

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

U.S. SUPPORT TO PLAN COLOMBIA: A HEADING CHECK

by

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ABSTRACT

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In the 2002 National Security Strategy, President George W. Bush envisioned a democratic Western Hemisphere which advances “security, prosperity, opportunity, and hope.” For some Latin American countries like Colombia, these ideals fall quite short of reality. Colombia is plagued by internal problems which restrict its ability to adequately govern its population and territory. For Colombians, reality is a poor economy with few available jobs, an inefficient judicial system, widespread corruption, and armed conflict with three insurgent groups operating within the national borders.

Colombia’s problems are not new. In 1999, Colombian President Andres Pastrana, developed a plan to address these challenges and to bring lasting peace and prosperity to Colombia. This strategy, known as Plan Colombia, was a five year proposal designed to fight the illegal drug trade which finances the insurgent groups, strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law, expand economic development, institute judicial reform, protect human rights, and reinvigorate the peace process. The total cost for Plan Colombia was \$7.5 billion with a significant share of that coming from the U.S in the form of military, economic and humanitarian assistance. U.S. assistance started in FY2000.

After three years and \$2.5 billion of U.S. assistance to Colombia, interim results are now available. Based on these results, it would be beneficial to reexamine the strategy from two perspectives. First, do the interim results indicate progress toward the desired objectives? Second, is the progress adequate to bring lasting peace and prosperity to Colombia and, if not, what else should be done?

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U.S. SUPPORT TO PLAN COLOMBIA: A HEADING CHECK

In his 2002 National Security Strategy, President George W. Bush envisioned a democratic Western Hemisphere which advances “security, prosperity, opportunity, and hope.”¹ For some Latin American countries like Colombia, these ideals fall quite short of reality. Colombia is plagued by internal problems which restrict its ability to adequately govern its population and territory. For Colombians, reality is a poor economy with few available jobs, an ineffective judicial system, widespread corruption, and armed conflict with three illegal groups operating within the national borders.²

These illegal armed groups constitute the most significant obstacle to Colombia’s peace and prosperity. Two of these are left-wing guerilla insurgent groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, more commonly known by their Spanish acronym FARC, and the National Liberation Army, or ELN. Of these two groups, the FARC is by far the largest, comprising over 20,000 combatants as compared to ELN’s less than 5,000 members. Although both these groups started out as left-wing revolutionary groups in the 1950s, they have lost their ideological support from the population and have become violent criminal organizations.³ Recently, the FARC and the ELN announced a military alliance in their war against the government.⁴ The third illegal armed group is a right-wing paramilitary organization called the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, or AUC. The 12,000 man AUC was formed in 1997 by the merger of several illegal self-defense groups which were formed by ranchers and farmers to protect themselves against the insurgent groups in rural areas where the Colombian government lacked a strong presence. All three of these armed groups fund their violent activities through illegal drug revenues. In addition, these groups are all on the State Department’s official list of terrorist organizations.⁵

In 1999, Colombian President Andres Pastrana introduced a five year plan, totaling \$7.5 billion, to address the challenges described above. This strategy has come to be known as “Plan *Colombia*.” The objectives of this plan were to combat the illegal narcotics industry, advance the peace process with the illegal armed groups, revive the national economy, and fortify the democratic and social institutions throughout Colombia. Each of these objectives is discussed in detail below:

- Combat the illegal narcotics industry – *Plan Colombia* intends to halve the production and distribution of illegal drugs within Colombia by 2005. This would be achieved primarily by destroying coca fields through aerial eradication. In addition, farmers currently growing coca would be offered financially viable and sustainable

alternatives to this illegal crop. These alternatives include edible beans, berries and fruits which can be sold at local markets. Also, the infrastructure elements used by traffickers to process and distribute illegal drugs would be identified and destroyed. These elements include coca laboratories as well as transportation, communication and distribution networks.

