

THE REGIONAL SECURITY CRISIS
IN THE ANDES:
PATTERNS OF STATE RESPONSE

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Abstract The instability, corruption, displacement of people, and violence generated by Colombia s unholy trinity of narcotics traffickers, insurgents, and paramilitaries is spilling over into virtually all of northern South America and Panama. Thus, the stability and political sovereignty of the region are being compromised. And, at the same time, progress toward achieving the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the economic integration of the Western Hemisphere by 2005 is being severely threatened. The author outlines some of the detail and implications of the regional security crisis in the Andes and makes recommendations for U.S. civil-military involvement in the hemispheric security arena. She argues for the United States to lead in the articulation of strategic objectives, while designing a defensible and feasible policy that critical elements in North America, Central and South America, Europe, and Japan can understand and support. She specifically argues for the U.S. military to build stronger and more cooperative security relationships within the circle of affected states around Colombia.		
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FOREWORD

Colombia is a paradigm of the failing state that has enormous implications for American foreign policy and the adaptation of U.S. air and landpower to the hemispheric threat environment. The instability, corruption, displacement of people, and violence generated by Colombia's unholy trinity of narcotics traffickers, insurgents, and paramilitaries are spilling over into virtually all of northern South America and Panama. Thus, the stability and political sovereignty of the region are being compromised. And, at the same time, progress toward achieving the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the economic integration of the Western Hemisphere by 2005 are being severely threatened. Clearly, vital interests are at stake.

In this timely monograph, a colleague at the Air War College, Dr. Judith Gentleman, outlines some of the detail and implications of the regional security crisis in the Andes and makes recommendations for U.S. civil-military involvement in the hemispheric security arena. She argues for the United States to lead in the articulation of strategic objectives, while designing a defensible and feasible policy that critical elements in North America, Central and South America, Europe, and Japan can understand and support. She specifically argues for the U.S. military to build stronger and more cooperative security relationships within the circle of affected states around Colombia.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to join with the North-South Center in offering this monograph as a contribution to the international security debate on the situation in Colombia. It is critically important to the vital interests of the United States, Colombia, the hemisphere, and the global community.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute

PREFACE

This monograph is an invaluable contribution to the ongoing study of *Plan Colombia* begun in February 2001 by the U.S. Army War College and the Dante B. Fascell North-South Center of the University of Miami. In her presentation, Dr. Judith A. Gentleman of the U.S. Air War College demonstrates the widening impact of the “spillover effect” into each of Colombia’s neighbors and into Brazil and Panama. She then proposes sensible ideas worthy of policymakers’ consideration.

For some time it has been apparent that the crisis of Colombia is no longer confined to that country. In fact, under no imaginable scenario can Colombia’s problems be contained within it. The activities of drug traffickers and guerrillas are on the rise in the entire region, coming from Colombia.

Given such compelling evidence of spillover, why has a regional, cooperative response been so slow in taking shape? Dr. Gentleman goes right to the heart of the matter: a pattern of competing objectives and inherent tensions. To begin, *Plan Colombia* was seen in the region as a U.S.-inspired initiative by Colombia, about which the neighboring countries were not consulted in advance. Its objectives, while broad, were supported only in their military component (and by the United States alone). Moreover, the United States and Colombia were not really in harmony as to the true objective, which, for the United States was suppression of the drug trade; and for Colombia, pacification of the guerrilla insurgency.

The Andean countries have also come around slowly and grudgingly to the concept, as the author points out, that only extensive international cooperation will work in an age of globalization. To do so, however, requires at least partial renunciation of the cherished principles of “noninterven-

tion, national self-determination, and sovereignty.” Meeting in Cartagena in April 2001 before the Quebec City Summit of the Americas, Andean leaders agreed on a regional counternarcotics strategy. They also called on the United States to renew the Andean Trade Preference Act and to include Venezuela in it. Such agreement is a great step forward.

Much depends on the support of the United States for such a comprehensive regional approach. The Bush administration has responded positively with its new Andean Regional Initiative (ARI) of over \$800 million, announced in May 2001. It will expand assistance into seven countries in the areas of alternative economic development, infrastructure development, human rights activities, and initiatives other than fighting narcotics trafficking. The new U.S. approach may well draw the promised (but not delivered) European assistance to the developmental aspects of *Plan Colombia*.

Dr. Gentleman recommends, however, that the new U.S. regional approach avoid simply responding to “political constraints rather than strategic analysis,” by which she means “the political predilections” of Colombia’s neighbors. She makes the case that a better level of analysis be applied to design a “defensible and feasible” policy and that a “special envoy” be appointed for the Andean region to oversee and coordinate the program.

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JUDITH GENTLEMAN is a Professor of International Security and Latin American studies in the Department of Strategy and International Security at the U.S. Air War College. She previously taught at the University of New Hampshire and was a Fulbright Scholar at the Universidad de los Andes, Bogota, Colombia, and at El Colegio de Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico. She was also a Research Fellow at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego. She earned her Ph.D. degree at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Among her publications are articles and reviews published in *Political Science Quarterly*, the *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, the *Latin American Research Review* and the *American Political Science Review*. She is the author, editor and co-editor of *Mexican Oil and Dependent Development*, *Mexican Politics in Transition* and *Mexico's Alternative Political Futures*. Her recent work has focused upon Colombia's political conflict, regional security in the Andes, and Mexico's political transition.

THE REGIONAL SECURITY CRISIS IN THE ANDES: PATTERNS OF STATE RESPONSE

THE ANDEAN CRISIS AND GLOBALIZATION

The growing security crisis in the nations of the Andean Ridge has focused attention upon the seemingly intractable problem of consolidating democratic governments in the context of increasing political, economic, and military difficulties. Throughout the region, the governments of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, along with neighboring states Panama and Brazil, find themselves confronted by a series of security challenges that reflect the influence of globalization upon traditional dimensions of conflict in the region. Globalization has not only redefined security issues in a generic sense,¹ but now complicates and dramatically increases the difficulty states face in shaping responses by traditional national means.

Analysts have suggested that effective state sovereignty is being whittled away under pressure from the forces of regionalization and globalization. While there is little agreement on the precise definition of globalization, several elements have gained broad currency. Of particular note is the growing phenomenon of "the inability of nation-states to cope with global problems that require global solutions, such as demography, ecology, human rights, and nuclear proliferation."² The nations of the Andean Ridge appear to be increasingly overwhelmed by external forces that converged with domestic problems to create nearly insurmountable obstacles to crisis management and development.

Specifically, the weak states of the Andean area are now confronted by networks of drug and arms trafficking, by pressure from rising domestic discontent and insurgency, and increasingly by international criminal networks tied to

these illegal financial resources. They also face demands by other international actors that national leaders confront these challenges to national authority. Simultaneously, these states face demands from international organizations and external states to conform to norms of political and economic liberalization deemed to be foundational for contemporary market democracy. Throughout the Andean Ridge, levels of democratic practice that had been achieved earlier have now eroded in the face of these challenges. From Peru to Venezuela, there are increasing indications that the regional states lack the capacity to surmount these difficulties by traditional means.

Historically, states in the region have placed highest priority upon the values of sovereignty, nonintervention, and national self-determination, thereby resisting multilateral or collective approaches to problems affecting the region. The record of successful collaboration for regional problem-solving has been spotty at best. While states have been eager to utilize international organizations and forums and international law as means to achieving national ends, much less common has been a willingness to work collectively on a sustained basis at the regional level. The acute nature of the deepening crises in the region may be promoting a new direction in regional relations, however, with far greater emphasis upon collective determination than has been seen before. This monograph will examine the sources of the security crisis in the region, discuss national responses to the challenges faced by these states, and assess the likelihood that regional states may begin to successfully overcome the constraints of traditional political culture while mapping out strategies for collectively confronting the region's security challenges.

THE COLOMBIAN CRISIS

The current axis of the Andean crisis is to be found in Colombia, where a historically weak state has been all but overwhelmed by an insurgency now harnessed to narco-trafficking, in turn propelling the development of

powerful paramilitary forces and assorted criminal elements, many with ties to international networks. At the same time that these forces continue to become more powerful, the Colombian state's capacity to respond has been weakened further due to corruption, an impotent justice system, a weak military, woefully outgunned law enforcement capability, and the inability of the political class to make progress toward a negotiated peace settlement. So riven with conflicts at this point in its history, the Colombian state, as some argue, may have ceased to exist as measured by any conventional understanding of sovereignty, certainly when defined in terms of territorial control.

