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Introduction

The primary purpose of this Masters of Military Studies monograph is to illuminate the process by which the national interests of the United States have been translated into a specific policy agenda for Colombia. This monograph has attempted to capture the creation of U.S. policy in Colombia through the study of three key documents.

The first document considered was the Department of State's 2000 Foreign Operations Budget Proposal (FOBP). The FOBP was an executive branch initiative that provided the basis and rationale for the U.S. \$1.3 billion component of Plan Colombia. The FOBP was developed to provide a portion of what the Colombians hoped to be a \$7 billion overall program supported by the international community. Put simply, Plan Colombia was conceived by Colombian President Pastrana's administration with the primary goals of strengthening governmental institutions while cutting illicit narcotics production by an ambitious fifty percent over six years. In its FOBP, the State Department described and titled the five pillars of Plan Colombia as "Support the Push into Southern Colombia", "Support Interdiction Efforts", "Support the Colombian National Police", "Support Alternative and Economic Development", and "Support Human Rights and Judicial Reform". These five initiatives served as the framework for congressional debate as Congress applied the legislative process to the FOBP.

During the legislative process, Congress determined which programs would be added or eliminated, and more importantly, which programs would be funded. The interim product of its effort was House Bill 5529 (H5529), which describes in detail each

of the individual supporting programs for each of the five pillars of Plan Colombia.

H5529 provides the bulk of the material considered in this thesis.

If the FOBP and H5529 describe “what” is to be provided by the United States in Plan Colombia, Public Law 106-246, the third policy input, describes “how” that aid will be provided. Although it lacks the detailed program breakout as contained in H5529, P.L. 106-246 is in many ways, more significant from a policy standpoint because it establishes the limits and restrictions associated with U.S. financial and material support.

Although Congressional Records are public information, they do not appear to receive wide dissemination, nor do they seem to be referenced in contemporary articles on U.S. policy in Colombia. For this reason, I feel that describing the process and provisions of the FOBP, H5529, and P.L. 106-246 will contribute to the academic community by giving it a sense of just how far our elected leaders are willing to invest the United States in support of Colombia.

The secondary purpose of this monograph is assess whether Plan Colombia will succeed. This issue will be addressed on two levels. The first level of analysis will attempt to determine to what degree U.S. aid will strengthen the five pillars of Plan Colombia. In other words, are the resources adequate to meet the stated objectives. The second level of analysis will consider whether or not the stated objectives of Plan Colombia do in fact provide an appropriate solution to the social, political, and economic conditions plaguing Colombia.

The purpose of this monograph is to provide the reader with a factual understanding of U.S. policy in Colombia. However, in order to provide the reader with a more balanced treatment and understanding of the subject, it will also incorporate the

author's personal observations made while serving in the United States Military Group, Bogotá, from September 1998 to July 2000. In addition, two Government Accounting Office (GOA) reports that are somewhat critical of Plan Colombia shall also be considered. The reports, titled "U.S. Assistance to Colombia Will Take Years to Produce Results" and "Challenges in Implementing Plan Colombia", were released in October 2000 following the passage of P.L. 106-246. In many ways, the GAO reports will serve as the monograph's Plan Colombia antithesis. It is hoped that sufficient information and analysis will be provided to enable the reader to draw a well-supported conclusion on the effectiveness of U.S. policy in Colombia.

As a matter of organization, this monograph will dedicate a chapter to each of the five objectives or pillars of Plan Colombia. Each of these chapters will draw heavily from the Foreign Operations Budget Proposal and House Bill 5529, while a separate chapter will be dedicated to consideration of the unique provisions and limitations established by Public Law 106-246. The Government Accounting Reports and my conclusions will form the basis of the final two chapters. This method of organization should be easy to follow and minimize redundancy contained in the key documents.

Background

Some describe the Republic of Colombia as a partially collapsed state whose complete disintegration is imminent unless its government or its United States ally acts decisively to restore order. Poverty, corruption, insurgent and paramilitary activities, and narcotics trafficking all form an integral part of the Colombian political landscape. Recognizing that the United States and Colombia view this landscape from decidedly different vantage points, it is not unreasonable to expect that any strategy in Colombia would contain potentially contentious, if not slightly contradictory elements. For this reason, some authors like Gabriel Marcella and Donald Schulz in writing for the Army's Strategic Studies Institute, have cautioned that U.S. policy is itself at a crossroads in Colombia. Yet in the end, it is the function of diplomacy to bring coherency to contradiction, to bridge the gap between divergent philosophies and limited resources.

In her March 15, 2000 Foreign Operations Congressional Presentation Document (CPD), Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright stated that the "fight against illegal drugs remains the principal U.S. interest in Colombia." Note that the Secretary of State defines drugs and not democracy as our principal interest in Colombia. This represents a departure from the traditional approach to U.S. diplomacy in the region. For much of the previous century, Central and South America were treated as a battleground in the ideological struggle between the U.S. and the former USSR. Events were generally viewed within an East-West context, and more often than not, American intervention was justified in terms of defending democracy. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and discrediting of communism has enabled the United States to define its national interests less ideologically in Latin America. The result has been the development of a more

precise and perhaps more self-serving agenda for the United States in Colombia. Our policy is not to liberate the freedom loving citizens of Colombia from the communist backed insurgency that threatens their democratically elected Government, but to eliminate the narcotics that threaten the citizens of the United States. The paradigm shift from democracy to drugs as *the* guiding principle in our Colombia policy is essential in understanding Plan Colombia and the limitations that have been imposed by Congress.

