

**CONFRONTING THREATS TO SECURITY IN THE  
AMERICAS**

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**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE,  
PEACE CORPS, NARCOTICS AND TERRORISM  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
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## CONFRONTING THREATS TO SECURITY IN THE AMERICAS

TUESDAY, JUNE 22, 1999

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE,  
PEACE CORPS, NARCOTICS AND TERRORISM,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met at 10:02 a.m., in room SD-562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Paul Coverdell (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senator Coverdell.

Senator COVERDELL. I am going to call this meeting of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee to order and welcome Gen. Charles Wilhelm, Commander in Chief, United States Southern Command, Miami, Florida.

General, if you would bear with me a minute, I am going to take a little more prerogative this morning on an opening statement than I normally would, but I want to get this in the record and then I will turn to you for your opening statement and we will take it from there. I do want to say how appreciative I am. I know this has been difficult for you to do, and we are very appreciative that you would make this time available this morning.

The purpose of this hearing today is to examine what I consider to be very real threats to the security and stability of the hemisphere. I cannot remember another time in recent history when we have paid less attention to developments in our own hemisphere. The current administration has failed to engage the region on a consistent basis or to articulate and implement a coherent policy for the hemisphere. Most of our attention has been focused recently on the Balkans, the Middle East, China, North Korea, and rightly so. These places certainly demand our immediate attention, but we simply cannot afford to ignore serious developments in this hemisphere in our own back yard.

In a hearing this subcommittee held several weeks ago, we discussed the notion that the United States is good at responding to crises, coups that actually change governments. It was asserted that we are not as good at preventing situations from reaching these crisis stages. And the reason why is we tend to ignore problems and neglect them until we must take action. We fail to engage in a regular, consistent manner, and this has been a standard foreign policy flaw of the current administration.

I want to talk briefly about Panama, a subject which in my mind has been largely ignored. At the end of this year, almost one cen-

tury of a strategic U.S. presence in Panama is scheduled to come to a close. If the schedule remains unchanged, by the end of the year the United States will hand off the Panama Canal to Panamanian authorities and will completely withdraw all military forces.

The ramifications of this, as it relates to our ability to effectively fight the war on drugs and in relation to general security and stability in the region, are troubling. For years Panama has been at the heart of our drug interdiction efforts in the hemisphere. U.S. bases in Panama have provided secure staging for detection, monitoring, and intelligence collecting and have provided critical support to our Latin American neighbors through aerial reconnaissance and counternarcotics training.

The administration's response to the withdrawal of the military from Panama has been to negotiate agreements for three forward operating locations, FOL's, in the region, with another one possibly to follow. While current events make the FOL concept a necessity, I have serious doubts. Among them is the cost of improving and updating infrastructure at the FOL's, which is estimated to be several hundred million dollars, money that has already been invested in Panama. In addition, the negotiated agreements for FOL's are short-term agreements. Long-term agreements may be more difficult to secure.

I find it difficult to give up on U.S. military assets so strategically positioned. I do not understand why, as State Department officials have recently affirmed, the administration has not raised the issue of a continued U.S. troop presence with the Panamanian President-elect. She herself is on record as willing to negotiate some type of continued U.S. military presence.

I am also concerned that we are leaving Panama without the ability to defend itself from certain destabilizing threats, such as incursions by Colombian guerrillas, narcotraffickers, and paramilitary forces.

Less tangible, but no less important, is the fact that our presence in Panama represents America's strong commitment to cooperative security in the region. It also serves to reassure investors, and provides a visible deterrent to those in the hemisphere who would threaten U.S. interests.

Now to Colombia. Nowhere has this administration's failure to consistently engage the hemisphere more apparent than in Colombia. Few seem to be taking notice that the situation there continues to deteriorate. Despite President Pastrana's well-intentioned efforts at resolving the decades old conflict, the number of casualties of both combatants and civilians continues to rise. More than 38,000 Colombians have been killed in 30-plus years of conflict, and according to the Department of State, more than 300,000 people were internally displaced last year alone. The administration's policy of neglect has contributed to the balkanization of Colombia.

While the Pastrana Government continues to make concessions to the guerrillas, including ceding them control over large tracts of land in southern Colombia, the guerrillas have only increased their efforts to undermine peace and stability. Most recently members of the National Liberation Army, ELN, Colombia's second largest guerrilla group, hijacked a domestic flight with 41 people on board. This was followed by the kidnapping of more than 140 innocent ci-

vilians from a church in Cali, Colombia. While many of the hostages have since been freed, these shocking occurrences serve to further undermine the rule of law and erode any sense of stability that remains. This obviously cannot be allowed to continue.

We know from General Serrano of the Colombian National Police, the guerrillas have tapped into the vast resources of the illicit drug industry. Estimates of guerrilla income from the drug trade reach as high as \$1.5 billion. The result is a well-funded and well-armed guerrilla movement with little incentive to compromise against an underfunded and undermanned Colombian military.

As we have seen, the conflict in Colombia also threatens peace and stability in neighboring countries. President Chavez of Venezuela has had to move troops to its western border with Colombia as a result. Recent reports indicate that increased fighting in northeast Colombia between paramilitaries and guerrillas has forced hundreds of innocent civilians across the border into Venezuela. Just over a week ago, 600 Colombian civilians from the region petitioned the Venezuelan Government for refuge.

The conflict is also spilling over the border into Panama with greater frequency. Reports indicate that FARC guerrillas move freely across the border and have the citizens there vacating in their wake. This is understandable considering that Panama does not have a standing army to defend itself.

So, as we can clearly see, there are serious security issues which must be addressed immediately in the hemisphere.

With this said, General Wilhelm, I look forward to your remarks this morning and then engaging in an important session of questions and answers. Thank you again for appearing before the committee today.

[The following opening statement of Senator Biden was submitted for inclusion in the record.]

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing. General Wilhelm, welcome. Before we start, I have to tell you that I don't envy you. The good news is that Latin America is becoming an increasingly important economic partner for the United States and the majority of the region continues to work to solidify democratic political systems and the open civic institutions necessary to support democracy. The bad news is that illegal narcotics organizations continue to become more diversified and agile. The plague of violence and corruption that these organizations bring with them continues to spread throughout the region.

I am very interested, General, in hearing more about the Administration's plans to replace the counterdrug and other capabilities once maintained in Panama and your views of the current situation in Colombia. I also hope you will let us know what sort of resources you need to do your missions, particularly regarding the illegal narcotics threat.

On the subject of replacing the capabilities we are losing in Panama, I have more questions than answers General Wilhelm. I've been a student of illegal narcotics for most of my career here in the Senate. I know that the traffickers adapt to our tactics fairly quickly, so I am interested in hearing how you and the Administration are incorporating the military's new focus on flexible, expeditionary forces into the new operational architecture that must be created with the loss of Panamanian facilities.

While we are losing a significant capability, we also have an opportunity to really re-think our tactics in Latin America and the Caribbean. I hope that you will be able to go through some of that thought process with us today to explain how the Administration arrived at the current plan for new Forward Operating Locations and why this makes operational sense. I also hope you will share with us your

thoughts on how significant an operational hindrance it will be if Venezuela continues to deny the use of its airspace for counterdrug missions.

On the subject of Colombia, I don't think there are any easy answers. The security challenges confronting President Pastrana and the people of Colombia are monumental. The guerrilla forces of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, or FARC, and the National Liberation Army, or ELN, control the eastern lowlands and southeastern jungles of Colombia. Paramilitary groups have significant control and free reign in the northern and central parts of Colombia. These groups operate outside the law and threaten everyone—the people of Colombia, the people and governments of the region, and, tragically, foreign visitors.

Efforts by Colombian military units to confront these groups are often tainted by the lawlessness behavior of some of those units. While the military is beginning to clean-up its human rights record, they have only just begun.

For the people of the United States and the world, those challenges remain a significant security threat because Colombian traffickers are still responsible for most of the world's cocaine production and wholesale distribution. The Colombian traffickers are also major suppliers of heroin and marijuana. The dominance of Colombian traffickers in heroin supply is new this past decade. It is a sobering reminder that traffickers will adapt and take advantage of any laxity.

In Colombia, the traffickers have a unique advantage because of their links to rebel and paramilitary groups. The ability of illegal narcotics organizations to use both guerrilla and paramilitary groups for security gives them tremendous flexibility and reach. The mutual dependence that is created by the need of both paramilitary and guerrilla groups for funding is extremely dangerous. The money generated by illegal narcotics is sustaining various lawless groups in Colombia and poisoning democratic institutions.

So, for Colombia and her allies, the challenge is not merely to disband violent, well-funded, and lawless organizations. The real challenge is to create democratic Colombian institutions that are Colombia feel safe.

I am not sure President Pastrana's initiatives and the risks he is taking will lead to peace. In fact, I am concerned that some of the initiatives aimed at peace may, in the short-term, undermine our counter narcotics efforts. But, I support President Pastrana because I am absolutely sure that peace has never been created without a willingness to take risks.

I was extremely pleased to hear that official talks between the government and the FARC guerrillas will begin on July 4th. In the long-term, we will never win the war on drugs if there is no peace in Colombia.

In sum, as I said in the beginning General, I do not envy you the challenges you face. Illegal narcotics organizations do not provide easy and obvious targets. They are much more difficult to fight than an opposing military force because they are so interwoven with the emerging institutions and economies of the region. I look forward to hearing your thoughts regarding our strategy and the resources you need for defeating these threats.

Senator COVERDELL. I now turn to you, General Wilhelm.

**STATEMENT OF GEN. CHARLES E. WILHELM, COMMANDER IN CHIEF, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND, MIAMI, FL**

General WILHELM. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Coverdell, I appreciate this opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, and we appreciate your interest and the interest of the members of the subcommittee in United States Southern Command and in its area of responsibility.

Beyond that, sir, I wanted to tell you that we very much appreciate your personal interest in the region which became so apparent to us when, right on the heels of the last rainstorm from Hurricane Mitch, you appeared in Central America. That was a tremendous morale shot in the arm to our folks, and it really let them know that the Congress is aware of what they are doing and the conditions that they are doing it under. So, sir, from all of them and from me, thank you very much.

Senator COVERDELL. I appreciate your acknowledging that.

General WILHELM. Sir, in your letter of 20 May you were very explicit about the subjects that you wanted to address at this hearing, and you mentioned that you wanted to discuss our drug interdiction capabilities and certain other threats and that you wanted to examine them in light of the upcoming withdrawal of our forces from Panama, as you discussed in your opening remarks, and specifically the closing of Howard Air Force Base.

Sir, rather than to go through the customary opening statement, which is normally very general, I thought this morning I might ask your indulgence for another approach. Really what we are talking about is geography, and we are talking about resetting the United States Southern Command theater architecture for the next century. So, I brought some charts, sir, and if you do not mind, I thought I might suggest that we begin this hearing by my providing you and up-to-the-minute report on precisely where we are, what progress we have made in setting this new architecture in place. Will that be OK, Senator?

Senator COVERDELL. That is absolutely fine. Thank you.

General WILHELM. Yes, sir. Senator, I think the best way to do this is to simply walk from north to south down the map through the region, and I will provide an update concerning each key note of our relocation and repositioning plan for the theater.

I will start, sir, right at our home base, the headquarters in Miami, Florida. As you know, the command officially moved to Miami on the 28th of September 1997, and that move was made after extensive deliberations about the best next site for Southern Command headquarters as it departed its previous home at Quarry Heights in Panama. Miami was selected from 126 sites and 26 cities. Sir, at this point, we now have about 20 months' experience operating on the ground in Miami, and I would just like to reaffirm this morning the wisdom of the decision to position the headquarters in Miami. In my judgment, sir, we are in the right strategic location to do the business that Southern Command must do during the next century. And, sir, I would be glad to expand on the reasons for that opinion during the question and answer period, if you would like.

Senator COVERDELL. Very good.

General WILHELM. Sir, moving about 150 miles south of Miami down to Key West, as I know you are aware, prior to the emergence of the requirement to relocate all of our forces from Panama, we had intended to maintain Joint Interagency Task Force South as our organization in Panama, really the central element around which we intended to build the United States component of the multinational counterdrug center. That element would have continued to plan and oversee our counterdrug operations in the source zone.

When the negotiations with Panama were closed, we had to think our way through a new approach. The new approach has been to relocate Joint Interagency Task Force South to Key West where we have merged it with Joint Interagency Task Force East, which previously planned and supervised the execution of our counterdrug operations in the transit zone. So, now we have a single Joint Interagency Task Force that plans and oversees the exe-

cution of counterdrug operations all the way from the Florida Straits to the Southern Cone.

