabilized his country and discouraged foreign investment and tourism.⁸ Further, FARC's increasingly strong alliance with the drug traffickers has only increased the country's instability. The fight against it constitutes the core in the Colombian strategy. Currently, the drug traffickers enjoy strong protection from the FARC.

In 1999, the U.S. provided Colombia nearly 300 million dollars, primarily to help Colombia's police forces. A new Colombian anti-narcotics Army battalion of 950 members, trained, vetted and backed by the U.S., was activated on 14 September 1999.⁹ It is equipped with the latest technology and with 18 UH-1 helicopters. For the first time, the U.S. is providing aid and military assistance directly to the Colombian military, instead of to the police.

On January 11, 1999, the Clinton Administration announced a two-year emergency aid package of 1.3 billion dollars to help Colombia fight the illegal drug industry in Colombia. This aid will be spent on military training and equipment for the Colombian armed and police forces. The Colombian armed forces will get 66 helicopters that are greatly needed to transport troops to areas where the coca plants are grown.

According to General Luis Ernesto Gilibert, Deputy Director of the Police Forces in Colombia, the police have come increasingly under the control of the Ministry of Defense. Formerly, they did not have the capability to go after the highly organized narco-trafficking organizations, particularly where they controlled the land or provided security for the illegal crops. As a result, the police force was realigned under the Defense Ministry. It now receives direct assistance from the Colombian Army, Air Force and the Navy.¹⁰ Gilibert contends that Colombian insurgent guerrillas are financed by the narco-traffickers and that the insurgency subsidizes the coca farmers by reducing their start-up costs and assuring them good prices for their harvests. Finally, he observed that after successful fumigation the farmers move to other areas, particularly into the jungle, where the police have no capability to go after them and where the guerrillas offer near-total security. What is also interesting to note is that the newly appointed Colombian police chief, General Rosso Jose Serrano, was allowed to purge 8,000 policemen linked to narco-trafficking and para-military activities, but the Colombian Army did not clean house to the extent the police had. This may explain the secrecy with which the police conduct counter-drug activities. It seems there is certain level of distrust when it comes to sharing intelligence with the Colombian military that may still be plagued with corrupt members who could tip off drug traffickers of an impending raid. President Pastrana has taken measures to dismiss three Army generals, most recently Brigadier General Bravo for his failure to take action and prevent right wing militia massacres that took place in August 1999.

ANALYSIS OF THE U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN COLOMBIA

According to former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, employment of the U.S. military in the war against drugs detracts from military training for war.¹¹ He also argues that law enforcement missions are inherently different from military missions. But Weinberger's reservation against military involvement fails to acknowledge that the war on drugs is totally different from the kinds of war described in Clausewitz's Trinitarian Warfare. In 1986 President Reagan signed a decision memorandum declaring that drug trafficking is a threat to the national security of the United States, so he directed all federal agencies to take steps to counter this threat.¹² For almost 15 years, the U.S. military has offered limited assistance in the war on drugs by helping seal the borders and cooperating with other agencies to interdict drug traffic. But their efforts have failed to reduce drug consumption in the U.S. All indicators point to stable demand, as well as availability and cheaper prices of illegal drugs. In the U.S., drug crimes and incarceration of drug offenders has grown to the point of overpopulating American jails. Many observers question the effectiveness of the current U.S. drug control strategy and policies.

In Colombia it is not entirely clear to what extent the drug producers or cartels support political insurgency. The "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas" (FARC), the largest insurgent group in Colombia, has been granted control of an area of 16,000 square miles which in reality allows them to exercise control over an area equivalent to forty percent of the country. President Pastrana's rationale for yielding this territory was to create a demilitarized zone in order to reduce armed conflict and to foster

peace negotiations. The insurgency fields an army of 20,000 and influences an area almost half the size of Colombia.¹³ Further, the Colombian narco-traffickers have cut deals with the FARC for protection against the police forces. Insurgents administer several cultivation zones in the Colombian departments of Meta, Vichada, Gaupes, Guaviare, Caqueta, Putumayo, and Magdalena. They probably control or tax most of the cocaine laboratories in these zones.¹⁴

In an article published in the Christian Science Monitor, three experts describe how the drug trade in Peru has created power bases throughout Latin America that threaten the interests of the United States because they provide support for a drug industry and foster insurgent activities that are a threat to regional democracies.¹⁵ This connection between the insurgencies and the drug industry surely thwarts the U.S. policy of supporting development of democratic governments around the world.