Chapter 1. The Push Into Southern Colombia

The Putumayo and Caqueta Departments lie on Colombia's southern border with Ecuador. Putumayo and Caqueta are the primary targets of Plan Colombia because of the intensive coca plant cultivation that takes place there. This is due to the acidic properties of the soil that make it ideal for growing coca. The introduction of high-yield coca plants, capable of generating three to four annual harvests, has been made possible by the unique growing conditions in Southern Colombia. Unfortunately, the soil is good for little else other than coca. Complicating the problem in Putumayo and Caqueta is the lack of infrastructure, primarily roads. Even if the substandard soil could support foodstuffs, producers have no cost effective way of getting their products to market. Though the Putumayo and Caqueta have an abundance of navigable rivers for local transportation, the principal mode of transportation connecting the region with the national government in Bogotá remains air travel. Given the region's limited legitimate economic potential, it is easy to understand why Putumayo and Caqueta were historically neglected by Bogotá. This neglect is manifested by a near total lack of government infrastructure and services, allowing the region's illicit economic potential to be fully exploited by narcotics traffickers. Given the explosive growth of coca cultivation and the absence of any meaningful governmental presence in the region, Putumayo and Caqueta became the focal point for Bogotá in the conceptual development of Plan Colombia.

To help the government of Colombia (GOC) confront its challenges in the South, the U.S. will provide \$390.5 million in financial aid and materiel to "Support the Push Into Southern Colombia". The instruments of this push are three counternarcotics (CN) battalions, sixteen Sikorsky UH-60 Blackhawk Helicopters, and thirty Bell UH-1H II, or

Super Huey Helicopters. Sustainment support will also be provided for eighteen Bell UH-1N Helicopters provided separately to the Colombian Army by the Department of State in 1999. The CN battalions and helicopter programs alone account for \$365.5 million appropriated to support the Push. The remaining \$25 million will be used to support alternative development in Southern Colombia and aid in the temporary resettlement and employment [of personnel].¹ The peasant cultivators are commonly referred to as *raspachines* or strippers, because of the manner that they remove the leaves from the coca plant. The \$25 million will assist the GOC in relocating the *raspachines* to areas outside the region or to transition them from illicit cultivation to legitimate economic activities. Part of the \$25 million will be used to provide cultivators with a modest stipend as an incentive to participate in the program.

Though it would be difficult to discern from its title, the bulk of the aid to support the Push Into Southern Colombia is destined for the Colombian Army (COLAR). Specifically, \$365.5 million will be used to train and equip two more COLAR CN battalions and in addition will provide sustainment to the existing CN battalion; support the UH-1N, UH-60, and Super Huey helicopter programs; and provide infrastructure, force protection enhancements, and logistical support for CN battalion operating bases. Additionally, \$9 million was appropriated for the recommended procurement of a Schweizer SA 2-37A (RG-8) model aircraft equipped with a Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) sensor to serve as an organic intelligence collection aircraft for the three CN battalions that will eventually become a CN brigade. To round out support for the Push, over \$1 million will be used to train COLAR and Colombian National Police (CNP) senior commanders in joint counternarcotics operations.² The COLAR-CNP senior

commander training program, though miniscule in comparison to other Plan Colombia programs, deserves some additional consideration because of the light it sheds on one of the idiosyncrasies in U.S. support to the Push.

Observations

In her 2000 Foreign Operations Budget Proposal, Secretary of State Madeline K. Albright justified U.S. support to the COLAR for the Push Into Southern Colombia almost exclusively in terms of its benefit to the CNP stating that:

The CNP lack the capability to carry out counternarcotics missions in the southern departments of Caqueta and Putumayo, which have become the center of coca cultivation, due to ideal growing conditions and the concentration of well-armed guerillas and paramilitary groups operating there. The COLAR CNBNs will be dedicated to supporting the CNP to enable them to eradicate illicit crops, destroy drug labs, and arrest those involved in drug trafficking. CNBN mobility is paramount to the success of this effort. Without airlift, the CNBNs will not be able to operate in the most active coca growing areas in preparation for CNP eradication and lab interdiction operations.³

If COLAR-CNP cooperation is the key to conducting effective counternarcotics operations in the Putumayo and Caqueta, why has only \$1 million been programmed to forge the link between the two organizations? One answer is that joint military and police training is embedded throughout Plan Colombia, to include in the training of the CN battalions. The author did observe considerable effort by the Narcotics Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy Bogotá to develop and staff joint counternarcotics doctrine to guide training. Perhaps it was because the U.S. needed the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 to forge its military into a truly joint force, that Congress realized that Colombian joint reform was simply beyond the scope of Plan Colombia. Whatever the true answer might be as to why so few resources appear to be

directed toward enhancing joint operating capability, Secretary Albright's statement is clear. The U.S. expects the COLAR to play a *supporting* role to the CNP in the implementation of Plan Colombia.

A second series of observations on the Push Into Southern Colombia relates to the concept for providing air mobility for the COLAR CN battalions. These observations relate to four points that those seeking to assess potential challenges with the Push in Plan Colombia should consider.

The first point is that the U.S. has created a considerable aviation management challenge for Colombia by requiring the COLAR to operate and maintain three different helicopter models. The Bell twin-engine UH-1N, the Bell modified single-engine Huey II, and the Sikorsky twin-engine UH-60 Blackhawk all have unique operational capabilities, pilot and maintenance crew training programs, and distinct logistical support requirements. Compounding the issue is that Colombian Army Aviation will undergo a four-fold increase in the total number aircraft they will operate by the time the last of the Plan Colombia aircraft are delivered in late 2002. Through the selection of a single airframe, the U.S. could have helped Colombia adjust to this exponential growth by enabling the COLAR to create economies of scale in their training and maintenance efforts. The decision to provide both Bell and Sikorsky products appears to have been a politically expedient compromise between the representatives of Texas-based Bell and Connecticut-based Sikorsky constituencies. This type of compromise is of course a hallmark of the American democratic process.

The second significant point on the helicopter component of Plan Colombia is that only the Blackhawk procurement will be managed by the U.S. Defense Security

Cooperation Agency (DSCA). DSCA management ensures that each Blackhawk will be procured within a “total package fielding” concept that incorporates a logistical spares and training package in the calculated delivery cost of each airframe. Because the UH-1N and Huey II are being eliminated from the active U.S. inventory and are considered non-standard aircraft, DSCA is unable to manage those programs. Program oversight for the eighteen UH-1Ns delivered to the COLAR in 1999 is currently being provided by the Department of State Air Division.