This was achieved with some savings. The numbers of Department of Defense and Coast Guard people required to man two independent joint interagency task forces was 378. The merged organization operates with 279. We previously had a requirement for 31 interagency representatives, Department of Transportation, Department of Justice, Customs. Under the new organization, we will up that by 3 to 36.

We have not achieved full manning, but we are convinced that with the thoughtful use of the information technologies that are available to us, we will be able to assemble a single organization that will be able to look from north to south and execute from south to north. The attraction of a single task force of unity of command: we will have eliminated that line between the source and transit zone, one of the seams which we tend to be attacked along. So, we think there are some efficiencies of scale to be realized in this, and if the architecture for command and control comes together in the way that we would like, it may well be a more efficient organization than the two that we had before.

Sir, moving over to the southeast, I would like to comment on the forces that will be moving to Puerto Rico. As a very general statement, I think it is correct to observe that Puerto Rico will now assume the role that Panama has for Southern Command for about the last 50 years. Puerto Rico will really become the hub for our operations in both the source and the transit zone.

The first organization that I would like to discuss is U.S. Army South. U.S. Army South at this moment is in the process of moving from its previous home at Fort Clayton to Fort Buchanan in Puerto Rico. The organization that existed in Panama had 3,860 members. The new organization at Fort Buchanan will be 1,382. Now, that is a substantial decrease in the number of active component personnel in the Army component command headquarters. We hope to compensate for the reduction in numbers by forging a very close relationship between our active component planners at the headquarters with the 16,000 Army and Air Force Guardsmen and Reservists on Puerto Rico, all of whom are bilingual, so they have equal applications and will be equally effective whether they are operating in the eastern Caribbean or in Latin America.

The second organization that has located to Puerto Rico is the Special Operations Command South, our special operations component. Our previous strength in Panama was about 353 people on the ground. We have about 297 now occupying facilities at the Roosevelt Roads Naval Station. The command actually completed the move. They are operating out of tents there right now because permanent facilities are not yet groomed for them, but I instructed them that they must accomplish the move and that we could accept no interruption to the operating tempo or the flow of deployments into the region. They accomplished everything that I asked them to do, and as I mentioned, sir, they were up and operating on the 1st of June.

I would backtrack and mention as well, sir, that the merged joint interagency task force was fully operational on the 1st of April and

assumed responsibility for the broad area mission for the transit and the source zones.

The third element in Puerto Rico that I would like to talk about is our Air Force element. Previously our business in the air was conducted by the 24th Wing located at Howard Air Force Base in Panama. We closed the runway at Howard on 1 May, just as we had forecasted we would have to in order to comply with the provisions of the Panama Canal treaties. We have relocated a small number of aircraft to Puerto Rico. These are principally our intra-theater airlift assets, our C-130's. We have relocated six air frames to Puerto Rico. They are now providing inter-theater airlift support for both U.S. South elements and, perhaps most importantly, for Special Operations Command South.

Sir, closing out that portion of the Panama equation, I would like to talk very briefly about some of the modifications that we have made to the force structure at Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras. As I know you are aware, sir—and I know you visited Soto Cano—we have had a continuous U.S. presence there since 1983. When it became necessary to reset the architecture in the ways that we are discussing, we took a very careful look at Soto Cano and tried to come up with the best mix of forces that would, one, be politically acceptable to the Honduran Government and, two, that would best fit with the existing structure of Joint Task Force Bravo.

We determined that this would be the best place to move the additional helicopter assets from the first of the 228th Aviation Battalion which has been traditionally aligned with U.S. Army South in Panama. So, we moved four CH-47 Chinook medium lift aircraft and we moved four additional Black Hawk helicopters, some in a utility configuration and some in a medevac configuration, to Soto Cano. We now have between 18 and 20 helicopters on the ground there on any given day. So, that has become our rotary wing operating hub for the region.

Sir, I saved really what has emerged as probably the most contentious issue for last, and that is the forward operating locations. As I mentioned, probably the biggest loss that we confront coming out of Panama and our bases there are the 8,500 feet of concrete, the ramps and taxiways, maintenance facilities that have served us so well, as you pointed out, for a great many years at Howard. That has been our single base for most of our counterdrug assets. It supported AWACS operations, P-3 operations, F-16's, ARL's, Customs trackers and Customs domes, Citation 550's. Just about everything we have put into the air in the drug struggle has been based at Howard at one time or another. So, it was a very difficult proposition coming up with offsetting locations to sustain those operations in the future.

We selected three sites as potential locations for what we termed forward operating locations, as I have gone to great pains to point out, throughout the region. These are not U.S. bases. These are simply access agreements to host country facilities that will enable us to prosecute the operations of shared interest against narcotraffickers.

The first sites are at Curacao and Aruba, and in truth, sir, those are two. There are about 35 miles that separate the two islands. Those negotiations were undertaken with the Dutch. They were

successfully concluded during April. An exchange of diplomatic notes has occurred and we are now today operating from both facilities, as I will show you in just a minute.

The second location that has been successfully negotiated is the airfield at Manta in Ecuador. Negotiations were successfully concluded and an exchange of diplomatic notes with Ecuador also occurred during April. There we have some refurbishment and repair to do before we can open the field to unrestricted operations by U.S. counterdrug aircraft, but we are operating out of there today.

The third FOL will be somewhere in Central America. We looked initially at Costa Rica. As to whether or not we can successfully negotiate an access agreement with Costa Rica is somewhat problematic, sir. But we do need a third FOL and that third FOL should be in Central America and it should afford us access to the eastern Pacific operating areas and movement vectors for narcotics, which of course is an area that we do need to oppose.

Sir, just a quick thumbnail to show you where we are today because I know there was a lot of justifiable concern in Congress as to exactly what would happen on 1 May when we put the sawhorses across the end of the runway at Howard Air Force Base.

Well, sir, we are up and operating at the FOL's and other traditional operating locations in the AOR. Very quickly, we are operating AWACS and tankers out of MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. We are operating E-2C Hawkeyes and Navy P-3's out of Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico. We are operating Customs, the double eagle package, the slicks and the domes, out of Aruba, along with Citation 550 trackers. And in Curacao—I visited there just week before last—we have five F-16's on the ground and we have a C-130 variant aircraft with a classified mission there as well. In Manta today we have just one Navy P-3, but some modifications and refinements have been made to the facility. And I am looking to expanded operations in Manta by the end of the month.

Sir, I will close this out by just very, very quickly giving you a sketch of the capabilities that these three FOL's deliver. These arcs display the ranges. P-3's here with the small dotted line. AWACS with the bold dotted line operating out of Aruba and Curacao, and then we have range arcs that show the P-3 operating range out of both Manta, Ecuador and Costa Rica. With any one of these FOL's, sir, we will have about 65 percent of the coverage that we previously enjoyed from Howard Air Force Base. With two, with Curacao/Aruba and with Manta, we will have about 80 percent of the reach and operational coverage that we had before, and with all three, we will have about 110 percent. This arc happens to be inscribed on the Liberia airfield at Costa Rica.

Sir, in a nutshell, that is precisely where we are at this moment, and I thought that would be as good a point of departure as any for our dialog today.

[The prepared statement of General Wilhelm follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GEN. CHARLES E. WILHELM

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I welcome this opportunity to provide you my assessment of counterdrug (CD) efforts in the United States Southern Command's (SOUTHCOM's) Area of Responsibility (AOR).

SOUTHCOM's specific role is to provide and coordinate Department of Defense (DOD) support to Goals Four and Five of the National Drug Control Strategy. All of our CD efforts are focused on providing this DOD support to the Department of State, U.S. law enforcement agencies, U.S. Country Teams and our regional partner nations in order to stem the growth, production, and shipment of illegal drugs to the United States.

Today, I will provide you with the following: my personal assessment of the region's overall security and stability; a strategic overview of the regional drug trafficking threat; an overview of our post Panama Theater Architecture; a brief discussion of resource constraints; our CD strategy; country and regional assessments; and finally my vision of the future.

#### SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE SOUTHCOM AOR

The strategic and economic importance of Latin America and the Caribbean to the United States continues to grow and cannot be overemphasized. Our growing dependence on oil from the region, which includes Venezuela as our single largest source of imported fuel—18 percent annually, combined with the region's growing dependence on U.S. imports, fully justifies a consistent and balanced engagement strategy in the region. Latin Americans currently spend 44 cents of every dollar on imports from the U.S. By 2000 Latin America is expected to buy more U.S. goods than Europe, and by 2010 more U.S. goods than Europe and Japan combined. These figures are expected to increase as initiatives of the Free Trade Area of the Americas take root.

For many years most Americans looked south and only saw problems: coups, military dictatorships, communist-inspired insurgencies, and economic crises. Over the last two decades, the Caribbean and Latin America have embraced democratic governance—of the 32 nations in our theater, all but one are governed by leaders who serve at the pleasure of the people. The military forces of Latin America are also contributing to this process by supporting civilian authority and the rule of law. Human rights are accorded more respect, and in a region where military governments and coups were commonplace, great progress has been made. In fact, the only non-democratic country within the entire SOUTHCOM AOR is Cuba, a sad remnant of the Cold War. We remain hopeful that the people of Cuba will eventually enjoy the personal liberties and increased economic opportunities that are inherent in a free society with a market economy.

While we are encouraged by these political and economic trends, we are mindful that many of these democracies are fragile. In a region that fears no external power, is essentially at peace with itself, and on a per capita basis, spends less on arms than any other region of the world, transnational threats have emerged as the greatest dangers to regional stability. There is a growing realization throughout the region, from the tip of the Southern Cone to the Straits of Florida, that the corrupting influences of drug trafficking, money laundering and organized crime are undermining the foundations of democracy and impeding economic development. It is against these transnational threats, and specifically illicit drug trafficking, that SOUTHCOM has framed its CD strategy.

#### THE DRUG THREAT

The entrenched and increasingly diverse illegal drug business continues to demonstrate an ability to meet the world demand, and poses increasingly complex challenges to CD efforts throughout our area of responsibility. Cocaine and heroin continue to be a formidable industry in the Source Zone. Coca is grown almost exclusively in the three Andean countries of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. It is refined into finished cocaine Hydrochloride, primarily in Colombia, then transported to the United States. Colombian poppy fields are a primary source of the opium that is converted into heroin also destined for the United States. Finally, there are also numerous growing areas in the Caribbean that supply significant amounts of marijuana for U.S. consumption.

#### *Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs)*

The nature and modus operandi of DTOs are well known. Their primary strategic strength is their ability to operate with significant financial backing and freedom of action in the source and transit zones. Nurtured by a constant demand for their product, these transnational criminal organizations are resilient, dynamic, and agile. They have transformed and survived through the dissolution of traditional drug cartel organizations. They have proven over time that they can rapidly adjust transit routes and modes in response to U.S. and Participating Nation interdiction efforts.

Motivated by profit, DTOs are increasingly gaining control over Colombia's infrastructure, economy, and security apparatus. In some areas, they operate with near impunity, controlling ports and many of the rural areas of the Andean Ridge. An integral part of their "security arrangement" involves the cooperation of insurgents. These insurgent groups, in turn, have become increasingly dependent on drug profits to sustain themselves. As a result, this mutually beneficial relationship has allowed DTOs to realize profit levels that support sustained secure operations in rural areas—areas that are increasingly encroaching on civilian population centers.

DTOs possess a large amount of capital and resources, which are increasingly invested in legitimate businesses. Their disregard for national sovereignty allows them to cross national frontiers with impunity and gain unfair advantage over legitimate business enterprises, which further undermines the civil government. However, DTOs are not invulnerable. Inefficiencies caused by an effective CD effort can drive up the price of illegal drugs to the point where U.S. demand wanes. With the right amount of effort, the profit from drug trafficking can be reduced to a point where it becomes a far less profitable and lucrative business.

We know DTOs intend to maximize profits. To that end, they are continuing to expand cocaine production and export to the United States, Europe, Asia and new secondary markets in South America. They are also continuing to plant higher yield varieties of cocaine in the Putamayo and Caqueta growing areas in Colombia and expand cocaine production within Peru and Bolivia. In the future, DTOs will likely seek to expand cultivation within the border regions of Brazil, Panama, and Venezuela. DTOs will also attempt to strengthen security alliances with insurgent groups that undermine regional governments.

#### THEATER ARCHITECTURE

To sustain our support to on-going CD efforts in the region and to compensate for our redeployment from Panama, we have worked hard to reset a viable theater support architecture. Our goal is to continue support to detection, monitoring and tracking operations as well as sustain the logistics base for regional engagement activities.

