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**ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED STATES POLICY
FOR SUPPORT OF PLAN COLOMBIA**

BY

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ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED STATES POLICY FOR SUPPORT OF PLAN COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

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Drug abuse is a major threat to American security, claiming thousands of lives each year. One of the most threatening drugs to law and order in the United States is cocaine, 90% of which comes from Colombia. Drug trafficking in Colombia has become a major source of income, contributing to the destabilization of the economy and also funding a nearly forty year insurgency. Colombia developed Plan Colombia, a \$7.5 billion plan, to attack drug trafficking; reform the economic, social and judicial systems; and bring about peace with the insurgents. In July 2000, the United States committed \$1.3 billion in a two-year aid package in support of Plan Colombia, signifying changes in U.S. policy. This research paper will analyze the intensity of U.S. interests in Colombia and review the components of the strategy (ends, ways and means) to achieve the U.S. objectives. Additionally, this research paper will assess the U.S. policy in the first six months of execution and make recommendations for changes to that policy in the future.

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ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED STATES POLICY FOR SUPPORT OF PLAN COLOMBIA

In January 2000, President Bill Clinton proposed a new two-year funding package to assist Colombia in counter-drug efforts in an attempt to reduce the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.¹ The House of Representatives quickly endorsed the proposal, and in July, after months of debate, the Senate approved the \$1.3 billion package. On July 13, 2000 the President signed the package (H.R. 4425) into law, officially providing U.S. support to Plan Colombia, the Colombian strategy to attack drug trafficking and reform its social, economic and judicial systems.² This strategy research project will examine Plan Colombia and provide an analysis of the United States policy in the first six months of implementation. Additionally, this project will provide recommendations for improvement to U.S. policy in the future.

UNITED STATES PROBLEM

Drug abuse is a major threat to American security, annually costing the United States an estimated 52,000 lives and \$110 billion in expenses and lost revenue.³ A majority of U.S. law-enforcement agencies report serious problems with cocaine, crack and related criminal activity, and identify cocaine as the greatest drug threat. In 1998, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) estimated that, of the 13.6 million Americans who used illegal drugs, about 1.8 million used cocaine.⁴ Coca is the raw product used in cocaine production, with most of this growing in the Andean Region of South America. Estimates now are that ninety percent of the cocaine supplied to the United States comes from or through Colombia.⁵

UNITED STATES INTERESTS IN COLOMBIA

Enhancing American security, bolstering economic prosperity, and promoting democracy and human rights abroad are the three core objectives of the U. S. National Security Strategy.⁶ In order to achieve these objectives, the National Security Strategy further identifies threats and regional interests to the United States. With regard to the Western Hemisphere, the strategy provides the following assessment: "Our hemisphere enters the twenty-first century with an unprecedented opportunity to secure a future of stability and prosperity – building on the fact that every nation in the hemisphere except Cuba is democratic and committed to free market economies."⁷ The National Security Strategy continues to reinforce the need for regional political, economic and security cooperation in promoting peace and prosperity throughout the hemisphere. The reaffirmation of the commitment in the Americas to fight the threats of drug trafficking and corruption brings the nations of the hemisphere closer to achieving these objectives.⁸ Through security cooperation within the hemisphere, Peru and Bolivia successfully

fought the drug trafficking problem. Now attentions turn toward Colombia. As stated in the Inter-American Dialogue 2000 report, "For some time to come, no country in Latin America outside of Mexico will command greater U.S. policy attention than Colombia."⁹

Interests determine policy; and any attempt to formulate or analyze policy should occur only after a clear understanding of U.S. interests. The Department of State's FY2000 Congressional Presentation for Foreign Operations identified the fight against drugs as the principal national interest in Colombia.¹⁰ The U.S. National Drug Control Strategy states that "the first duty of government is to provide security for citizens," and the Constitution requires the federal government to protect against "all threats, foreign and domestic."¹¹ In his proposal of the aid package providing support for Plan Colombia, the President of the United States said, "We have a compelling national interest in reducing the flow of cocaine and heroin to our shores, and in promoting peace, democracy and economic growth in Colombia and the region."¹² After explaining the package, he concluded with, "strengthening stability and democracy in Colombia, and fighting the drug trade there, is in our fundamental national interest."¹³