With the introduction of additional UH-1N, Huey II and DSCA managed aircraft, the U.S. will itself be challenged to ensure unity of effort within the Departments of State and Defense, as both departments exercise aviation program management oversight over the same COLAR aviation battalion. By virtue of its oversight role for the Bell programs, the Department of State will be put into a position where it will directly influence the conduct of military training and operations. This will be most evident in the synchronization of aviation and ground unit training. DOD’s traditional role of providing military to military interface is being challenged by the Department of State because DOD lacks the contracting expertise, experience, and manpower required to manage this massive aviation package. The expansion of the State Department’s oversight to include Colombian military service operations is necessary for program management purposes, but the encroachment on the DOD mission is clearly one of the unintended consequences of the Push Into Southern Colombia.

Perhaps the most significant challenge associated with the helicopter package is Colombia’s lack of trained aviation personnel. The COLAR will require significant short term contract pilot and maintenance augmentation to absorb and maintain the additional

aircraft. The COLAR Aviation Battalion initially operated nine Soviet MI-17 and seven UH-60L helicopters. With the pre-Plan Colombia delivery of the State Department's eighteen UH-1Ns, and Plan Colombia's fifteen additional UH-1Ns, thirty Huey II, and fourteen UH-60Ls⁴ helicopters, Colombia Army Aviation is programmed to grow from sixteen to sixty-five aircraft over the next two years. This 400 percent increase in aviation manning requirements will occur at a time when the COLAR will be attempting to man three 1000-man CN battalions and a brigade staff. Since all COLAR aviators are drawn from the combat arms branches, these competing priorities will greatly stress the COLAR's manpower management functions. Couple the minimum six-month training requirement for *basic* pilot or maintenance technician training with 400 percent growth a significant manpower shortage is evident. To address the COLAR manning shortfall, the Push will require extensive contract pilot and maintenance technician augmentation. The capability to manage a contract of this scope at this point resides only within the State Department's Air Division. If DOD wants equipment and training readiness for the COLAR's Aviation Battalion, it will have to cede some of its traditional responsibility for military to military coordination to the Department of State or get into the contracting business itself. In any case, clear identification of departmental responsibilities as they relate to CN and COLAR aviation battalion operations should be established to ensure effective unity of effort in supporting the Push Into Southern Colombia.

¹ House Bill 5528, 106th Congress, June 29, 2000.

² Isaacson, Adam. *Plan Colombia by the Numbers*, pp. 7-9.

³ Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations FY 20001. Released 15 March 2000.

⁴ House Bill 5528, 106th Congress, June 29, 2000.

Chapter 2. Narcotics Interdiction

Support for Interdiction Efforts is the second major initiative associated with Plan Colombia. In terms of funding priority, Interdiction's \$430 million ranks a close second to Support for the Push Into Southern Colombia's \$441 million as Plan Colombia's largest program. Yet unlike the Support for the Push Into Southern Colombia which is highly focused on the Army, Putumayo, and Caqueta, Interdiction distributes its resources across a wide array of supporting programs with a regional focus. These programs include aircraft and radar upgrades, infrastructure and intelligence enhancements, operations support, water and ground interdiction capability improvements, and support for regional interdiction programs in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. As varied as the elements of Interdiction are, all are designed to facilitate the identification, interception, and seizure of narcotics transporting aircraft, ocean-going vessels, and rivercraft.

Interestingly, a substantial portion of Interdiction funding is programmed to support the United States Department of Treasury. \$68 million will be used to upgrade four radar systems on United States Customs Agency P-3 aircraft. In addition to the radar upgrades, the Treasury Department will receive an additional \$2 million to fund Drug Kingpin legislation to monitor trafficker's financial accounts.¹ The P-3, originally designed to perform an anti-submarine warfare mission, has since been equipped with an early warning radar to detect low flying targets. With the assistance of on-board Host Nation riders, Customs can query Colombian civil aviation authorities and the COLAF Air Defense Command to determine if the target is legitimate or a suspected trafficker.

Once the determination has been made that the aircraft is suspect, the same network used to query the COLAF Air Defense Command is then used to launch A-37 intercept aircraft. To support the upgraded Customs P-3 aircraft, Interdiction funding will include \$124.5 million to enhance Forward Operating Locations (FOL) in Aruba, Curacao, and Manta, Ecuador.²

To complement the Customs P-3 upgrades, Plan Colombia will improve the COLAF's ground based radar detection and command and control (C2) capabilities. \$13 million will be used to establish a radar site in Tres Equinas and upgrade an existing radar site in Leticia. Colombia's ground based radar system will ultimately consist of six sites located in San Andres, Rio Hacha, San Jose del Gauviare, Marandua, Leticia, and Tres Esquinas. In addition to these six military radar sites, Aeronautica Civil operates an additional six sites to provide routine air traffic control services near the cities of Bogota, Cali, and Cartagena. A \$5 million radar C2 center to be established at Tres Esquinas to tie-in these sites, along with P-3 and other airborne tracking platforms, as part of an integrated detection and monitoring network. Logically, a radar network contributes little to the counternarcotics effort if authorities lack the aircraft to interdict the suspected narcotics trafficking targets.

To improve the aerial interdiction capability of the Colombian Air Force (COLAF), Plan Colombia will contribute \$15 million to extend the service life of eleven OV-10 Bronco aircraft. These eleven Broncos, along with fourteen A-37 Dragonfly aircraft, represent the COLAF's interdiction fleet. To provide for the timely launch of the Broncos and Dragonflies, \$8 million dollars has been allocated to extend the runway and enhance airfield services at Tres Esquinas. By collocating the interdiction aircraft with

the radar C2 center in the heart of Southern Colombia, Plan Colombia's architects hope to extend aerial interdiction operations to areas where they have traditionally been lacking. To further enhance aerial interdiction effectiveness, Support to Interdiction commits \$7 million for the enhancement of the Andean Ridge Intelligence network. This network will permit the hand-off of illicit flights between controllers in Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, and Colombia in order to coordinate interdiction efforts.