Looking at the map of the hemisphere and taking into account SOUTHCOM's two primary missions, regional engagement and counterdrug, Howard Air Force Base has served us well. However, in compliance with our treaty obligations, we will turn over all facilities to the government of Panama by the end of 1999. We are establishing a theater architecture to support operations into the 21st century.

Puerto Rico will replace Panama as our main operating hub in the theater. The United States Army South (USARSO) is in the process of relocating its headquarters to Fort Buchanan. Once reestablished, this force of 1,382 active and reserve component soldiers and civilians will undertake the missions previously carried out by a contingent of 3,868 in Panama. To compensate for reduced manning, USARSO will rely heavily on the more than 16,000 Army and Air Force Guardsmen and Reservists stationed in Puerto Rico. In a great many ways this is an ideal marriage. Puerto Rican guardsmen and reservists are bilingual, making them equally effective whether conducting engagement activities with members of English-speaking militaries in the Eastern Caribbean, or with Spanish-speaking counterparts in Central and South America.

Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH) is our most heavily committed component. Each year the soldiers, sailors and airmen of our theater Special Operations Command conduct nearly 150 deployments into our Area of Responsibility. SOCSOUTH provides the quick reaction force we need to respond to crises and other fast-breaking requirements. To perform these demanding missions Special Operations forces must be close to the action and keep a sharp edge on their language and cultural skills. We are relocating approximately 350 members of SOCSOUTH to Naval Air Station, Roosevelt Roads. We are also finalizing basing arrangements for selected command and control and intra-theater airlift assets on Puerto Rico. Collocation of ground and air forces is imperative for precise planning and rapid execution of crucial missions.

Another important organization, strategically located, at the Soto Cano Airbase in Honduras since 1983, is Joint Task Force (JTF) Bravo. JTF Bravo is a contingent of about 500 soldiers and airmen who have for 16 years occupied temporary, expeditionary facilities on the east side of the airfield. Soto Cano has been, and will continue to be, our main hub for operations throughout Central America. To preserve adequate tactical mobility, some of the 228th Aviation Battalion helicopters formerly based in Panama will reinforce the limited aviation assets assigned to JTF Bravo. The superior performance of JTF Bravo during the tragic, early hours of Hurricane Mitch underlined the importance of this unit's presence to the people of Honduras.

The SOUTHCOM Headquarters has now operated in Miami for 20 months. I am convinced that we are in the right place to implement our engagement and CD strategies. Miami is widely accepted by the nations of this hemisphere as the de facto capital of Latin America. With its economic, cultural, academic, transportation, and consular ties to our area of responsibility, Miami has proven to be the most credible location in the continental United States from which we can engage the entire region. Relocating from Panama to Miami has supported our mission, and afforded us opportunities to pursue "smart business" practices in providing support services to the SOUTHCOM military community. Consistent with my desire to nurture and fully support "smart business" and business reform efforts, I believe the United States Government will be best served by purchasing our headquarters building and land. An initial review of the development trends in this part of Miami reveals dramatic increases in the value of real property.

Until its recent deactivation, Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-South), operated from its headquarters at Howard Air Force Base and served as our primary planning and execution agent for CD operations and activities in the source zone. Our departure from Howard has caused us to redesign our counternarcotics command and control mechanism. We have merged JIATF-South with its counterpart organization JIATF-East in Key West. Through deliberate integration of communications and information systems we have created a single organization capable of "seeing" from the Florida Straits into the Andean Ridge. The merged JIATF will be responsible for planning, coordinating and supervising the execution of detection, monitoring and tracking and other CD missions in both the source and transit zones. To achieve a streamlined and cost-effective organization, the SOUTHCOM Headquarters will assume responsibility for some administrative, logistical and programmatic activities previously performed by both JIATFs.

We have also made significant progress towards establishing Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) to support the air coverage that Howard Air Force Base formerly provided. Interim access agreements have been signed with the Government of Ecuador for the use of Manta and with the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the use of Aruba and Curacao.

On 16 April 1999, Secretary Cohen designated the Department of the Air Force as Executive Agent for Manta, Ecuador and Aruba/Curacao and the Department of the Navy as Executive Agent for a future Central American location. We are aggressively moving to establish these FOLs to support on-going air operations. Expeditionary CD operations began in May in Aruba and Curacao and will be expanded in the coming months. Our focus will be on executing strategic/high payoff operations designed to keep our level of support at the 1997 levels achieved from Howard Air Force Base.

In order to sustain the 1997 level of CD operations, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, through his Drug Enforcement Policy and Support office, submitted a proposed reprogramming action of \$45,000,000 from the DoD Working Capital Fund into the Central Transfer Account in February of 1999. To meet immediate Post 1999 theater CD architecture requirements I deferred \$17,000,000 of current year SOUTHCOM CD requirements, some of which are Congressional high interest items, and \$15,000,000 of Post 1999 architecture requirements. Unless the requested reprogramming action is approved in the very near future, the full Post 1999 CD architecture will not be in place at the start of Fiscal Year 2000. Additionally, I will face the challenge of determining which cuts to make to the theater CD mission in Fiscal Year 2000 to fund these one-time relocation expenses.

#### RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

In addition to an effective theater architecture, SOUTHCOM requires sufficient resources to support the goals and objectives of the National Drug Control Strategy. The U.S. military services have continued to contribute CD detection and monitoring resources to SOUTHCOM in the form of dedicated CD aircraft flying hours and ship steaming days. The standing Joint Chiefs of Staff CD Execute Order establishes specific requirements. However, while the Air Force and Navy are tasked to provide a specific number of platforms, higher priority contingencies, maintenance requirements, and exercises have prevented consistent and full allocation of these platforms to SOUTHCOM. Over the past years, we have lost some capabilities. For example, a degraded intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability is eroding the effectiveness of our CD efforts. Adequate ISR capabilities are key to quickly and successfully reacting to drug traffickers' changes in operational patterns.

CD requirements place additional demands on low-density/high demand forces. As a result, we are confronted with a large mission and limited resources. In response to this challenge, we have devised creative approaches that will enable us to effectively and productively carry out our CD responsibilities in a resource-constrained environment. We have developed a three-part strategy to sustain our CD efforts.

#### COUNTERDRUG STRATEGY

The key components of the strategy are: (1) promoting effective regional responses, (2) pursuing better coordination and more effective employment of inter-agency resources, and (3) applying innovative tactics, techniques and procedures.

##### *Regionalizing the Effort*

By expanding joint and combined operations, we are moving toward multilateral and regional responses. For example, through the SOUTHCOM sponsored Caribbean Nations Security Conference and the Association of Caribbean Command Military Chiefs, we are strengthening our relationships with European forces in the region. Subsequently, the contribution of British, Dutch, and French surface and air assets to multinational CD operations in the Caribbean has resulted in greater operational efficiency and has lifted some of the burden from U.S. forces in the region.

Exercise United CD 98 (UCD 98) is a prime example of how we are supporting regional initiatives of the Summit of the Americas. Fifteen countries were represented at UCD 98, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Trinidad & Tobago, Venezuela, and the United States. UCD 98 brought together national CD teams that compiled positive and negative lessons learned from air and maritime CD operations. The exercise provided an opportunity to evaluate operations, discuss information sharing, and increase CD cooperation and coordination. In this regard, the Organization of American States is now a full co-sponsoring partner for this year's exercise.

##### *Interagency Involvement*

In much the same way that we have sought better and more complete coordination and cooperation with our European and Latin American partners, we are pursuing a better integrated CD effort with the Departments of State, Justice and Transportation. A Coast Guard Rear Admiral commands the merged Joint Interagency Task Force in Key West, which has 34 designated interagency billets in its new structure. We have also instituted quarterly coordination meetings between CD resource sponsors from State, Defense and the Office of National Drug Control and Policy. In combination, these initiatives are generating a better-managed and more fully coordinated CD effort.

##### *Innovative Approaches*

We have learned that the traffickers study and analyze our operating patterns in much the same way we study and analyze theirs. Therefore, we have developed innovative ways to maximize the use of our limited resources.

One example of this is the series of "pulse" operations we have conducted in the Caribbean. The first such operation, "FRONTIER SHIELD," successfully disrupted the heavy flow of drugs through Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Eastern Caribbean. Anticipating that traffickers would shift their maritime routes westward through the Central Caribbean, we conducted a follow-on operation, "FRONTIER LANCE," that targeted routes to and through Hispaniola. A third operation, "FRONTIER SABER," sequentially targeted transit routes through the Bahamas and the Northern Caribbean.

We are now conducting follow on phases to these operations to stay ahead of the drug traffickers in the Eastern and Central Caribbean. Additionally, Operation "COSTA ESMERALDA" was recently completed along the Western Caribbean movement vector and Operation "CAPER FOCUS," designed to disrupt and interdict drug traffic along the Eastern Pacific movement vector, is underway today.

As a companion to these maritime efforts, we have initiated Operations "CENTRAL SKIES" and "WEEDEATER." These initiatives involve surge operations by U.S. aviation assets in support of Central American and Caribbean CD forces. These operations concentrate our limited helicopter lift assets in specific areas where focused intelligence tells us they will have the greatest effect.

In the Source Zone, we continue to provide Peru and Colombia with night vision equipment and training, improvements and modifications to their interceptors, as well as detection and monitoring support. Our focus is to ensure they maintain the pressure on the long-haul airbridge between Peru and Colombia. It appears that this route remains essentially disrupted.

This has forced drug traffickers to shift their air routes over Brazil and increase their reliance on the region's extensive river systems. Anticipating this shift, we have embarked on an ambitious five-year program to enhance the riverine interdiction capabilities of Peru and Colombia. In 1998, the first year of the program, Peru opened a joint riverine training center at Iquitos. Additionally, indigenous riverine support craft have either been launched or are under construction and a training and provisioning program is underway that will ultimately result in the fielding of 12 operational Riverine Interdiction Units in Peru. In Colombia, we have supported improvements to their riverine infrastructure and the formation of seven additional Riverine Combat Elements. We are optimistic that this type of support will enable Peru and Colombia to exert greater control over their inland waterways. We are considering extending the program to other nations in the region.

SOUTHCOM is also assisting Colombia in its efforts to reform and restructure its Armed Forces, transition the Colombian Army from its defensive mindset, forge a better union with the National Police, and improve its overall CD capabilities. Colombian leadership is in the process of creating a Counterdrug Joint Intelligence Center and a Colombian Army Counterdrug Battalion. This battalion is a highly mobile unit, designed from the ground up to work with the Colombian National Police, other Colombian Army units, or independently, taking the fight to traffickers in the safe havens of Southeastern Colombia where the majority of cocaine production takes place. SOUTHCOM is working closely with the Colombian Armed Forces providing them guidance, advice, and training, as they develop these new, important and very relevant capabilities.

#### COUNTRY AND REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS

With the exception of Paraguay, which was granted a waiver based on vital interests of the United States, all nations within the AOR have passed the counter-narcotics certification process.

##### *Peru and Bolivia*

For the second consecutive year, we have observed significant reductions in coca cultivation, leaf production and base production in both Peru and Bolivia. During 1998, cultivation dropped 26 percent in Peru and 17 percent in Bolivia, while leaf and base production dropped by roughly 25 percent in both countries. It is clear that Peru and Bolivia are making steady and significant inroads into cocaine production and we are assessing equipment and infrastructure development options that will enable them to sustain or accelerate these positive trends.

##### *Colombia*

Colombia is the producer of 75 percent of the world's cocaine HCl. Lack of government control over nearly 40 percent of the countryside has allowed cocaine cultivation in Colombia to increase by 28 percent in the last year. Colombia's situation is especially complex because the sophisticated international narco-criminal organizations cooperate with a mature insurgency and an illegal paramilitary movement. Colombian security forces confront a triangle of violence with themselves on one point, two well entrenched insurgent groups on another, and brutal paramilitary organizations on the third. Together, these agents of instability and violence threaten not only the democratic and economic security of Colombia, but provide a sanctuary for a thriving narco-criminal element. Operating from safe havens in eastern and southern Colombia, they are enlarging their domains into Panama's Darien Province, as well as Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru.

We have long recognized that Colombia's problems are international in their dimensions. The events of the past year have brought that point home to all of the countries I have mentioned. We are aggressively working with all of the affected nations to encourage unity of effort against a threat they are individually incapable of defeating.

Despite this dim picture, I believe Colombia is headed in the right direction and I am cautiously optimistic. While the Government of Colombia seeks a negotiated settlement with the insurgents, Colombia's military leaders are purposefully pursuing reform and restructuring initiatives that will make the security forces increasingly competitive on the battlefield.

