

**U.S POLICY REGARDING NARCOTICS CONTROL
IN COLOMBIA**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
**CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL**
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

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JUNE 3, 2003
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SENATE CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL
IN COLOMBIA

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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TUESDAY, JUNE 3, 2003

U.S. SENATE,
CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL,
Washington, DC.

The Caucus met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m., in room SD-215, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Charles E. Grassley, Chairman of the Caucus, presiding.

Present: Senators Grassley, DeWine, and Sessions.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHARLES E. GRASSLEY, U.S. SENATOR FROM IOWA

Chairman GRASSLEY. I thank everybody for their patience, although everybody is here on time and we are able to get started. I particularly want to acknowledge a lot of people who have come a long distance, obviously, the leadership of our friend, the country of Colombia, coming so far, as well as our people here in the United States who are so integrally involved coming from Florida and elsewhere.

Just in case our ranking minority member, Mr. Biden, is not able to be here, he asked that I would put a statement in the record for him and we will do that. But if he is able to come and he wants some time for his opening, I will obviously be very happy to give it to him.

[The prepared statement of Senator Biden follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.,
U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing today to examine U.S. policy in Colombia.

We are honored to be joined by Vice President Francisco Santos. The Vice President knows all too well the price that Colombia has paid in its three-front war against drug traffickers, left-wing guerrillas, and right-wing paramilitaries. He was held hostage for nearly 8 months by the Medellín cartel in 1990—and he has received numerous death threats from the FARC.

The people of Colombia live with a level of violence that Americans cannot comprehend; the bravery that Vice President Santos and his colleagues in government have demonstrated in the face of that danger is inspiring.

Three years ago, we renewed our commitment to the Andean region, providing funding for Plan Colombia, as well as for counter-narcotics programs in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela and Brazil. Since then, we have provided over two billion dollars in assistance to Colombia to combat the drug trade and restore the rule of law.

We have a duty to help in this effort because it is America's seemingly insatiable demand for narcotics that has helped fuel the drug trade.

We are beginning to see some results. Last year, there was a 15 percent decrease in coca cultivation and a 25 percent decrease in opium poppy cultivation. This re-

duced supply has led to a modest decrease in purity of both cocaine and heroin on the streets of the United States. There is still a long way to go, but this progress is encouraging.

Unfortunately, we had a setback elsewhere in the Andean region, with coca cultivation increasing by 8 percent in Peru and 23 percent in Bolivia in 2002. We must do more to help Colombia's neighbors guard against the so-called "balloon effect". And to successfully counter the drug trade in the entire region, we must have a three-pronged strategy: eradication, interdiction, *and* alternative economic opportunities.

Several other elements of our policy in Colombia bear emphasis.

First, human rights. According to the most recent State Department report, in 2002:

"The [Colombian] Government's human rights record remained poor . . . A small percentage of total human rights abuses reported were attributed to State security forces; however, some members of the government security forces continued to commit serious abuses, including unlawful and extrajudicial killings. Some members of the security forces collaborated with paramilitary groups that committed serious abuses. Impunity remained at the core of the country's human rights problems."

I know that the Vice President, and President Uribe are committed to improving human rights. But the message is still not getting through to all levels of the military. We need to see more improvements.

Second, last year Congress changed the law to allow Colombia to use equipment we have provided for other than counter-narcotics purposes. This recognizes the reality that Colombia's illegal groups are all involved in the drug trade. But we must be sure that this change in authority does result in a major change in focus: our priority must continue to be fighting the drug trade.

Finally, we must make sure that our other commitments abroad do not distract us from our promise to help Colombia and its neighbors. There's a lot on the foreign policy agenda. But we have a lot at stake in the Andes, and we owe it to our neighbors to help.

The Administration has done a good job in Colombia, but the Secretary of State cannot be focused on every world problem simultaneously. He needs some lieutenants. Unfortunately, the Narcotics Bureau at the State Department has not had a confirmed Assistant Secretary since August, and as yet no successor has been nominated. I urge the Administration to send us a nominee as soon as possible.

I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses this morning, and having a frank discussion with them about the progress we are making and the road ahead.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Today, we are going to examine the current status of events in Colombia. The United States has a particular interest in the stability and future of Colombia because it is both one of the oldest democracies in our hemisphere as well as the home to three terrorist groups, each of whom get a significant amount of their operational funds from drugs smuggled into the United States.

With illegal drugs grown and shipped from Colombia killing Americans everyday and the sale of these drugs funding terrorists who are killing Colombians everyday, it is in the interest of both the country of Colombia and our Nation to work together to eliminate drug production and trafficking in Colombia.

This past year has seen a very significant increase in the tempo of activities in Colombia, which has resulted in some of the successes we will hear today. But we obviously still have a long way to go, as we all know. This fight is by no means over, and I hope that we won't let these first signs of success distract us from the long road ahead. Today's hearing will highlight several aspects of the situation in Colombia and the nature of objectives of assistance that we are providing.

The last year has been a tumultuous one for the country of Colombia. Rapidly evolving events make maintaining a clear course

of action even more difficult. The most recent developments stem from former Colombian President Pastrana's decision to give up on 4 years of attempted negotiations with the FARC and end the Despeje territory, which had been created in an attempt to bring the FARC to the negotiating table.

Negotiating a peace with the FARC has been a cornerstone of the Pastrana presidency, but his efforts were ultimately frustrated by the FARC's reluctance to negotiate seriously. The failure to find a peaceful solution meant a new approach to the problem had to be found.

The people of Colombia demonstrated their resolve to take a new approach in confronting terrorist groups through the overwhelming election of President Uribe and of our first witness this morning, Vice President Santos. Elected in the first round by a significant margin over the nearest competitor, the President and Vice President face significant pressure to quickly fulfill their campaign promises, a pressure that we all understand and about which I am sure our first witness is well aware.

For the United States, eliminating coca production in Colombia is a longstanding goal of our National Drug Control Strategy. Opium poppy cultivation is a more recent development, but its elimination is also in our strategy.