One year after President Pastrana declared the demilitarized zone and ceded control of it to the FARC, it has become a sanctuary to the insurgents and has also given them control of drug production. According to Semana, the leading Colombian newsmagazine¹⁶ (much like Time in the U.S.) a kilogram of coca could be bought for 830,000 pesos in October 1998 (Exchange rate 2,000 pesos to 1 dollar). But just only one month after the DMZ was established, the price had increased to 1,200,000 pesos. In October 1999 that same kilogram of coca cost 1,800,000 pesos, a 120 percent increase since the FARC took control of the land. FARC now controls much of the production of cocaine and imposes a war tax on the producers. Then the coca is taken to the Yari plains where the processing is completed and sold to major drug traffickers for as much as 2,800,000 pesos per kilogram.¹⁷ So FARC has found a tremendous source of revenue in the DMZ. It is obvious that the Colombian government cannot curb drug traffic unless it defeats the insurgency. In fact it may not be able to survive without strong U.S. support in its struggle against the insurgents.

Thus the greatest U.S. challenge will be the decision to assist directly or indirectly in the fight against the FARC or the narco-traffickers, or both. President Clinton's proposal for additional aid to Colombia to help them fight drug traffic organizations and the "marxist rebels" who protect them has drawn emotional reactions from critics, who say it will drag the U.S. into a new Vietnam. Robert White, a former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador and Paraguay, is concerned that we may be headed in that direction.¹⁸ White questions what will happen when the rebels start shooting our helicopters down: Will the U.S. just stand by or will the U.S. escalate its involvement? But while former Ambassador White may sound persuasive to some, many members of Congress do not believe the U.S. will get into another Vietnam. The U.S. left Vietnam 27 years ago and we learned many lessons from that war, one of them being not to go into this type of conflict unless the American people and the political body fully support such action. Additionally, intervention of this type in Latin America would once again fuel nationalism and work against all the work done to foster democracies. Our best approach to fight the drug trafficking organizations in Colombia is through support of the Colombian police and armed forces. They have been doing this for many years, but they are ill equipped and poorly trained.

Our drug control initiatives to cut the drug supply in Colombia and thus to curb consumption in the

U.S. by making drugs more expensive and less available has not worked in spite of allocation of considerable resources. Since 1981, more than 65 billion dollars have been devoted to drug law enforcement, primarily in Latin America and the Caribbean. Yet drug use has increased in the U.S.¹⁹ Currently, there are 13.9 million drug users in the United States. In spite of all the efforts to suppress the international drug industry, "all has been thwarted by ruthless and elusive traffickers who wield incredible power and money. Corruption, global politics, and nature conspire to hamper the drive to cut off the flow of narcotics at the source."²⁰ Increasing numbers of young people are opting for the quick way to make money by moving into the drug business, particularly in Colombia, where the government has no control over the demilitarized zone where the FARC operates.