##### *Venezuela*

We have adopted a "wait and see" posture in the aftermath of Hugo Chavez' landslide victory in Venezuela's December presidential elections. We have been encouraged by President Chavez' declaration that he desires closer and broader cooperation with the U.S. on CD matters. It is notable that on several occasions since taking office, President Chavez has pledged "absolute and total" commitment to the re-

gional CD effort. However, Venezuela has recently denied CD overflight requests. My staff is conducting an assessment of the impact of this stance by the Venezuelan Government. A U.S. delegation will visit Venezuela soon to discuss CD cooperation. It is imperative that we come to closure with Venezuela on CD cooperation, otherwise our efforts throughout the region will suffer in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

#### *Panama*

As our forces withdraw in compliance with the treaties, I have concerns about the ability of local security forces to deal with the security challenges that confront Panama. The Panamanian Public Forces (PPF) are neither organized nor equipped to deal with incursions by Colombian insurgents into the Darien and San Blas Provinces. The Maritime Service has already expressed reservations about their capabilities to provide for canal security requirements and we have detected recent indications of an upsurge in drug trafficking in and around Panama.

It will be necessary to completely reassess our security relationship with Panama as our forces depart. We have voiced strong support for increased security assistance funding for Panama to enable the maritime service to strengthen its capabilities, and we are prepared to intensify our engagement with the PPF to assist them in meeting other emerging security challenges.

#### *Central America*

Beyond Panama, the other nations of Central America have become a vital link in hemispheric efforts to stem the flow of drugs. Fueled by concerns over their emergence as transshipment points and increases in internal drug use, over the past year we have seen the nations of Central America take a more aggressive stance against narcotics trafficking. Interagency estimates tell us that as much as 59 percent of the cocaine destined for the U.S. travels along the Western Caribbean/Eastern Pacific/Central American movement corridor. We have increased our involvement and engagement with the nations of Central America in the counterdrug struggle. Through Operation "CENTRAL SKIES" we are providing tactical airlift support to host nation security and law enforcement elements, enabling them to respond instantly to intelligence cues. Some significant seizures have occurred as a result of these operations. We have also forged maritime agreements with several of these countries that have facilitated interdiction efforts in their territorial waters. Increased cooperation with Central American countries is slowly but steadily increasing the risk to traffickers along a heavily used movement corridor.

#### *Caribbean Basin*

The Caribbean serves as the conduit for 30 percent of the cocaine destined for the United States. Two primary conveyances are used. The first is small aircraft that depart South America and fly to areas off Puerto Rico, Haiti, Cuba, and the Bahamas where they conduct airdrops to waiting high-speed boats that retrieve the drugs and bring them ashore. These high-speed boats are the second common conveyance and are referred to as "go-fasts." These "go-fasts" conduct open-ocean transits or skirt the Central American coast to crossing points on the Yucatan Peninsula. As in Central America, many Caribbean nations have aggressively taken up the fight against drug traffickers by participating in operations, such as "WEEDEATER." Even so, the ability of DTOs to selectively exploit the limited security and law enforcement capabilities available to Caribbean nations, and particularly Haiti and the small island states of the Lesser Antilles, creates a pressing need for U.S. support and close coordination of regional responses to drug transshipment operations.

SOUTHCOM, in partnership with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Department of State, and the U.S. Coast Guard, continues to work to enhance regional interdiction capabilities by providing host nations with training, infrastructure repair, modernization, and support for maritime operations in support of host nation CD goals. The Caribbean Support Tender, soon to be deployed with a multinational crew, will provide Caribbean nations with a mobile training classroom for their Navy and Coast Guard forces.

#### CONCLUSION

My vision of the future for this region is succinctly stated in our recently published Theater Strategy:

"A community of democratic, stable and prosperous nations successfully countering illicit drug activities and other transnational threats; served by professional, modernized, interoperable security forces that embrace democratic principles, respect human rights, are subordinate to civil authority, and are capable and supportive of multilateral responses to challenges."

Printed in Spanish and English, the document containing this statement has been delivered to every military leader in our area of responsibility. I consider this vision to be realistic, achievable and affordable.

In SOUTHCOM we do not need armor divisions, carrier battle groups, fighter wings or Marine Expeditionary Forces. We need modest numbers of the right kinds of people, with the right skills, doing the right things at the right times and places. This is an economy of force theater and I have every intention of keeping it that way. However, cheap does not mean free. Our modest requirements for forces and resources must be met and the unique needs of this region must be considered. I have mentioned several areas where levels of support have receded unacceptably placing the mission at risk. These shortfalls must be addressed and our forces must be positioned where they will do the most good. I request your continued support of SOUTHCOM, especially our efforts to create an efficient and effective theater architecture for the next century.

Senator COVERDELL. I appreciate it very much.

General WILHELM. Thank you, sir.

Senator COVERDELL. That was very informative. It does raise a series of questions, General. If I might begin.

We are going to have to kind of work our way through this. Going back to my opening statement, apart from the architectural reconstruction that you have outlined here, would you comment on the condition of or your view of Panama and its situation without any presence at all and no standing military in concert with the other forces that are now so obvious in the area? Your general overview of that situation beyond security for that immediate area, beyond the assets that it provided us in terms of the logistics you described here.

Second, what your general observation is about the President-elect's overture. What is your view that that means?

Let us start with those two, and then we will come back to some of these technical issues that you have raised here.

General WILHELM. Yes, sir. First, sir, regarding the future security posture of Panama, I certainly believe that there can be no mistake about it. The United States presence in Panama was really an essential element in the nation's security posture for a great many years and probably even more so in the aftermath of Just Cause in 1989 when their military forces were disassembled and were replaced by the Panamanian Public Forces.

At this moment, as we look at Panama, we do see some rather significant challenges, and you mentioned one of them in your opening comments. One of the first manifestations that we have seen of Panama's inability to protect the sovereignty of its borders has been the repeated incursions by FARC guerrillas into the southern Darien Province. You mentioned some of the conditions that have emerged in municipalities such as La Miel where Panamanians have actually been displaced from their homes by insurgents either seeking safe passage to other parts of Colombia through Panama or are there for purposes of rest and recuperation. So, I think that is certainly one source for concern, and the Panamanian Public Forces in my judgment are neither manned, trained, nor equipped to contend with the kind of threat that the fronts of the FARC can present on their southern border.

Another concern that has surfaced within Southern Command is what we perceive to be the beginning of a more vigorous thrust by narcotraffickers into Panama and into areas in and around the canal. We conducted Operation Conjuntos, which did enjoy some

successes in terms of interdicting the flow of narcotics, but by interdicting it, we confirmed the fact that it is an active movement vector and that narcotics are moving into Panama and in quantities that we had not seen in recent times.

We have had a dialog with the Panamanian Maritime Service, their Coast Guard equivalent, and that dialog has centered primarily on the responsibilities that both nations have under the second treaty, the treaty concerning the neutrality of the Panama Canal, and specifically our shared obligation to ensure right of free passage and the neutrality of the canal. It was not my program, but if the information at my disposal is correct, I think the Department of State attempted to get about a half a million dollars in additional funding to help the Maritime Service expand and improve their capabilities to provide some of the maritime protection for the canal.

As you would appreciate, sir, we are very mindful, of course, of our responsibilities under the neutrality treaty, and we know that we have the obligation to intervene either cooperatively with the Panamanians or unilaterally if the condition dictates. So, we are conducting contingency planning to that end.

We also have concerns about the transits of what we refer to as our high value assets transiting the canal. Previously this was a relatively simple mission because we had forces on the ground to provide additional security for these high value transits, and now we are having to come up with alternative approaches, some of which involve cooperation with Panamanian security forces.

We have maintained an active dialog with Ambassador Simon Ferro in Panama.

We look forward, sir, to establishing a new relationship with Mrs. Moscoso and her administration when she takes office in September and the development of cooperative security arrangements will be very high on our agenda.

Senator COVERDELL. Well, I take it from what you are saying that if there was a possibility yet of negotiating not the same presence, because that is obviously impossible here to retrench this architecture—it is so far implemented that it just stands out from seeing this presentation that we would be going backward if you tried to rebuild what had been there. But I do take it that you think it would be valuable for there to be a modern presence associated with the changes that have already occurred in Panama if the Panamanian Government were to ever agree to that.

General WILHELM. Senator, I think you hit the nail squarely on the head. Of course, when the negotiations were terminated last June, we had to make alternative arrangements because of the prosecution of counternarcotics and other operations must be continuous. So, as you pointed out, yes, we have moved ahead aggressively.

None of that, however, moves Panama or in any way alters its geographic significance. Truly in every respect, it was the optimum location to conduct counterdrug operations in the transit zone and the source zone, eastern Pacific and Caribbean. I would certainly say that if in the future it were possible to conclude an FOL-like arrangement with Panama, it might well be in the best interest of both countries.

Senator COVERDELL. Potentially the third, the still illusive third, FOL would be ideal if it could be established in Panama.

General WILHELM. That would certainly appear to me to be a possibility, yes, sir.

Senator COVERDELL. It would strike me that this 110 percent figure would be even larger given where you are now if that were one of the FOL's in the picture.

General WILHELM. Yes, sir. I really hate to hang my hat too heavily on that 110 percent figure.

Senator COVERDELL. I understand.

General WILHELM. As you would guess, that causes people to say, oh, OK, so you got 10 percent excess capacity or excess capability. So, we will just pare you back a little more.

I do need to put the caveat with that, that if we had every asset that is currently obligated to us under the JCS execute order under which we work, we could cover 15 percent of the total area 15 percent of the time. So, that would be 110 percent of a fraction of the area. So, I do like to make that point very clearly that we are not seeking an overmatch in capability.

But I would have to do the geometry on that, sir. Part of the expanding coverage we get using Costa Rica is that it is a little bit further north, so it gives us some eastern Pacific coverage that we probably would not have out of Panama, but I am not sure that that would be statistically significant. I would have to scribe the arcs again to come up with a correct geographic computation of the coverage we would get.

Senator COVERDELL. Is the assertion that there are very significant costs in the build-out—you acknowledged certain savings that are occurring in terms of a more productive force, smaller force, but maintaining the mission. But the material we are looking at suggests considerable sums of money are necessary to make these FOL's, the three of them, give you the capacity to achieve this reach that you are talking about here.

General WILHELM. Yes, sir. There are an awful lot of numbers that have floated in open source and in various briefings about the cost of doing the necessary refurbishments to the FOL sites to make them fully functional. I got a briefing, sir—I believe it was Thursday or Friday of last week—from Lt. Gen. Lansford Trapp who is my Air Force component commander, and General Trapp had just finished doing a pretty rigorous scrub of the requirements with his staff. What they came up with was a military construction requirement of about \$122.5 million for all three FOL's.

Having said that, I regard that as being somewhat overpriced because it contained facilities that I do not think are necessary, bachelor officers' quarters and enlisted quarters, where I believe we could make use of local hotels at probably a substantial savings and avoid the recurring maintenance costs.

So, the \$122.5 million sounds like a lot of money, but as a practical matter, sir, to operate Howard Air Force Base ran us \$75.8 million per year. This would be a one-time cost to create the expeditionary facilities we would need to operate in Curacao, Aruba, and Manta, those three locations. After that, the annual recurring cost would be significantly less than the \$75.8 million that we

spent in Panama. So, I think we need to look at the economics on a pretty broad scope.

Senator COVERDELL. Would you comment on the developments in Colombia? I suppose I should ask you to do it specifically as it relates to Panama, but I would like to hear your observations just in general with regard to developments there of late.

General WILHELM. Senator, I would be pleased to do that.

I run the risk of being a real minority speaker here, but Senator Coverdell, I am cautiously optimistic about Colombia. I have personally been in and out of Colombia for about 20 years, so I have had an opportunity to watch the problems grow. I think I have probably a better than average acquaintance with most of the key players on the military side.

The reason that I am cautiously optimistic about Colombia is I think that with the inauguration of President Pastrana on the 7th of August of last year and with the installation of the new team that he put in charge of the nation's defense structure, I think really a first-rate team assumed the reins. They took a loss. No question about it. The leader of the team was Minister of Defense Rodrigo Lloreda, and when Minister Lloreda stepped down, I think that was a loss for Colombia. But he left behind people like General Fernando Tapias who is the commander of their armed forces, General Mora Rangel, the commander of the army; Admiral Garcia, commander of the navy. These are gentlemen who I have known for quite some time. It is a solid leadership team. They know their business. They are professionals. The country has, in fact, published a national strategy to combat the many ills that plague them. The frequent lament of the military in the past has been the armed forces are at war, but Colombia is not. And, sir, there was more than a little bit of truth to what the generals and admirals were saying. So, I see competent leadership.