Working in close cooperation with the Government of Colombia, we have finally been able to get ahead of production this past year. According to the most recent cultivation surveys, coca production in Colombia was down 15 percent from 2001 and opium poppy production was down close to 25 percent. United Nations estimates show an even bigger reduction in the coca crop, so it seems that we are making some progress.

President Uribe has made it his goal to eliminate all coca production within Colombia by August 2006. This is a laudable goal that the United States is willing to and should support. Eliminating coca and poppy production is important not only because of the tremendous damage that these poisons do to users, but because of the important role they play as a funding source for terrorist organizations operating in Colombia. I hope today's testimony by our second panel of witnesses will shed additional light on what steps are necessary.

Does Senate DeWine have anything he wants to say in an opening statement before I introduce the Vice President?

**STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE DEWINE, U.S. SENATOR
FROM OHIO**

Senator DEWINE. Well, Mr. Chairman, I will be very brief. I want to thank you very much for holding this very important hearing. The witnesses that you have lined up are very impressive.

Mr. Vice President, thank you very much for joining us here today.

Mr. Chairman, I have had an opportunity to travel to Colombia on a number of occasions. We all have an interest in Colombia. I had a chance to meet with President Uribe a few months ago in Colombia and talk with him about the problems of Colombia.

This is a country that is in our own backyard. It is one of the oldest democracies in our hemisphere. It is a country that is, as we

all know, a struggling country that is struggling against the narco-terrorists. And if we cannot assist a country such as Colombia that is fighting terrorism in our own backyard, then obviously we can't do it anywhere in the world. And we are doing it; we are trying to help Colombia.

The importance of Colombia to the United States, I think, is obvious. This is a country that is engaged with us in a common struggle against not only terrorism, but a common struggle against the drug dealers. We are the consumers of drugs. Colombia is a producer of drugs. So we have a common problem and we both recognize that problem and we are working together. Our hearing today, of course, is to see where we are in that common struggle, and to evaluate that and to see where we need to go from here.

So, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for holding this very, very important hearing, and I thank our witnesses, who all are on the front line in this struggle, for being here today and I look forward to their testimony.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Our first witness obviously, as I mentioned, is the Vice President, Francisco Santos, and he was elected with the present administration in May of 2002. The election of the Vice President is his most recent of a long string of initiatives that Mr. Santos has undertaken to improve the lives of all Colombians.

Previously, he was editor of El Tiempo, Colombia's largest newspaper, and in weekly columns there often speaking out against kidnappings and massacres, and calling upon the civil society to take a more active role in finding peaceful solutions to facing the problems of Colombia.

He has stridently condemned murderous acts, whether they come from the extreme left or the extreme right, and obviously has been a target of drug traffickers. He was, in fact, kidnapped by Pablo Escobar, then-leader of the Medellin drug cartel. He also, with 10 other journalists, was held then for nearly 8 months in the unsuccessful attempt to extort a promise from the Colombian Government not to extradite drug traffickers to the United States.

After being released, he spent a year at Harvard University as a Nyman Fellow, and then returned to Bogotá, finding publications that would assist the victims of kidnappings and their families, and the organizations to back it up.

So he has been in the middle and suffered as a result of his crusades for freedom and for better living conditions for people in Colombia. So we are privileged to have the Vice President here, and I thank you very much for your testimony.

Proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. FRANCISCO SANTOS-CALDERON, VICE PRESIDENT, REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA, BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

Vice President SANTOS-CALDERON. Good morning, Chairman Grassley, Senator DeWine, and distinguished members of the Caucus. I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you today to discuss the significant progress both our countries are making in the war against narco-terrorism. I have prepared a statement for the record which I will summarize in the next few minutes.

Let me start by painting a broad picture of the situation in Colombia today. My country remains one of the most dangerous

places in the world. As we have taken the fight to the traffickers, they have responded with increasing violence across the country. We are not just fighting disparate networks of drug traffickers, but powerful terrorist groups who target primarily civilians.

The fight has moved from rural, isolated regions of the country to our largest cities. It has shifted from random acts of violence to sophisticated and coordinated attacks. The conflict is becoming increasingly regionalized, as illegal actors use Colombia's borders to escape our reach.

More than 8,000 acts of terror have been committed against the Colombian people over the past 5 years, more than the combined acts of terror committed worldwide during this period. Colombia suffers 30,000 violent deaths every year, equal to 10 times the victims who died on September 11 every year.

About 2,600 Colombians are kidnapped every year. Children are forced to fight for the illegal groups. Every type of economic infrastructure—roads, bridges, power lines, telephone towers, reservoirs, and all pipelines—has been targeted, costing billions of dollars and disrupting millions of lives. More than 1 million Colombians have been displaced by the violence of the drug terrorist organizations.

How have we responded to the situation in our first 9 months in office? The Uribe administration is implementing a multi-track fight against the illegal drug trade. This involves eradication of illegal crops, interdiction, destruction of narco-trafficking infrastructure and seizing their assets, military and police action against traffickers, and law enforcement and judicial cooperation. All these efforts are directed to a single goal: zero tolerance for drug trafficking and total eradication of this activity in Colombia by the year 2006.

We have already had positive results to demonstrate in each of these areas. A record level of illegal coca crops were sprayed last year. We sprayed 130,000 hectares of coca. This area of land is equivalent to 524 square miles, or 7.5 times the size of the District of Columbia. This spraying reduced Colombia's coca crop by 30 percent for the first time in 10 years.

We have sprayed an additional 65,000 hectares since January 2003, and we hope we will be able to achieve our goal of spraying more than 150,000 hectares this year. Our aerial spraying campaign is also targeting illegal poppy crops. We have sprayed 3,300 hectares in 2002, and so far this year we have sprayed 1,658 hectares.

We seized a record amount of illegal drugs. From January 2002 to the present, we have interdicted more than 100 tons of pure cocaine and 850 kilos of heroin. The street value of these drugs is more than \$3 billion, but these drugs will never reach America's streets.