- Promote the Peace Process – This objective recognizes the need to resolve civil conflict as crucial to Colombia's ability to adequately govern the population. Therefore, *Plan Colombia* aims to support negotiations with each of the illegal armed groups operating within the country.
- Revive the National Economy – The plan recognizes the importance of jobs and economic opportunity as critical to building and maintaining a stable country. *Plan Colombia* proposes to create new employment opportunities, expand international trade, and raise foreign investment. In addition, *Plan Colombia* intends to provide social programs for the poorest elements in Colombian society.
- Strengthen Public Institutions and Protect Human Rights – Colombia suffers from a weak judicial system, widespread corruption, and a historically weak military. *Plan Colombia* aims to reform the judicial system, reduce corruption, and modernize Colombia's armed forces and national police. It also includes training local government officials and strengthening the government's ability to protect and defend the human rights of all its citizens. *Plan Colombia* will also fund the development of infrastructure, education and health care.⁶

As seen above, *Plan Colombia* emphasizes two main components. The first is financial aid to promote social and economic development. This includes significant funds for social assistance, economic development, judicial reform, humanitarian relief, and protection of human rights. The second component is an emphasis on enforcement and security. This includes strengthening the Colombian armed forces and national police to enable increased counternarcotics operations throughout the country.⁷

President Alvaro Uribe, elected in 2002, has continued his predecessor's tough stance on drug trafficking and has increased counternarcotics and counterterrorism operations around the country.⁸ In addition, President Uribe has boosted security spending and is an avid supporter of aerial eradication and alternative development programs. In fact, he has audaciously committed to the total and permanent elimination of Colombia's coca crop by the end of his term of office.⁹ Recently, President Uribe again demonstrated his commitment to the fight against the illegal armed groups when he sponsored a change to the Colombian constitution that granted broad

legal powers to the military and the national police.¹⁰ In accordance with this new antiterrorism law, the police and military have the right to conduct residential searches, tap phones, and make arrests without warrants. However, this new law stipulates that these searches are legal as long as a judge reviews them within 72 hours.¹¹ Although these powers, by themselves, will not win the war against the insurgents, they do provide a powerful tool to help in the fight. The bottom line is that President Uribe's tough stance on drug trafficking and the illegal armed groups has created a new political climate in both Colombia and the U.S.¹²

THE POLICY

Considering the fact that 90% of the cocaine in the U.S. either originates or passes through Colombia and that U.S. drug-related deaths total over 50,000 each year, solving the Colombian problem is very important to the United States. An excerpt from a State Department report submitted to Congress in February 2003 succinctly states the national interests in the Andean region:

“Beyond drug trafficking, terrorism, illegal arms smuggling, and other criminal activities, there are broad and important U.S. national interests in Colombia that include stability in the Andean region, trade, immigration, human rights, humanitarian assistance, and protection of the environment.”¹³

Based on these interests, the U.S. is clearly compelled to action. As a result, the current U.S. policy of support to Colombia has received strong bipartisan support since its inception. In 2000, President Clinton secured the first U.S. contributions to *Plan Colombia* with a \$1.3 billion package to combat illegal drugs and support democracy in the Andean region. The majority of this funding went to Colombia. Through 2003, the U.S. has provided \$2.5 billion in economic, military and humanitarian assistance. Specifically, this assistance has been in the areas of support for human rights, judicial reform, expansion of counter-narcotics operations, alternative economic development, increased drug interdiction, and assistance to the Colombian national police. Additionally, U.S. funding has been used to assist persons displaced because of the armed conflict.¹⁴

The United States is not acting unilaterally in assisting Colombia. The European Union (as well as individual European nations), Canada, Japan, and the United Nations have all pledged money to help resolve Colombia's problems. Also, non-governmental organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Andean Development

Corporation, and others are all providing assistance in support of social, humanitarian and infrastructure development in Colombia.¹⁵

The Bush Administration has continued the policy of strong support for Colombia. In fact, the following excerpt from a statement by Paul Simons, the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, to the Senate Drug Caucus in July 2003 summarizes the current U.S. position on *Plan Colombia*:

“U.S. policy toward Colombia supports the Colombian government’s efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions, promote respect for human rights and the rule of law, intensify counter-narcotics efforts, foster socio-economic development, address immediate humanitarian needs, and end the threats to democracy posed by narcotics trafficking and terrorism. Our support reinforces, but does not substitute for, the broader efforts of Colombian government and society.”¹⁶

In separate testimony to the House Committee on Government reform on 03 June 2003, Mr. Simons emphasized the importance of a balanced approach to U.S. support to Colombia:

“While U.S. policy now recognizes the flexibility introduced by the expanded authorities, counternarcotics, alternative development, and judicial reform, as well as humanitarian assistance and social and economic development, remain key components of our support to Colombian’s democracy and the Colombian government’s programs to exercise authority throughout its national territory.”¹⁷