Colombia's deepening crisis pushed the United States into far greater involvement in the region for three reasons. First, Colombia had become the premier cocaine source for the United States. Second, the United States identified Colombia as one of a group of key states whose democracies were in jeopardy and upon which special efforts needed to be focused. This group also included Indonesia, Ukraine, and Nigeria.³ Third, the United States regards Colombia as the greatest threat to regional stability now facing the South American region. At the Fourth Defense Ministerial of the Americas, convened at Manaus, Brazil, in October 2000, then U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen likened Colombia's political pathology to a disease, observing that "it will spread like a cancer to other regions."⁴ He argued that democracy in Latin America was, simply put, at risk because of Colombia's crisis.⁵ As the Colombia Task Force report of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Inter-American Dialogue reported,

Colombia's deterioration spreads instability and conflict beyond its borders. Insurgent and paramilitary groups have made frequent incursions into the neighboring countries of Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama. Such incursions could well increase. The wider region is increasingly uncertain, reflecting both real spillover effects and independent, troublesome political developments. A stronger Colombia means a stronger region and a stronger Western Hemisphere.⁶

In still another perspective, former Assistant Secretary of State Bernard Aronson argued that U.S. interest in Colombia's security crisis was shaped by three issues: drugs, migration, and oil.⁷ Although the Colombia crisis long remained a second tier matter for the United States when compared to security issues involving Asia or the Middle East, for example, the increasing destabilization there came to be viewed in the late 1990s as a priority matter. The former U.S. "Drug Czar", General (Retired) Barry McCaffrey, urged that more attention be focused upon the growing regional crisis, but recognized that the U.S. domestic political environment would more easily support such efforts if the emphasis were placed upon drugs and military and law enforcement assistance. At the same time, the Pastrana government was urged to develop a comprehensive approach to the crisis and, with substantial U.S. involvement, unveiled the ambitious *Plan Colombia* in 2000.

The Clinton administration enthusiastically endorsed *Plan Colombia* as the coherent, feasible approach that was needed. Problems soon emerged, however. The United States was widely seen to have all but developed the plan itself. Neither Colombia nor the United States had consulted neighboring states, nor even kept them informed. Ecuador's Foreign Minister Heinz Moeller complained, for example, that "this was a ball to which we were not invited. Ecuador was not consulted at all."⁸ The failure to consult only made matters worse when U.S. officials also readily acknowledged that the plan would put pressure on bordering states, increasing the security problems for those nations. Nonetheless, the United States pushed for the plan's acceptance and campaigned to build support for the plan throughout the region.

In the meantime, dramatic upheaval unfolded throughout the Andes. Of all the states affected by narcotrafficking and by the Colombia crisis, Ecuador was perhaps the most severely affected because of its limited ability to respond. Having thus far successfully avoided

being pulled into the Colombian conflict, Ecuador now saw itself threatened by major incursions of refugees that were likely to flee Colombia once the counternarcotics offensive into southern Colombia commenced in the period 2001-2002 under the terms of *Plan Colombia*. Foreign Minister Moeller worried about “the cancerous tumor being removed from Colombia and metastasizing in Ecuador.”⁹ Wishing not to be drawn into the conflict, Ecuador acknowledged that the Colombian insurgents and paramilitaries had for many years freely used Ecuadorian territory for rest and recuperation as well as for resupply. In addition, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) elements were known to have established settlements for family members, and, indeed, intermarriage had become commonplace between FARC elements and Ecuadorian nationals on the northern Ecuadorian border.

Northern Ecuador had also become an important supply point for growing narcotrafficking and guerrilla interests in southern Colombia. Given its weak military capabilities, and not wishing to directly confront Colombian irregular military forces, Ecuador’s approach had been to rely upon the FARC’s stated commitment to avoid using Ecuadorian national territory for armed activity. In a bargain with compelling outside force, Ecuador sought to keep Colombian incursions confined to noncombatant purposes. No such agreement had been reached, however, either with the Colombian paramilitaries who had been growing in strength, or with narcotraffickers. In effect, Ecuador, already beset by its own overwhelming political and economic difficulties, including a recent attempted coup, found itself politically and militarily threatened by the Colombia crisis. Evidence suggested that the implicit bargain with Colombia’s narcotrafficking interests had run seriously aground. U.S. Southern Command’s (USSOUTHCOM) Commander-in-Chief General Peter Pace testified before the U.S. Senate in 2001 that nurseries of coca and heroin poppy seedlings had been found in remote areas of Ecuador, and that guerrillas working with drug

traffickers had been spotted moving across Colombia's borders into both Ecuador and Panama.¹⁰

Despite progress by the Fujimori government in quelling insurgency and drug trafficking throughout the 1990s, Peru had emerged from the summer 2000 national elections in complete disarray, the subject of an Organization of American States (OAS) diplomatic sanction and diplomatic intervention. These were then followed by the dramatic implosion of the Fujimori government itself. Further, new assessments suggested that coca cultivation had once again begun to increase, with indications that the acreage under coca cultivation had in fact grown over the previous 2 years. Arguably, it was the political firestorm ignited by the alleged involvement of President Fujimori's principal political associate and director of national intelligence, Vladimiro Montesinos, in arms trafficking and arms sales to Colombian guerrillas, all with the apparent complicity of the Peruvian military, that brought an end to the Fujimori regime.¹¹ While certainly Fujimori's record of electoral manipulations also contributed to public demands for political change, it was not until Fujimori found himself mired in the Colombian problem over arms trafficking with the FARC did the regime collapse, opening the door to wide-ranging investigations of the military's and other government officials' complicity in drug trafficking.¹²

Elsewhere in the Andes, Bolivia experienced a resurgence of chronic instability, once thought to have been largely allayed due to success in the counterdrug war and due to the Banzer government reforms. While not directly tied to the Colombian crisis, its difficulties stemmed in large part from controversy over the government's counterdrug policy. Following decades of turmoil, under the leadership of former General Banzer, now Bolivia's elected president, the nation seemed to be on the brink of resolving the issue of illegal drug production, having succeeded in implementing all but the final elements of its "Dignity Plan." Indeed, along with Peru, Bolivia had been touted internationally as a success story, one demonstrating that it was possible to

defeat the scourge of illegal drug production through an aggressive policy of crop eradication and alternative development.

With the onset of 2001, however, it became clear that neither eradication nor alternative development had won the day.¹³ Indeed, the plan to build several small garrisons to hold the line on the dismantled fields incited the coca-producing peasantry to violence against the government. Despite all the public declarations of success, the cocaleros apparently had every intention of returning to coca production once the crop eradication sweeps had terminated and counterdrug forces had returned to the barracks. Clearly, the lucrative nature of drug production continued to appeal to Bolivia's impoverished peasantry who were unwilling to follow through with the wholesale relocation of population from drug-producing regions to zones suitable for "alternative development."¹⁴

At the same time, for Venezuela, Colombia's crisis increasingly put pressure on the Chavez government and led to strained relations with the United States. Venezuela viewed itself as the victim of Colombia's crisis, suffering frequent incursions by refugees, guerrillas, paramilitaries, and narcotraffickers, and it thus voiced concerns over the prospects for a further widening of the conflict. Venezuela had already become home to hundreds of thousands of Colombian economic migrants in the 1980s and 1990s, and the prospect of further conflict in Colombian territory adjacent to the Venezuelan border promised to escalate the numbers of Colombian nationals seeking refuge outside for reasons of personal safety.

On Colombia's northern border, Panama sounded alarms over the extensive, repeated territorial incursions of insurgent and paramilitary elements from Colombia. Never territory well controlled by central authority, and without a military of its own to, at least in theory, defend the territory from illicit use, the Darien province of Panama became an area of essentially free reign for Colombian insurgent and

paramilitary forces. Increasingly, Panamanians expressed concern that the Moscoso government's prospects for dealing both with the internal pressures (stemming largely from corruption, some owing to narcotrafficking and money laundering) and with the external pressures (involving narcotrafficking, insurgency, and paramilitaries) were slim at best. A tendency to ignore the problem was made more difficult to sustain with the promise delivered by United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) paramilitary commanders that they would consider Panama fair game if Colombian insurgents were able to use Panamanian territory with impunity.

Of all the countries considered, Brazil arguably faced some of the more daunting challenges deriving from the Colombian crisis, chiefly owing to its vast unguarded Amazonian territories. To begin with, counterdrug efforts in the Andes increasingly had pushed narcotrafficking operations into Brazil as a result of the widely noted "balloon effect." With Brazilian national territory (land, air, and riverine) increasingly impacted by this traffic, Brazil felt increased pressure upon its already weak ability to protect national resources and the sovereignty of national territory. Essentially, Brazil could control neither its airspace, ground, or riverine traffic. With only relatively few federal police to monitor the entire country for counterdrug operations, Brazil faced heavy odds in contending with the threat to its territory.