The U.S. National Security Strategy specifies the U.S. interests and all of the sources quoted above identify specific objectives for Colombia that relate to those interests. The U.S. has two interests in Colombia: fighting drug trafficking and strengthening democracy. These two are inextricably intertwined. Drug trafficking from the source through middlemen to the end user can result in corruption, bribery, and money laundering. The countries through which these drugs pass, as well as Colombia, are susceptible to these hazards; all of which can serve to destabilize struggling democratic governments with weak economies. The U.S. Department of State identifies Colombia's drug trafficking organizations as a "pernicious source of instability" and a "serious threat to the rule of law and free market democratic institutions in Colombia."¹⁴ The interest most at stake in Colombia is that of the stability of regions in which the U.S. has a sizable economic stake. The objective to strengthen democracy addresses a concern over the impact of "the erosion of free market democratic institutions" in Colombia.¹⁵ Thus, the second interest is to support democratization. Further examination of the intensity of the interests will assist in understanding U.S. support for an aid package to Colombia.

The descriptors used by policymakers (principal, compelling, and fundamental) do not match the levels of intensity used in the National Security Strategy. Therefore, it's important to analyze each interest and associate it with intensity in order to determine the correct policy and allocation of resources. The United States Army War College provides a model for determining the intensity of interests, defining three categories: vital, important, and peripheral.¹⁶ These categories correspond to those in the National Security Strategy: vital, important, and

humanitarian.¹⁷ Neither the U.S. interest of regional stability nor support for democratization impacts the survival of the nation; so do not qualify as vital interests as outlined in the National Security Strategy. While the U.S. seeks the means to reduce the flow of drugs into the country, Colombia is not the source for all illegal drugs – only two – 90% of the cocaine and 40 - 60% of the heroin supplied to the United States. These two drugs make up about fourteen percent of the total drug use in America.¹⁸ Attacking the problem of drug trafficking in Colombia does not solve the bigger U.S. problem of demand. It may only make some drugs harder to get, although that has not yet been proven. In fact, despite reductions in the supply of cocaine available from the Andean Region since 1995, the Office of National Drug Control Policy indicates that U.S. demand for cocaine has not decreased.¹⁹ However, drug trafficking does contribute to crime, corruption and money laundering, all of which affect the stability of a region where the U.S. has a sizable economic stake. Any interest that affects the character of the world in which American citizens live is an important interest. Surprisingly, the National Security Strategy categorizes the spread of democracy and respect for the rule of law as only a humanitarian (or peripheral) interest.²⁰ Colombia's struggling democracy falls into this category. Colombia does not impose a direct threat on the United States even if democracy fails, but it will contribute to instability in the region. Economic stability is important, especially since Colombia is the eighth largest provider of oil to the U.S. and with neighboring Venezuela and Ecuador total 20% of U.S. oil imports. Additionally, Colombia is key for other agricultural imports, including coffee, fruit, fresh cut flowers, and leather goods.²¹

Any policy toward Colombia should be formulated on the basis of both an important and a peripheral interest.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A brief review of Colombia's recent history will help in understanding the problems facing Colombia today, and why U.S. support for Plan Colombia is so important to the current Colombian administration. For several decades the Liberal and Conservative Parties dominated Colombian politics. In 1958, these two parties agreed to a sixteen-year equal share of power, alternating the presidency every four years. This agreement excluded all other parties, and resulted in the emergence of armed insurgent or guerrilla groups. In the mid-1960's, two guerrilla groups rose to the forefront: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a largely communist organization; and the National Liberation Army (ELN), a group of guerrillas desiring a government based on the communist Cuban model. The two insurgent organizations had different goals, yet both sought control of the government. To combat the guerilla activities,

the Colombian government formed paramilitary groups in the 1980s, with one in particular emerging as the leader, the United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia (AUC). However, this paramilitary group began violating the law, attacking the civilian population and anyone thought to be a guerrilla sympathizer. In 1989, the government declared the AUC illegal.²²