Perhaps the most significant development in recent Colombian policy was contained in the 2002 Supplemental Appropriations Act which allowed for the use of U.S. resources in the fight against insurgency in Colombia. Prior to this law, U.S. equipment, training, intelligence support, and other assistance were only allowed to be used against drug traffickers and were specifically prohibited for use in potential counter-insurgency operations. Thus, the U.S. policy forced an unrealistic distinction between drug traffickers and armed rebels waging insurgency against the Colombian government. In reality, however, these groups are one and the same. Passage of this act allowed more flexible and efficient use of U.S.-provided resources in the war against illegal drugs and insurgency.¹⁸

RESULTS TO DATE

According to a July 2003 report released by the Colombian Embassy in Washington, DC, *Plan Colombia* is working. This report, titled “*Three Years of Successful U.S.-Colombia*

Cooperation in the Fight against Drug-trafficking and Terrorism," provides interim results that indicate Colombia's efforts to resolve the multiple problems are proving effective. Among the achievements identified in this statement, Colombia (with U.S. assistance) has reduced the number of hectares of coca cultivation to 102,071 (at the end of 2002), which is down from the 163,289 hectares in cultivation in 2000. This equates to a 37% reduction in the past year. In addition, 320 tons of cocaine have been intercepted by government authorities since 2000. Moreover, almost 23,000 farmers agreed to forego growing coca and 24,500 hectares of legal crops replaced coca acreage.¹⁹ These positive trends have continued in 2003. According to a memo from the American Embassy in Bogotá, in the first eight months of 2003, the aerial eradication program sprayed over 100,000 hectares of coca as well as over 2,200 hectares of opium poppy. These newest figures represent an increase of 27% in coca hectares sprayed and 22% in poppy hectares sprayed as compared to the same period in 2002.²⁰ Furthermore, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that by the end of 2003, only 50,000 hectares of coca will be under cultivation in Colombia. This represents a 50 percent reduction from 2002. UNODC attributes this significant reduction to the success of the aerial eradication program.²¹

According to the Colombian Embassy report, the government of Colombia is in the process of training and equipping 78,000 new police officers who will provide government presence where little or none existed previously.²² President Uribe's strategic goal is to use these new officers to establish state control over areas that are currently ungoverned thus reestablishing a security force presence in these areas. As of August 2002, 158 of Colombia's 1098 municipalities had no police presence and, therefore, these areas were under the control of one of the illegal armed groups. In April 2003, the Colombian national police initiated the first of a three phase effort to return to these uncontrolled areas. In phase I, national police teams were established in 77 of these 158 areas. Phase II was started on 18 August 2003 with the deployment of an additional 62 police units. Phase III will start in December 2003 with the deployment of police teams to the final 19 municipalities. Furthermore, these deployed police teams will be complemented by 62 mobile police units (known as *Carabiniro* Mobile Squadrons) intended to reinforce security in remote areas. As of September 2003, 25 of these *Carabiniro* squadrons were in existence with an additional three units coming on line every eight weeks. These *Carabiniro* squadrons are already achieving notable results. A senior FARC commander who recently defected credited the *Carabiniro* squadron operating in his area with shutting down his operations. Because of the police mobile unit, he could no longer obtain supplies for his unit from the local townspeople. In addition, the *Carabiniro* squadrons

and the new local police units serve an important purpose beyond establishing a local presence. These units directly contribute to the antidrug effort by setting up check points to search vehicles for narcotics as well as conducting manual eradication in areas undetectable by aerial reconnaissance.²³

President Uribe's plan for increased government presence is not limited to the national police. He also proposes increased spending on Colombia's military forces. Under this plan, expenditures on the armed forces will increase from 3.5% of GDP in 2002 to 4.1% in 2006. This will enable size of the military to grow by 126,000 troops.²⁴ This emphasis on strengthening the military forces is already showing results. According to the Colombian Defense Minister, the number of insurgents killed in combat by the Colombian security forces increased almost 30% in the first six months of 2003 as compared to the same period in 2002. Also, the number of insurgents captured increased almost 100% in that same period. The paramilitary groups are also experiencing the effects of President Uribe's commitment. In the same six month period of 2003, Colombian security forces killed 145 paramilitaries which represents a 70% increase from 2002. Paramilitaries captured increased by 100% over the same period.²⁵ Based on this and other data, U.S. experts conclude that the insurgents and the paramilitaries are becoming demoralized. This conclusion is supported by the fact that desertions from these illegal groups increased by 300% from 2001 to 2002. In fact, desertions are now increasing at an even greater rate as Colombian counterinsurgency efforts intensify. Currently, desertions are up 53% in the first six months of 2003 as compared to the same period in 2002.²⁶