I see an aggressive and I think constructive approach to future defense structure. Minister Lloreda was really the leader of a movement to overhaul the way the armed forces were organized. As I know the Congress is aware, for a great many years there has been a privileged class of soldiers. Those who lost out in the draft lottery but had a high school degree were categorized as bachelaris, and by a function of law could not participate in combat operations, and that was over 30,000 troops. You cannot run an army that way.

Minister Lloreda's plan, which has been adopted by General Tapias and is being carried forward, would place 15,000 additional combat troops in the field this year, next year, and the following year. So, that would be 45,000 more trigger pullers off of overpasses in Bogota and out in the southeastern part of the country where the real battles are to be fought.

As I know you are aware, sir, Southern Command is very heavily engaged with the Colombian armed forces now in the construction of a counterdrug battalion. I was down there about 3 weeks ago and visited the troops in training at Toleda. Sir, if you would like, I will get into that in more detail. I will not now in the interest of leaving the floor open for other questions.

So, for all of these reasons, I think I see a tighter national team forming. I see a country that is beginning to realize that it has

problems instead of just a national police force led by an outstanding man like Jose Serrano, and I see better team work between the Colombian National Police on one hand and the armed forces of Colombia on the other.

This team work I think has been demonstrated fairly recently, though it did not make front page news in the Miami Herald or any other newspapers in the United States. In a kind of quiet but effective way, the armed forces of Colombia boxed the ears of the FARC on at least three occasions: once in Arauca, once in Uraba, and once I believe it was in Cordoba, three provinces where they inflicted what I would call mid-level tactical defeats on the FARC. And this is on the tail of those 10 very widely publicized major tactical reverses that the armed forces and police suffered at the hands of the FARC beginning at Las Delicias and extending all the way up to Mitu. So, sir, that is some of the rationale for the cautious optimism that I feel at this time.

Senator COVERDELL. Well, that is most encouraging, the first encouraging news that I have heard in recent months. I hope your optimism is borne out. Obviously, moving 45,000 new and, according to you, highly trained people into the field is going to change the balance, that is a significant force.

General WILHELM. Yes, sir.

Senator COVERDELL. General, the extension of Colombian narco-trafficking agents has been talked about recently here as it relates to Cuba. I was curious as to any observation you might have about any changes or acceleration of activity that intertwines itself with Cuba.

General WILHELM. Yes, sir. I think probably the one event that probably spiked interest in this I think it was about a 7 metric ton seizure, if I remember correctly, that occurred off the north coast of Colombia, and I think it was determined to be en route to Cuba, which caused some speculation about where it might go from that point forward.

Senator, as I know you are very much aware, Cuba has bilateral condrug agreements with 18 nations, obviously not the United States. I know of no move afoot on our part to establish such relationships.

I really am not aware—and I talk with the Colombians very frequently about this—of any aggressive desires on their part to expand beyond the existing relationships they have with Cuba, which to the best of my knowledge are primarily information sharing. I do not know of any tactical cooperation or any ability for their forces to tactically cooperate. And in fact, Colombia does not really have the operational reach to get to Cuba, and Cuba does not have the operational reach to get to Colombia. So, I am personally unaware of any designs that might exist in Bogota to expand that relationship.

Senator COVERDELL. General, if you were about to conclude a career and contemplate doing other things, as you were to leave this post, what would your general sense be as you walked away, your reflections about the level of concern because of your unique oversight and knowledge of how we are doing in general in this region, for which you have had charge? Do you feel better? Are you optimistic as the point you made about Colombia? Do you harbor con-

cerns about the direction? What would be your general demeanor when you had a cup of coffee with one of your former colleagues and you were thinking about the future of the United States, this hemisphere of democracies, a new millennium? What would be the tone of that meeting?

General WILHELM. Senator, that is a great question that could lead to a very long answer.

Senator COVERDELL. Take your time.

General WILHELM. I will try to be as concise as I can possibly be.

First, when I assumed command of Southern Command on the 26th of September 1997, I have always felt that I sort of assumed command of a success story, a team that was in first place in an international sense. I say that because I looked at the region and then I thought about the region in the context of the national security strategy and its two principal tenets of engagement and enlargement. Yes, we were engaged, but more important was the whole subject of enlargement. There I stared at a region consisting of 32 countries, which is what my operating domain consists of, and 31 of them had functioning democracies with free market economies. It certainly was not that way 20 years ago when most of Central America was embroiled in civil wars. There were either military strongmen or outright Communist dictators who held sway in most of the nations, and the majority of the people went to bed at night serving under the rule of someone other than a leader that they had popularly elected. So, that really is I think kind of an inspiring success story in a lot of ways: 31 out of 32 countries.

And I have made the observation to others because life is a competitive business and I compete with the other four CINC's for every resource that I get, but I said, you know, if you want to look around the world and study your globe for a minute and then nominate to me a region where we can say our national security strategy has really worked, I defy you to beat my region. I think it is a success story.

Sir, I have been doing this for 36 years now and I have come to reach the conclusion that sometimes we do not handle success as well as perhaps we ought to. I would like to see us do a bit more in the region, sir. Having said that, I recognize that there are an awful lot of claimants for very few resources. We have certainly seen that in spades in the Balkans. That was a humanitarian outrage that absolutely demanded our attention, but every time you respond to one of those humanitarian outrages, there are other bill payers. And again, our region was a bill payer for that.

The principal point that I try to make, sir, is that we really need to look at Latin America and the Caribbean in a very pragmatic way and we need to ask ourselves where our future is. And I just cite a few facts.

Very interesting to me that Chile, a country of 14.5 million people, 14.5 million folks, we do more business with them every year than we do with India which has 952 million.

Brazil, big country, biggest one we have got, 164 million. We do more business with Brazil every year than we do with China which has 1.3 billion.

And the beat goes on and on and on. There are many examples. I point out that there are 411 million people living in my area of

responsibility, and they all have a requirement for imported goods and services. They do an awful lot of trade among themselves, but even when they have completed all of that, 44 cents out of every dollar that they spend on imported goods and services are imported goods and services from the United States of America.

Then we look at, to me very, very important, demographic trends. Where is the world and the region going? Right now we are the fifth largest Spanish speaking country in the world, the United States. By about 2005, we will be the third largest Spanish speaking country in the world. And since we did the measurement in 1997, we used 2047 as the benchmark year when there will be 100,000,000 people of Hispanic descent in the United States.

My observation is what we have previously referred to as an American culture will really become a culture of the Americas. When you see events like the free trade area of the Americas, which is I hope heading toward a successful implementation in the year 2005, and when we think about the projections made by economists that by the year 2010, we will do more business with our neighbors to the South than we will with all of Europe and Japan combined, it really points the way I think toward a future in which the Caribbean and Latin America play a very, very important part for our country.

So, for all of those reasons, I advocate and argue, just as strongly as I possibly can, for sufficient resources to do the job that needs to be done in Latin America to sustain these democracies because many of them are fragile. We know that. They are youthful. They have got a lot of rough roads to go down. There are many, many economic problems that confront the region. The near total absence of a middle class in a lot of the countries troubles me greatly, though it is not primarily a military matter.

So, sir, I guess you are preparing me for September of the year 2000 when I do have to take this suit off, and I have no earthly idea what I am going to do with myself. But I think those are a few of the things that might be going through my mind.

Senator COVERDELL. Well, General, I appreciate the observations very much. I think that I take some comfort. They are reinforcing when you take the data that you were referring to, the interaction between this region and the United States. I only think it underscores what a high priority that ought to suggest to us. I have always felt that we have tended to take too much of its value for granted.

I think that coming into this new century, for all of us, us and our neighbors, all these countries you allude to, we probably all ought to take note of, so to speak, a doctrine of democracy, a criteria of standing democracy, so that our focus is quickly drawn to any incident or circumstance that destabilizes that doctrine and that we not let things slide in such a way that there is a retrenchment which is possible. You mentioned the fragility of these governments. When you look at the power of the narcotic base, it is enough to make you nervous, or me anyway, particularly when it confronts a small or new and fragile government with all the resources they have to destabilize it.

So, I am hopeful that over the next short period of time that we might be able to, with the good work of people such as yourself and

your team and others, bring more focus, resource to making sure that we have done everything we know to do to secure these democracies and make them be the overriding component of the next century versus what we have been dealing with in the past.

I have heard so many facts about the interaction between our countries here, but you have shared yet some new ones. I need to get those from you. They are very, very moving.

General, I am going to keep the record open for 5 days for other Senators so they may pose several particular questions. We may yet pose several others over the next day or 2 to you, both on and off the record. So, you might be prepared over the next several days to have a few more questions that might come from other members who could not attend here today.

I want to thank you for your willingness, as I said at the outset, to be here. And I always want to take the opportunity to thank somebody that has devoted their entire life to the welfare of our country. You represent so many of your colleagues. So, if you would first accept the thank you from a citizen and extend it on to the others who work with you as well, I would be most appreciative.

General WILHELM. Senator Coverdell, that is very kind of you, and I will certainly pass your words along personally to my people and I have lots of ways to do that. It is much appreciated, sir.

Senator COVERDELL. Well, thank you for your service and duty. Thank you.

We are going to move, after the general has gotten his material here, to expedite the hearing of the nomination of Gwen Clare to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Ecuador.

Thank you, General.

General WILHELM. Thank you, sir.

[Whereupon, at 10:56 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

#### **Additional Questions Submitted Subsequent to the Hearing**

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RESPONSES OF GEN. CHARLES E. WILHELM TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JESSE HELMS

#### PANAMA

#1. SENATOR HELMS. How important have the U.S. military facilities in Panama been to the overall effort to combat drug trafficking in the region? Has the Department of Defense done any cost comparisons of utilizing military facilities other than those in Panama to perform the same functions? Please explain their conclusions.

GENERAL WILHELM. U.S. military facilities in Panama have been essential to supporting our overall counterdrug efforts. In addition to providing basing for over 2,000 counterdrug sorties per year, Panama also supported source and transit zone interdiction operations, pierside boardings and searches, and hosted training facilities for U.S. and host nation counterdrug units. Since 1995, missions flown from Panama supported host nation counterdrug operations resulting in the shootdown, forcedown, and/or destruction of 123 narcotrafficking aircraft.

We studied several alternatives for replacing our Panamanian airfield facilities with emphasis on sustaining our level of counterdrug effort at a reasonable cost. We considered existing U.S. military bases, specifically MacDill Air Force Base, Florida; Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico; and Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. These alternatives were inadequate because they reduced total Detection and Monitoring (D&M) coverage to fifty percent of that previously provided from Howard Air Force Base.

To maintain an operational counternarcotics reach into the Source and Transit Zones, we require a network of Forward Operating Locations (FOLs), covering three areas: the Caribbean, South America, and Central America. This geographic cov-

erage allows U.S. Southern Command to continue supporting the National Drug Control Strategy effectively but at a reduced cost. The cost of enhancing and operating three FOLs for 10 years is 40 percent of the cost required to operate Howard Air Force Base for the same period.

FOLs provide an effective and efficient alternative to maintain our presence in the region for counterdrug operations.

#2. SENATOR HELMS. Is there any doubt in your mind that you could carry out your anti-drug mission better and easier if we were able to keep U.S. troops in Panama?

GENERAL WILHELM. Keeping U.S. troops in Panama is not critical to the success of our counterdrug mission. Panamanian facilities and its geographic advantage provided an optimum location to support aircraft conducting counterdrug missions in Central America, South America, the Eastern Pacific, and the Caribbean. To compensate for the loss of Panamanian facilities, we developed and implemented an option to replicate our counterdrug Detection and Monitoring (D&M) efforts, at a reduced cost.

Using a network of Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) in three regions—the Caribbean, South America, and Central America—we can sustain counterdrug D&M coverage, without the troop presence, base infrastructure, and costs associated with Howard Air Force Base. We are currently conducting counterdrug operations from a Caribbean FOL (Aruba/Curacao) and a South American FOL (Manta, Ecuador). Improvements to runways, taxiways, ramps and other support facilities are needed in order for these sites to meet fully our operational and safety requirements. When these improvements have been made, our D&M coverage will be approximately eighty percent of that previously provided from Howard Air Force Base. Once we begin operations from a Central American FOL, our overall D&M coverage will increase to approximately 110 percent of that provided from Panama.