The Andean Ridge Intelligence network is just one aspect of the Plan Colombia's effort to regionalize the interdiction effort. In addition, Peru will receive \$27 million to operate and maintain its A-37 and helicopter fleets. Bolivia will receive \$25 million to support eradication in the Yungas and Chapare Departments, while Ecuador will receive \$12 million to support its air and ground based interdiction efforts along the Putumayo River that forms its border with Colombia. In all, Plan Colombia provides \$82 million to support non-Colombian interdiction programs. While \$82 million is not an insignificant amount, it by no means establishes a cordon sanitaire around Colombia to prevent the displacement of cultivation back into Ecuador or Peru in the event that prosecution in the Putumayo and Caqueta is successful.

Two more aerial interdiction programs should be mentioned before considering the ground and riverine components of Support to Interdiction. First is the \$7.4 million effort to equip one AC-47 Phantasma with a forward looking infrared radar (FLIR), bringing the total number of FLIR-equipped AC-47 aircraft in the COLAF inventory to five. The second program is the \$10 million initiative to integrate intelligence sensor suites into two Fairchild C-26 aircraft. Both programs are designed to enhance

Colombia's aerial interdiction capability, although in the case of the AC-47, priority will be on locating aircraft on clandestine airfields.

Observations

Of the \$430 million programmed to support interdiction, Plan Colombia dedicates a meager \$21 million to support ground and riverine based interdiction. Most of this support is for ammunition, operations, and sustainment funding of existing Colombian riverine units. Barring any major reorganization of operational areas of responsibility, only the 90th Riverine Battalion based at Puerto Leguizmo is positioned to participate directly in Plan Colombia's push into the Putumayo and Caqueta Departments. The remaining Colombian Marine Forces are committed to counterinsurgency and force protection mission throughout the rest of the country. The inadequacy of support for Colombian riverine operations will now be briefly described in order to highlight this critical vulnerability in Plan Colombia.

The 90th Riverine Battalion has 24 officers, 130 non-commissioned officers, and 874 marines. The battalion's 1028 personnel are responsible for controlling over 2,500 kms of waterway on the Putumayo, Caqueta, Ortegaza, and Caguan Rivers. This equates to approximately 2.5 kilometers of river per marine. The Battalion is supported by three shallow draft 126' "Nodrizas" logistics support vessels. At 90 tons, each Nodrizas is capable of providing berthing, mess, and medical services, for 55 marines for up to 15 days. An optimum deployment would allow a Riverine Combat Element (RCE) to patrol out to 325 kms and back in a 15 day period. Even if each of the three Nodrizas deployed every month, nearly 1500 kilometers of river would remain unpatrolled at any given time.³ Plan Colombia makes no provision for expanding riverine interdiction

capabilities. Rather it simply provides for sustainment of existing capabilities which are inadequate at best. Unless the COLAF's enhanced aerial interdiction, and the COLAR's enhanced ground interdiction capabilities are matched by a corresponding improvement in Colombian brown water programs, narcotics trafficking is certain to displace to the lines of least resistance—the rivers of Putumayo and Caqueta. This is clearly a critical vulnerability and shortfall in Plan Colombia's Support for Interdiction.

¹ Isaacson, Adam. *Plan Colombia by the Numbers*, pp. 9-11.

² The FOLs are the logical result of the Torrijos-Carter Panama Canal Treaty of 1977. Until Howard AFB Panama reverted to Panamanian control in 1999, it served as the primary operating base for U.S. detection and monitoring aircraft.

³ After Action Report, USMILGP Riverine Plans Officer Apr, 2000.

Chapter 3. Support the Colombian National Police

In the five-year period preceding Plan Colombia, the Colombian National Police (CNP) received the majority of U.S. counternarcotics assistance. This was due in large part to the perceived need by U.S. policy makers to separate counternarcotics operations from counterinsurgency operations. Fear that the United States would become entangled in the much clichéd “Another Vietnam”, policy makers sought to neutralize critics by limiting their support to the military. Allegations of the military’s involvement with human rights abuses and collaboration with paramilitary organizations undermined efforts to increase the military’s role in counternarcotics activities throughout the latter half of the 1990s. As a result, \$464 million of the \$765 million in counternarcotics assistance provided to Colombia between 1996 and 2000 was used to support CNP programs under the auspices of the Department of State, while Department of Defense managed programs came in at a distant \$282 million. The United States Agency for International Development received the remaining \$18 of the \$765 million.¹

Given historical U.S. support for the Colombian National Police, Plan Colombia represents a continuation or extension of a well-established policy. The \$115 million to support eradication operations forms the third pillar of Plan Colombia, Support to the Colombian National Police. As with Support to the Push Into Southern Colombia, the majority, \$66 million, of CNP support is destined for aviation programs. The ability to take the counternarcotics fight deep into the Putumayo and Caqueta requires the type of mobility that only a helicopter can provide. Yet as all involved in Plan Colombia are beginning to understand, aviation is not cheap.

The largest single Plan Colombia CNP support program was \$26 million for the acquisition and sustainment of two UH-60L Blackhawk helicopters. Originally, there were no plans to provide the CNP with additional aircraft, but effective lobbying on the part of CNP supporters in congress resulted in a compromise to provide the CNP two of the sixteen that were to be provided to the COLAR. One justification was to provide the CNP teams accompanying the COLAR CN battalions on counternarcotics operations with the same tactical mobility as their Army counterparts. This of course begs the question why the CNP could not fly with the CN battalions on Army aircraft? The author suspects that the answer can be found in the fact that it took congressional intervention in the form of Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 for the United States to truly embrace joint warfighting. We should be careful not to judge the Colombians too harshly while their counternarcotics doctrine matures. Another justification for providing the CNP with the high performance UH-60L was to enable them to conduct poppy eradication in the higher elevations in areas adjacent to the Putumayo. In either case, the CNP will add two more Blackhawks to their existing inventory of five UH-60Ls.

The second major CNP support program is the \$24 million Super Huey program. As previously discussed, the COLAR will receive thirty of Plan Colombia's forty-two Super Hueys. The \$24 million will be used to provide the CNP the capability to maintain and operate the remaining twelve Super Hueys in support of smaller scale eradication operations. To man these aircraft, the CNP will receive \$2 million to stand up a second airmobile unit, and an additional \$2 million to train additional pilots and mechanics.