With a better trained and equipped military and police, we have targeted narco-terrorists with greater success. Last year, 3,553 guerrillas and 1,336 members of the self-defense groups were captured. An additional 1,138 members of these illegal groups have turned themselves in. We have seized over 4,000 weapons, arms that would have been used to perpetuate violence against our citizens.

Our anti-narcotics brigades, trained and equipped by the United States, have located and destroyed dozens of cocaine-producing laboratories and other drug-trafficking infrastructure. In just one 2-week period in May, a brigade destroyed 16 coca labs in the State of Narino. Since assuming office last year, the Uribe government has extradited 78 Colombians to the United States to face justice here for narco-terrorist crimes.

Senators Plan Colombia is working. These results have been realized because the Uribe government is committed to taking the fight directly to the drug terrorists. But it is also the result of military, economic and social assistance provided by the United States and the extraordinary level of cooperation between our two governments.

This cooperation that started under the Pastrana and Clinton administrations has continued between President Bush and President Uribe, but it also extends to many thousand Colombians and Americans who are today working side by side to defeat narco-terrorism wherever it exists and whenever it strikes.

Plan Colombia is working for several reasons. First, it was developed in a bipartisan manner, and bipartisan support has enabled it to be implemented thoroughly. Second, it required a commitment by both our countries to combine our resources and share the burden that this activity inflicts in both of our societies.

Third, we have both invested significant funds. To date, the United States has provided \$1.7 billion in military, economic and humanitarian assistance. The Colombian Government has spent nearly \$4 billion of our own funds in support of Plan Colombia.

Our recent effort to more aggressively target illegal groups is reducing the level of violence in Colombia. During the first months of this year, homicides were down by 20 percent, compared to the same period in 2002. Kidnappings were down 40 percent over the same period.

We are investing significant resources to restore law and order throughout the country. Defense spending will rise from 3.5 to 5.8 percent of GDP during President Uribe's 4-year term. The armed forces will be enlarged by 126,000 troops. Already, there is a greater police and military presence on Colombia's rural highways and roads. This is critical for commercial activity and for tourism and public safety.

In addition, we are this year training and equipping 27,000 new police officers who are being stationed in 170 rural towns where there is no police at all and in 260 rural towns that have less than 10 policemen each. The bottom line is this: We are making Colombia a safer country day by day, road by road, town by town. We are committed to this effort because we know narco-terrorist violence affects all Colombians, rich and poor, urban and rural, powerful and ordinary citizens.

President Uribe and I have not been exempt from it. Our inaugural ceremony last year was targeted by a FARC missile attack. The President's father was kidnapped and assassinated by the FARC in the 1980's. I was kidnapped and held captive for 8 months in 1990. My brother-in-law was killed by a bomb that Pablo Escobar put in an airplane.

Nearly every member of President Uribe's Cabinet has lost a family member or a close relative in this violence. Governors, mayors, congressmen, labor leaders, soldiers, policemen, human rights workers and journalists, all brave citizens fighting to take back our country from those illegal organizations, have been murdered.

For President Uribe and myself, defeating terrorism is not just a policy. It is a total commitment. We know the destruction that drugs and violence inflict not just on our country, but on our families and loved ones. To end the cycle of drugs and violence, we need continued support and cooperation from the United States and the international community.

We are benefiting from American technology, intelligence, training, and financial assistance. We offer in return our full commitment and energy to learn, to execute, to cooperate, and to achieve the results both our countries desired. Colombia's strength is its national resilience in the face of adversity. We move forward, propelled by our determination and the help of allies like the United States to a more promising future.

Thank you.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Well, thank you, Mr. Vice President. The two of us would have a few questions to ask you, and I might make an announcement for you as well as for other panels as well.

Particularly on Tuesdays, there are a lot of committee meetings and members might not be able to come to all these hearings. So you might get questions in writing from members who can't be here or even from those of us who are here, and we would appreciate responses in about a 2½-week period of time, if you do get questions in writing.

First of all, Mr. Vice President, you were very positive from your point of view about Plan Colombia working, and I am very happy to hear that sort of positive response and, of course, that is what this hearing is basically about.

Are there any shortcomings in Plan Colombia that you would want to point out to Members of the U.S. Congress?

Vice President SANTOS-CALDERON. No. At this point in time, I think the most important thing is to maintain the level of assistance. Obviously, we are going into new areas where our planes are being hit tremendously, the spraying planes, the helicopters.

Right now, we have moved to the southern part of the Bolivia region, to other regions, and the anti-narcotics battalions are going to be moved there. So we think that will improve the situation. But certainly, as we move more aggressively in more areas, we are taking hits on those planes in a more massive manner than we did before. But with the level of assistance that right now is being provided, we think that our goal of eradicating drugs and cultivation in the year 2006 will be able to be met.

Chairman GRASSLEY. I would like to have you describe for me the support that your administration has received from Colombian citizens for its fight against drug trafficking and terrorism. Obviously, I presume that those that are outside of what you might call the drug-growing areas or the areas not so close to the FARC and other organizations obviously would welcome the sort of aggressive action you are taking.

But the extent to which you could quantify that support, more important if there is any way you can describe support from those whose lives are closer to the regions where fighting might be going on, that would be helpful.

Vice President SANTOS-CALDERON. President Uribe and his administration have had a very, very clear discourse in regard to defeating drugs. That is why Colombians elected us, and in that sense we have been very, very clear with Colombian society about what our goals are.

And we have backed up that discourse with action. We have told drug barons that they are going to be extradited and we have extradited them, that they are going to be attacked and they have been attacked, that we are going to seize their assets, and in the latest action we seized 6,000 hectares of land that is going to go to displaced peasants.

We have told the peasants who are involved in drug trafficking that an illegal hectare of crop is an illegal hectare of crop, and that we are going to eradicate it. In that sense, what we have seen is that more and more of the peasants that have been displaced from those areas are going back to the traditional agricultural areas where they used to be.

We are protecting some crops so that they can go back to the places and be able to have a sustainable income. Our growth in cotton is very impressive, and cotton in Colombia generates a lot of rural employment. We are trying to protect coffee, also, that generates employment.