While Brazil's Amazon region had never been well controlled, Brazil's national security officials increasingly recognized that the future pattern of development in the region could be seriously affected by the myriad illegal unmonitored activities taking place. Mining activity, forestry, and indigenous communities were all affected by the uncontrolled situation in the region. The arrest of Brazil's leading drug lord, Luis Fernando Da Costa (Fernandinho Beira-Mar), by Colombian forces on Colombian territory in the spring of 2001 brought into bold relief the growing ties between narcotics trafficking and the

Colombian insurgency. “Fernandinho” had allegedly served both as a major trader in cocaine from the FARC and as a supplier of arms to the FARC, all via Brazilian territory, reportedly relying upon Paraguayan, Russian, and Surinamese organized crime elements in the process.¹⁵

STATE RESPONSES TO THE ANDEAN CRISIS

Colombia.

With the success of counterdrug operations in Peru and Bolivia in the first half of the 1990s, and with the successful interdiction of the Andean air bridge, more and more elements of cocaine production moved to Colombia from former, more dispersed producing areas. With the defeat of the centralized cartels in Colombia in the 1980s and 1990s, the industry moved in several new directions, the most important of which came to be the strengthening of ties between producers and both the FARC and the AUC, the so-called paramilitaries. Initially, the FARC swelled its coffers with “tax payments” from coca producers, as did the AUC at a later point. Over time, however, the FARC reportedly became more directly involved in various stages of coca production, increasing coca production by a third in the demilitarized zone, the *despeje*, over which it had exclusive control.¹⁶ Ceded temporarily to the FARC by the Pastrana government as a confidence-building measure designed to get the peace negotiations off the ground, this area the size of Switzerland also came to be used as a platform for hiding kidnap victims and for increased military preparations.

The Colombian crisis had now all but spiraled out of control. Law enforcement was incapable of dealing with either escalating traditional crime or the escalating crime associated directly or indirectly with drugs. The justice system was equally incapable of contributing to a solution, as it had been both corrupted and intimidated. The first priority, that of regaining control over the national

territory, was now arguably beyond the reach of either the Colombian military or the police without substantial improvements in capabilities. Nearly two million persons had been displaced by the violence and either were internal refugees flooding into Colombia's cities, or had left Colombia for neighboring countries.¹⁷ The nation's elites had left en masse, with immigration rates into the United States skyrocketing and with a special protected status designation for such Colombians under consideration by the U.S. Congress. The economy had gone into a tailspin, with the country experiencing its first serious recession in modern history. Nearly half of the nation's territory was effectively beyond state control. The most compelling armed forces in the Colombian state were the nearly 20,000 armed elements of the insurgent armies (along with their 36,000 civilian militia supporters) and the over 8,000 (and growing) AUC paramilitary forces.

At the behest of the United States, as we noted earlier, the Colombian government developed *Plan Colombia* as an approach to resolving some of these issues. The multi-year, multi-billion dollar plan existed at two levels: the conceptual level and the practical level. At the conceptual level, the plan appeared to be a comprehensive approach to issues of social development, human rights, law enforcement, economic development, and peacemaking. At the practical level, however, the only part that was likely to be funded was the U.S.-sponsored element that targeted counterdrug efforts. The U.S. contribution of \$1.3 billion (of the total proposed \$7.5 billion) focused upon the development of a military capability designed to support law enforcement counterdrug efforts. Pledges of non-U.S. international financial support were disappointing. While the European Union pledged several hundred million dollars, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) offered support to social development projects, the bulk of the financing had to be shouldered by Colombia itself, chiefly through loans.¹⁸

The approach espoused by the Colombian government for confronting its internal crisis was based on a two-track process: (1) peace negotiations with insurgents where and when possible, and (2) armed confrontation with the narcotraffickers, principally with U.S. support. Put simply, the primary preferred goal of the Colombian government was to reach peace with the insurgency, while the primary goal of U.S. policymakers was to curtail the production and export of Colombian cocaine to the United States. In other words, in principle (though not in practice) the Colombian government's objectives and the U.S. Government's objectives were very different. Reflecting this distinction, the United States provided assistance to support Colombia's development of three specially trained anti-narcotics battalions, and provided several hundred U.S. military personnel along with several hundred civilian contractors to support counterdrug training activities.

At the same time, despite substantial efforts to modernize the organization of Colombia's armed forces, those combatant forces remained very limited in their capability to confront their principal foe, the insurgents. Despite these limitations, as a result of its partnership with the United States, the government concentrated scarce resources on those forces it believed to be of secondary concern, narcotraffickers. While the profits earned by the FARC from narcotrafficking connections certainly played a pivotal role in their ability to sustain operations, Colombian analysis suggested that drug trafficking could not be shut down if the insurgency were not first defeated. In other words, the government apparently saw no other source of support available to meet its urgent requirements. In its weakened state, it accepted the U.S. initiative as the only game in town.

As noted previously, at the outset both the Colombian and the U.S. Governments acknowledged that the plan was likely to produce spillover effects, broadening the conflict as narcotraffickers, insurgents, and paramilitary forces increased their use of neighboring states' territories,

thereby regionalizing the conflict. While regional leaders were willing to support President Pastrana's efforts to reach a negotiated peace settlement, they voiced serious objection to *Plan Colombia* due to the spillover potential resulting from the military rather than socio-economic emphasis that was felt to characterize the plan. While defenders noted that nearly 80 percent of the proposed funding was for nonmilitary expenditures, detractors noted that the only firm commitment was, in fact, the U.S. commitment to military and law enforcement expenditure.

Despite anxious U.S. and Colombian appeals for support at the meeting of the presidents of South America's 12 countries, convened by Brazil in Brasilia in September 2000, such appeals met with only measured success. Chilean President Lagos reported that the presidents fully support "the peace process, which implies negotiations" as "distinct from the problem of narcotics trafficking." Colombian Foreign Minister Guillermo Fernandez de Soto complained about this response, arguing that "it is unjust and counterintuitive that Colombia's efforts to strengthen itself to fight the threat it faces are the subject of complaints when no one criticizes the arms buildup of the insurgents. We want cooperation, not unfair criticism."¹⁹

A vocal opponent of the plan was Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who declared, "We support *Plan Colombia* so long as it does not generate combat activities that could complicate our situation," noting further that he feared the threat of "the Vietnamization of the entire Amazon region."²⁰ Chavez also argued that "[the plan] is going to make the conflict even more tense and is going to worsen armed clashes." He further observed, "Peace cannot be achieved by arms, that is a great contradiction."²¹ Earlier assurances offered by both Presidents Pastrana and Clinton apparently did little to allay the fears of regional leaders that the spillover effects of *Plan Colombia* could be adequately handled. During his visit to Colombia in August 2000, President Clinton admitted that the plan would likely "cause the problem to spill over the borders" of neighboring

countries, but added that the United States would provide “a substantial amount of money to help other countries deal with those problems at the border when they start.”²² Such assurances were in no way sufficient to bridge the gap between the U.S. plan and South American objections.

Venezuela’s Response

Under President Chavez’s leadership, Venezuela sought to chart an independent course with respect to the Colombian crisis and the problem of narcotrafficking. These efforts reflected the continuing and longstanding difficulties in Venezuelan-Colombian relations, along with the increasingly tense relations between Venezuela and the United States. From the outset, Chavez’s populist message had struck a discordant note with Colombian authorities, as the Venezuelan leader never missed an opportunity to criticize the Colombian “oligarchy,” pointing to unfavorable contrasts between Colombia’s internal social policies and his own “Bolivarian Revolution.” To the consternation of Bogota, Chavez sponsored talks in Caracas between representatives of the FARC and the Colombian government itself. Although Bogota viewed Chavez as engaging in unwanted meddling, it did send the nation’s Attorney General to participate in the talks. Yet relations were rubbed raw by the experience. Venezuela’s Defense Minister Rangel went so far as to state publicly that Venezuela has the right to talk “with those who have power.” Further commenting upon the Colombians’ annoyance over the matter, he suggested that the Colombians “would get over it.”²³ A FARC delegation, including Olga Marin, daughter of FARC chief Manuel Marulanda, had been hosted at a meeting of the Latin American Parliament in the Venezuelan National Assembly in November 2000.²⁴ Caracas was generally thought to have good contacts with the FARC, if for no other reason than to be in a position to hold the insurgency at bay and to maintain some leverage over their forces. They would thus not pose uncontrollable problems to the Venezuelan

government, or so it was hoped. At the same time, such outreach to Colombia's insurgents was designed to serve as testimony to Chavez's domestic constituency as to their leader's progressive credentials.