#3. SENATOR HELMS. After we turn over the Panama Canal, this country retains a treaty obligation to help preserve the neutrality and stable operation of the canal. Is there any doubt in your mind that you could do that job better and easier if we were able to keep U.S. troops in Panama?

GENERAL WILHELM. Southern Command can fully support its treaty obligations with the new theater architecture, continued engagement, exercises, and contingency plans. For future negotiations, I would support a Forward Operations site in Panama, with a reduced presence, to maintain operational flexibility and reach within the theater.

#4. SENATOR HELMS. What is your assessment of Panama's planning for reverted military facilities? Since the return to democratic rule in 1989, what has been Panama's record in utilizing land, buildings, and other facilities that have been transferred back to Panamanian control?

GENERAL WILHELM. The Secretary of Defense approved SOUTHCOM's Panama Canal Treaty Implementation Plan on 3 February 1992. At this point we have returned approximately 90 percent of lands and 65 percent of facilities to the Government of Panama. I defer comments on Panama's reutilization of reverted facilities to the United States Ambassador to Panama.

#5. SENATOR HELMS. When we speak of keeping U.S. troops in Panama, many think of a U.S.-run "base." But could you explain how we might fashion an access agreement that allows us to deploy troops there using facilities jointly operated with the Panamanians?

GENERAL WILHELM. We have already executed a majority of the actions necessary for all U.S. forces to leave Panama prior to noon on 31 December 1999. Southern Command headquarters is established in Miami; Howard Air Force Base has ceased air operations; our two Joint Interagency Task Forces have merged in Key West; the Special Operations Command South has relocated to Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico; and U.S. Army South stood up operations at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico on 31 July 1999. All transition actions are in motion, and in my opinion, irreversible.

We are currently completing the final critical step of resetting the theater architecture—the establishment of Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) in Manta, Ecuador; Aruba and Curacao; and a yet-to-be determined Central American location in support of Department of Defense and Interagency counterdrug air operations.

A similar access agreement for Panama might be a subject for discussion if raised by the new Panamanian government after it assumes office in September.

## FORWARD OPERATING LOCATIONS (FOLS)

#6. SENATOR HELMS. You have seen the estimated costs of operating the “forward operating locations” in Peru, Aruba, and Ecuador. Is it cost-effective to build second-rate facilities elsewhere when the U.S. taxpayer has already paid for first-rate facilities in Panama?

GENERAL WILHELM. We are resetting the theater architecture to accomplish our theater engagement and counterdrug missions. The new architecture includes the capability to maintain Detection and Monitoring (D&M) coverage from FOLS in three regions: the Caribbean, South America, and Central America.

A network of FOLS allows us to sustain our counterdrug D&M footprint effectively and efficiently. By investing in moderate improvements to host nation airfields and operating facilities, we will mitigate risks and create a safe operating environment for our deployed forces.

To accomplish our missions, and meet requisite safety and operational standards, the military construction requirement at our two operational FOLS will be \$122.47 million. After adding this investment to an estimated ten-year FOL operating cost, the total FOL option will require only 40 percent of the funds needed to operate Howard Air Force Base for the same period with deployed forces. From an operational and safety standpoint, these will not be second-rate facilities.

#7. SENATOR HELMS. We understand that you have described the “forward operating locations” (FOLS) as “expeditionary” facilities—meaning that the U.S. deployments will be small and brief (and perhaps) not even military. In light of our long-term struggle against drugs and our permanent security obligations in this Hemisphere, could these FOLS ever fill the void of losing access to Panama?

GENERAL WILHELM. FOLS in Curacao/Aruba; Manta, Ecuador, and a future Central American (CENTAM) location will meet and, in most cases, exceed the capabilities provided from Panama. Manta provides better deep source zone (SZ) and Eastern Pacific transit zone (TZ) coverage. Curacao/Aruba provides for both SZ and TZ coverage. A CENTAM location will provide TZ coverage in both the Eastern Pacific and Western Caribbean. FOLS will provide more geographic coverage, longer station times in key areas, and greater flexibility in positioning assets.

When compared with area coverage provided by Howard Air Force Base, one FOL (Manta or Curacao/Aruba) provides approximately 65 percent area coverage; two FOLS (Manta & Curacao/Aruba) provide approximately 80 percent area coverage; and three FOLS (Manta, Curacao/Aruba, and CENTAM) will provide approximately 110 percent area coverage.

## TENDING TO THREATS AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE AMERICAS WITHOUT FORWARD DEPLOYMENT

#8. SENATOR HELMS. One of your jobs is to tend to the security threats in the Western Hemisphere. Is there any doubt in your mind that you could do your job better by keeping troops in Panama (particularly because after we withdraw from Panama, the only sizable deployment under your command outside the continental United States will be in Puerto Rico)?

GENERAL WILHELM. The closure of Howard Air Force Base and Rodman Naval Station coupled with the relocation and reduction of Southern Command component forces has challenged our ability to react quickly to events in the southern and western reaches of our Area of Responsibility (AOR). Southern Command’s restructured theater architecture will allow us to continue to conduct regional engagement and support to counterdrug operations from bases in Puerto Rico, the Continental United States, and forward operating locations in the AOR.

Southern Command has been evaluating and revising theater contingency and functional plans to accommodate the loss of U.S. basing in Panama, and adjusting to the downsizing and relocation of our components to Puerto Rico and the Continental United States.

## COLOMBIA

#9. SENATOR HELMS. Critics of our “war on drugs” have criticized policies that they say, “militarize” our anti-drug efforts. In Colombia, we have seen what happens when the other side, the narco-traffickers, militarize their operations by allying with the guerrillas. Under that circumstance, is there any substitute for the military playing a key role in confronting the narco-guerrilla threat?

GENERAL WILHELM. Under current conditions, I see no viable substitute for Colombian military involvement in countering the intertwined narcotics trafficking and insurgent threats in Colombia. Even though the Colombian National Police (CNP) charter requires them to take the lead in addressing the counterdrug effort,

current circumstances justify aggressive engagement and support by Colombian armed forces in counterdrug operations. The Colombian military plays a key role by providing security during CNP counterdrug operations.

Recognizing a need for specially trained and equipped forces, the Colombian government has recently demonstrated its commitment to improve military support to counterdrug operations. The development and fielding of a dedicated Army counter-narcotics battalion reflects this commitment. This highly mobile organization, designed from the ground up to work with the CNP, is focused on supporting CNP counterdrug law enforcement activities in remote areas. The airlift and security provided by the military allows the CNP to "get to the fight," in the jungles, in the insurgent-controlled safe-havens, where the majority of cocaine production takes place.

This is a big step. I am encouraged by Colombia's commitment to provide their National Police with the mobility and firepower needed to minimize operational risks and maximize opportunities for success during counterdrug law enforcement operations. The CNP and military, when used together, offer Colombia the best option for countering their growing narcoguerrilla threat. The U.S. can bolster this joint team by providing increased support to the Colombian Armed Forces while maintaining its current level of support to the Colombian National Police.

#10. SENATOR HELMS. Please describe the U.S. military support being provided to the Colombian armies "counter narcotics battalion." How much does this operation cost? What kind of equipment is being donated? What additional forms of support are being considered for this battalion?

GENERAL WILHELM. U.S. military training and material support is being provided for the Colombian Army Counterdrug Battalion. Battalion Training is being conducted in phases by Special Operations Forces from the 7th Special Forces Group. Phase One training, April through June 1999, included basic instruction for the battalion staff, one line company, the reconnaissance platoon, the medical platoon, and the mortar platoon. Phase Two training, July through September 1999, will include the remaining two line companies and the rest of the battalion combat support and combat service support personnel. Finally, Phase Three training is scheduled for October through December 1999 and will include company and battalion level collective training. All branches of the Colombian military and national police will participate in field exercises during Phase Three. The total cost of training is approximately \$3.9 million.

Material support provided to the battalion comes from two sources. The Office of the Department of Defense for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support (DEP&S) funds material support of \$3.5 million. Equipment provided includes uniform items, field gear, medical equipment, and communications equipment. Section 506 Drawdown equipment for Fiscal Year 1998 will be directed by the Colombian Military Group Commander as supplement for the battalion.

Additional uniform items, field gear, communications equipment, Meals Ready-to-Eat (MREs), and ten 5-Ton trucks were among the items requested. Drawdown material requests total \$1.2 million.

In all, the training and material support is approximately \$8.6 million. This allows an independent, skilled, self-sufficient, and technologically smart counterdrug battalion to enter the jungles of Colombia and, with intelligence support from the Joint Intelligence Center, wage a winning counternarcotics war against narcotraffickers in Colombia.

#11. SENATOR HELMS. You know the Colombian army and its leadership better than anyone else in our government. What steps have they taken to become more effective and to improve their human rights record?

GENERAL WILHELM. I dedicate a great deal of my time as Commander in Chief to dealing with issues concerning Colombia. Human rights is at the top of the list. Imbedding the ethic of human rights in our counterpart security forces is and will remain a key element of our strategy in Latin America. I emphasized this commitment to the previous Minister of Defense Lloreda, the current Armed Forces Commander, General Tapias, and the Commander of the Army, General Mora, and I see encouraging improvements in the attitudes and actions of Colombian Armed Forces with respect to human rights under the leadership of these officers. Allow me to discuss areas where I consider the Colombians to have made substantial progress.

Overall human rights performance: Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) regularly monitors statistics on human rights violations in Colombia. The Department of State (DoS) provides this data. In their 1998 annual human rights report, DoS reported the Colombian security forces were responsible for three percent of the extrajudicial killings where the perpetrator could be credibly identified. While no number is acceptable here except zero, this does represent substantial progress.

Military officers prosecuted for human rights violations: Past attitudes on the impunity of high level officers are changing for the better. In the last three months, three general officers have been suspended from duty on suspicion of involvement in human rights violations. One of them was subsequently arrested, which I believe sends a strong signal to the rest of the armed forces that the impunity which military officers have traditionally enjoyed has ended.

Commitment to Human Rights Training: General Tapias and General Mora continue to work with SOUTHCOM to expand the Colombian military's human rights training program. SOUTHCOM developed a human rights/law of war handbook jointly with the Colombians and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). This important handbook incorporates international human rights and international humanitarian law standards and will simply and effectively convey the basic code of conduct and international human rights standards to Colombian military personnel of all services.

Severing ties with irregular armed groups "paramilitaries:" Colombian military leaders have ceased collaboration with the paramilitaries and are now pursuing them as enemies of the state. General Tapias reported the Colombian Armed Forces apprehended over 400 paramilitary members in 1998. The military makes it clear that paramilitaries are not their partners.

Military justice reform: SOUTHCOM is working with the Colombian military to establish a Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps in the Colombian Armed Forces. This JAG Corps will guide essential institutional reforms and ensure human rights violators in the Armed Forces are investigated and prosecuted when allegations are substantiated. We are in the early stages of developing this program.

Other actions in progress: Other developments which represent measurable progress towards improving Armed Forces support of human rights in Colombia include disbanding the 20th Intel Brigade, cooperation on the End-Use Monitoring Agreement, willingness of the Armed Forces to comply with the Leahy legislation certification requirements, participation in hemispheric human rights conferences, and military subordination to the civilian control by the Pastrana administration. This subordination includes providing support to the peace process. While challenges remain, Colombian military support of human rights programs is on the right track, and their leadership is committed to making the fundamental changes required.

#12. SENATOR HELMS. If the guerrillas can count on endless financing from the drug traffickers and the army is incapable of defeating them as, a military force, what incentive is there for the guerrillas to reach a peaceful settlement?

GENERAL WILHELM. As I see it, for as long as the insurgents and paramilitaries have access to financing provided by drug traffickers, and security forces remain non-competitive on the battlefield, there will be little if any incentive for the insurgents to engage in meaningful negotiations leading to settlement of Colombia's four decade of internal conflict.

In my judgement the success of President Pastrana's peace process is inextricably linked to the battlefield performance of Colombia's security forces. I am firmly convinced that it is within the capabilities of the security forces to meet this challenge. The much improved performance of the armed forces and national police during July's countrywide insurgent offensive and reform initiatives currently underway within the armed forces provide reason for cautious optimism.

This question is closely linked to question #14. For specifics concerning the points raised above, please see my answer to that query.

#13. SENATOR HELMS. What if President Pastrana's peace initiative fails and he is forced to ask the United States for increased military support, including money and equipment for his Army? Are we prepared to tell him "no," even if doing so means the war in Colombia will spiral out of the control?

GENERAL WILHELM. President Pastrana's peace initiatives support a larger plan to end the ills and violence that plague Colombia. Should the peace process not achieve the Government's objectives, I do not foresee the situation in Colombia spiraling out of control.