So what we have seen is that our security policy has been able to absorb those peasants that moved out of the traditional cultivation areas into coca areas, and the growth of the agricultural economy is pretty impressive. So in that sense, by protecting the rural areas, we have been able to generate the employment that our poppy and coca spraying campaigns have generated in other areas.

President Uribe's popularity, according to sources, is around 65 to 70 percent, and in that sense it shows that Colombians are fed up with violence, that Colombians want this to end, and I think have supported the President in a way that sometimes we didn't expect it was going to be as high as it is.

We have been very transparent with the Colombian population about what we are doing. We have accepted the mistakes that sometimes the policy can have. We are willing to correct them, but what we have been very clear on is that our zero-tolerance policy toward drugs is non-negotiable, non-negotiable because it is a national security matter.

If we eradicate drugs, we will take the main fueling agent of the conflict and we will be able to defeat easier the drug terrorist organizations that are killing all those Colombians and that are destroying a lot of the infrastructure and that are displacing Colombians. So Colombians who voted for us to recuperate security, that is what they are getting and they are pretty happy about it.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Even though your administration is less than a year old, have you seen, and if you have seen any changes in terrorist organization functioning, how they function or what they accomplish compared to before—in other words, as a result of

your administration's actions, any sorts of changes that have taken place that you actually see within the last few months.

Vice President SANTOS-CALDERON. Yes, we can foresee a couple of changes which are pretty important. The first one is that the FARC, which used to be a very conservative organization in terms of military development, has gone shopping in the world, has bought technology from different terrorist groups and has used it.

Last year, we lost, I think, 15 explosives experts because they bought technology from a terrorist organization and they learned very quickly how to put bombs in a different manner and our explosives experts didn't know it was being done. The attack on the 7th of August was technology also bought from a terrorist organization.

So we can foresee the FARC to use more efficient methods of terrorism, to look for it, to shop around the world not only for technology, but knowledge too. And they have urbanized the conflict, so we can foresee a lot more terrorist activities in regard to the conflict, terrorist activities in the large urban areas.

In the past 8 months, our police have seized in Bogotá, the capital, more than five tons of explosives. Our police have done a very good job. Unfortunately, we can't stop them all and we had the Nogal incident, but they really want to take terrorism into the urban areas.

The second thing is that our attacks against the paramilitaries and the drug traffickers have been so strong, and will be even stronger in the future, that you can foresee the most radical elements of those organizations working together with the FARC in order to destabilize the country and in order to make more efficient the terrorist war.

Drug traffickers fish in turbulent waters, and the more order we have, the less they will be effective in promoting their business. So I would foresee, and I think it wouldn't be a strange thing if those radical elements come together and move efficiently in some areas. The FARC and the paramilitaries are starting to share the business, the coca business. So you are starting to see some signals that are very worrisome and that will require the Colombian army and the Colombian police to combat them even stronger.

The other thing that I think will be worrisome—and I know this might be in the future—the FARC has become a more fearless type of organization. Their political elements are in the back seat. A lot of the political figures who grew out of the organizations have been taken away of positions of power. And the FARC has created an organization that is very efficient because it promotes those who get more money and are more violence-oriented, produce more results.

And in that sense, what you foresee is an organization that has less restraints and will look for allies all over the world. I think that in the future, when they feel weak—and when they feel weak, they react very violently. That is the pattern they have had. I am worried that they might use different types of weapons of mass destruction.

They have gotten involved in the water reservoirs, which is very dangerous. So I foresee for the near future that our successes will make the FARC more violent, more prone to get allies in the inter-

national community of terrorists and looking for new ways of generating terror in Colombia.

Chairman GRASSLEY. My last question would be in regard to—I don't know whether this would be a fair measure of your continuing success, but I would see that in previous attempts that maybe the average citizen in Colombia would be fearful of helping the government in any way, with information or any other way, against drug traffickers. But with an aggressive administration, you might see the average citizen moving to help the government and the police and the military to a greater extent without feeling their lives were maybe so jeopardized as otherwise.

Are you seeing any movement in that direction of the average citizen being less fearful and more willing to cooperate with the government against FARC and other organizations, or is that still pretty much a difficult thing for the average citizen to be involved with?

Vice President SANTOS-CALDERON. That certainly has been the case. The population more and more is cooperating with the policy, with the army, and with the government. We are seeing it all over the country.

As I said before, in 170 towns we are going to get back a pretty important contingent of soldiers and policemen, between 50 and 100. In the 90 towns where we have put them back so far, they are received like heroes. They say finally you are taking away this terror that we used to live in. What people want is authority, State legal authority, to be imposed and to get back to being able to live successfully.

Our policy of recuperating the roads has been a major success. Before, you used to be incarcerated in the cities. You know, you were so worried that you left the cities and you were kidnapped. Our internal tourism was practically dead, and that has generated huge popular support because people immediately realized that authority imposed with respect for human rights, but authority nonetheless can benefit the citizens.

The past Easter where there was a big vacation, more than 8 million Colombians took to the roads again. We hadn't seen that in the past 7 years. So all those small steps have made people believe in authority again, have made people believe in the government again. And certainly without their help, we wouldn't be able to stop a lot of the terrorist actions we have been able to stop.

The army and the police have responded very quickly to tips from the citizens, which didn't used to happen. So there is a trust that is starting to grow immensely. In polls that have been made by independent organizations, newspapers, et cetera, the No. 1 institution in trust and popularity in Colombia is the armed forces. That is a process that has helped, certainly, the cooperation of citizens with the government.

Chairman GRASSLEY. I thank you for your testimony and thank you for answering questions.

I now turn to Senator DeWine.

Senator DEWINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Vice President, you have really touched upon this, but I want to get into it just a little bit more. You really have entered a new phase of this war with the guerrillas, the FARC, moving into

the urban areas. This is obviously a calculated effort to bring terror to the middle class, terror to the urban areas, to Bogotá and the other major cities.