Today the FARC is 15,000 members strong and seeks to gain political power in Colombia. This group supports democracy, agrarian reform, and state control of the economy, and uses bombing and killings to achieve its goals. They take over municipalities and kill those who get in their way. The FARC receives approximately sixty percent of its income from the drug trade by providing security for drug traffickers. This organization is well equipped and trained to fight the Colombian military. As a result, in 1998 the Colombian government agreed to the FARC's demand for a "neutral zone" in exchange for peace talks. This "neutral zone" has become the center of FARC operations, where they perpetuate the drug trade, partially through sponsoring coca plantations of their own. Although President Pastrana personally met several times with the FARC leaders since May of 1999, peace talks continually broke down or were postponed.²³ However, in February 2001, President Pastrana spent two days negotiating points for a peace agreement with the FARC, with further talks to follow.²⁴

The ELN consists of approximately 5,000 members and desires a socialist government. This group's income is generally based upon kidnapping for ransom money, but also receives some revenue from the drug trade. Opposed to privatization and foreign investment, the ELN resorts to bombing industrial centers to show their displeasure with the expansion of foreign investors. In 1999, the ELN increased their kidnappings and hijackings to an all-time high. However, in the spring of 2000, the ELN began peace negotiations with the government and released hostages as a show of cooperation. The Colombian government is currently considering the ELN demand for a demilitarized area in northeastern Colombia in exchange for separate peace talks.²⁵ This option does not have popular support however, since there's been no substantive progress with the FARC in the south.

The AUC is a right-wing paramilitary group that currently has between six and eight thousand members. Although declared illegal by the government many years ago, this group still receives support from some corrupt government officials and military members. It receives most of its financial support from drug barons, right-wing landowners and businessmen, and continues to increase its involvement in drug trafficking. The AUC wants political recognition and desires to participate in peace talks.²⁶

Colombia's economy is struggling, while the drug trade flourishes and finances the insurgency in Colombia. Yet as recently as 1995, Colombia was not the leader in cocaine

production. With U.S. support, Peru and Bolivia successfully fought their drug cultivation problems in the late-1990s, and Colombia became the predominant cocaine producer in the Andean region.²⁷ The tables below show the transfer of cocaine production within the region, both in tons of cocaine and hectares of land.

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Peru	460	435	325	240	175
Bolivia	240	215	200	150	70
Colombia	230	300	350	435	520
Totals	930	950	875	825	765

TABLE 1. ANDEAN POTENTIAL COCAINE PRODUCTION (METRIC TONS)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Peru	115,300	94,400	68,800	51,000	38,700
Bolivia	48,600	48,100	45,800	38,000	21,800
Colombia	50,900	67,200	79,500	101,800	122,500
Totals	214,800	209,700	194,100	190,800	183,000

TABLE 2. ANDEAN COCA CULTIVATION (HECTARES)

Currently, Colombia produces approximately 90% of the world's cocaine supply and 40 – 60% of the heroin supply.²⁸

The drug trade helps support both the insurgents and paramilitaries, and the cost of the drug war continues to increase. Since 1985, two hundred bombing incidents (of which one hundred were equivalent to the size of the bomb used in Oklahoma City) occurred in Colombia's cities, and right-wing paramilitaries eliminated an entire democratic leftist political party. Additionally, four presidential candidates, 200 judges and investigators, half the Supreme Court's justices, 1200 police officers, 151 journalists and 300,000 citizens were murdered during this fifteen year period.²⁹ With strong U.S. support, Colombia successfully eliminated drug cartels several years ago, capturing and prosecuting the drug kingpins. However, the drug trade in the 1970's and 1980's created a social class that profited through the growth of coca plants and the production of cocaine. In the fourteen-year period between 1985 and 1999, Colombia's unemployment rate increased from 9% to 20% where it remains today.³⁰ As a result, more and more farmers resorted to coca production and now rely on it for their economic wellbeing. This recession period also drained the government's resources to stabilize the economy, leaving little to attack the drug trade problem.