Such irritations notwithstanding, Venezuela had suffered incursions from Colombians over its border for many years. As one news broadcast described the situation, "Venezuela is constantly suffering the negative effects of Colombian drug trafficking: the air, river, and land routes are disrupted and those who are not part of the problem still have to suffer the consequences of this same problem, one that is unpredictably grave." Colombian insurgents had kidnapped scores of Venezuelan ranchers and business leaders, and the 1,400-mile border offered porous transit points for illicit trafficking of narcotics, weapons, and people. Recently Colombian kidnapping gangs were formed to seize Venezuelan ranchers to "sell" them to Colombian guerrillas.²⁵ At the same time, Colombian authorities charged that Colombia's insurgents routinely obtained weapons from the Venezuelan armed forces.²⁶

Venezuela's release in 2001 of National Liberation Army (ELN) insurgent Jose Maria Ballestas, hijacker of a Colombian commercial flight in 1999, only served to further sour relations.²⁷ Finally, Venezuela complained that Colombian traffickers used Venezuelan territory as a major route for shipping drugs destined for the European market.²⁸ Nonetheless, Venezuela remained steadfast under Chavez in refusing to allow U.S. counterdrug operations on Venezuelan national territory and continued to refuse to reauthorize counterdrug surveillance flights by the United States in Venezuelan airspace that had been stopped by the Chavez government. In that regard, Venezuelan authorities also suggested that the new U.S. Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) in Aruba and Curacao represented nothing more than a staging platform for the invasion of South America by the United States. More recently, however, Defense Minister Rangel reportedly

agreed to visit with USSOUTHCOM and American operations at Key West.

Venezuela suffered increasing influxes of refugees as Colombian paramilitaries cleared towns on the Colombian side of the border of suspected insurgent sympathizers. These influxes were in addition to the tens of thousands of Colombians who had previously, from the Venezuelan point of view, “colonized western Venezuela.”²⁹

Both President Chavez and Venezuela’s former defense minister warned that Colombia’s efforts must not worsen Venezuela’s difficulties, suggesting that Colombia’s conflict could spread and provoke a “medium intensity” regional conflict.³⁰ Then Defense Minister Ismael Hurtado Soucre noted, “We’re worried about the military plan. The way that it’s done could generate more violence.”³¹

Chavez commented at length about *Plan Colombia*:

We are terribly affected by the war in Colombia. Peasants have been kidnapped or murdered; there is terror on the border. It is a lawless land. We want peace. But peace cannot be achieved with 80 Blackhawks or military trainers, but by dialogue. So it is a terrible mistake that the governments of the United States and Colombia are making. We are warning that the conflict could escalate and become another Vietnam.³²

Indeed, such fears seemed to be well borne out as Colombia accused Venezuela of an illegal military incursion (not the first) in October 2000. Colombia’s Defense Minister Luis Ramirez charged that Venezuelan forces invaded Colombian national territory with 30 helicopter-borne troops, and that Venezuelan military aircraft had fired rockets and destroyed houses and livestock. Venezuela’s then Foreign Minister Jose Rangel denied this and called Colombia’s claim “irresponsible” and a “vulgar lie.”³³

In the meantime, Venezuela deployed thousands of reinforcements to its Colombian border to deal with rising levels of conflict, stationing 10,000 soldiers in what were described as “two theaters of operation.”³⁴ In an early sign of

what would later come to be a willingness to cooperate on a regional basis, however, Chavez also floated a trial balloon proposing that South American states form a NATO-like military alliance to deal with regional problems, a measure that was vetoed by Brazil's Foreign Minister Luiz Felipe Lampreia as antithetical to Brazil's own interests.³⁵

President Chavez sought to distance himself from U.S. influence in the region in a number of different ways, particularly with respect to U.S.-sponsored counterdrug operations. In addition to the suspension of U.S. overflight rights, the Venezuelan government also issued a diplomatic protest to the United States over the presence of a U.S. Coast Guard vessel that had entered Venezuelan waters in support of counterdrug operation. The United States argued that this arrangement had been provided for under a prior treaty arrangement. More generally, Chavez sought to declare his independence from the United States by, among other things, developing close relations with Cuba, and by turning to Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) through overtures to Saddam Hussein, including a visit to Iraq as well as a planned visit to Iran.³⁶

In sum, Venezuelan authorities deplored what was characterized as primarily a military approach to Colombia's internal problems and one that set the stage for U.S. intervention in the region. Moreover, Venezuelan officials went so far as to argue that U.S. military support to Colombia would create a worrisome regional military imbalance, but offered assurances that Venezuela would not embark upon an arms buildup in response to *Plan Colombia*.³⁷

Ecuador's Response.

Of all the frontline states, Ecuador faced what may be the bleakest implications deriving from the Colombian crisis. The 1990s had been a time of enormous domestic financial and political turmoil that left the state teetering on the brink of collapse. As pressure from Colombia

mounted with the increasing penetration of Ecuadorian territory by Colombians, Ecuador had little in the way of resources that it could bring to bear upon its problem, given its already severe internal crisis. Gustavo Noboa, the fifth Ecuadorian president in 5 years, came to office in the aftermath of a coup staged by a coalition force of disgruntled junior army officers and indigenous rights activists aggrieved by the nation's economic crisis.³⁸ The coup attempt fizzled only after the very direct diplomatic intervention by the leaders of neighboring states and most particularly by the United States. All issued strong warnings concerning the isolation Ecuador would face were it to abandon democracy.

Ecuador's difficulties stemmed from an array of both international and domestic factors. Its most recent crisis emerged as a result of pressures from political, financial, investor, human rights, indigenous rights, and insurgent forces.³⁹ Desperate for solutions, the government sought to achieve economic stability by "dollarizing" the economy. Most observers agreed that this measure alone could do little to secure stability for an economy in need of serious structural reform. So severe were Ecuador's political and economic difficulties that fully 4 percent (500,000) of the population had left the country in the 1999-2000 period. At least one observer pointed to "globalization and the economic transition that has hit the region hard"⁴⁰ as the chief reasons for Ecuador's (and other similarly afflicted states) acute difficulties. Ecuador had little capacity to respond to rising pressure from the Colombian situation, although it moved some forces to the Colombian border in order to try to increase security.⁴¹

Sensing weakness, the FARC bluntly demanded that Ecuador remain strictly neutral with regard to the Colombian conflict, that it should refrain from supporting *Plan Colombia*, and that it should resist the use of the "fusarium oxysporum" fungus to eradicate coca crops.⁴² According to FARC representatives,

There are certainly democratic sectors in Ecuador which are not going to support *Plan Colombia*, and we believe there are sectors within the Ecuadorian armed forces that are also not going to open fire on their Colombian brothers. The Colombian guerrillas do not consider the Ecuadorians or their army as their enemies, neither do they consider the Venezuelans, Peruvians, Brazilians, or Panamanians as their enemies. We have enough land there. To come and fight here, to Ecuador; that would be outrageous.⁴³

Despite such “assurances,” Ecuador nonetheless felt compelled to double its border forces to 4,000 troops⁴⁴ as the pressure in southern Colombia mounted. Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Heinz Moeller announced the implementation of a combined armed forces and police border patrol program.⁴⁵ According to Colombian sources, Ecuador had become the principal source of supplies for the FARC, including “food supplies, medicine, provisions, weapons, ammunition, explosives, uniforms.”⁴⁶ Ecuadorian authorities struggled to respond with limited resources. Farmers were being driven off of their land; the Ecuadorian army had discovered four cocaine labs in Ecuadorian territory; Colombian paramilitaries were reported to be running extortion rings in Ecuador; and FARC and ELN armed belligerents crossed regularly into Ecuadorian territory with impunity.⁴⁷ Reports indicate that hundreds of Ecuadorian residents of the border area had fled in the face of threats from both Colombian guerrillas and Colombian paramilitaries.⁴⁸ New evidence suggested FARC complicity in the kidnapping of oil workers in Ecuador, an act that originally was thought to have been the work of internal criminal elements.⁴⁹ For Foreign Minister Moeller, however, the problem, more ominously, was that of the “ideological infiltration” of the border.