What impact has this had, do you think, on the people in the urban areas so far? I mean, this was an attempt that was made years ago by the drug dealers with some success, actually, in the past. How are you going to keep this from happening again? What has been the reaction of the people in Bogotá? The people in Cartagena and people in the other urban centers—what has been their reaction?

Vice President SANTOS-CALDERON. You know, certainly, for example, the bomb that they put in the club where they killed 37 persons and more than 100 were injured, it hurt us. You have to recognize it, you know, and people get scared.

But what we felt immediately was that after the initial reaction, Colombians citizens toughened up and said, "You know, we know this is the price we have to pay". So you have a population that has lived through all that and is tougher than ever, which doesn't mean that we don't have to really improve our intelligence and try to avoid those types of acts.

As a matter of fact, with the help of U.S. Government intelligence, informants, and work which we are doing in a very coordinated way, the police have stopped many, many incidents like those in Bogotá, in Medellin, in Cali, and in other cities. The work has been quite impressive. The results are very, very good in stopping terrorist acts.

But unfortunately, with one that you can stop, a lot of that policy gets not stopped, but people get frightened and questioned. But I think the leadership of President Uribe that he established after the bombing accident and that was reflected in a phrase he said in a speech after that that said that Colombians are crying but they will not surrender—that is the feeling of the country right now.

And the support for security policy, even though it suffers a little bit with those incidents—I think we have gone a long way from the early 1990's when car bombs in the cities and terrorism almost put Colombian society to its knees. We have learned a lesson and we know that we are going to pay some more prices, some really high prices in this fight against terrorists, but we are willing to do it and so far we have the support of Colombian society.

Senator DEWINE. Mr. Vice President, in both your written testimony and your oral testimony, you have really, I think, done a good job in helping us understand the human cost of narcotics production and trafficking in Colombia. While most Americans understand the toll that cocaine and heroin take on our own young people, I venture to say that few Americans are really aware of the toll that narcotics take on the children of Colombia.

As noted in a human rights report recently released by our own State Department, children are often caught in a crossfire. For example, last June a crossfire between paramilitaries and a mixed contingent of FARC and ELN fighters killed a 7-year-old boy outside that little boy's home in Colombia. In September, three children in Bogotá were killed when the grenade with which they were playing exploded. The grenade apparently had been discarded by

members of the FARC urban militia that operated in that neighborhood.

An estimated 12,000 to 15,000 children were members of illegal armed groups, both paramilitary and guerrilla. The Roman Catholic Church has reported that FARC used its freedom and its former safe haven to lure or force children into its ranks, which you have already talked about. Children who have deserted from the FARC have reported that local guerrilla commanders threatened to kill their families should they desert or attempt to do so.

Let me ask you, could you further describe the impact that narco-terrorism is having on your country's young people, or maybe give us some personal perspective on this aspect of the conflict? Will you expand on what you have already talked about a little bit?

Vice President SANTOS-CALDERON. Drug trafficking fuels Colombia's war. It finances the paramilitaries, it finances the FARC, and the alien which didn't used to get its finances from drug trafficking now is involved in the business.

All those three organizations, especially the first two of them, are involved in all aspects of the business, not only protecting crops, not only protecting labs, but now they are involved in all the ladder of the drug trafficking business. That provides between \$300 and \$500 million to those terrorist organizations. If Al-Qaeda had that kind of money, I don't want to even think what they could do.

We need to take that money away from them. That money has allowed them to grow, to buy technology. The FARC 10 years ago, 15 years ago, was a 3- to 4,000-member army. Now, they have 17,000, all financed from drugs.

I will give you a perspective of what is happening. We have 15 members of Congress kidnapped. The head of the human rights commission is kidnapped. The head of the peace commission of the senate is kidnapped. A Governor was just killed. They have a former Governor kidnapped. They have a Presidential candidate kidnapped. They had two former ministers kidnapped. They tried to kidnap a bishop. Last year, they killed 90 council members. They have 18 State assembly members kidnapped.

The Colombian government has a President, as I said before, whose father was kidnapped and killed. The interior minister, his father was kidnapped and was released. The education minister has a brother who was kidnapped by the FARC, killed, and now has a brother that is kidnapped.

The prosecutor general's wife, which was a former culture minister, was kidnapped and she was murdered. The minister of agriculture, his son used to work for the crop substitution program and he was killed in a plane crash when he was going to a region.

Obviously, I was kidnapped. I had to leave the country in the year 2000 because of threats by the FARC. In the bombing of El Nogal, I lost a very good friend, and my 9-year-old daughter had to go the funeral of a school friend that died from that bomb.

When you look at the amount of displaced people, it is a horrendous humanitarian problem. The AUC, the paramilitaries and the FARC use displacement as a military weapon, a territorial control weapon. They are using displacement in their barbaric types of tactics and we have between 1 and 1.5 million Colombians displaced by those organizations.

If we don't destroy crops and eliminate drug trafficking from Colombia, we will not be able to destroy those organizations. Therefore, we have to combat them with everything we have, and there is an element that also generates immense problems and it has to do with children in the conflict.

The AUC, the FARC and the ELN, more than 30 percent of their members are children between the ages of 10 and 15 years old. What we are seeing in the massive desertions is a lot of those children want to leave those organizations and we have a special program designed with our institution to protect children, the ICBF, the Colombian Institution for Children's Benefits, to protect them and we have a special program. But that is another element of it.

I will give you a personal story. I had somebody who worked with me. When I had to leave for Spain, she went back to her town, which was in the highlands, and she went just 3 months ago and told me a horrendous story about what was happening in her region.

She had left because the FARC had come and wanted to take her children, to recruit them, to force recruitment. So she left everything and went to Bogotá, and what she told me was not only that the FARC was doing that—and what we have been able to see is that forced recruitment of children is the No. 1 cause of displacement. People would rather leave their area than give their children to the FARC, to the paramilitaries, or to the ELN. So that is also complicating the social scenery and the humanitarian tragedy that these terrorist groups are generating.

So in all areas of Colombian society, you see the drug-financing terrorist activities affecting Colombian society, affecting broader elements of Colombian families. And the hindering of social development is also an element that this conflict is generating.