In 1998, Andres Pastrana was inaugurated as president of Colombia. His administration immediately focused on changing Colombia's image both regionally and globally. They

concentrated resources in four areas: restoring damaged relations with the United States, promoting regional integration and security, expanding economic growth, and strengthening counter-narcotics cooperation.³¹ In order to achieve this last end, in 1998 Colombia formed a counter-drug task force, combining elements of the military and the National Police for a concerted attack against the drug trade.³² Additionally, President Pastrana, working closely with the United States government, developed Plan Colombia; a comprehensive three-year strategy designed to address the problems affecting the national security of Colombia.³³ The \$7.5 billion plan aimed specifically at drug trafficking, human rights abuses, judicial reform, social development, the economy, and the peace process. When proposed in 1999, Colombia planned to provide about \$4 billion of the total requirement through revenues and government loans, and asked for international assistance for the remainder of the funds.³⁴

UNITED STATES POLICY FOR COLOMBIA

While the drug problem in Colombia grew steadily in the 1990's, U.S. policy floundered. Although President Clinton's 1993 Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 14 urged "increased attention to stopping dangerous narcotics at their source",³⁵ his administration did not appropriate funding for the effort. In fact, from 1993 to 1996, budget cuts decreased spending on all international programs directed at the drug source, from \$660 million to \$290 million. Over time, a variety of congressional leaders expressed growing concern for Colombia's problems and the U.S. hands off approach. Congressman Mark Souder (R-IN) offered a view that something could have been done in 1995 and 1996. He characterized the policy at the time as one with cuts in the international counter-drug account, curtailed training, sanctions under the Leahy amendment, and feet dragging in the delivery of lifesaving assets.³⁶ A growing sense of urgency led Congress to push the Clinton administration for a more aggressive policy in late 1999.

The current United States policy toward Colombia is an extensive aid package that supports President Pastrana's Plan Colombia. Several sources document this policy. First, the foundation for U.S. support is expressed in the 1999 National Security Strategy. It specifically addresses significantly increased U.S. assistance for Plan Colombia and the U.S. intent to promote the plan to its allies.³⁷

After signing H.R. 4425 into law in July 2000, President Clinton further formalized U.S. policy in a classified Presidential Decision Directive. He identified the objectives for the assistance package as democratic governing and respect for human rights, curtailment of drug cultivation and production, drug interdiction, and economic reform.³⁸

Another documented source of U.S. policy is found in the National Drug Control Strategy 2000 Annual Report that President Clinton sent to Congress. The President wrote, "We must help committed democracies resist the transnational threat posed by illegal drugs and the criminal organizations that traffic in them."³⁹

The President and the State Department reiterate that the target of the policy is reducing the flow of narcotics, not against the counterinsurgency efforts. Additionally, these statements of policy by the President and Secretary of State specify that United States troops will not be committed to Colombia and will only provide training to the Colombian military forces.⁴⁰

CURRENT UNITED STATES STRATEGY FOR COLOMBIA

The best review of the strategy to support the current policy is through identification of the ends, ways and means as they apply to the policy.

Ends are the desired objectives in any policy. Ends are those things that help protect the U.S. national interests in Colombia. First is fighting drug trafficking to enhance regional stability as well as to allow demand reduction efforts at home to have a chance to work. Second is strengthening democracy in Colombia by supporting free market economies, the rule of law and judicial reform.

Ways are the concepts used to achieve the desired objectives. The National Drug Control Strategy provides the ways to achieve the U.S. objectives through its goals. Specifically, a major reason to support Plan Colombia comes directly from the fifth goal of the National Drug Control Strategy. This goal is to break foreign and domestic drug sources of supply. This goal identifies the threat to "the rule of law, human rights, and democratic institutions" which comes from the drug trade.⁴¹ Aggressive international supply-reduction programs not only reduce the volume of illegal drugs, but also attack international criminal organizations, strengthen democratic institutions, and show resolve in support of international drug control commitments. Within the supply-reduction strategy are five specific objectives: (1) eliminate illegal drug cultivation and production, (2) destroy drug-trafficking organizations, (3) interdict drug shipments, (4) encourage international cooperation, and (5) safeguard democracy and human rights.⁴²

The United States focus for international drug control efforts is on source countries where drug trafficking infrastructures and production are most vulnerable to effective law-enforcement action. Colombia has become the central focus in the Western Hemisphere.⁴³ Since cultivation of coca and the production of cocaine are labor intensive, these activities are relatively easier to disrupt than other aspects of the trade, which explains the U.S. and Colombian focus on drug eradication.