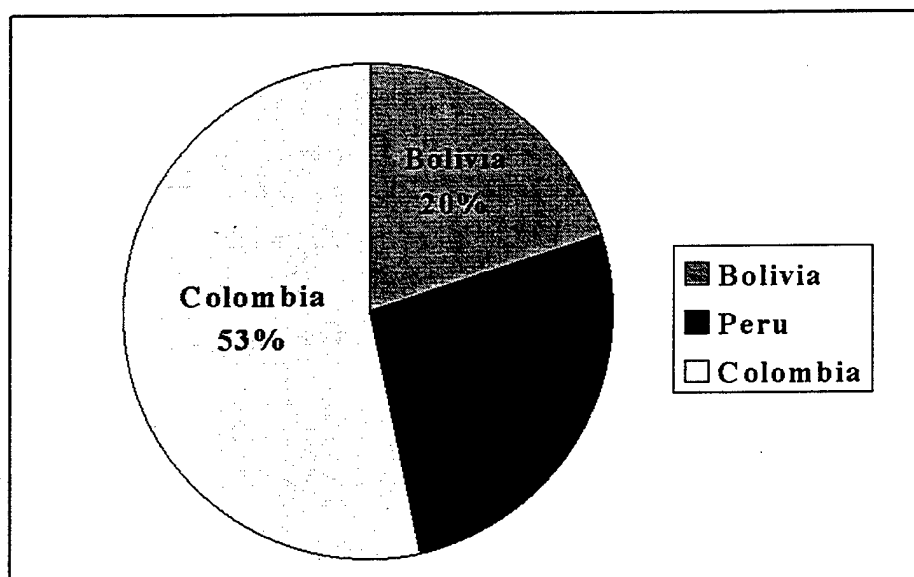


Figure 5, Cultivated Areas of Coca in 1998, National Drug Control Strategy, 1999

All the resources devoted to Colombia over the past four years went to the police forces. But the net result has been the opposite of what the experts in the U.S. expected. The objective of reducing the supply by resourcing the Colombian police forces has not worked. Figure 5 indicates that Colombia is the Andean country where 53 percent of the coca cultivation takes place.

Colombia's government in itself needs to achieve a balance in strategy, especially as it relates to the economy. Significantly, the development of the newly discovered oil reserves of about 2.7 billion barrels puts Colombia on the level of an OPEC-producing country. These oil reserves, by a strange twist of geography and history, happen to be located in the same area where the insurgency operates. So they cannot be exploited unless the insurgency is controlled. If these oil resources could be properly exploited, they would provide the much-needed replacement for the influx of capital generated by the illegal drug trade.

PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT U.S. POLICY TOWARDS COLOMBIA

The U.S. should carefully consider how much to support the Colombian military. Strengthening the military in a country where the civilian institutions are weak may lead to other problems. The U.S. needs to decide what is more important: Should U.S. policy be aimed at eliminating production of illegal drugs? Or should we aid in the Colombian government's efforts to defeat the Colombian insurgency? In "Militarization of the U.S. Drug Control Program," Peter Zirnite, an expert on drug policy, says that despite all of our military efforts and the massive amount of money poured into this campaign, illegal drugs are now more readily available than they ever were at cheaper prices and of better quality. He also claims that efforts to democratize Colombia are being thwarted by U.S. military involvement with the Colombian Army, which for many years has been implicated in human rights violations.²¹ Zirnite also acknowledges that in Colombia it is difficult to distinguish between the insurgents and the narco-traffickers, making the fight against either of them extremely difficult. The FARC offers protection to drug-traffickers for a price, thus making it very confusing for anyone to determine which side they are on.

Despite these complications, additional military assistance from the U.S. has already been targeted to boost Colombia's radar system modernize and re-arm A-37 fighter jets, acquire helicopters, and form three more Army anti-drug battalions. Accordingly, the Colombian military would grow from 130,000 to 159,000 by 2004. This strengthening of the Colombian military is supported by a two-year U.S. emergency aid package of \$1.3 billion. The Colombian military will get 30 Blackhawk and 33 Huey helicopters, along with funding to train two more counter narcotic battalions.

Bertil Lintner's analysis of the internalization of narcotics enforcement of DEA programs in Burma points out that the U.S. contribution of helicopters for anti-narcotics work simply improved the logistics of an already corrupt government that is still the main patron of the Golden Triangle heroin trade.²² If U.S. policy sought to eliminate the insurgency and reintegrate its members into the Colombian society, then we must provide the Colombian government with the means to do it. But the risk of supporting a government that has had corruption at every level of government in the past is high. However, without such support, the government cannot defeat the drug trafficking organizations. In March 1998 the Colombian Army was demoralized when an elite counter-insurgency battalion was ambushed and almost destroyed. A subsequent investigation revealed that the troops were not properly trained, were poorly led, and were undisciplined.²³

A further risk in this approach of aiding the Colombian military will come in the area of human rights. There are no guarantees that the newly equipped and bigger Colombian military will break its "unofficial ties" with right-wing paramilitary groups, as has been the case in previous years.²⁴ The Army was not allowed to clean its ranks of members with ties to the drug industry or paramilitary groups as the Colombian police had done. There are claims that many "vigilante" or paramilitary groups have emerged in Colombia. Some claim that they are responsible for killing street children, prostitutes, homosexuals, and other "socially undesirable" individuals. In some parts of Colombia, the Army has looked the other

way and tolerated many of these paramilitary groups.²⁵ More than 750,000 civilians have been displaced from their homes over the past 10 years as a result of violence in the rural areas caused by increased paramilitary activity. Colombia's government needs a system of checks and balances to continuously monitor the state of the Colombian military to prevent abuses in the area of human rights. Likewise, reforms within the Colombian military are needed to rid the institution of corrupt elements at all levels. According to Rafael Pardo, a former Colombian Minister of Defense and now a television commentator in Colombia, military leaders should be selected on merit, not on the basis of their associations with the Minister of Defense. He also states that the military now believes that they are the "defenders of constitutional order."²⁶ There is no question that some reforms within the military are necessary. As in democratic societies, the armed forces should remain under total civilian authority and should certainly be held responsible for violations.