Senator DEWINE. Mr. Vice President, that is a chilling description, I think, of the price that your country is paying and what the FARC and the ELN and the paramilitaries are doing to your country. I appreciate hearing this and I think it is something that the American people need to understand and I think it was a very eloquent description.

I have been very impressed by your government. As I said, I had the opportunity several months ago to meet with President Uribe in Cartagena and discussed with him the situation for about an hour-and-a-half. It was at a time shortly after some additional attempts on his life and I was impressed by his courage and his tenacity and his determination to do what was necessary to hang in there and to fight back against the terrorists.

So we appreciate your coming and we appreciate your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Mr. Vice President, I don't have any other questions, but we obviously are going to monitor this situation and continue to lend what help we can and encourage you all we can. I hope that you will free to stay in touch with this group that we call the International Narcotics Control Caucus, the group that is holding this meeting, on how we can be helpful.

We have been very impressed with the leadership that you send representing your country here in Washington, DC. They keep in

touch with us on a regular basis. We consider them friends and we want you to be very successful. Thank you very much.

You are welcome to stay if you want to sit in the audience for the rest of the day, if you want to. I know you are probably very busy, but you would be welcome to stay if you want to stay.

Vice President SANTOS-CALDERON. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Vice President Santos-Calderon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. FRANCISCO SANTOS-CALDERON,
VICE PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA

Good morning Chairman Grassley, Senator Biden and distinguished members of the Caucus.

It is an honor to be here today and have a chance to report on the progress that has been possible thanks to the support and cooperation of both this Congress and the Government of the United States. Thanks to U.S.-Colombia collaborative efforts we have made significant progress in building democratic security in Colombia and begun to show increasing results in successfully combating narcoterrorism.

I. A SUCCESSFUL ALLIANCE

Through Plan Colombia the U.S. became more immersed and committed to the fight against drugs. Less than 3 years into its implementation, this strategy has demonstrated greater results than any other strategy previously attempted.

President Alvaro Uribe's commitment is clear: zero tolerance for drug-trafficking. One of Colombia's main goals is the total eradication coca and opium poppy cultivation and trafficking by the year 2006.

Since year 2000, U.S. Congress has provided us over \$1.7 billion dollars in economic, humanitarian and security aid. The alliance between our governments enables us to address common objectives such as combating drug trafficking and terrorism. The narco-terrorist threat affects both our countries and our joint efforts to combat it will improve the security of the U.S. and Colombia and provide stability to the entire Andean region.

Together, we have made considerable progress.

- *Aerial spraying:* In 2002, we sprayed 130,363 hectares of coca. According to the United Nations, this represents a 30 percent reduction of total coca cultivation. It is the largest number of hectares sprayed and the steepest decline of coca cultivation. So far this year we have sprayed over 65,000 hectares. By the end 2003 we expect to eradicate 50 percent of all illicit coca cultivation.

- *Interdiction:* We have also made significant progress in seizing illegal drugs. From January 1, 2002 to the present we interdicted over 110 tons of pure cocaine, most of this in cooperation with the United States. In the same time period, we confiscated more than 850 kilos of heroin. We destroyed more than 225 cocaine production laboratories.

- *Coca production:* Since every hectare of coca is equivalent to 3.9 to 4.3 kilos of cocaine, our spraying strategy succeeded in removing more than 150 tons of pure cocaine off the market last year. This result, together with interdiction successes, represents 260 tons of cocaine that did not reach the U.S. or the world market.

- *Heroin production:* As for heroine, a serious and growing threat to the United States, we achieved a net reduction of 25 percent in opium poppy cultivation in 2002 alone. Our spray teams, trained and assisted by the United States, sprayed over 3,300 hectares last year and, we have already sprayed 1,658 hectares this year. This is another area of considerable progress, taking into account that, according to CNC estimates, Colombia currently has approximately 4,900 hectares of poppy plantations. As a positive consequence of the these efforts, from 2001 to 2002, the purity of heroin in the United States fell by an average of 6 percent, according to DEA estimates.

When the Colombian Army Counter Drug (CD) Brigade began its operations in 2001, it focused on the southern region of Colombia, especially in the Department of Putumayo. This State was at that time the heart of the Colombia coca cultivation. Trained and supported by the United States, the Brigade achieved impressive results. They located and destroyed dozens of cocaine production laboratories and other drug trafficking infrastructure, including oil refineries used by the FARC to produce cocaine base. As a consequence, the narco-trafficking organizations have transferred their activities to other regions of the country, mainly the Pacific Coast Department of Nariño.

In late 2002, the Uribe administration restructured the CD Brigade. It was transferred from the Joint Task Force South and placed under Colombian Army command with the mission to attack high-value narco-terrorist targets throughout the country. It also received advanced training from United States Army Special Forces. These changes gave new strength to the fight against narco-trafficking organizations. In May, the Government deployed a battalion of the Brigade to attack the drug industry in Nariño: in only 2 weeks a CD Brigade-led joint operation with the Colombian Navy and National Police destroyed 16 cocaine-producing laboratories and confiscated a ton of pure cocaine alkaloid.

In light of the results of our successful alliance, it is easy to understand what the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), John P. Walters, said recently:

“President Uribe has achieved major successes against the illicit drug trade. Reductions in drug production in Colombia will mean fewer drugs on American streets. We intend to remain a solid partner with Colombia as they fight against a drug industry that inflicts damage on both of our nations.”

You know as well as we do there were many skeptics that Plan Colombia would succeed in reducing drug trafficking. These accomplishments, which are just a few from a long list of successful missions undertaken in cooperation with the U.S., speak for themselves. We have proven non-believers wrong and the Uribe administration assures you we will eradicate drugs from Colombia. To successfully accomplish this mission our partnership with the United States is vital.