The Colombian economy, critical to the success of *Plan Colombia*, is currently growing at a healthy pace. Thanks to the increases in security and the associated reductions in violence, the GDP grew by an impressive 3.8% in the first three months of 2003. This stronger economy should result in an increase in the number of jobs available for Colombian citizens. Just as important, however, is the 37% increase in tax revenues during that same period. These increases are the direct result of greater economic activity combined with tax, pension and labor reforms which were approved by the Colombian legislature in late 2002.²⁷ These increased tax revenues should help the Colombian government pay for the intensified anti-insurgent and anti-paramilitary operations.

With the intent of strengthening the judicial system, 31 legal service centers have been created over the last three years to provide access to justice and peaceful conflict resolution in low income areas. These centers have handled over 1.6 million cases since their inception. These centers help expand the state's presence to remote areas of Colombia and help restore public confidence in the judicial system.²⁸

Also, thanks to an emphasis on the protection of human rights, violent crime is down as a result of *Plan Colombia*. According to the Colombian Department of National Planning, terrorist attacks in the country declined 53% in the first six months of 2003 compared to the same period the previous year. Kidnappings and Homicides are down 34% and 45%, respectively in the same period.²⁹

VIEWS OF OTHERS

Not everyone shares the view of *Plan Colombia* as a good news story. Critics of U.S. support for this effort include the U.S. Office on Colombia (USOC), a non-governmental organizational in Washington DC. According to the USOC, aerial fumigation has not been as successful as it appears. The USOC criticism claims that almost half of the coca hectares eradicated in 2002 (44% according to U.S. government figures) were actually destroyed manually by farmers who were provided legal and financially viable alternatives. Since coca crops non-voluntarily fumigated are often immediately replanted (environmental conditions in Colombia allow for 4 crops per year in a given area), farmers who voluntarily destroy the crops are less likely to replant. In addition, the USOC claims that since cocaine availability remains steady after three years of fumigation, the U.S. and Colombia should divert the fumigation funds to drug demand reduction programs in the U.S.³⁰

Also, the USOC recommends a reduction in military assistance to the Colombian government due to continued human rights violations and collaboration by the armed forces with the paramilitaries. It recommends using the money instead for Colombian health care, education, and judicial reform programs. According to the USOC, this will help strengthen the government and reduce popular support for the insurgents.³¹

Amnesty International (AI) also opposes elements of *Plan Colombia*. Like USOC, AI objects to military aid to Colombia due to widespread governmental support for the paramilitaries and continued human rights violations. In fact, AI claims that the human rights portion of *Plan Colombia* is inadequate and misdirected as it fails to address the causes of the human rights problems as identified by the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. Specifically, AI objects to the continued collaboration between the armed forces of Colombia and the right-wing paramilitaries who are responsible for many of the human rights violations in the region. Finally, AI claims that *Plan Colombia's* assistance to displaced persons inadequately addresses the violence which is the root cause of displacement and only treats the resulting consequences. Thus, *Plan Colombia* is only reducing the visibility of the displaced persons problem as opposed to resolving it.³²

Stephen Johnson, a Senior Policy Analyst for Latin America at the Heritage Foundation, argues that the key to resolving Colombia's problems is to secure the uncontrolled areas of the country, strengthen public institutions and to establish the rule of law in previously ungoverned areas. In his opinion, money spent on crop substitution programs (\$312 million by end of 2003 as compared to \$143 million to strengthen institutions) would be better spent on strengthening the judicial systems and expanding public services into the neglected areas of rural Colombia. According to Mr. Johnson, additional financial emphasis on public institutions will enable Colombia to better bear its own burden in the future.³³