The third CNP program is a \$20 million initiative to modernize its aerial eradication program. It calls for the purchase of nine Ayers S2R T-65 agricultural

fumigation and OV-10 spray-equipped aircraft. The T-65 is a commercial spray aircraft and the OV-10 a modified Bronco outfitted with ballistic protection and state of the art spray equipment. Currently, the Department of State Air Division provides Colombia seven OV-10s operated under the auspices of the Narcotics Affairs Section, U.S. Country Team Bogotá.

The remaining \$49 million of Plan Colombia's support to the CNP will be used to provide it with secure communications; weapons and ammunition; force protection and operating bases along the Putumayo border with Ecuador; and upgraded aviation maintenance facilities in Guaymaral and Larandia. Funding for secure CNP communications is noteworthy because a similar request for secure COLAR field communications was left unfunded. Why the United States would allow COLAR communications to be subject to monitoring is a matter of speculation, but does raise an interesting question in light of historical allegations regarding military-paramilitary collaboration.

Observations

Given the controversy over military human rights abuses and paramilitary ties, limitations on support to Colombian military modernization were appropriate. The decision to withhold U.S. support in order to leverage reform within the military was not however, without consequences. In the latter half of the 1990s, the link between narcotics traffickers and their "security elements" became so strong that the CNP could no longer risk conducting major law enforcement operations without military assistance. The good news was that Colombian Armed Forces embarked upon a concerted campaign

to sever ties with the paramilitaries and remove numerous personnel charged with human rights violations.

A second unintended consequence of the U.S. preference to aid Colombia through the CNP, was the deepening of professional jealousy and mistrust between the CNP and the military. During the time when the armed forces struggled militarily, and were the subject of constant U.S. and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) scrutiny, the CNP enjoyed steady funding and favorable international press. While the military became domestic and international whipping boys, the CNP, under the leadership of General Jose Serrano were touted as heroes in the war on drugs—not necessarily a bad thing in a country in desperate need of strong governmental institutions. Nonetheless for the military, the modernization associated with Plan Colombia is considered long overdue. For the Police, Plan Colombia brings a sharing, if not a shift, in the spotlight and funding priorities with the military.

¹ General Accounting Office. *US Assistance to Colombia Will Take Years to Produce Results*. Washington, DC: GPO, p.6 Table 1.

Chapter 4. Support for Alternative and Economic Development

If the Counternarcotics Battalions, ground based radars, and T-65 spray planes are the “sticks” in Plan Colombia, then this \$81 million program represents the sole “carrot” for inducing Southern Colombia’s *raspachines* to voluntarily participate in eradication efforts. Support for Alternative Development (AD) targets the estimated 100,000 persons currently involved in coca and poppy cultivation in the Putumayo and Caqueta with a variety of incentive programs to facilitate their transition in legitimate economic activities. These programs include a \$30 million initiative to compensate cultivators who voluntarily destroy their illicit crops. Another \$24.5 million will be provided to reintegrate *raspachines* and their families into the legitimate economy through relocation, “job training and grants to municipalities to establish basic education, health/reproductive units, and child-care facilities.”¹ For those who remain in Southern Colombia, it is hoped that \$22 million in assistance to local governments will establish the necessary infrastructures and community-level markets for the exchange of legal agricultural products in the region. The United State Agency for International Development (USAID) will provide oversight during the implementation of these programs. USAID will receive \$4 million to cover operating costs during Support to AD’s initial, two-year period. The final component of Support to AD is a \$2.5 million environmental conservation effort intended to improve the management of protected areas and establish a sustainable forestry program.²

Observations

Support for AD attempts to bring a holistic solution to Colombia’s narcotics-related problems. In this regard, AD related programs serve an important function. Plan

Colombia's AD program begins to answer the important question of "what next?" should support for the Push, Interdiction, and the CNP prove effective. The Government of Colombia recognizes all too well that the 100,000 *raspachines* of the Putumayo and Caqueta represent a considerably large and volatile political force. As such, their needs must be addressed equally, regardless of whether the *raspachine* was voluntarily or forcibly separated from illicit cultivation. For Plan Colombia to succeed, the Government of Colombia must allocate the appropriate resources to permanently reintegrate the *raspachine* into society. Otherwise, well meaning former-*raspachines* could be placed in a revolving door that quickly exhausts relocation and reintegration programs. Unless AD can overcome the forces that drive large portions of the population into illicit cultivation in the first place, it is unlikely to have anything more than a temporary impact. A temporary impact however, may be all the Government of Colombia requires.

If the Government of Colombia cannot justify the disruptive effects of eradication, especially during the early phase of Plan Colombia, it will lose the vitally important element of legitimacy for its actions. The Pastrana government cannot afford for its critics, to include the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), to turn eradication into yet another symbol of government oppression that seeks to deny the disenfranchised their meager existence. By combining voluntary and forced eradication programs in a phased approach, the Government of Colombia can dissipate the social and economic shock of eradication during the particularly critical early stages of Plan Colombia. Dissipation of the adverse social and economic effects of eradication will be especially important in gaining domestic acceptance for the action—at least until the

eradication programs can be accepted for what they are—efforts to curb illegal activity. Of course the critical question is whether such action will still be perceived as legitimate two years and \$81 million dollars later?

One gets the distinct impression that Government of Colombia recognizes the limits of Plan Colombia to address its long standing economic problems. For the cynic and student of *real politik*, support for AD needs only to continue long enough to politically fragment the *raspachines* and the FARC while forced eradication programs are brought fully on line. Once the danger of large scale political mobilization of the *raspachines* has passed, the effectiveness of the Push, Interdiction, and CNP activities should deter further involvement in illicit activity. How well Colombia manages the transition from voluntary to forced eradication will be a true test to the skill, dexterity, and perceived legitimacy of the Colombian Government. Unfortunately, a one-time shot of \$81 million does not provide much of a social or economic safety net for Government of Colombia considering the political tightrope it must walk.

¹ Isaacson, Adam. Center for International Policy Report. *Plan Colombia by the Numbers*. p.13

² Ibid., 13.