THE ENEMY

Strong drug trafficking organizations operate freely in almost any country without regard to borders and with a strong financial backing. Motivated by the demands of the market and by their hunger for profits, they prosper and eventually assume the roles of legitimate businesses. As their wealth and power expand, they threaten governmental authority, all the way to national leaders.

The cocaine business in Colombia is highly concentrated and sophisticated. Basically two criminal groups operate in the cities of Medellin and Cali; they account for 70 to 80 percent of the entire Colombian cocaine production.²⁷ The other 20 to 30 percent is in the hands of independent narco-traffickers, which may include the FARC.²⁸ These illegal organizations present a great challenge to established government because of their size and infrastructure. According to a Colombian journalist who has researched the Mafia operations extensively, the Cali and Medellin cartels combined employ more than 24,000 people and have established networks in more than 25 countries.²⁹ A report by the U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations states that the Medellin cartel alone comprises "approximately 200 individual trafficking groups" that participate in the different phases of the cocaine industry.

Drug trafficking organizations in Colombia generate an income of about 10 billion dollars per year,³⁰ so they can easily buy many weapons and sophisticated equipment. In April 1990 there were some reports that the cartels may have tried to buy 120 Stinger anti-aircraft missiles³¹. They have employed former Israeli and British commandos as instructors, hired by the narco-traffickers to teach techniques in intelligence, counter-intelligence, camouflage, and communications.³² On 12 December 1999, the FARC overran a Colombian naval base near the Panamanian border. They possess aircraft and state-of-the-art communication systems that the Colombian police in many cases do not have. A retired Colombian General observed:

The Colombian armed forces are well aware that the narco-traffickers can track the movement of the Colombian armed forces and aircraft better than their respective commanders, know where they are and where they are going.³³

The drug organizations in Colombia are highly sophisticated and present a credible threat not only in the military arena but also in the political one. Leaders of these drug organizations normally invest in the Colombian economy just like any normal citizen. They buy land, act as rightful business owners, and use their money to bribe officials and gain support, and donate large amounts of money to civic causes and the poor.³⁴ Thus they have become particularly powerful. In spite of its illegality, the drug industry heavily infuses capital into the poor areas, turning frontier towns into shopping areas and improving employment at every level.³⁵ Profits filter down in the form of enhanced income and provide enhanced employment opportunities, as was the case in Peru and Bolivia, where farmers relocated just to benefit from the coca cultivation.