Finally, a recent "report card" issued by several non-governmental organizations and endorsed by two members of Congress was highly critical of *Plan Colombia*. This report criticized the inherent unbalance in the U.S. support for *Plan Colombia*. According to the authors of this report, *Plan Colombia's* over emphasis on financial assistance to the military and police, at the expense of social and humanitarian efforts, diminish the chances of achieving success. The report card claims that over 82% of the 1997-2004 contributions by the U.S. to Colombia were for military and police assistance. (Although the majority of U.S. financial assistance to Plan Colombia is for military and police support, the figure of 82% is overstated.) In addition, the report card also recommends that an increase in funds to reduce drug demand in the U.S. would be a more effective way of supporting security and democracy in Colombia.³⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

In spite of the criticisms mentioned above, for the most part U.S. support to *Plan Colombia* appears to be working at this time. Coca cultivation is down, drug interdiction is up, the economy is getting stronger, and violence is down. However, resumption of the peace process with the insurgents has not yet occurred. Without peace with the insurgent groups, the previous results are not sustainable. Therefore, U.S. policy makers should consider the following recommendations.

DECREASE U.S. DEMAND FOR DRUGS

It is clear that the only way to secure lasting peace and prosperity for Colombia is to eliminate the armed insurgent groups. Once these groups are out of the way, judicial reform and the strengthening of democracy can proceed unhindered. However, getting rid of these groups will not be easy. Peace talks have floundered due, in part, to the lack of motivation for the insurgent groups to compromise. In the absence of military pressure from the government, there is no motivation for them to compromise when they are satisfied with the status quo. Revenue from the sale and trafficking of illegal drugs allows them to continue their violent

behavior. Therefore, the first step to bringing them back to the peace table is to cut their income from drug money. Only after this income has been eliminated can efforts to break their will to fight become effective. Aerial fumigation and alternative development programs attempt to do this at the source and have been partially successful. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is compromised by the strong demand for illegal drugs in the U.S. While only 5% of the world's inhabitants are citizens of the U.S, these same citizens consume over 50% of the world's illegal drugs.³⁵ Therefore, attacking the problem at the source is necessary but not sufficient to solve the problem. The U.S. must also strengthen efforts to decrease the domestic demand for drugs. According to the 2003 National Drug Control Strategy, only 17% of those in need of drug treatment actually received it.³⁶ Increasing the availability of drug treatment programs in this country will directly result in a drop in the domestic demand for drugs and will cut off the drug traffickers from their primary source of income. Once their income has evaporated, the insurgents may be more willing to negotiate.

That is not to say that the illegal drug demand reduction program in this country is totally ineffective. Currently, the U.S. spends \$11.5 billion on the war on drugs. Ninety one percent of that total is spent within the United States on treatment and prevention as well as on supply reduction and market disruption. As a result of this significant expenditure, the number of persons using cocaine in the United States has declined from a peak of 13 million in 1988 to about 4 million in 2002.³⁷ So while the number of users is still unacceptably high, it is much lower than previously. In fact this reduction in demand can help explain why the price on cocaine on the streets has remained relatively unchanged for the past several years. Critics of *Plan Colombia* argue that this stable price indicates that the supply side reduction efforts are ineffective. That is, they argue that if the supply were significantly reduced then the price would go up based on economics. However, if the supply was significantly reduced concurrent with a reduced demand then it is not inconceivable that the price would remain the same. Of course, both these scenarios assume constant product quality and dilution which may not be true. If the product quality and dilution were not constant but rather reduced (which when considering production and distribution problems would be more likely), that would also help explain why the price and availability of cocaine has remained constant.

CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN THE POLICE AND ARMED FORCES.

Even with their drug income severely curtailed, the armed insurgent groups won't just fade into the jungle. They still have resources at their disposal that will allow them to continue to exist. Therefore, the government of Colombia, with financial assistance from the U.S., must

continue to grow and strengthen the Colombian military forces to allow them to take the fight to the insurgent groups. As Dr. Gabriel Marcella of the U.S. Army War College states below, the insurgent groups will not come to the peace table until they encounter a military force that seriously threatens their existence:

“The principal lesson learned in successful modern counterinsurgencies, such as in the Philippines, Malaya, El Salvador, and Oman, is that the battlefield must be linked to the peace process. A real peace process ending in conflict termination is only possible when the armed forces of the government establish enough asymmetry on the battlefield to convince the insurgents that further war is counterproductive to their physical and political survival.”³⁸

Taking the fight to the enemy is exactly what the Colombian government is now doing. In Operation New Year, a campaign kicked off on 4 January 2003, Colombian military forces have occupied many towns and highways that had been dominated by the FARC for the past decade.³⁹ Continued successes like these place increased pressure on the insurgents and will ultimately force them to the peace table. Therefore, U.S. assistance, consisting of training, equipment and intelligence, must continue if the armed insurgents are to be permanently defeated.