In the summer of 2000, the Ecuadorian National Security Council (CSN), under the leadership of President Noboa, announced that the war on drugs would be a priority of the Ecuadorian government, and that the government would devote special efforts to this objective through the

creation of an “Executive Unit” that would focus upon social and economic development in the region to be impacted by *Plan Colombia*.⁵⁰ At the same time, President Noboa endorsed *Plan Colombia*⁵¹ and asked the United States for \$160 million in assistance to help create an economic buffer zone on its border with Colombia. In particular, Ecuador sought assistance to deal with Sucumbios province where Colombian irregular forces congregated freely. Ecuador also sought additional assistance to acquire helicopters, fast boats, and reconnaissance equipment. The \$160 million would be part of Ecuador’s 4-year \$300 million program to stabilize the border region.⁵² According to Noboa, most of the funds would be used to support social and economic development initiatives in the region. Ecuador had been allotted \$20 million in the emergency supplemental appropriation passed by the U.S. Congress in support of *Plan Colombia* in 2000, but much more would be needed to stabilize the situation. Ecuador requested further assistance in financing five camps for refugees planned for location on the Colombian border. The United Nations had warned Ecuador to expect an influx of 25-30,000 refugees, with the number potentially exceeding 40,000. Refugees would be expected to stream into Ecuador from Colombia’s Putumayo province once the southern offensive into Colombia began, and indeed Ecuador reported that 8,000 refugees had arrived in the early days of the Colombian operation.⁵³ Without enhanced financial support, the Ecuadorian President suggested that Ecuador might have to reconsider its agreement with the United States to allow the use of its territory by U.S. antidrug aircraft.

The U.S.-Ecuadorian agreement in question established a Forward Operating Location (FOL) at Manta Air Force Base on Ecuador’s Pacific coast. Under the terms of a 50-year lease agreement and with a \$62 million expenditure in runway, hangar, dormitory, and other construction upgrades, Manta stood as one of the leading U.S. military initiatives in the region.⁵⁴ Manta would have 400 U.S. service personnel by October 2001, and would serve as a

base for airborne warning and control system (AWACS) reconnaissance aircraft and tanker refueling capability deployed in support of counterdrug reconnaissance.⁵⁵ From the FARC point of view, the establishment of the U.S. FOL at Manta constituted a “declaration of war,” and the FARC warned that if U.S. aircraft were to fly out of Manta to eradicate crops, the guerrillas would strike targets in Ecuador.

In response to the perceived threat, Ecuador stationed 5,000 troops along the Colombian border in the provinces of Napos and Sucumbios. According to Ecuadorian sources, the FARC had previously identified Sucumbios as a “strategic area,” and its intention was to hold this as a secure sanctuary.⁵⁶ In sum, Ecuador faced intense pressures from virtually all quarters and, because of its weakness, sought to strengthen its relationship with the United States, a measure that was likely to draw it more directly into Colombia’s crisis. Some Ecuadorian authorities worried that Manta would transform Ecuador into the “new Panama,” stripping it of any sovereign pretensions and exposing it to even greater external threat.⁵⁷

The Peruvian Response.

Unlike other states in the Andean Ridge, Peru had conducted an intensive counterdrug and counterinsurgency offensive for over a decade. With President Fujimori’s ascent to power and subsequent initiatives, Peru developed a set of capabilities that enabled it to establish sovereignty over its territory and to attack fundamental economic issues. While the process led to an increasingly authoritarian and violent pattern of rule, replete with human rights abuses and political repression, equilibrium appeared to be maintained within the system. A consensus had been forged between the political class, the business class, and the military over the courses of action that had to be taken to reestablish sovereignty over Peruvian territory.

Peru aggressively pursued narcotraffickers and insurgents, essentially winning a military victory over both groups.

One clear Peruvian advantage was a well-developed and credible military capability and a willingness to use force. In addition, Peru's insurgent forces never developed the kinds of links with narcotraffickers that proved to be so devastating in Colombia. Further, Peru developed a strategy for defeating the insurgents that focused upon arming the rural population through the mechanism of state-sponsored *rondas campesinas* or self-defense forces. Compared to the Colombian self-defense forces that evolved over time, the Peruvian *rondas* proved much more successful, coming to serve as a legitimate auxiliary to the armed forces of the state. Peru also adopted an aggressive policy of air interdiction of drug traffickers, shooting down scores of national aircraft involved in illicit activity.

The onset of the Colombian crisis proved to be more than a match even for the tested Fujimori establishment. In part, the political failures of the 2000 electoral period may have been a manifestation of the exhaustion of Fujimori's political acumen, after years of apparent success. One could not argue that a revolt by civil society caused the defeat of the system, since Peruvian civil society was exceedingly docile. Instead, the fundamentally corrupted character of the regime, coupled with the inflammatory nature of the FARC-arms trafficking allegations, triggered a collapse of consensus among the ruling political and military elites, causing the regime's profound deterioration beginning in the summer of 2000. Neither rigged elections, nor Comandante Gonzalo, nor the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) seizure of the Japanese Embassy, nor the contest of wills between the United States and Peru that often characterized their relationship in the 1990s could compare with the delegitimizing impact of the arms trafficking charges, especially as seen within the wider context of massive government corruption. Vladimiro Montesinos' involvement in arms trafficking to the Colombian FARC forces proved to be a far more devastating

event than the accumulated difficulties of 10 years of internal war in Peru.⁵⁸

In the meantime, evidence suggested that the weakening of the Peruvian state led opportunistic elements in the drug industry to begin once again to revive cocaine production in Peru despite much progress on the issue.⁵⁹ Although data show that coca production fell in 2000 for the fifth consecutive year, dropping from 233,168 acres planted to 84,474, there were numerous indications that Peru faced new trafficking challenges ahead. The FARC's 14th front was reported to control labs in the Peruvian jungle between the Napo and Putumayo rivers that ran directly into Brazil. Observers suggested that local narcotrafficking interests were preparing to build up production in Peru in anticipation of the implementation of *Plan Colombia*, essentially by paying higher prices to producers. Prices rose steadily in Peru; poppies were now being grown and more cocaine processing was evident, as was the development of more labs. More Colombians and Mexicans were found to be involved. Regrowth was observed in once abandoned areas, and many new fields and new seed beds were also observed.⁶⁰

Peru's former Minister of Foreign Relations, former U.N. Representative, and current chair of the Congress's Foreign Relations Commission, Francisco Tudela van Breugel-Douglas, argued that, within the context of the region's struggle for development, a major potential threat is the rejection of globalization in the name of defending "reactionary utopias" or "bucolic utopias." Tudela suggested that bucolic reactionary politics may increasingly be linked to drug trafficking in the Andean (and other regional) areas behind what he terms the "smokescreen of ethnic politics." In other words, some of those defending such bucolic utopias may be doing so disingenuously, using this political agenda to mask their true illegal intentions. According to Tudela, *Plan Colombia* created "huge awareness and big fears," principally the fear of injecting large amounts of money into an economy with rampant illegal activity. Resources may

fall into the wrong hands, producing far worse outcomes. There were also fears of diasporas and of a domino effect. For Peru, the spillover from the Colombian crisis was expected to come through Ecuador, which is contiguous to Peru. In addition, there was concern as to whether the FARC would move into eastern Ecuador, thus triggering the Colombianization of that country.⁶¹

The Bolivian Dilemma.

In the fall of 2000, Bolivia found itself confronted by protests and labor strikes, leaving numerous dead and wounded. While teachers were part of the striking contingent, most of the rancor stemmed from the failure of alternative development programs to adequately substitute for coca production. The United States had committed \$25 million for counterdrug efforts in the Chapare and Yungas regions and allocated \$85 million for alternative development in these two areas.⁶² Coca growers' unions, however, as they had for years, fought to stop the eradication program and to demilitarize the Chapare region by staging roadblocks throughout the nation, leading Bolivia to economic and political crisis. Bolivia's capital city, La Paz, faced food shortages and was all but blocked off from the rest of the country, as 35,000 coca growers stood their ground.⁶³ Yet the Banzer government remained committed to the total eradication of illegal coca leaf by the end of the 2002 presidential term. Even so, peasants who depended upon the crop for their livelihood in one of the region's poorest countries resisted: "The government says it will take our land and send us to jail if we persist in growing coca. We will have no alternative but to defend ourselves, like in Colombia."⁶⁴ The *cocaleros* were particularly incensed over the news that the government would construct, with U.S. financing, several small garrisons in the coca growing areas to insure that the crop would not be replanted.