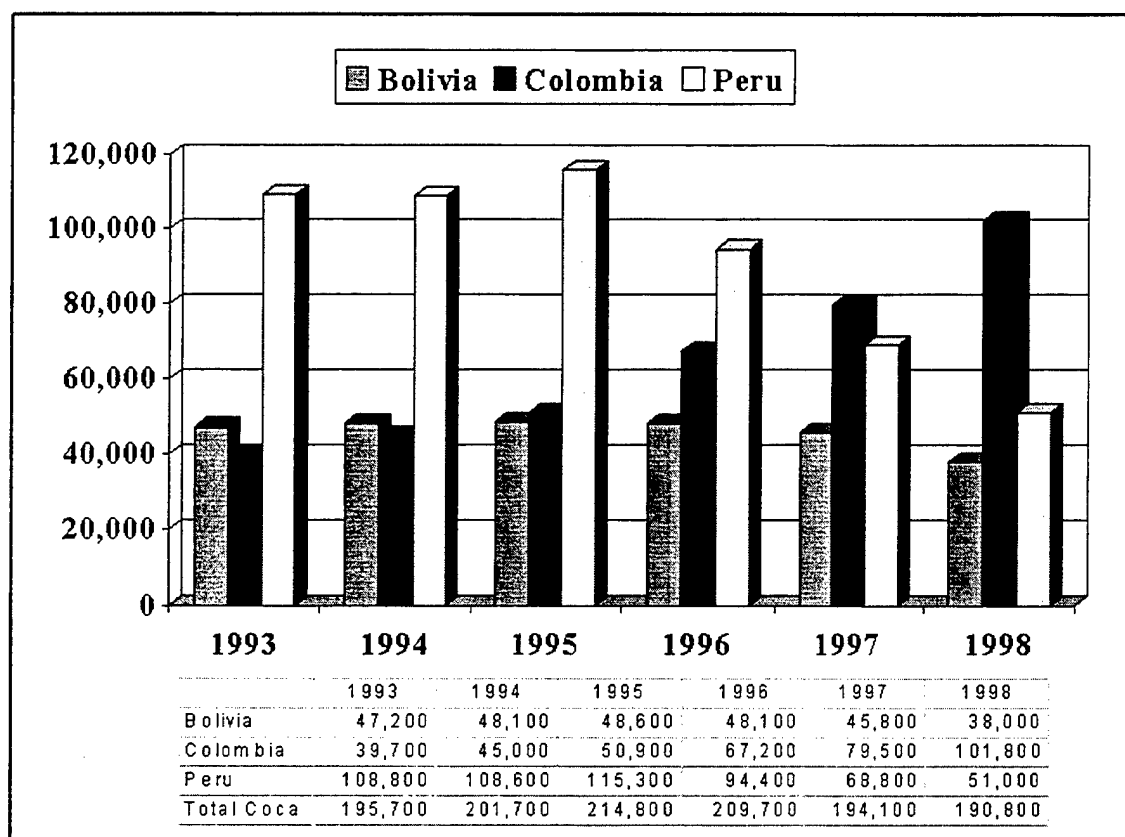


Figure 6, Coca Cultivation Andean Region in Tons

Successful counter-drug efforts in one country do not mean less production of the drug itself. Economic incentives encourage farmers to move to more remote areas where there is no control or law enforcement, as was the case in Peru and Bolivia. As reflected in Figure 6, production of Coca in Peru

and Bolivia has dropped significantly due to the success of the counter-drug effort. At the same time, it increased by about the same proportion in Colombia.

Our efforts to stop drugs at the source reveal that the illegal cultivation of coca simply moves to where there is no government resistance. Migration of populations takes place for many reasons. For example, in a program sponsored by the United States, the government of Burma attempted to eradicate opium (poppy) fields by aerial spraying. As a consequence of this crop destruction, many of the farmers moved to Thailand and replanted their fields.³⁶ In Bolivia more than 1,000 unemployed miners marched to a coca producing area and threatened to take up the coca growing jobs if the government did not help them.³⁷ Thus we can assume that in Colombia this phenomenon may repeat itself. There is every possibility that our efforts to stop the growth and harvest of coca leaves in Colombia may simply move this agricultural business to another location.

TOWARD A NEW WAR ON DRUGS POLICY

In their monograph "Colombia's Three Wars," Marcella and Schulz argue that Colombia is "the most troubled country of the Western Hemisphere."³⁸ They conclude that Colombia's problems are caused largely because of her efforts to conduct war on three fronts, and they see Colombia as possibly a failed state. The three fronts of Colombia's war are the violence and corruption caused by the illegal drug operations, the insurgency, and the paramilitary groups.³⁹ The FARC, with its advocacy of social reform, is using all available means to advance its goals; it is starting to cultivate and produce illegal drugs to gain the necessary monetary resources to finance and continue its struggle against the government of Colombia. This is a departure from the FARC's traditional insurgency activities. Marcella and Schulz believe that the increasingly strong ties between the insurgents and the narco-traffickers spells big trouble for the Colombian government.

The problem of corruption at all levels of the government in Colombia is caused largely by the \$3-7 billion that the narco-traffickers annually bring into the country. This money is used to buy sophisticated equipment and to bribe key politicians, judges, and military officers. Documents released after the death of drug leader Pablo Escobar revealed that he had bought the entire police force in Cali, key members of the Colombian government and other countries, which included people close to the presidents of Venezuela, Brasil, Mexico, and Cuba.⁴⁰ On 16 January 2000, President Cardoso of Brazil fired his nation's first civilian head of the armed forces after his former chief of staff was allegedly linked to drug trafficking.