Finally are the means for implementing policy – the resources being applied to achieve the policy objectives. The \$1.3 billion aid package to support President Pastrana's Plan Colombia is the means in this case. It consists of dollars, equipment, and limited military forces. The policy dictates the specifics of how each of these must be used. Additionally, Congressional approval of the aid package applied constraints as well, including a requirement for certifications of human rights provisions, and a cap on the number of U.S. personnel who can actually be in Colombia (500 military, 300 civilian).⁴⁴

The \$1.3 billion aid package divides support into the following five major categories:

1. Support for Human Rights and Judicial Reform. This component is to provide support for a broad range of human rights and judicial reforms aimed at strengthening democracy and the rule of law. Specific initiatives include: protecting human rights non-governmental organizations, strengthening human rights institutions, establishing human rights units within the Colombian National Police and the Fiscalía (national prosecutor's office), training judges and prosecutors, and funding to train and support law enforcement personnel in anti-corruption, anti-money laundering, and anti-kidnapping measures.⁴⁵

2. Expansion of Counter-Narcotics Operations into Southern Colombia. This second component of the package supports the government's attempt to gain control of the drug producing regions of southern Colombia. In late 1999, United States military forces completed training of one counter-narcotics battalion, and these funds supported training and equipping the two additional battalions. It will fund procurement and support of 16 UH-60 helicopters; procurement, refurbishment and support of 30 UH-1H helicopters; and support for 15 UH-1N helicopters for use by the Colombian Army. This component also includes humanitarian assistance and development initiatives; helps displaced persons and provides developmental assistance, including technical and agricultural assistance to farmers in southern Colombia.⁴⁶

3. Alternative Economic Development. This component of the package supports alternative and economic development programs in Colombia, specifically to assist small farmers in the transition to legal activities. This component provides additional aid to displaced persons, voluntary eradication programs, local governments, and environmental programs to protect specific lands and water sources from the drug eradication efforts. This component also aid to Bolivia and Ecuador for alternative and economic development.⁴⁷

4. Increased Interdiction Efforts. This component provides financing to enhance both U.S. and Colombian interdiction efforts. It focuses on upgrading interdiction equipment used throughout the region (radar, aircraft, sea vessels) and the Colombian Navy's counter-narcotics intelligence infrastructure.⁴⁸

5. Assistance for the Colombian National Police. The final component provides support to the Colombian National Police. This package provides additional support for helicopters and agricultural spray aircraft, as well as communications equipment, ammunition, spare parts, training and logistics support.⁴⁹

ANALYSIS OF EFFECT OF THE UNITED STATES AID PACKAGE

This analysis looks at the effect of the U.S. aid package for the time period August 2000 through February 2001. Announcement of the aid package brought immediate reaction in several areas. A review of the response from both the international community abroad and Colombia's Latin American neighbors provides insight into the probable effectiveness of Plan Colombia. A further review of over six months of progress in drug eradication efforts, alternative development programs, and human rights reforms, provides the basis to assess the U.S. policy and determine if it achieves the stated national security objectives.

SUPPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

President Pastrana's \$7.5 billion dollar plan relied on the international community for about half the plan's cost: With the U.S. providing an aid package of \$1.3 billion, Colombia looked to other nations for the remaining \$2.2 billion. President Pastrana developed Plan Colombia on the expectation of \$1 billion in assistance from the European community.⁵⁰ Even U.S. officials were confident that once Europe saw the U.S. commitment to fighting the growing drug problem, Europe too would provide support in the fight. After all, Colombia is the primary source of cocaine for Europe as well as the United States. However, Europeans condemned the military portion of the Colombian plan, seeing social development as the solution to the problems in Colombia. They vehemently opposed the large U.S. military aid package, believing this will only further aggravate the armed conflict in Colombia. Additionally, they condemned the fumigation (eradication) strategy, supporting voluntary eradication in trade for legitimate crops. As a result, the European Union only provided \$250 million in aid, not to the Colombian government, but directly to non-profit groups supporting human rights, judicial reform, and economic development.⁵¹ Even with additional financial support from Spain (\$100 million), Norway (\$20 million), Japan (\$70 million), and the United Nations (\$131 million), and \$300 million in loans from international financial institutions,⁵² Plan Colombia suffered an initial shortfall of over \$1.2 billion in the anticipated external aid. More importantly, the plan still suffers from lack of political support for its objectives throughout the international community.

SUPPORT FROM LATIN AMERICA

Perhaps the biggest blow to Plan Colombia is the lack of support within Latin America. At the conclusion of a summit meeting of Latin American leaders in November 2000, Panama asked for a meeting with the defense ministers of Colombia's five neighboring countries to address their concerns. Colombia's defense minister was not invited to the meeting.⁵³ The Mexican foreign minister, Jorge G. Castaneda, addressed his country's concerns with Secretary of State Colin Powell in their first meeting.⁵⁴ Neighboring countries criticize the plan as they see the war in Colombia spreading across their borders. They not only fear the spread of violence, but also the flood of refugees and movement of coca production into their countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that there are about 525,000 internally displaced persons in Colombia. Panamanian authorities uncovered a weapon smuggling ring sending arms to the FARC, and Brazil launched a \$10 million operation to reinforce its border with Colombia.⁵⁵ Ecuador, Colombia's poorest neighbor, is the most vulnerable to the overflow of the conflict. As the Colombian government tightened activities against the FARC, the guerrillas began peaceful movement across the Ecuadorian border, buying supplies and seeking medical treatment in Ecuador. Now Colombians are buying farms and ranches in Ecuador, possibly for future coca plantations. With its own political instability, high inflation and marginal military, the Ecuador government has grave concerns about the overflow of Colombia's problems. Although Plan Colombia included some limited funding to neighboring countries, the government of Ecuador is now asking for up to \$300 million in additional U.S. aid to combat expansion of the Colombian drug war.⁵⁶

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

U.S. and Colombian officials estimate that about one third of the 300,000 acres of coca grown in Colombia belong to small farmers with four to five acres each.⁵⁷ Alternative development programs target this group of coca producers. The crop substitution program offers seeds, technical assistance, road improvements and electricity to communities of small farmers if they switch to legal crops. Each farmer also receives between \$1000 and \$2500 to assist in establishing legitimate operations. Unfortunately, the legal crops are usually less profitable than coca production with coffee farmers receiving average returns of 35.6% compared to 59% for coca farmers.⁵⁸ Convincing communities of farmers to make the switch in guerrilla controlled areas is a hard sell against the physical threats from the guerrillas. Additionally, it takes time for farmers to see the profits from crop substitution programs and time is in short supply for the Pastrana administration. By October 2000, the Colombian government

had already adjusted its target area for these programs from the entire country to only small areas in southern Colombia, and began eradication efforts against those small farmers who refused to join the government program.⁵⁹

DRUG ERADICATION EFFORTS

Large coca plantations provide about two thirds of Colombia's coca. Many of these plantations combine coca growth with laboratories to convert the raw coca into cocaine. Plan Colombia attacks these through aerial eradication, and ground attacks by the U.S. trained counter-narcotics battalions. Using armed helicopters and soldiers on the ground to provide security, and U.S. intelligence assistance in pinpointing coca farms, aerial eradication began in earnest in southern Colombia in December. Reports at the end of January indicate that this program, in just over a month, destroyed thousands of acres of coca in southern Colombia, driving up prices and putting coca leaf pickers out of work.⁶⁰ The government of Colombia turned aerial eradication against small farmers as well. This change in attack is designed to punish coca-growing communities that did not join the crop substitution program. Unfortunately, aerial eradication does not discriminate between legitimate and illegal crops. A common technique is to alternate rows of coca plants with rows of legitimate crops for their own use or trade. The eradication efforts attacked not only the coca plants, but also legal crops, livestock, and water supplies, resulting in allegations of widespread hunger in some communities.⁶¹ In spite of this, the government continues aerial eradication as it seeks to diminish the strength of the guerillas and narcotics traffickers.