In the 1990s, Bolivia in fact achieved dramatic success in reducing national acreage devoted to coca production. Coca cultivation was reduced from 78,400 illegal acres to 4,000, according to U.S. sources.⁶⁵ According to Bolivian sources, this signified a loss of some \$700 million in illegal drug income in just 2 years.⁶⁶ Ironically, the economic deficit created by success in the counterdrug effort helped to plummet Bolivia into financial and social crisis. The government responded by appealing to Washington for debt relief and for improvement in trade relations in textiles, an economic sector emphasized by Bolivia to provide labor alternatives to the drug industry. Such appeals appeared to hold little promise, particularly vis-à-vis textiles. As U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright noted during her August 2000 visit to Bolivia: "We did discuss the issue of textiles. I have to tell you, though, that this is a very complicated problem as far as our trade relations with any country is concerned." Nevertheless, Albright noted that Bolivia had received \$450 million in debt forgiveness from the period 1991 to 1999 and also received \$115 million annually in other assistance.⁶⁷

Bolivia's economic problems continued to worsen during the years of the counterdrug regime and the Banzer government. In the spring of 2000, the nation was gripped by a paralyzing strike involving a water project that was to privatize water investments, dramatically raising prices for the population. Ambushes, protests, and small-scale insurrections increasingly became the stuff of everyday Bolivian life.⁶⁸ While few observers believed that the government faced a threat to its existence solely due to the increasing ferment, it was unable to quell rising levels of discontent. In an attempt to mollify those who decried the government's mistreatment of the indigenous population and who urged the white population to leave the country, the government agreed to appoint a minister for peasant and indigenous affairs. An array of economic concessions were also promised, suggesting that the cycle of protest and concession would continue to spiral farther. In this context,

the potential for a balloon effect in Bolivian narcotics production was a real concern despite the government's pledge to end all illegal coca production by the end of 2002.

The Challenge to Panama.

Despite Panama's desire to maintain a pose of neutrality as its best shield against being drawn into the Colombian crisis,⁶⁹ Carlos Castano, the head of Colombia's feared AUC paramilitary "self defense" forces, accused Panama's National Guard of openly cooperating for financial gain with Colombia's insurgents and declared that he regarded the Guard as a "military objective."⁷⁰ Despite these threats, some such as Ricardo Arias Calderon argued that Panama must insist upon maintaining its neutrality to safeguard the Canal, and further suggested that a Contadora-like effort be developed to forge a regional peace, with Brazil potentially taking the lead in the effort.⁷¹ Panama's ambassador to the United States, Guillermo Ford, commented that "*Plan Colombia* is for Colombia. Panama does not want to get involved in the internal problems of Colombia. We've been shying away from that in every way."⁷²

Threats to Panamanian citizens were escalating. The Roman Catholic bishop of Darien, Romulo Emiliani, was forced to flee the province because of threats from the Colombian paramilitary forces. While Panama's President Mireya Moscoso promised more support to those attempting to police the border, Panamanian territory was transgressed and utilized with impunity by insurgents and paramilitary forces. Colombian civilians fled in increasing numbers to Panama as refugees from both insurgents and paramilitaries. Although Panamanian police twice engaged with FARC insurgents in Panama's Darien province during 2000, these Panamanian forces had little or no capacity to respond and were no match for the well-equipped and comparatively well-trained forces of the FARC and the AUC.

Panama has been used continuously as a major venue for arms shipments, a practice that was likely to increase as the FARC boosts its forces to an expected 30-35,000 combatants in response to *Plan Colombia*. By the same token, the AUC was expected to increase its forces in response to the expected FARC increases. To the extent that arms shipments traversed Central America and implicated Central America, the expansion of the network of corruption and criminality could only be expected to expand further.⁷³ Indeed, the problem of arms-for-cocaine trafficking reached deeply into Mexico, America's own neighbor, where FARC cooperation with Mexico's Tijuana Cartel was under attack by Mexico's new Fox administration.

Since the implementation of the Panama Canal Treaties, discussions have taken place concerning the possibility of establishing a new arrangement for a U.S. presence in Panama. At the time of final implementation, negotiations had taken place to establish a Multinational Drug Center, but final agreement was never reached. The prospect of a return of U.S. forces to Panama was a difficult matter for Panamanians, but the Panamanian government was able to forge an agreement with the United States for the training of 1,000 Panamanian police assigned to border patrol.

Panama's substantial involvement in money laundering activities was a source of continuing concern. In July 2000, the U.S. Department of Treasury included Panama on a blacklist of states that were not cooperating with efforts to control money laundering activities.⁷⁴ Panama was included on the U.S. Financial Action Task Force list of Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories. Panama, however, pressured the United States to be removed from the list as acknowledgement of its cooperation in receiving Peru's Vladimiro Montesinos into the country on a temporary asylum basis at the request of the United States and the OAS. Panama did so because it had been alleged that a military coup was in the offing in Peru as a result of the Montesinos affair.

President Moscoso's position was that *Plan Colombia* was a matter between Colombia and the United States, and declared her intention to avoid having Panama become involved in the program. At the same time, Panama was singularly ill-equipped to grapple with the illegal and criminal operations that were at the root of the Colombian crisis. Some would argue that Panama faced the choice of becoming entirely overwhelmed by Colombian forces or seeking to establish, once again, what could only amount to a protectorate relationship with the United States. Ultimately, concern for the security of the Panama Canal may further increase pressures on Panama to take more formal steps in that direction. The recent seizure of aircraft by FARC forces from a former U.S. base may indicate a rising threat in Panama.

The Brazilian Calculus.

At the Fourth Defense Ministerial of the Americas convened in the city of Manaus, Brazil, Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso issued a call for "shared cooperation" to deal with the drug problem. This would form part of a new concept of security for the region. "We share a broad concept of regional security which depends on democracy and sustainable development, values that have taken root from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego."⁷⁵ One of the president's greatest concerns was the need to shield the Amazon region from the further spread of narcotrafficking. Toward that end, some years ago the Brazilian government launched its plan for the Surveillance of the Amazon System (SIVAM/SIPAM). The \$1.7 billion system of radars and sensors, to be supported by reconnaissance and fighter aircraft, was to provide the "eyes" and the "reach" for the Brazilian government into the Amazon to establish sovereignty in its vast, unwatched, and uncontrolled areas. The system, according to Cardoso, would enable the government to "reinforce our presence with technology, not just with men."⁷⁶ Yet Cardoso stated at the Defense Ministerial meetings held in Manaus that "the problem is a

domestic problem,” and that “we are not interested at all in any kind of Brazilian intervention in Colombia.”⁷⁷

There was no doubt about Brazil's deep concern over its border areas and its Amazon territories. Brazil's commitment to its new enormously expensive surveillance system came in a period of dramatically reduced overall defense spending for the Brazilian state. Further, it dovetailed with the wholesale redesign of Brazilian defense policy that shifted the focus of the nation's defenses from Brazil's southern border with Argentina to its northern and western borders in the Amazon region. In addition to preparations for the deployment of SIVAM/SIPAM, Brazil also deployed additional police along its 1,000 mile border with Colombia. More dramatically, in reaction to pressure on its border, Brazil stationed a total of 23,000 troops along the border in 63 locations, up from a force of 6,000 in 1991. These forces were to remain stationed in these positions throughout the duration of *Plan Colombia*.⁷⁸

Put most directly, however, Brazilian authorities did not support *Plan Colombia*. While they supported a negotiated settlement, they did not support what was viewed as a military approach to the problem. They feared U.S. intervention in the region, worried about sovereignty issues, and wished to preserve their own leadership options as the major regional power. Brazilian officials chose to characterize the insurgent crisis as an exclusively internal political matter (much as did the United States) that would have to be resolved politically within Colombia. As with other states in the region, the government feared that heightened military activity in Colombia would simply push the problem across Brazil's borders. Moreover, Brazilian authorities worried about the environmental effects of crop fumigation in Colombia and the potential for winds from Colombia to carry chemicals over the Amazon.

According to General Alberto Cardoso, President Cardoso's chief security advisor, “For Brazil, Colombia is causing the biggest worry. Our attention is dedicated to the

effects it could have on Brazil, like the flight of guerrillas and the transfer of [drug] laboratories and plantations.”⁷⁹ Although President Cardoso indicated that President Pastrana “deserves our firm support,”⁸⁰ Foreign Minister Lampreia clearly delineated Brazil’s intent during an August 2000 visit to Brasilia by U.S. Secretary of State Albright who was seeking Brazil’s support for *Plan Colombia*. The Foreign Minister outlined Brazilian policy with regard to possible cooperation with the United States and Colombia as follows:

Now, your question about possible common action programs: No, I would say that we do not have the same degree of commitment with the drug trafficking program of President Pastrana or his peace plan. But that being said, we’ve told President Pastrana that we will review with interest, and of course, within our possibilities, we will try to answer positively to any request from Colombia to try to help their development and their peace process, but we have no intention of participating in any common or consorted international action in the country.⁸¹

According to one newspaper report, Minister Lampreia “stressed the autonomy of Brazil, Latin America’s largest country, and said Brazil would not participate in the major Washington campaign to help battle Colombian drug traffickers.”⁸² In a similar vein, Minister Lampreia also outlined Brazil’s disagreement with regional calls for sanctions on Peru for its electoral irregularities of the spring and summer 2000.