Chapter 5. Support for Human Rights and Judicial Reform

Before considering the fifth and final element of Plan Colombia, which has alternatively referred to as “Boost Governing Capacity” and “Support for Human Rights and Judicial Reform”, it is imperative to understand congressional sensitivity on human rights issues in Colombia. A review of Public Law 106-246 details specific U.S. concerns regarding the potential for abuse of Plan Colombia equipment by Colombia and its Armed Forces.

Section 3201 of Public Law 106-246 places the onus on the President and the Secretary of State to ensure the Government of Colombia takes all necessary steps to prevent human rights abuses in conjunction with its counternarcotics operations. Prior to the obligations of funds authorized under the heading, the Secretary of State must certify annually that-

(A)(i) the President of Colombia has directed in writing that Colombian Armed Forces personnel who are credibly alleged to have committed gross violations of human rights will be brought to justice in Colombia’s civilian courts, in accordance with the 1997 ruling of Colombia’s Constitutional court regarding civilian court jurisdiction in human rights cases; and

(ii) the Commander General of the Colombian Armed Forces is promptly suspending from duty any Colombian Armed Forces personnel who are credibly alleged to have committed gross violations of human rights or to have aided or abetted paramilitary groups; and

(iii) the Colombian Armed Forces and its Commander General are fully complying with (A)(i) and (ii); and

(B) the Colombian Armed Forces are cooperating fully with civilian authorities in investigating, prosecuting, and punishing in the civilian courts Colombian Armed Forces personnel who are credibly alleged to have committed gross violations of human rights;

(C) the Government of Colombia is vigorously prosecuting in the civilian courts the leaders and members of paramilitary groups and Colombian Armed Forces personnel who are aiding or abetting these groups;

(D) the Government of Colombia has agreed to and is implementing a strategy to eliminate Colombia’s total coca and opium poppy production by 2005 through a mix of alternative development programs; manual eradication;

aerial spraying of chemical herbicides; tested, environmentally safe mycoherbicides; and the destruction of illicit narcotics laboratories on Colombian territory; and

(E) the Colombian Armed Forces are developing and deploying in their field units a Judge Advocate General Corps to investigate Colombian Armed Forces personnel for misconduct.

As if there were any doubt regarding Congress's intent, House Appropriations Bill 5528 states that if any helicopter procured under that bill were "used to aid or abet the operations of an illegal self-defense group or security cooperative, then such helicopter shall be immediately returned to the United States."¹

In light of these concerns, let us consider the programs that constitute the \$122 million initiative to Support for Human Rights and Judicial Reform in Colombia. Compared to the other components of Plan Colombia, Support to Human Rights (HR) is highly prescriptive in that it identifies twenty-eight specific programs to be funded, with most of those funded at levels between \$1 and \$3 million. The four largest programs provide \$25 million for the Colombian Attorney General (Fiscalia) to establish HR crimes investigation units; \$15 million to establish an Asset forfeiture-money laundering task force; \$15 million to combat organized financial crime; and \$10 million to provide witness protection/security in HR-related cases.

The remaining \$57 million to Support Human Rights and Judicial Reform in Colombia is to be disbursed amongst a variety of programs which include: protection of human rights workers; strengthening human rights institutions; judicial policy and criminal code reform; prosecutor, judge, and public defender training; judicial police training; non-HR witness and judicial security; Armed Forces HR and legal reform; establishment of an Army Judge Advocate General

(JAG) School; training for Customs police, maritime enforcement and port security personnel; prison security programs; and enhanced banking and revenue enhancement supervision. Especially noteworthy is the \$3 million program to assist in Conflict management and the Peace Process; \$2.5 million to establish U.S. and United Nations Offices to monitor Human Rights; and finally a \$2.5 million effort to rehabilitate child soldiers.

Observations

Despite the non-negotiable tone of the human rights certification, Congress allowed assistance to be furnished without the written certification by the Secretary of State provided the President “determined and certified to the appropriate committees that to do so is in the national security interest.”² This waiver was in fact provided by President Clinton on August 23, 2000, when it was determined that State could only certify condition (A)(i), and that Colombia would need additional time before the administration could certify the remaining criteria.³ Although the waiver provision does not relieve the President or Secretary of State from stringent follow-on reporting requirements specified in Section 3202, it appears to distance Congress from the Colombia policy. Nonetheless, House Appropriations Bill 5528 and Public Law 106-246 provide Congress with the moral highground and a very real “string” to exercise control over the use of U.S. provided equipment in Colombia.

¹ House Appropriations Bill 5528, Chapter 2.

² Public Law 106-246, Section 3201.

³ Memorandum of Justification for Presidential Waiver of Human Rights Certification for Colombia, p. 1.

Chapter 6. Plan Colombia: The Government Accounting Office View

At the request of the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources of the Committee on Government Reform, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) conducted a review of U.S. counternarcotics efforts in Colombia. The GAO Report, not-so-subtly titled, “U.S. Assistance to Colombia Will Take Years to Produce Results”, was published in October, 2000. The review was designed to determine (1) how the drug threat had changed in recent years, (2) what problems, if any, had the United States historically had in providing counternarcotics assistance to Colombia, and (3) what challenges would the United States and Colombia likely face in the future in attempting to reduce illegal drug activities.¹

The GAO team conducted its comprehensive review of U.S. counternarcotics support to Colombia between March and September 2000. In Washington D.C., the GAO team interviewed officials and reviewed counternarcotics policy and implementation plans at the Department of State, Department of Defense, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. In Miami, Florida, the team interviewed United States Southern Command officials and reviewed pertinent documents relating to counternarcotics support programs. Finally, in Colombia, the GAO team interviewed U.S. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, and analyzed reports and other documents from various U.S. agencies responsible for implementing counternarcotics programs in Colombia. Furthermore, the team interviewed Colombian civilian, military and police officials to obtain *their* views on the effectiveness of U.S. aid. The team also

visited the Colombian Army Aviation battalion at Tolemaida, and the proposed Plan Colombia helicopter operating bases at Larandia and Tres Esquinas.²

Given the comprehensive nature of the GAO review and the wide access afforded to its team, the GAO was able to make a number of well-supported conclusions regarding the drug threat and the historical effectiveness of U.S. assistance. This GAO report, combined with its supplemental report, “Challenges in Implementing Plan Colombia”, also released in October, provides valuable insight for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of Plan Colombia. While no report should ever be taken completely at face value, the fact that the GAO obtained concurrence on their reports from the affected U.S. agencies, and incorporated rebuttals before printing the report, does lend an additional element of credibility and objectivity to the GAO findings.