HUMAN RIGHTS REFORMS

Colombia has a long history of human rights abuses and President Pastrana's Plan Colombia includes programs to enhance respect for human rights. When promoting support for Plan Colombia, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that the U.S. intent was to "assist in strengthening mechanisms for protecting human rights and promoting judicial reform."⁶² Another concern was to eliminate the collaborative efforts between military forces and the paramilitaries, as well as to improve the judicial system for prosecuting violators. Under the Leahy Amendment, Congress established seven conditions for assistance to the Colombian armed forces and required certification by the State Department prior to releasing aid. Congress allowed a loophole to ensuring Colombia met the conditions by granting presidential waiver of the certification requirements if he deemed it in the national interests of the United States. Barely 30 days after signing the aid package into law, President Clinton waived six of the seven requirements, five of which were human rights related, allowing aid to begin flowing to

Colombia.⁶³ This waiver drew immediate criticism from human rights organizations around the world. And, in the months since approving the waiver, Colombia seems only to have made limited progress. In the spotlight are the counter-narcotics battalions trained by U.S. Special Forces soldiers, since for years the military was as guilty of human rights abuses as the guerrillas and paramilitaries. The United States checks the record of each soldier in the battalion for human rights violations, and provides instruction in human rights and respect for civilian authority as part of the counter-narcotics training.⁶⁴ It may be several years before the U.S. knows the success of the human rights training effort for this select group of the military. While there has been some reform within the remainder of the military, accusations still abound concerning military support for the paramilitaries and their tactics. As recently as February 26, 2001 the State Department reported that, "the Colombian government's human rights record remained poor and that illegal right-wing paramilitary forces still find a ready support base within the military and the police."⁶⁵

ASSESSMENT OF UNITED STATES POLICY FOR COLOMBIA

Assessment of the U.S. policy must relate directly back to the identified interests and their intensity. The fight against drug trafficking in Colombia impacts regional stability and is an important interest, while promoting Colombia's struggling democracy is a peripheral interest.

In light of this categorization of interests, it appears that the decision to support Plan Colombia was an appropriate one. Where the U.S. may have erred is in the specific approach. Support for Plan Colombia is budgeted under the National Drug Control Strategy, targeting the elimination of the source of drugs. While this is an objective that may result in the economic progress necessary to promote regional stability, it cannot work alone. A free market economy is critical to Colombia, Latin America and the United States.

Over 75% of the aid package that goes directly to Colombia is in military assistance to the Colombian government, specifically identified to fight drug trafficking, not the insurgency. Yet, the two are inseparable and many see the aerial eradication techniques and the provision of Black Hawk helicopters as means to fight the guerrillas as well as the drug trade. Before determining specific support for President Pastrana's plan, the U.S. should have coordinated with the remainder of the international community. Had this occurred, Plan Colombia might have had a better chance for full implementation. The U.S. would have either gained support for the plan and identified the role each supporting country would play, or would have identified obstacles to implementing the plan as designed and revised it to garner support from other nations. Since the U.S. did neither, Plan Colombia hit roadblocks early on in its implementation.