This corruption recently crept into the U.S. Embassy in Colombia. The wife of Colonel James Hiett, commander of the U.S. anti-narcotics forces in Colombia, was caught in a drug scheme. She was mailing cocaine to the U.S., using the postal system within the American Embassy in Colombia.⁴¹ COL Hiett was not involved in the scheme. But this case demonstrates that corruption reaches the highest levels because of the tremendous amount of money involved and because of the corrupting

influence of addiction. Colonel Hiett's wife was apparently drawn into the scheme through her addiction to cocaine.

By now the FARC has established itself as the ruling party in the demilitarized zone. Experts do not believe they will give up control of the area in the short term. Strong links bind drug trafficking organizations and the insurgents. In addition, FARC provides law and order to a region that is otherwise unpoliced. They are using the cocaine trade to bolster their political position and to gain funds, even though they may claim that they are ideologically opposed to the drug trade itself. Consider the insurgent group "Shining Path" in Peru: This guerrilla group came into the Upper Huallaga Valley, Peru's main coca growing area, as early as 1984 and successfully turned regional opinion against the U.S. coca eradication program. They then mounted a campaign of anti-government violence.⁴² But the success of Peruvian President Fujimori against the war on drugs in his country did not take place until after "Shining Path" insurgents had been defeated. In Colombia the FARC protects the coca farmers and provides a source of profitable revenue. Should we infer then, based on the Peruvian experience, that the FARC needs to be defeated first to win the war on drugs in Colombia?

The Colombian government and U.S. policy makers are challenged to come up with alternatives for coca farmers and to find ways to motivate the FARC to enter negotiations and pursue political solutions. Colombia has mounted an all-out war against the narco-traffickers. President Pastrana's Plan Colombia urgently claims that the drug trafficking organizations and the insurgency will take over the government of Colombia unless resources are available to win the war against drugs and the insurgency. But if Pastrana believes this threat is so great, why doesn't he propose military conscription for all eligible Colombians? Currently, draftees with high school education are exempted from serving in the armed forces.⁴³ Pastrana's political will doesn't seem to match with his sense of urgency as described in his Plan Colombia. The sons of workers and farmers who have been deprived of an education may be semi-literate, but they probably believe the system is rigged against them.

According to retired General Valencia Tovar, who led the Colombian armed forces for many years, Colombia is involved only in the production of cocaine. He asserts that the international community should concern itself with such larger matters as the distribution and consumption of the drug, with the control of precursor chemicals, and with the marketing and money laundering associated with narco-traffic.⁴⁴

To win this war against drugs, an international alliance is necessary to attack the drug industry on all fronts. The link between the insurgency and the narco-traffickers is so strong that we cannot successfully engage the traffickers without conflict with the insurgents. They have in effect become formidable allies in opposition to the Colombian government – and to its supporters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To be successful in reducing the illegal flow of drugs, the U.S. must support the government of Colombia in defeating the drug trafficking organizations by providing funds, equipment, and training for the counter-narcotics battalions. Efforts to screen every potential member of the Colombian counter-drug battalion for human rights violations, illegal drug activities, and paramilitary links must continue, with certification by the U.S. Department of State and DoD. If the FARC is in fact a drug trafficking organization or acting as an agent, then U.S. assistance could also be used against them after consultation with U.S. officials. The insurgency is a 40-year problem that must be resolved politically by the government of Colombia; U.S. help should be aimed strictly toward counter-drug activities. The Colombian military must clean its ranks of individuals with links to drug traffickers, paramilitaries, and human rights violators. The Colombian police purged 8,000 "bad apples" from their ranks. Why can't the military do the same? According to GEN McCaffrey, "Both the rebels and their paramilitary rivals are moving directly into the trade".⁴⁵ They use the profits and payoffs from the drug cartels to fight and defeat the Colombian military. Our current efforts are funded at a level of about 300 million dollars annually. The Clinton Administration has proposed a \$1.6 billion assistance package to Colombia over the next two years. If this war is to be won, this assistance package needs to be approved and U.S. policy should seek to defeat the Colombian drug trafficking organizations.

We must further consider the American interest in promoting democracy abroad. Entire civil societies are being threatened by the drug problem. Countries like Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Panama, Mexico and Caribbean sovereignties are proven victims. The entire hemisphere is being threatened. It is time to redefine our means and commit resources to win the war on drugs at the source.

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