Warning of the likely flight of drug operatives into Brazil once Colombia’s southern offensive began in December 2000, representatives of the USSOUTHCOM reportedly sought to encourage collaboration with Brazil and proposed police, military, and intelligence cooperation, but found a less than enthusiastic response.⁸³ On the other hand, while Brazil did not support what it viewed as the military approach taken by the United States and Colombia, it nonetheless expressed willingness to share intelligence gathered from the SIVAM system with Colombia. Although

the Brazilian legislature in 1998 passed an aggressive shoot-down policy designed to control aircraft entering Brazilian airspace illegally,⁸⁴ the policy had yet to be implemented to the consternation of some military and law enforcement authorities. Nevertheless, Brazil reportedly intended to spend \$3.5 billion for fighter aircraft and transport aircraft to support its new surveillance system, and planned to “refurbish 100 jets” in support of the program.⁸⁵ Brazil also reportedly entered a partnership with the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company (EADS) to support Amazon surveillance operations and held discussions for purchase of heavy troop transport helicopters with Russia’s Rosoboronexport.⁸⁶ In sum, Brazil moved aggressively to respond at the national level to the perceived regional threat despite its marked reluctance to participate in region-wide, collective security solutions to the crisis.

FARC insurgents routinely used Brazilian territory as sanctuary and to obtain food, medicine, and supplies. Brazil also served as an important transshipment venue for narcotics, and had become a substantial source of precursor chemicals. Brazilian territory had already been the site (on rare occasion) of military engagement involving Colombian forces. Yet a precedent was set when Colombian troops fled to Brazilian territory following the FARC assault in Mitu in 1998. Although Colombian forces counterattacked and partially retook the city by staging from Brazil, Brazilian authorities preferred to declare this use of Brazilian national territory as primarily involving humanitarian considerations for the beleaguered Colombian troops in order to avoid a confrontation with Colombia over the issue.⁸⁷

Brazil’s overall policy conformed to its longstanding principles of independence and reluctance to cooperate in formal military terms with projects involving the United States. More than any other state touched by the spreading contagion, Brazil had the resources to marshal a defense of its territory and sovereignty largely on its own terms, yet

this would be no guarantee of success because of the elusiveness and mobility of opposing forces and the insidiously corrupting influences upon what were now out-manned law enforcement and military forces.

At present, despite the fact that there are 23,000 troops stationed in the Amazon area, they are poorly prepared to tackle the agile forces that constitute the potential adversary. Further, Brazil currently only has a handful of police outposts available to contest illegal entry and illegal activities. While Brazil recognized that the border must be fortified, it did not adopt a “Maginot line” approach. It feared more the onslaught of massive drug use, drug manufacturing, and arms trafficking, recognizing that domestic Brazilian drug consumption levels had lately skyrocketed. Brazil has already suffered spillover effects for 2 decades in its border region with Colombia: cocaine paste had routinely been routed in from Peru, and the refined drug was imported from Colombia for export or for domestic consumption. Brazil also feared the prospects of U.S. armed forces on its border, owing to longstanding suspicions about U.S. intentions in the Amazon region. In recognition of these growing fears, Brazil recently announced a 3-year \$10 million program dubbed Operation COBRA which would increase police presence at border crossings, on waterways, and in air space. The program involved seven Brazilian federal agencies as well as the army.⁸⁸

A NEW AGENDA

Although U.S. authorities readily admitted that attention would have to be paid to the regional implications of both the crisis in Colombia and *Plan Colombia*, the approach taken tended to be bilateral and reactive rather than proactive on a multilateral basis. As Ecuador’s Foreign Minister admitted, Colombia had provided no information about its plan to neighboring states. Indeed, few within Colombia had much of a sense of the plan’s objectives. Yet, the regional nature of the problem was clearly noted by

senior U.S. officials. Former Under Secretary of State Thomas R. Pickering observed that, with respect to requests for aid to the region, “I think this is evolving now into not just a pure Colombia issue, but an Andean regional issue, something it has always been. I think in future years there will be a broader regional aspect to this as we plan and propose to the Congress new budgets for this kind of activity.”⁸⁹

Though the Clinton administration’s reaction to the growing crisis in the Andes had focused narrowly upon Colombia, the hemispheric summit process had also tended to overlook the explicit regional threat. Indeed, at the 1998 Santiago summit, virtually no mention was made of the threat to Colombia and adjacent states, although the issue of narcotrafficking was certainly addressed.⁹⁰ The situation would change in important ways with the advent of the 2001 Quebec Summit.

Prior to the Summit, regional leaders traveled to Washington in unprecedented numbers (for such an early point in a new U.S. administration) to consult about the urgency of the regional crisis and to appeal for a new approach. While the Bush administration sought to move cautiously, it was clear that even the more limited counterdrug option that had previously characterized U.S. policy in the region was facing more and more complex challenges. The State Department’s annual report on narcotics stated:

With the drug trade now an organic part of the Colombian civil conflict, the question facing the antidrug coalition will be how to reduce the supply of illegal drugs without exacerbating local conflicts that threaten regional stability.⁹¹

Several factors appear to have converged to encourage a series of new initiatives from regional leaders concerning the crisis. To begin with, the election of Vicente Fox in Mexico appeared to have facilitated Colombia’s apparent “rapprochement” with President Chavez of Venezuela,

leading to the revival of the long moribund “Group of Three” (Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico). The subsequent improved spirit of amicability, following “intense diplomatic efforts to mend relations,” led to new initiatives in the Colombian-Venezuelan relationship, including the announcement of joint border operations with the Colombian and Venezuelan armed forces.⁹²

This measure of progress in turn facilitated the convening of the meeting of the Andean leaders in Cartagena, Colombia, on April 19, 2001, immediately prior to the Quebec Summit. This meeting produced several dramatic developments. First, in a remarkable turnabout, President Chavez announced that he no longer had any reservations concerning *Plan Colombia*. While denying that his policy had changed, he declared, “What we had warned about, not against *Plan Colombia*, but against its military component, that chapter has been closed. Doubts that existed in any instance regarding *Plan Colombia* have now been clarified.”⁹³ Chavez elsewhere explained that the briefings he had received revealed a plan for socio-economic development that addressed inequality and that deserved support.

With Chavez no longer an obstacle to a regional approach, the Andean leaders next developed what they termed a “Regional Counternarcotics Strategy.”⁹⁴ The strategy called for the formation of a bloc for “political cooperation to deal with the scourge of illicit drugs and to create alternatives for development that would promote legal employment.”⁹⁵ As a cornerstone of the approach, the Andean leaders called for renewal of the U.S. Andean Trade Preferences Act set to expire in December 2001 to stimulate economic growth and employment in the region. The proposal called for the inclusion of Venezuela in the group of beneficiary nations. The leaders asked that the Act be amended to cover all products manufactured in the region, specifically emphasizing the inclusion of textiles.⁹⁶ It also provided for a full exemption from tariffs and quotas for Andean production. The new strategy, among other things,

called for cooperating states to create joint policies and to reach border agreements in order to combat drug cartels.⁹⁷

At the Quebec Summit, the Andean leaders presented a letter to President Bush, again urging renewal of a more generous Andean Trade Preferences Act, declaring “We need real help.” Together, the leaders of Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador (acting on their own and Venezuela’s behalf) urged swift action to improve the region’s economic prospects. While a spirit of cooperation prevailed despite President Chavez’s declaration that Venezuela might not be able to join the Free Trade of the Americas Act (FTAA) unless approved by popular referendum, the prospect for Andean regional cooperation in problem-solving appeared to have brightened considerably.

For its part, the Bush administration unveiled its proposal for Fiscal Year 2002 support for the region. Its Andean Regional Initiative proposed to triple the amount of support for Colombia’s neighboring states and substantially increased the proportion of funds devoted to economic development as compared to interdiction. While appearing to be responsive to calls for a broader approach to the region’s problem, the Andean Regional Initiative nonetheless established performance goals of a 30 percent reduction in Colombian coca production between January 2000 and December 2002, and called for the elimination of all illegal coca production in Bolivia by the end of calendar year 2002.⁹⁸

While the performance goals identified by the initiative appear to be predictably one-dimensional, the Summit also produced a commitment to support investment in the region preparatory to the FTAA. The World Bank and the IADB reportedly pledged \$20 billion to “strengthen democratic foundations” in the region.⁹⁹ Performance criteria associated with these funds were likely to target foundational issues of national development as stipulated by the program’s purposes.