II. NARCO-TRAFFICKING AND TERRORISM

Terrorism continues in Colombia. Here are just 3 of the 361 acts of terrorism suffered by Colombia during the first 4 months of 2003:

- On Friday, February 14, 2003, a patrol of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—one of the State Department’s designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO)—fired upon a downed U.S. reconnaissance aircraft while it flew a counter-narcotics mission in Southern Colombia. The FARC brutally murdered U.S. citizen Jennis Thomas and Colombian Sergeant Luis Alcides Cruz, and kidnapped three other American citizens who are still being held.

- Last May 5, in a jungle camp of the guerrillas in Urrao, Department of Antioquia, another FARC group, perpetrated a massacre by killing the Governor of that Department, Guillermo Gaviria, his Peace Adviser, and former Minister of Defense, Gilberto Echeverri, who had been kidnapped the previous year, and eight soldiers whom they had held in captivity for several years. The hostages were kept in inhumane conditions.

- On February 7, a car-bomb exploded, killing 32 people and injuring close to 150, including many children, at the El Nogal social club in Bogotá.

Colombia is a long standing democracy with a president elected last year with broad popular support. Our democracy is besieged by a violent minority that lacks any popular support and whose main sources of financing are drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortion.

These illegal armed groups repeatedly and systematically engage in summary executions, torture and kidnapping. They attempt to restrict our freedom of movement and opinion. They threaten and assassinate local elected officials. They destroy the country’s infrastructure. In general, our common heritage is under siege. The truth is undeniable: Colombians are the victims of terrorism.

It is violence that affects everyone: rich and poor, urban and rural, powerful and ordinary citizens. President Alvaro Uribe’s father was assassinated by the FARC in the 1980’s. Last year this group murdered the wife of the Attorney General Edgardo Maya, former Minister Consuelo Araujo. My own family has been a victim of narco-terrorism: My brother-in-law, Andres Escabi, died in a commercial airliner that was blown up by Pablo Escobar, the former leader of the infamous Medellin Cartel. I was kidnapped and held for 8 months.

Some key statistics illustrate the extent of the *human cost* in terrorist violence:

- In the nexus between narco-trafficking and terrorism Colombia has suffered an average of 30,000 violent deaths a year for the last 3 years. This is a figure close to the total number of victims of the attacks of September 11, 2001—every month!

- Over the last 5 years, 16,000 people have been kidnapped.

- Over 6,000 children have been recruited mainly by coercion or force to fight for the illegal armed groups.

- Today, the illicit armed groups are responsible for almost all the violations of human rights in Colombia.

- Over the last 5 years, we have suffered 8,000 acts of collective destruction.

The *economic costs* of their actions are also enormous:

- During 2002, the illegal armed groups downed 483 power lines, 62 communications towers, 100 bridges and attacked 12 reservoirs. These attacks have cost Colombia more than \$4 billion dollars, money which was literally stolen from the citizens of our country.

- Terrorist violence costs an estimated 2 points of Colombia's Gross Domestic Product every year.

The FARC and Colombia's other two State Department-designated FTOs, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), have moved from simply taxing coca fields to the production and distribution of pure cocaine.

Here are some examples:

- In November 2000, a senior lieutenant to FARC military commander, Mono Jojoy, was arrested in Mexico City while meeting with the chief of operations of the powerful Mexican Arellano Felix Cartel.

- In March 2002, soon after the end of the Zona de Despeje, the Colombian National Police discovered over seven metric tons of pure cocaine in several FARC-run cocaine production labs—these drugs were ready to be shipped to international markets.

- The leader of the AUC has publicly admitted to trafficking in drugs to finance his weapons and arms purchases. There is ample evidence that paramilitary groups ship tons of pure cocaine through Pacific and Caribbean drug transshipment points to United States and Europe.

The FARC, ELN and AUC are the perpetrators of the majority of the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in my country. The principal victims are the civilian population. For each member of the Armed Forces killed last year, at least six civilians were murdered by the illegal armed groups. For every soldier and policeman taken hostage against international humanitarian law, 43 civilians were kidnapped. A total of 35 mayors have been assassinated over the last 3 years and 62 representatives of city councils in the last year alone.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

Together with this escalation of death and terror, drug trafficking organizations cause enormous, irreparable damage to the global environment.

Drug traffickers have concentrated their activity in environmentally-sensitive ecosystems: poppy is planted in high Andean forests and highlands while coca is grown in the vast plains and tropical forests of Orinoquia and Amazonia. These form part of one of the world's most important ecological zones to regulate global climate. Moreover, this region is humanity's largest source of flora and fauna that could hold the secrets to curing diseases.

Studies show that for every hectare of coca cultivated, four hectares of Amazon forest are felled. For every hectare of opium poppy, 2.5 hectares of Andean forest are destroyed. In addition to this loss of flora and fauna, destruction of these forests itself contributes to global warming—an estimated 380 kilograms of biomass per hectare is burnt. The area destroyed by traffickers between 1990 and 2000 is equal to about twice the size of Yellowstone National Park.

Drug traffickers use a broad range of insecticides, herbicides and fungicides to grow their illegal crops. These destroy biomass because of their high toxicity. In the year 2000 alone, approximately 4.5 million liters of these chemicals were used. These chemicals, solvents, acids and bases are dumped into Amazon streams and rivers, damaging the environment and the normal functioning of aquatic ecosystems, especially the biological cycles and the very existence of their fauna. The quantity of chemicals dumped into the Amazon river systems each year is equivalent to two Exxon Valdez disasters.

IV. DEMOCRATIC SECURITY

In spite of terrible terrorist atrocities committed against my country, Colombia continues to thrive. It is a dynamic Nation of 44 million people—the vast majority of whom are honest, love their country, want their rights to be respected and are productive members of society.

Colombia is the fifth largest economy in Latin America after Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela; the second largest in the Andean region; and, the largest market among the Andean Trade Program and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA) member states. Our population is the third largest in Latin America. 90 percent of our inhabitants are under 50 years of age and 71 percent live in urban areas. Colombia has a cultured entrepreneurial class with a sizable and growing middle class. It has a productive, intelligent workforce, with significant skilled human resources and low labor costs. According to the United Nations Development Program's

(UNDP) Human Development Index, Colombia is a medium developed country, ranked 15 among the 83 countries in that category.