This strategy of strengthening the military and police to bring the insurgents to the table is already bearing fruit. On 15 July 2003, representatives of the Colombian government and AUC spokesmen agreed to begin formal peace negotiations. These spokesmen represent nine of the 14 AUC fronts and speak for over 10,000 paramilitary members. Elements of the accord include an agreement that these nine fronts will begin to demobilize and assemble in government-designated areas at the end of 2003 with complete demobilization to occur before the end of 2005. In return, government forces will provide permanent security for the ex-paramilitaries in these areas. Additionally, the AUC will support continued government efforts to fight drug trafficking and will continue to observe the current cease-fire.⁴⁰ Based on this agreement and on an amnesty bill proposed by President Uribe in August 2003, members of the right-wing paramilitaries have begun to surrender and disarm. Although this offer is open to all of the illegal armed groups, only the paramilitaries have accepted it thus far. In fact, over 850 paramilitary members surrendered their weapons to government forces in late November 2003.⁴¹

President Uribe proposed the amnesty bill to encourage Colombia's illegal combatants to turn in their weapons. While President Uribe's offer has been criticized by many human rights groups, the tactic of granting amnesty to the opposition in return for disarmament and surrender has been used successfully in the past to bring peace to trouble regions, most notably in El

Salvador. Instead of complaining that the amnesty deal allows the worst human rights violators off the hook, President Uribe's critics should accept the fact that ending the chaos and bloodshed that has plagued Colombia for many decades is worthy of significant compromise on both sides.⁴² In addition, the disarmament and surrender of the right wing paramilitaries should open the door to new negotiations with the left-wing insurgents since the most significant obstruction to the continuation of the peace process has been the existence of the paramilitary groups.⁴³

Another indicator of the benefits resulting from strengthening the Colombian police and military forces was the capture of a top ranking FARC leader, Ricardo Palmera, early in 2004. Palmera's capture was only the most recent in a string of successes. According to the Colombian Defense Ministry, after conducting more than 2,300 encounters with the insurgents and the paramilitaries in 2003, government troops killed nearly 3,000, captured 10,000 (including a dozen brigadier general-level commanders), and seized cocaine valued at over \$2 billion.⁴⁴ These accomplishments highlight the Colombian government's efforts to improve security in the whole country. Ultimately, all other *Plan Colombia* goals become achievable once security is firmly established

RESTRICT THE MOVEMENT OF THE DRUG PROBLEM TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES.

While aerial eradication and alternative development have been at least partially successful in reducing the number of coca and poppy hectares in cultivation in Colombia, policy makers must be aware of the potential for growers of these illegal crops to move into Colombia's neighboring countries. This "balloon effect" or the movement of coca production from a stressed region, such as Colombia, to an unstressed area, like Peru, is not new. In fact, the current trend from Colombia to Peru is the exact opposite of that which occurred a decade ago. What is troubling to U.S. officials, however, is the violence and corruption that seems to be moving with the drug production. In early 2003, violent protests and strikes in traditional coca growing areas in both Peru and Bolivia provided strong evidence that Colombia's problems are moving across the border.⁴⁵

Fortunately, the creation of an antidrug center in Peru indicates that the U.S. recognizes that antidrug efforts must focus on the whole Andean region and not just on Colombia.⁴⁶ This antidrug center in Peru is only part of the overall effort called the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI). The goal of the ACI is to ensure that the successful eradication of drugs in Colombia do not reverse the gains previously achieved in Bolivia or Peru. In addition, it also attempts to prevent the spread of illegal drug cultivation into Brazil, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela. In

summary, the ACI is an attempt to ensure that supply side efforts aimed at reducing the flow of drugs into the U.S. and other nations will continue to be effective even after the Colombian problem is resolved.⁴⁷

RESTRICT U.S. FORCES FROM COMBAT ROLES.