The Colombian Government's establishment of a demilitarized zone and demonstrated commitment to upcoming peace talks has not mitigated the internal bloodshed. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) have become increasingly aggressive in recent months, conducting highly publicized kidnappings and initiating clashes with Colombian security forces. There have been over 50 such incidents during the last 90 days, highlighted by the Avianca airliner hijacking and the abduction of churchgoers in Cali.

The situation in Colombia is threatening long-term regional stability, peace, and economic prosperity. Additional U.S. government support to Colombia in the form

of increased detection and monitoring, information sharing, equipment and training must remain an option. Raising the level of support for the Colombian military equal to that of the Colombian National Police will help strengthen the Colombian Government's position at the negotiating table and improve their ability to achieve success in the peace process and reverse current trends.

#14. SENATOR HELMS. What sort of impact does the Colombian conflict have on neighboring countries. We understand that Peru and Venezuela have been concerned enough to deploy additional troops on their borders with Colombia and that Panama is practically defenseless against Colombian guerrillas operating in its territory. What can we do to address this threat to regional security?

GENERAL WILHELM. Your question cuts to the heart of an issue that I have pursued continuously since coming to Southern Command. The problems that confront Colombia cannot be viewed in isolation. In one way or another and to varying degrees or extents, the problems that plague Colombia plague each of its five neighbors. Panama, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil have all been affected by the Colombian crisis, and I believe those affects are increasing in their severity.

As you mention, both Peru and Venezuela have deployed forces along their borders with Colombia to prevent or limit intrusions by insurgents, narcotraffickers and paramilitaries. In the case of Venezuela, I have personally visited the majority of their outposts. On any given day, Venezuela has approximately 10,000 troops along the Colombian frontier. The cessation of hostilities between Peru and Ecuador and implementation of the peace accords has freed troops from both nations for commitment on their borders with Colombia. Thus far, Peru has initiated the strongest response. The continuing economic crisis in Ecuador has limited President Mahuad's options; however, the border is a source of deep concern to the Ecuadorian military. Brazil long asserted that it was exempt from the drug problem. Incursions by insurgents and narcotraffickers into the coveted Amazon region have caused Brasilia to rethink its position. Brazil has reinforced its northwestern garrisons and during the past year has initiated focused military operations to protect its sovereignty. Panama's position is a difficult one. The disbanding of its military forces following Operation Just Cause has left the country with only police forces. The Panamanian Public Forces are neither manned, trained, nor equipped to deal with the FARC formations that have made repeated incursions into the southern Darien province.

We have emphasized to all of the militaries in the region that this is a regional threat that can only be effectively countered by a regional response. We have encouraged cooperation at the tactical level among the forces positioned along the borders. We have enjoined the armed forces to vigorously pursue information and intelligence sharing initiatives, and we have provided assistance within our capabilities to develop pathways for these exchanges. Counterdrug operations provide additional opportunities for regional cooperation. The host nation rider program is but one of many examples. Through our exercise program we provide forums where military and civilians leaders can come together to explore ways and means to combat these share threats.

When all is said and done, the decisive battle must be waged and won within Colombia. Based on our experiences elsewhere in Latin America, I am convinced that the solutions to Colombia's problems, which are now the problems of the region, lie in depriving the FARC and ELN of the revenues they receive from narcotraffickers and in achieving and negotiated settlement to the four decades old insurgency. To achieve these goals the armed forces must improve their battlefield performance. The string of tactical defeats suffered by the security forces at the hands of the FARC over the past two years have created a situation whereby the FARC have little incentive to engage in meaningful or substantive negotiations. To improve their combat capabilities, the Colombian armed forces need help that only the United States can or will provide. During the Samper administration we continued to provide assistance to the Colombian National Police, but provided little in the way of meaningful assistance to the armed forces. As a consequence Colombian national capabilities are out of balance. In my judgement, we must increase our support for the armed forces while sustaining our assistance to the Colombian National Police. Though a reputable and well-led force, the national police are overmatched by the heavily armed and increasingly aggressive mobile columns of the FARC.

I am encouraged by the performance of the armed forces during the FARC's countrywide July offensive. In most engagements government forces gave better than they got and we saw new and encouraging levels of cooperation and coordination among the various services and between the armed forces and the police. This may be a harbinger of better things to come. The newly created Counter Drug Battalion is coming together smoothly and we are on schedule to activate the Colombian Joint Intelligence Center in mid-December at Tres Esquinas. I predict that these will be high performance units that will give an excellent account of themselves in the field

and set new standards for the armed forces. To reiterate, our continued support will be essential for the success of these initiatives and for the long-term success of Colombia.

#15. SENATOR HELMS. Have you consulted with regional defense leaders about this problem? (Refer to question #14)

GENERAL WILHELM. Yes, the situation in Colombia has been a topic of frequent discussion with civilian and military leaders in the bordering countries of Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil and Panama. All are concerned about the violence in Colombia and its potential spread across the borders. Concern is not limited to the Andean nations. I have had recent discussions with officials from Chile, Argentina and all of the nations of Central America about the pervasive impacts of narco trafficking and the ills it breeds.

#16. SENATOR HELMS. One of the reasons that our policy has avoided military help for Colombia is because of human rights concerns. Do you think increased U.S. material support and training for the Colombian military will help or hurt the human rights situation in Colombia?

GENERAL WILHELM. Unquestionably, increased U.S. material support and training for the Colombian military will help the human rights situation in Colombia. First I'll address the training issue. All training provided by U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), including every course, seminar, exchange, or exercise, contains a human rights component. The Colombians already have a vigorous human rights training program in place. We aggressively supplement that program with our own additional training. SOUTHCOM's training serves both to reinforce the importance we place on human rights and to bring an international perspective to bear on the human rights efforts of the Colombian Armed Forces. As a matter of public law, we allow only those members of the Armed Forces who demonstrate respect for human rights and compliance with international rights standards to receive the benefit of U.S. military training.

Insofar as material assistance is concerned, the Leahy legislation requires full compliance with human rights as a prerequisite for providing material assistance. Units with a history of human rights abuses cannot receive U.S. material assistance. These restrictions, which we rigidly enforce, provide the Colombian Armed Forces powerful incentives to prevent human rights violations.

#### VENEZUELA

#17. SENATOR HELMS. What are the practical implications of the Venezuelan government's refusal to allow anti-drug flights over its territory?

GENERAL WILHELM. The Venezuelan Government's recent denial of overflight rights for United States aircraft conducting counternarcotics missions has two significant practical or operational implications. First, denial of overflight impedes our ability to maintain contact with suspect aircraft for ultimate handoff to host nation forces and prosecution of end games. The countries most significantly effected are Venezuela and Colombia. Second, denial of Venezuelan overflight adds one to one and one-half hours transit time for detection, monitoring and tracking aircraft proceeding from Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) in Curacao and Aruba on missions over the heart of the source zone in Colombia and Peru. Increased transit time ultimately results in reduced on-station time.

This situation has reinforced the need to attain full operational capability and capacity at the FOL in Manta, Ecuador. Given the ability to operate the full complement of detection, monitoring and tracking assets from Manta, we would have an immediate workaround to Venezuelan overflight restrictions. For this and other reasons it is essential that FOL enhancements be fully funded.

#### UNITED STATES SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS (USARSA)

#18. SENATOR HELMS. What is your response to those who say the School promotes human rights violations and that it should be shut down? Please provide your best argument for keeping the School.

GENERAL WILHELM. Senator Helms, I appreciate this question and the opportunity that it gives me to speak out again in support of the United States Army School of the Americas (USARSA) and the unique and singularly valuable role it is playing in support of the United States Southern Command mission. In my professional view there is every reason in the world to keep the doors of this institution open and there are none at all for closing them. USARSA must be judged on its current merits, not on isolated past deficiencies. As it stands today, USARSA conforms strictly to all United States Army training standards, it vigorously and effectively supports our nation's strategic goals and objectives in this hemisphere, and

it has the most expansive and effective human rights training program of any Department of Defense training institution.

As Commander in Chief of the United States Southern Command, I am one of the primary benefactors of the School and the great work that it does. My position on USARSA has been clear, consistent and unambiguous. This School plays a key and essential role in our regional engagement and counterdrug programs. It serves as an engine for positive change within the militaries of the region. Graduates of USARSA leave Fort Benning with a greatly increased appreciation for the proper role of armed forces in a democratic society; with a clear understanding of the reasons why militaries must be subordinate to civilian leadership, and with greatly heightened awareness of the imperative requirement for respect for human rights and absolute compliance with the tenets of International Humanitarian Law.

I regard professional military education as a long-term investment in healthy relationships with our neighbors to the south. Since its inception more than 50 years ago, the School has trained nearly 60,000 officers, cadets, noncommissioned officers and civilians from North and South America. The School has been a place where lifelong friendships and professional relationships are forged. USARSA critics make much of the handful of graduates who have violated the lessons that were taught to them at the School. No mention is made of the legions of diligent, honorable, principled and highly professional officers who have returned to their countries and played leading roles in enterprises such as the forging of the peace accords between Peru and Ecuador and the recovery of devastated communities from the ravages of Hurricane Mitch. Ignored are the constructive, disciplined, apolitical approaches taken by USARSA graduates when confronted with challenges to democracy and the rule of law as have recently been the cases in Paraguay and Ecuador.

Because of USARSA's critical importance to United States Southern Command and to United States interests in this hemisphere I will make again a statement I have made before . . . if we were to lose USARSA today, I would have no option other than to recreate it tomorrow at considerable expense and with an unacceptable loss in the continuity of one of the centerpieces of our regional engagement strategy.

#### MILITARY'S COMMITMENT TO COUNTER-DRUG OPERATIONS

#19. SENATOR HELMS. Many informed observers believe that the U.S. military has been and remains wary of getting involved in counter-drug operations. What is your opinion of the level of commitment within the military to this mission? What should be done to increase the level of support for this mission?

GENERAL WILHELM. As reflected by our Global Military Forces Policy (GMFP) counterdrug missions are accorded a lower priority than missions that support major theater wars, contingency operations, training, and exercises. Therefore, when we are confronted with contingencies such as Bosnia, Kosovo, and tensions between China and Taiwan, forces are reassigned from counterdrug missions to address these higher priority national military requirements. Though the reasons for these diversions of forces are apparent, it is equally apparent that the inconsistent availability of resources makes coherent planning and execution of counterdrug operations problematic. In simple terms, we face a strategy and forces mismatch. The same high-demand/low-density assets that are required for higher priority contingencies are those most urgently needed for effective and productive counterdrug operations. Thus, we are confronted not with a lack of Department of Defense (DoD) commitment, but with real world operational and resource constraints.

Our most critical deficiency is intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR). We generally have sufficient ISR assets to cover 15 percent of the source and transit zones 15 percent of the time. That is more a statement about the magnitude of the task than of our commitment to it. We need accurate, focused, and timely intelligence in order to effectively commit limited assets and to obtain maximum results from their employment. We are working with the Joint Staff and the intelligence community to address these deficiencies.

In summary, I am convinced that DoD is committed to its role in support of the National Counterdrug Strategy. Because a change in DoD mission priorities is unlikely, I will continue to advocate for increases in total force structure that will provide a broader base of capabilities to meet counterdrug requirements.

#### TERRORISM THREATS IN THE HEMISPHERE

#20. SENATOR HELMS. What is the level of the terrorism threat in the Americas? GENERAL WILHELM. Although we assess the overall terrorist threat to U.S. interests in Southern Command's Area of Responsibility (AOR) as low, Colombia is the exception. Despite recent success in combating terrorism, the presence of terrorist

and criminal groups in Southern Command's AOR continues to pose a credible threat to U.S. individuals, businesses, and government interests.

Latin America accounted for 110 of the 273 (40 percent) international attacks conducted by terrorist groups according to 1998 Department of State Statistics. Of these attacks, 87 were directed against U.S. interests in Latin America. Almost all the anti-U.S. attacks in Latin America happened in Colombia or were connected to Colombian terrorist groups. Of the 87 anti-U.S. attacks in the region, 77 were bombings of multi-national oil facilities in Colombia, in which U.S. businesses have an interest. An oil pipeline-bombing incident in October killed 71 people and injured more than 100.

The National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) continue to pose the most significant terrorist threat to Americans, as evidenced by the recent kidnapping and execution of three U.S. citizens by the FARC (04 MAR 99) and the aircraft hijacking by the ELN (12 APR 99). These two groups continue to increase attacks (kidnappings, bombings, and extortion campaigns) against Colombian security forces and civilians despite the current peace process with the Colombian government. So far this year, 13 American citizens have been kidnapped in Colombia. Four of those victims are still being held. Additionally, three members of the New Tribes Mission abducted in 1993 remain missing.