The multifaceted crises of the Andean Ridge states and spillover from the acute Colombian crisis threatened stability, democracy, and economic prospects in the region. The complexity and the reverberatory international character of these threats outstripped the capability of the majority of states in the region to resist these pressures. Within the context of expanding globalization, one might have expected that the first inclination on the part of the besieged states would have been a collaborative approach to meeting these challenges. Yet, as globalization increasingly undermined state sovereignty, leaders in turn found it correspondingly more difficult to embrace approaches that further reduced national sovereignty, even for plausible purposes. This is particularly the case in the Latin American environment where the political culture of foreign policy tradition has so emphatically elevated to primacy the principles of non-intervention, national self-determination, and sovereignty.

The Andean crisis had reached such proportions in the minds of regional leaders, however, that they began to consider the benefits of collective action. While these leaders had yet to agree upon a regional security approach to the crisis, their efforts to coordinate economic policy, develop an avenue to cooperative border management, arrive at coordinated counterdrug policies, and, perhaps most importantly, reach a unified position on the United States, were positive steps toward fashioning a regional stance. At the same time, optimism had to be tempered by the record of prior efforts toward Andean regional cooperation that have proved disappointing.

Certainly U.S. reaction to these initiatives would be of the utmost importance in either encouraging or discouraging such innovation. Also important would be Brazil's decision either to embrace a new approach on the issue, taking a cue from the Andean leaders, or to remain largely aloof from regional security cooperation. By contrast, Mexico's new leaders appeared to be creating a model for the region for a new era of regional security

cooperation. For their part, as the Andean states sought to recover stability and defeat their adversaries, they were being forced to grapple with complexities in the international environment that would require changes in their approach to interstate behavior, changes that they were now apparently more willing to accept.

CONCLUSION

For the moment, despite speculation concerning its future attitude to the Colombian crisis, the Bush administration remains committed to supporting *Plan Colombia*.¹⁰⁰ Early reports from the administration suggested a degree of uncertainty regarding the overall policy approach, the heightened emphasis upon Western Hemisphere affairs notwithstanding. Indications have been that the entire policy will be undergoing extensive review.

In the interim, the administration has broadened its focus on the issue to include more emphasis upon development programs along with more emphasis upon support for Colombia's neighboring states.¹⁰¹ U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell has suggested that the Andean Regional Initiative represents a more comprehensive perspective. Powell stated that the

regional initiative that I will be defending before the Congress . . . allows us in future years not just to focus on narco-trafficking in Colombia but to see the problem as a regional problem and to invest in human rights activities, to invest in infrastructure development, to invest in economic opportunities that will encourage people to move away from narco-trafficking , and to see this problem as a regional problem and not just a simple problem of narco-traffickers in Colombia alone.¹⁰²

The Andean Regional Initiative has been described as providing "comprehensive and coordinated assistance to seven different countries" impacted by the Colombian crisis, and was developed in consultation with the seven recipient states and with European and "other potential donors."¹⁰³ This new level of coordination represents a positive

beginning for what needs to be a systematic multistate analysis of the problem. U.S. authorities have argued that this kind of coordination was not possible in the moment of crisis to which the \$1.3 billion supplemental *Plan Colombia* appropriation responded.¹⁰⁴

According to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs William R. Brownfield, the shift resulted from criticism of the plan and of the United States package of support for the plan which was labeled as being too focused on “security and law enforcement” and “overly focused on Colombia.”¹⁰⁵ The complaints of interest groups, the United States Congress, the news media, and European donor countries; consultations in Bogota and Madrid; and the influence of Mexico and Brazil pushed the administration to redirect its energies and resources to the three ds—democracy, development, and drugs. Elsewhere, other administration officials had argued that the initial package of U.S. support for *Plan Colombia* emphasizing security and hardware acquisition had laid the necessary groundwork that would permit more emphasis later upon programs geared to social stabilization.

While the shift in emphasis had much to commend it, the conclusion implicit in the change was that Colombia's security situation had improved to the point that substantial new sums could be profitably introduced into Colombian social programs designed to defend democracy and to promote development, including improvement of justice systems, alternative crop development, and so forth. Yet no evidence to that effect was presented or even hinted at. Indeed, Colombian government plans called for the addition of 10,000 more soldiers per year to the army “until the army and police are large enough to provide security for their entire country.”¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the administration had not seemed to move closer to confronting a central dilemma: if it were to continue to identify drugs as its chief concern, then how would it respond to the Colombian Defense Minister Ramirez Acuna's assertion that “fighting the drugs has gone from being a criminal problem to a military

one.”¹⁰⁷ The “military” aspect of the problem was driven by the strengthening alliances between insurgents, paramilitary forces, and narcotraffickers. It would be less and less possible to engage in the kind of semantic sleight-of-hand that characterized U.S. policy in the 1990s, driven by U.S. resistance to intervening in a civil war. For his part, General Pace observed in testimony to the House Armed Services Committee:

If you asked me to make a distinction between narcotraffickers and the insurgents, I can draw that line for you. But it is a very, very clouded line. And in fact in my mind it is a distinction that probably has lost its value. The bottom line from my perspective is that if you are trafficking in drugs, regardless of what else you do, if you are trafficking in drugs you are a narcotrafficker. And the symbiotic relationship between the insurgents and the narcotraffickers has so confused that distinction that it's very difficult to do.¹⁰⁸

More worrisome still was that the apparent shift in emphasis in assistance to Colombia was based not upon a strategic analysis of the conflict, but rather upon the administration's response to the political predilections of interested parties largely outside of Colombia. That is to say, changes in policy emphasis appeared to be, now more than ever, a function of political constraints rather than strategic analysis. This, in turn, calls into question the chances for the policy's success. Given the weight of these constraints, the challenge for the administration will be to find a way to observe the precepts of collective security while maintaining a coherent strategic policy.

If there is to be any maturation of U.S. policy toward the Andean region, it will be incumbent upon the U.S. administration to conduct a sound strategic analysis of the region's destabilization, lead in the articulation of strategic objectives, and design a defensible and feasible policy that can gain the support of critical congressional, interest group, and news media elements in the United States, above and beyond the concurrence of the Andean and other impacted states. Given the importance attached by the

Bush administration to achieving a free trade agreement by 2005 and given the difficulties faced in simply renewing the Andean Trade Preferences Act to the satisfaction of all parties, the United States will have to devote considerable political resources to moving policy beyond the piecemeal improvisation that now substitutes for strategy.

The engagement responsibilities of the U.S. military in the Andean area have been extensive. *The United States Security Strategy for the Americas* (2000) outlines U.S. military taskings in the Andean Ridge nations as focusing upon defense partnerships.¹⁰⁹ The scope of support to Andean states in counterdrug interdiction has grown steadily since the late 1980s. At the operational level, the problem for USSOUTHCOM has remained that of resource scarcity, particularly in the areas of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) and “in national, theater and tactical collection and processing for signals intelligence (SIGINT), human intelligence (HUMINT), and imagery intelligence (IMINT).”¹¹⁰

In addition, SOUTHCOM Commander-in-Chief General Peter Pace has identified the need for improved budgetary support for foreign military sales and financing. In testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, Pace noted that Congress had allocated \$220 million in 1991 for this activity, but in 2000 the budget stood at only \$3.5 million, “a drastic reduction in the amount of money that we spend in assisting our friends in the region to build their own capabilities.”¹¹¹

Still another problem area may be the issue of the use of contractors to support Department of Defense (DoD) and other U.S. Government agencies’ commitments in the region. Increasingly, the reliance upon contractors has been called into question by congressional critics and by the Colombian government itself, as witnessed by the termination of Military Professional Resources, Inc. (MPRI) responsibilities for DoD-sponsored assistance to the Colombian Ministry of Defense. How U.S. Government

agencies, and DoD in particular, will replace these assets remains to be determined and may gravely complicate matters.¹¹²

A major challenge facing the U.S. military in the near term will involve maintaining the support of regional partners in cooperative programs, given Washington's perceived strategic uncertainty. Enhancing the confidence of partners in Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela will be of the utmost priority. As a matter of official policy, however, the current U.S. military tasking in the Andean Ridge area remains clear: counterdrug support. Without an overall strategic reconsideration of the region's problem and of the threat to hemispheric democracies, the U.S. military will continue to focus upon training and operational support for regional states' counterdrug operations and assisting partner nations with the enhancement of their own counterdrug detection and interdiction capabilities. Ultimately, regardless of whether the overall policy guiding U.S. military tasking shifts marginally or dramatically, the more that U.S. military leadership can do to promote region-wide security cooperation and to build cooperative relationships within the circle of impacted states, thus overcoming traditions of bilateralism, the greater the prospect for long-term success in reducing the level of regional instability.

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