What did the GAO conclude? Regarding the nature of the drug threat, GAO findings can be summarized as follows:

- Although \$765 million in U.S. counternarcotics aid was provided between fiscal years 1996-2000, during the same period, Colombia’s cocaine production doubled from 230 to more than 500 metric tons annually. In 1997, Colombia surpassed Bolivia and Peru to become the world’s largest coca leaf producer and it became a major supplier of heroine to the United States.
- The drug threat has become increasingly difficult to address because of the increasing number and types of organizations, including insurgent and paramilitary groups, that are now involved in illicit trafficking activities.
- More than forty percent of Colombia’s national territory is controlled by insurgent or paramilitary groups. Their control is equivalent to an area the size of Texas.
- DOD estimates that 20,000 insurgents serve in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN). Another 5,000 serve in the Colombian Self Defense Union (AUC) paramilitary group.
- Insurgent and paramilitary groups are involved in all aspects of drug trafficking and production, to include providing security for cocaine processing laboratories, establishing market prices, and both storing and transporting cocaine.

- Insurgent and paramilitary narcotics-derived income is estimated at anywhere from \$30 to \$600 million annually.³

The second set of GAO observations concern the effectiveness of U.S. counternarcotics assistance to Colombia. In short, GAO was especially critical of the U.S. tendency to focus on the delivery of the major end item while at the same time neglecting that item's operations and maintenance support requirements. Sustainment funding was deemed insufficient and efforts to drawdown from existing Department of Defense excess parts inventories were considered ineffective. GAO also noted that the State Department had been unsuccessful in transferring operational control for the OV-10 aerial eradication program to the Colombian National Police. Analysis of the Government Accounting Office observations provides some sobering insight on current U.S. counternarcotics initiatives in Colombia.

Between 1996 and 2000, the Department of State provided the CNP with more than thirty-two Bell UH-1, B212, and Huey II helicopters. As previously discussed, the Department of State delivered eighteen UH-1N helicopters to the COLAR in 1999 alone. GAO concluded that operations and maintenance funding support for these programs was inadequate and ineffective due to the following factors:

- Narcotic Affairs Section identifies a \$1.25 million FY 2000 requirement to replenish depleted CNP part stocks that goes unfilled for six months because of delays in submitting State's plan to Congress for using the funds.
- DOD provided only \$58 million of the \$148 million requested by the Embassy for drawdown of defense articles and services under section 506 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Of the \$3.1 million requested for FY 2000 alone, DOD was able to provide only \$378,000 worth of spares.

- 17 of 24 contractor pilots hired to fly the COLAR's 18 UH-1Ns were laid off in May 2000 because \$2.2 million in funding for salaries and operating costs was not made available until August 2000.
- Inadequate funding for the COLAR program resulted in the four month lay-off of pilots needed in order to support CN battalion operations. The lay-off cost the program an additional three months because of the necessity to hire new, or retrain former contract pilots.⁴

Another set of GAO findings relating to the effectiveness of current U.S. counternarcotics programs relate to the aerial eradication program. In a desire to reduce cost and its large U.S. personnel footprint, in 1998 the State Department began a three-year program to transfer primary responsibility for aerial eradication from U.S. contractors to the CNP. GAO observed the following:

- State estimated that direct eradication program costs to the U.S. government were \$6.6 million in FY 1996, but by 1999, the annual operating cost was estimated at \$36.8 million.
- Increased cost is due to the higher tempo of operations and increased manning requirements. The 111 contract pilots and mechanics currently employed earn more than 2.5 to 4 times what their CNP counterparts are paid. To illustrate, a U.S. contract helicopter pilot makes \$110,500 while a CNP pilot makes approximately \$29,000.
- The CNP has not demonstrated an ability to implement a flying hour program in order to balance its aviation operations requirements with their associated maintenance requirements.
- The CNP continues to treat advanced aviation training opportunities as a form of reward or privilege for its senior leaders. These officers are often not assigned to billets where they can apply the required skills. This ultimately limits the CNP's ability to assume greater overall responsibility for the program.⁵

The last area that the GAO looked at as part of its report on Colombia were the likely challenges to be encountered in implementing Plan Colombia. This group of findings captures many of the individual programs shortfalls, but also brings some of the larger

policy concerns into focus. The findings help explain why the GAO has concluded that U.S. counternarcotics assistance to Colombia will take years to produce results. GAO has concluded that:

- The government of Colombia has not generated the funding, detailed plans, or the management structure necessary to effectively achieve the Plan's stated goal of reducing drug production and trafficking by 50 percent over the next six years.
- The State Department, Defense Department, and other U.S. agencies do not have sufficient staff in place to support Plan Colombia.
- Although the United States approved more than \$1 billion to support Plan Colombia, additional funds will be needed to support the helicopter programs.
- At this point, the total cost and activities required to meet the plan's goals remain unknown, and will likely take years before drug activities are significantly reduced.⁶

Observations

These assessments are not particularly good news for U.S. policymakers who would prefer to see a firewall established between Colombia's counterinsurgency and counternarcotics programs. Yet things are not always as complicated as they may appear. As one former Assistant Secretary of Defense put it, "When an armed individual or a group of individuals deliberately position themselves to impede law enforcement activities, their political affiliation is irrelevant."⁷ Stated another way, when a group engages directly in narcotics trafficking activity, such as providing security for a lab or coca field, it no longer enjoys whatever legitimacy it may have had as a political or insurgent force. For all intents and purposes, they are criminals and the legitimate target of the counternarcotics operation. This perspective is perhaps the only way to put the nexus between insurgency, paramilitary activity, and narcotics trafficking in its proper context. The U.S. and Colombian governments can expect the insurgent groups to create

the perception that U.S. counternarcotics activities are designed to veil deepening U.S. involvement in counterinsurgency operations on behalf of a corrupt government.