Arrests of terrorist leaders from the Sendero Luminoso (SL) and robust counterterrorism operations against the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) have significantly diminished terrorist capabilities to conduct attacks in Peru, particularly in urban areas.

Recently, we have witnessed the development of militarized criminal groups (MCG), also known as criminal enterprise armies (CEA), using terrorist-type tactics to achieve their goals and objectives. Reportedly, one such group of bandits is operating along the border of Belize and Guatemala. These groups pose a higher threat throughout our AOR and their capabilities to conduct criminal operations challenge the response of law enforcement agencies.

#### TERRORISM THREATS IN THE HEMISPHERE

#21. SENATOR HELMS. What efforts should be taken to address the insecurity in the "Tri-Border" area with Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil?

GENERAL WILHELM. Terrorist support elements are primarily in the Tri-Border area to generate revenue. They, and other criminal organizations, are attracted to the financially lucrative opportunities offered by contraband trade, particularly in the large duty-free zone. Illicit profits are well hidden and can easily be diverted to fund terrorist organizations and operations in other parts of the world. Similar corruption and contraband opportunities exist in other major duty-free zones in the Southern Command Area of Responsibility, such as those located in Colon, Panama and Margarita Island, Venezuela. The presence of terrorist support elements and sympathizers, and the ease of entering the region with counterfeit travel documents, attract terrorists to the area to hide, rest and recuperate, and possibly to plan, and coordinate operations worldwide.

Security in the Tri-Border area has improved as a result of combined efforts by the Governments of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. Security can be further augmented through greater multi-lateral information sharing between the region's law enforcement, security, and intelligence services, as well as with U.S. counterparts. Improved communications and computer connectivity between these agencies would allow the development and shared use of databases and other information to detect and deter the movement and actions of terrorists and their support elements.

The attractiveness of the Tri-Border area to both terrorist and criminal groups can be greatly reduced by increased customs and immigration control measures and improved law enforcement efforts that counter corrupt activities, money laundering operations and illegal migration. Establishing effective information sharing networks between the U.S. Government and those of the region is critical to the enhancement of security in the Tri-Border region.

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RESPONSES OF GEN. CHARLES E. WILHELM TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.

#### FORWARD OPERATING LOCATIONS (FOLS)

#1. SENATOR BIDEN. General Wilhelm, studies show that we get more bang for our buck from investing in drug treatment than by investing in source country control. As you know, we already devote two thirds of the national drug budget (65.8 percent) to supply reduction. I am not convinced that this is the most effective use

of funds. In your Area of Responsibility we are now looking at establishing three new fully operational Forward Operating Locations in Manta, Aruba and Curacao. I have heard various estimates of what this will cost, and all of them make it sound like this will be an expensive endeavor. How much do you expect the new Forward Operating Locations to cost and from which accounts would this money come from? Please provide a detailed explanation of how you envision these new locations working to combat illegal narcotics organizations. In other words, I want a tactical match up—how our use of these bases will impact the methods of the “bad guys.”

GENERAL WILHELM. The National Drug Control Policy has a budget of \$17.9 billion for Fiscal Year 1999. The total budget for Goal 5, Break Foreign and Domestic Sources of Supply, is \$2.28 billion or 13 percent of the total national counterdrug budget. The Department of Defense (DoD) has a \$937 million counterdrug budget for Fiscal Year 1999. Goal 5 accounts for \$277.4 million, or 29.6 percent of the DoD counterdrug budget.

The following validated and prioritized MILCON projects support Southern Command Concept of Operations for the Counterdrug Forward Operating Locations at Aruba, Curacao, and Manta Air Base (AB):

1. \$10.60 million—Consolidated Planning and Design
2. \$33.15 million—Manta AB—Airfield Pavement/Site Improvements
3. \$31.00 million—Curacao—Airfield Pavement/Site Improvements
4. \$ 9.10 million—Aruba—Airfield Pavement/Site Improvements
5. \$ 9.20 million—Curacao—Aircraft Maintenance Hangar/Nose Dock
6. \$ 6.70 million—Manta AB—Aircraft Maintenance Hangar/Nose Dock
7. \$ .50 million—Aruba—Aircraft Maintenance Hangar
8. \$ 2.13 million—Manta AB—Crash/Fire/Rescue Station
9. \$ 3.10 million—Curacao—Maintenance Facilities
10. \$ 4.96 million—Manta AB—Petroleum/Maintenance Facilities
11. \$ 2.20 million—Curacao—Squadron Operations/Aircraft Maintenance Unit (AMU)
12. \$ 2.61 million—Manta AB—Squadron Operations/AMU
13. \$ .90 million—Aruba—Squadron Operations/AMU
14. \$ 4.70 million—Manta AB—Visiting Airman Quarters/Dining Facility
15. \$ 1.62 million—Manta AB—Visiting Officers Quarters

\$122.47 million—Total

The \$122.47 million will come from the Air Force Project Code (PC) 9500. PC 9500 is for Curacao, Aruba and Manta FOLs. The \$122.47 million total is for MILCON projects. The U.S. Air Force allocated approximately \$14 million per year in their Program Objective Memorandum for Fiscal Year 2000 and Fiscal Year 2001 for combined operating expenses at Curacao, Aruba and Manta.

I was pleased to receive your question concerning the tactical impacts of the FOLs. Too often, these kinds of issues are relegated to programmatic debates with little or no emphasis on strategic and operational dimensions. The counterdrug mission is a challenging one. When we have every asset that is committed to this mission through the Joint Chiefs of Staff Execute Order we are able to cover just 15 percent of the source and transit zones, 15 percent of the time. This actually says more about the magnitude of the task than it does about the adequacy of resources. We have two absolute requirements. The first is, for the best possible intelligence support. Timely and accurate intelligence enables us to commit limited resources at the right places and at the right times to achieve the best possible effect against narcotics traffickers. The second requirement is to position our assets in such a way that we maximize coverage of key trafficking routes and cultivation and production areas. Once all FOLs (to include Central America) are fully activated, we will have roughly 110 percent of the area coverage or operational reach that we enjoyed from Howard Air Force Base in Panama. Of greater importance, transit time to critical areas will be significantly reduced permitting us to spend more time in, astride or over key mission areas. The Marita FOL is particularly important. When improvements are complete and the airfield is capable of supporting operations by the full complement of detection, monitoring and tracking assets, we will have more responsive and much improved coverage of the critical southern source zone. This includes Southern Colombia where the majority of coca is grown and much of the cocaine is produced, the air bridge between Colombia and Peru, Northwestern Brazil and points of origin for maritime trafficking through the Eastern Pacific. Curacao and Aruba will provide improved coverage of the northern source zone (Colombia and Venezuela), and heavily used trafficking routes through the Eastern, Central and Western Caribbean. The Central American FOL will provide blanket coverage of

Central America which is emerging as a major transit area, and much improved access to and coverage of the Eastern Pacific routes that we regard as an open back-door to Mexico and ultimately to the United States. In addition to purely geographic advantages, the FOLs will give us greater flexibility. We will be able to concentrate assets at the location or locations best suited for operations based on weather patterns, cultivation and production cycles and alterations in routes and methods used by traffickers to move their product and evade our interdiction efforts. If we execute the FOL plan as it is framed, we will emerge with a significant tactical advantage in comparison with previous single site operations from Panama.

#2. SENATOR BIDEN. Currently our short-term agreements allow use of bases in Manta for six months and Aruba and Curacao for one year. All three sites will require significant military construction to achieve full operational capacity. Cost estimates have varied and we have yet to see a solid cost-estimate and a detailed plan for post-Panama operations. At the moment we have short-term agreements for our Forward Operating Locations in Manta, Aruba and Curacao. What kind of military construction will be required to bring these locations to full operational capacity and how much will it cost? What are we doing to guarantee that we will have use of these sites for long enough to justify additional investments there? Is there a more limited, less costly set of construction options that would allow us to increase capability in the interim, until we have longer-term agreements in place?

GENERAL WILHELM. The military construction required to bring these existing facilities to U.S. standards is primarily safety and maintenance-related. Runway and parking ramp upgrades, hangers, navigation aids, fire rescue, operations office space and quarters are among the items that total \$122.47 million for the next two years with \$42.8 million needed in Fiscal Year 2000. Costs by site are listed below.

Temporary facilities like the Air Force's "Harvest Bare" are currently being used for interim facilities. Their use will continue until permanent facilities are completed. These expeditionary facilities (tents and prefabricated structures) are effective, but have a limited service life. After 18-24 months they require replacement or significant maintenance. Additionally, they will not withstand hurricane and storm force winds prevalent in the Caribbean and coastal regions of South America. Permanent facilities will be constructed using materials and methods, which will result in the least cost, both in terms of initial construction and routine Operations and Maintenance (O&M). "Expeditionary" type facilities (preengineered buildings, K-spans, etc.) will be used where practical.

Ambassador Rich Brown, continues to serve as the State Department negotiator for the FOLs. Ambassador Brown is heavily involved in negotiating long term agreements (10 years), and has already held initial discussions with both the Dutch and the Ecuadorians. I have been informed of no significant impediments to reaching the long term agreements we seek.

Economy has been a watchword during FOL concept development and negotiation. Based on 10 year cost projections, we estimate that operations from the FOLs will cost 60 percent less than continued operations from Howard Air Force Base. We will strive to achieve additional economies each step of the way. To answer more fully your questions concerning costs associated with FOL development, I provide the following prioritized list of MILCON requirements by site:

[In millions of dollars]

Common costs (\$10.60)	
Consolidated Planning and Design .....	\$10.60
Manta (\$55.87)	
Airfield Pavement/Site movements .....	33.15
Aircraft Maintenance Hangar/Nose Dock .....	6.70
Fire Crash/Rescue Station .....	2.13
Visiting Airmen Quarters/Dining Facility .....	4.70
Squadron Operations/Aircraft Maintenance Unit (AMU) .....	2.61
Petroleum Oil & Lubricants/Maintenance Facilities .....	4.96
Visiting Officers Quarters .....	1.62
Curacao (\$45.5)	
Airfield Pavement/Site Improvements .....	31.00
Aircraft Maintenance Hangar/Nose Dock .....	9.20
Maintenance Facilities .....	3.10
Squadron Operations/AMU .....	2.20
Aruba (\$10.5)	
Airfield Pavement/Site Improvements .....	9.10
Aircraft Maintenance Hangar .....	.50

Squadron Operations/AMU .....	.90
Total .....	122.47

#3. SENATOR BIDEN. On May 25th, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said, "We cannot accept U.S. counternarcotics flights because Venezuela is a sovereign country." In contrast to that refusal, President Chavez told reporters in the United States ten days ago that Venezuela's commitment to cooperating with the United States on drug issues is "absolute and total." In the past, Venezuela has allowed U.S. Customs planes to use its airspace for counterdrug missions, but it has been inconsistent. How effective can the new Forward Operating Locations be if Venezuela continues to deny the use of its airspace for counternarcotics work? To what extent are your operations not based at the new Forward Operating Locations hindered by Venezuela's denial of the use of its airspace?

GENERAL WILHELM. The Venezuelan Government's recent denial of overflight rights for United States aircraft conducting counternarcotics missions has two significant practical or operational implications. First, denial of overflight impedes our ability to maintain contact with suspect aircraft for ultimate handoff to host nation forces and prosecution of end games. The countries most significantly effected are Venezuela and Colombia. Second, denial of Venezuelan overflight adds one to one and one-half hours transit time for detection, monitoring, and tracking aircraft proceeding from Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) in Curacao and Aruba on missions over the heart of the source zone in Colombia and Peru. Increased transit time ultimately results in reduced on-station time. Though we are paying some operational penalties as a result of the Venezuelan overflight issue, I would hasten to add that we are continuing to conduct the full spectrum of counterdrug air operations, albeit at reduced efficiency. Discussions are currently underway with Venezuela and we anticipate that the overflight issue will soon be resolved.

This situation has reinforced the need to attain full operational capability and capacity at the FOL in Manta, Ecuador. Given the ability to operate the full complement of detection, monitoring, and tracking assets from Manta, we would have an immediate workaround to Venezuelan overflight restrictions. I should add that these workarounds would be equally valuable if other conditions, such as inclement weather precluded or restricted operations from a single FOL. For these and other reasons it is essential that our plan for enhancement of the FOL network be fully funded.