The shortfall of aid from the European Union meant that the only real element of Plan Colombia being implemented is the military element, supported only by the United States. President Pastrana is now seeking additional U.S. funding and support for social and economic issues. The Bush Administration has tentatively programmed about \$400 million in the FY 2002 budget for this purpose.⁶⁶

The U.S. policy over the past year sent mixed signals to the rest of the world. Currently the U.S. refuses to participate in or observe the peace negotiations between the government of Colombia and the FARC because the FARC has not yet turned over for prosecution their members who killed three American human rights workers in 1999. Yet, in spite of the State Department's assessment of continued human rights abuses by the Colombian military, President Clinton waived the certification requirements to provide military support to a potentially corrupt government and the U.S. continues to do so after the latest State Department report. Instead of promoting economic growth, the U.S. continued to impose tariffs on goods from Colombia, and let the international quota system for coffee lapse under the Clinton administration.⁶⁷

RECOMMENDATION FOR A POLICY SHIFT FOR COLOMBIA

The United States must reexamine its policy toward support of Plan Colombia. In order to achieve the national security objectives, the U.S. must ensure Colombia survives as a democracy and does not cause further instability in the region. The threat of the migration of the drug trade or the guerrillas is a serious concern to Colombia's neighbors. The U.S. can achieve its objectives with a revised strategy using a combination of the elements of national power.

DIPLOMATIC

Observation by U.S. officials of the peace negotiations between President Pastrana's government and the FARC would most likely prove beneficial to both the United States and Colombia. The U.S. failure to recognize the FARC does not lessen its influence in Colombia. Active participation might afford U.S. diplomats the opportunity to influence the outcome of the peace negotiations while supporting the legitimate government of Colombia. The peace process is critical to resolving the issues in Colombia.

Additionally, Colombia is in real need of help in reforming its judicial system. The U.S. must step up its efforts in the judicial sector. There is a great interagency effort underway involving the Departments of Justice and Treasury and a twelve-project proposal to revamp

Colombia's systems. The U.S. must implement these projects now in order to make a real change in the rule of law and promotion of human rights.

ECONOMIC

The United States can make the greatest impact in Colombia through economic efforts. Increasing the demand for and profit from legitimate goods will provide the impetus for farmers to grow legitimate crops. Renewal of the Andean Trade Preference Act and expanding the goods to which it applies will also promote legitimate business, not only in Colombia, but also Bolivia and Peru. The Colombian government must come through on its promise of funding for those that voluntarily eradicated coca plants and agreed to participate in the alternative development program. The ability to profit from more open markets will reduce poverty in the country and the susceptibility to corrupt activities from the poorer class. Finally, the United States should use its influence in the Third Summit of the Americas, scheduled for April 2000, to implement the Free Trade Area of the Americas. This will establish trade standards among all nations in the Western Hemisphere, and promote greater legitimate trade throughout the region.

MILITARY

If the U.S. is serious about fighting drug trafficking, but not the insurgency, it must reduce the military aid package. The U.S. should divert the first fourteen Black Hawk helicopters, scheduled to begin delivery in July to the Colombian National Police, whose job it is to fight drugs not the military. Cancellation of the remaining aircraft deliveries (Huey-2s) will free up funds for reallocation to the economic and diplomatic elements. Continued support of the professionalism of the military will continue to reduce the human rights abuses.

CONCLUSION

President Pastrana's objectives through Plan Colombia are commendable; yet cannot all be accomplished in the single four-year term he is authorized by Colombian law. He spent his first two years in office pulling together Plan Colombia, selling it to the international community, and negotiating peace agreements with the FARC. Only in early 2001 has Colombia begun to show any progress in implementing Plan Colombia. They've had some success in drug eradication, but are rapidly losing popular support for this by the indiscriminate spraying method. Additionally, peace talks between the government of Colombia and the FARC are underway. Members of the international community, to include the United States, have been invited to participate in this process. Little has been done to stabilize the Colombian economy, and judicial processes are still inadequate to effectively deal with criminals. Human rights abuses

continue to occur by the Colombian military, paramilitaries, and guerrillas. Without full international support, President Pastrana is rapidly running out of time.

Colombia badly needs U.S. support to stabilize its democracy. With the new Bush administration, the U.S. has the ideal opportunity to reassess the policy toward Colombia. The U.S. must place emphasis on economic and diplomatic support if the legitimate government of Colombia is to survive. The U.S. must address the drug problem through further demand reduction initiatives at home, not targeting the source abroad.

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