The second set of GAO observations illustrate the problems associated with the U.S. propensity to deliver major end items without adequate logistical support. The United States does not contribute to the long term readiness or operational effectiveness of Colombian counternarcotics forces unless it provides integrated logistical and training support with each helicopter or airplane. Colombian defense and budgeting officials have repeatedly stated that with their tight defense budget, “they cannot afford to operate and sustain the new U.S. helicopters by themselves.”⁸ Yet U.S. officials seem content to offer workaround solutions like the 506 drawdown, perhaps not realizing that Cold War excess stocks have been all but depleted. In a system where parts requisitions are either “filled or killed”, it is not surprising that the 506 drawdown program has failed to meet expectations.

When speaking of expectations, should the U.S. be surprised by the reluctance of the CNP to assume responsibility for the aerial eradication mission? While the actual cost of performing the mission would be significantly less for the CNP to do the mission, the relative cost to the Police and Government are exceptionally high. To phase out the U.S. contractors would require upwards of 111 highly trained pilots and aviation mechanics that Colombia simply does not have, especially when considering the demand that Plan Colombia’s 58 new helicopters will create. Even if the CNP wanted to assume responsibility for aerial eradication, it would likely require additional U.S. augmentation in another program. The United State could however, do a better job in screening

personnel for training to increase the probability of reassignment into a suitable functional area.

Perhaps the most troubling observation by the GAO was that Colombia had raised only \$1 billion of the \$4 billion it had pledge to commit when it originally conceived the Plan. State and Colombian officials are doubtful about Colombia's ability to obtain new money without cutting existing government programs. This makes Plan Colombia largely a U.S.-Colombian affair. In the absence of dedicated follow-on operations and maintenance funding, Plan Colombia will eventually place the Government of Colombia in the classic guns or butter dilemma. U.S.-provided aviation support, and its voracious appetite for fuel, parts, and highly trained personnel, will exacerbate the dilemma unless the U.S. is prepared to follow through with sustained logistical support. As the aerial eradication program has shown, this commitment is likely to be long term.

¹ General Accounting Office. Report. *Drug Control: US Assistance to Colombia Will Take Years to Produce Results.*, p. 3.

² Ibid., p. 27.

³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

⁷ Author's recollection of comment made by Brian Sheridan, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operation and Low Intensity Conflict at U.S.-Colombia Bilateral Working Group Conference in October 1999.

⁸ GOA, *Drug Control: US Assistance to Colombia Will Take Years to Produce Results*, p. 20.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

The presence of coca and the subsequent settlement of *raspachines* in Southern Colombia has created a kind of *Catch-22* for the Government of Colombia. Once the *raspachines* were lured to Putumayo and Caqueta by the universal laws of supply and demand, and the promise of a better wage, they became the political tool of the narcotics traffickers and insurgency. Opposition groups could with some legitimacy claim that the government had abandoned the *raspachine*, or left them with little alternative, but to grow coca. To respond to its critics and garner international support for counternarcotics programs, the Government is now being pressured to divert its scarce resources into this region of limited economic potential. This diversion of limited resources from other geographic regions and social programs could very well exacerbate the conditions that drove the peasant cultivators into Southern Colombia in the first place—hence a *Catch-22*.

To complicate matters for the Government of Colombia, is its susceptibility to allegations of Human Rights violations. In the State Department's Human Rights Condition Report 2000, paramilitary groups were cited as having committed 153 massacres that claimed the lives 889 victims. Oddly, the report did not attribute a figure to the insurgents.¹ The report suggests an inherent bias by human rights watch groups and non-governmental organizations. Given this bias and the stern language of Public Law 106-246, a well choreographed human rights related "incident" could bring Plan Colombia to a screeching halt.

Even if Plan Colombia manages not to get derailed through a human rights violation, it will have difficulty in appreciably reducing the flow of drugs to the United

States. While U.S. aid will improve the GOC's ability to operate in Southern Colombia, improve its interdiction and Police capabilities, enhance alternative development and governing capacity, U.S. aid alone cannot shift the balance in favor of the Government of Colombia. GAO reported that despite \$780 million in U.S. aid to Colombia from 1996-2000, cocaine production doubled during the same period. A one-time surge in U.S. aid cannot offset the billions that illicit trafficking generates year in and year out in Colombia.

U.S. materiel and economic assistance will help, but the issue ultimately will come down to the commitment, will, and resources of the Government and people of Colombia. Helicopters are extremely expensive to operate and will require substantial O&M funding beyond 2002. The more important question is how the GOC will respond if its efforts in the South are successful? For nearly a decade the citizens of Bogotá have been blissfully isolated from the effects of war. If the narcotraffickers are hurt badly enough in the South what is to prevent them from testing the Government's resolve by bringing the war to Bogotá? The GOC is often criticized for its propensity toward concessions, for peace at any price—witness the creation of the FARC sanctuary in the heart of the coca cultivation zone. Will GOC leaders and society's elite be prepared to bear the social and political cost necessary to rid their country of the scourge, or when the going gets tough, will they negotiate for a return to the more or less comfortable, if not predicable, status quo?

Today, the U.S. views the insurgency as internal matter to Colombia, and defines our interests there as counternarcotics. The U.S. has a considerable stake in the effectiveness of international counternarcotics operations and \$1.6 billion dollars will

certainly help Colombia in the war on drugs. Colombia policy watchers must remember two points. First and foremost, eighty percent of Colombian cocaine and a third of its heroine are consumed *in the United States*. The United States is clearly a major contributor to Colombia's problems. Secondly, and most importantly, no amount of aid buys the United States ownership of the drug problem *in Colombia*. The United States will be well served to remember this when the first U.S. counternarcotics trainer gets killed in the line of duty in Colombia. The United States can assist, but only Colombia can adjudicate the political, social, and economic sacrifices that will be required to resolve its internal problems.

¹ General Accounting Office. Report. *Drug Control: US Assistance to Colombia Will Take Years to Produce Results*. P. 12.

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