In addition, U.S. policy makers must ensure that our support reinforces, but does not replace, the broader efforts of the Colombian government. They must resist the temptation to use U.S. military forces to directly combat the insurgents. The strengthening of Colombia's democratic institutions cannot be effectively achieved by anyone other than Colombia itself. If Colombia is to continue functioning as a democratic state, it must be capable of solving its own problems with minimal military assistance from outside sources. Colombia can do this by strengthening and enlarging its own military forces. While the U.S. can help by providing equipment and training, Colombia must do all the fighting on its own.⁴⁸ To be an effective government, Colombia must be able to convince its citizens that it is capable of handling its own problems. Defeating the insurgents without the direct use of U.S. troops, when combined with a reduction in violent crime, the elimination of corruption in the government, and a strengthening of the judicial system, will significantly raise the public's faith in the government. The resulting legitimacy will go a long way toward ensuring the future of Colombia as a truly democratic nation. Recalling the important role that the Clauswitzian Trinity—the government, the armed forces, and the people—plays in any conflict, internal or external, reinforces the notion that fostering public legitimacy is critical to Colombia's future.

DEVELOP *PLAN COLOMBIA* PHASE II NOW.

Finally, U.S. assistance to Colombia must continue beyond the original five year horizon envisioned by *Plan Colombia*. Although significant progress can be made over that period, defeating the insurgents and establishing control over all Colombian territory is a very long term endeavor. One of the obstacles blocking any talk of further assistance beyond *Plan Colombia* has been the reluctance of the government of Colombia to sign an "Article 98" agreement which would exempt American citizens in Colombia from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court as required by the American Service Members Protection Act.⁴⁹ In fact, President Bush froze future military aid to Colombia in July 2003 until the agreement was signed. However, after much debate, this agreement was signed on 17 September 2003 and FY04 military assistance is back on track.⁵⁰ With the removal of this barrier, it is time for the U.S. to officially admit that the continuation of assistance beyond the planned conclusion of *Plan Colombia* is

likely and to provide Colombia the commitment it needs to bring lasting security and prosperity to its citizens.

Word Count = 5167

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- ³ Embassy of Colombia, *Understanding Colombia: Why Americans Should Care About This Country in South America* (Washington, D.C.:2001), 3
- ⁴ Rachel Van Dongen, "Colombia's Leftist Rebels Unite; The Country's Two Main Groups Announced a Military Alliance Against the Government on Monday," *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 August 2003:6 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 23 September 2003
- ⁵ U.S. Office on Colombia, *Understanding Colombia Series: The Illegal Armed Groups* (Washington, D.C.: 2003) 1
- ⁶ Embassy of Colombia, *Three Years of Successful U.S.-Colombia Cooperation in the Fight Against Drug-Trafficking and Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: 2003), 1-2
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ U.S. Department of State. "Disrupting the Market: Strategy, Implementation, and Results in Narcotics Source Countries. Congressional Testimony: Statement of Paul E. Simon, Acting Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs before the House Committee on Government Reform," 09 July 2003. Available from <http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/rm/2231pf.htm>. Internet. Accessed 09 Sept 03.
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- ¹² U.S. Department of State. "U.S. Narcotics Control Initiatives in Colombia.. Congressional Testimony: Statement of Paul E. Simon, Acting Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs before the Senate Drug Caucus," 03 June 2003. Available from <http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/rm/21203.htm>. Internet. Accessed 27 Aug 03.
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- ¹⁶ U.S. Department of State. "U.S. Narcotics Control Initiatives in Colombia..."
- ¹⁷ U.S. Department of State. "Disrupting the Market ..."
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- ²⁰ American Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia, "Aerial Eradication Status Report," telegram for Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 08 September 2003
- ²¹ American Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia, "United Nations Says Coca Down 32 Percent in Colombia," telegram for Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 18 September 2003
- ²² Embassy of Colombia, *Three years...*, 6.
- ²³ American Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia, "Colombia Establishing Police Presence in Conflictive Areas: Phase II," telegram for Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 12 September 2003
- ²⁴ Embassy of Colombia, *Three years...*, 6.
- ²⁵ American Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia, "Uribe's Democratic Security Plan: Its Nationwide Impact," Telegram for Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 05 August 2003
- ²⁶ American Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia, "Scenesetter for Visit of USTR Zoellick to Colombia," Telegram for Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 04 August 2003
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- ²⁸ U.S. Department of State. "Disrupting the Market..."
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- ³⁰ Jeffrey, 1
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⁴³ "Disbanding by Rightists May Spur Pact with Left," *Miami Herald*, 01 December 2003, (115 words). [database on-line]; available from Lexis-Nexis; accessed 02 Dec 2003.

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