Even during recent years when acts of narco-terrorism were at their highest, the Colombian economy continued to grow. Colombia grew 2.23 percent in the second half of 2002 and 3.8 percent in the first quarter of this year. This places us in the same position of the 1980's and 1990's, when our economy grew without interruption and at rates much higher than the Latin American average.

Colombia has always honored its international debts and commitments. At present, the majority of our external debt is long-term. In recent years, Banco de la República, the country's central bank, succeeded in stabilizing inflation in line with international standards.

The fact that we have achieved constant, uninterrupted economic growth in spite of being plagued by many difficulties, is a demonstration of the determination of our hard working people.

Colombia will not permit minority terrorist armed groups, principally financed by drug trafficking, to continue indiscriminately attacking innocent citizens, perpetrating assaults and massacres, kidnapping, laying anti-personnel land mines and committing other terrorist acts. These terrorist groups are harming our country's economy, spoiling the tranquility of our citizenry and restricting Colombians' right to progress.

President Uribe's commitment is to defeat narco-terrorism shares the same vision expressed by President Bush after the events of September 11, 2001 when he said:

"We will direct all the resources we have available to us—all diplomatic channels, all the tools of intelligence, all the instruments for the enforcement of the law, all the financial influence and the necessary arms of war—towards the destruction and defeat of the global network of terror."

V. THE COLOMBIAN CONTRIBUTION

Under the leadership of President Uribe, we are implementing a policy of democratic security to combat terrorism, drug trafficking, extortion and kidnapping.

One of the priorities of this policy is to strengthen the Armed Forces. Our military personnel and police ratio is very low compared to other countries: 3.9 troops for every 1,000 citizens. President Uribe intends to increase the size of the Military Forces by 126,361 and defense spending from 3.5 percent to 5.8 percent of GDP during his 4-year administration. To achieve this, Colombians are being called upon to make a greater sacrifice. Last year, the Government decreed a tax on capital for companies and citizens with the highest incomes, through which, in spite of the economic difficulties of the time, resources close to 1 percent of GDP are being collected.

Since the onset of Plan Colombia, Colombia improved the professionalism and efficiency of its public forces. Today we have a force that is more aggressive and offensive-minded, better equipped and trained for night combat, with improved war-fighting capability. There is improved coordination and cooperation between the different services. The military force is more sensitive to and respectful of human rights.

One shortfall in returning security to Colombians has been the lack of police presence in conflicting zones. The Colombian National Police (CNP), in cooperation with the U.S. Government, is implementing a plan to reestablish public security by training and equipping 165,000 policemen. These will be assigned to 157 municipalities which currently do not have a police presence. We are creating 62 mobile *Carabineros* Squadrons, or rural police, and building 80 hardened new police stations in the larger municipalities.

Our efforts are already showing results, but we recognize there is a long and difficult road ahead. Some statistics:

- Compared to last year, in the first 4 months of 2003 we reduced the number of homicides by 20 percent, thus saving the lives of 1,964 Colombians.

- We also managed to reduce kidnappings by 32 percent and have increased rescues of people held for ransom by 56 percent. This has meant freedom for 322 Colombians.

- In the first half of 2002, there were 170,000 displaced persons and in the second half, 98,000.

- In the first half of 2002, the deaths of 98 union members were reported; in the second half, these deaths declined to 52 and in the first quarter of 2003, to 9.

These results have been achieved by public forces who are respecting human rights. Data we have provided to this Congress and to the U.S. Government, in accordance with the requirement contained in Section 564 of Law 107-115, show that in spite of the intensification of the conflict, human rights complaints against members of the Armed Forces have been substantially reduced.

President Uribe has made it clear: We do not accept violence either to combat the Government or to defend it. Both are terrorist acts. We are committed to promoting and defending human rights.

VI. TOWARDS FINAL VICTORY

Three of the four State Department-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations which operate in the Western Hemisphere are present in Colombia. It is time for all leaders, media, individuals and organizations to realize the enormity of the danger these organizations represent to our country.

Since 1992, these groups have kidnapped 54 and murdered 11 American citizens. While they are not as clear and present danger as Al-Qaeda, they have indirectly caused greater harm to Americans by promoting drug consumption, poisoning the population, frustrating the future of millions of young people and inciting violence and crime in towns and cities. According to information provided by the ONDCP, drugs in the United States cause the death of as many as 50,000 Americans every year. This is a threat to both of our countries and we need to continue working together to defeat it. The Uribe administration is committed to this war.

The Uribe Administration, in addition to democratic security, is focusing on political, economic and social transformation by reducing government spending, improving tax collection, reforming the administration, reinvigorating the economy and social policy. In addition to the results in the fight against drugs and the struggle to overcome terrorism, the assistance we have received from the United States have been important to our efforts to fight corruption, improve the justice system, protect human rights, reinsert ex-combatants into society [especially children] and promote alternative development in coca and poppy growing regions.

In addition to building up democratic security, our priority is to continue strengthening our economic stability. US-lead initiatives such as FTAA, ATPA and ATPDEA allow us to create more jobs and move toward greater growth and development, providing legal alternatives to narco-trafficking.

I wish to express, once again, the gratitude of millions of Colombians who have benefited, directly or indirectly, from America's generous assistance.

We are committed to defeat terrorism. We need know-how, expertise and to maintain the levels of support the U.S. provides Colombia. I invite you to continue to protect this alliance, to strengthen and empower its results. To channel the successes and abundant experience we have accumulated in the fight against narco-trafficking and terrorism, which are, at the end of the day, the same thing, to fulfill the plans and attain the goals which the Presidents of our two nations have been so right in outlining to eradicate these threats.

Thank you.

Chairman GRASSLEY. It is my privilege now to call the second panel. I had invited the Deputy Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mark Grossman, to testify, but last week he was sent by the Secretary of State to Europe for NATO ministerial meetings, and then on to Africa. When the President calls, I can understand his not being here.

So we are fortunate to have Curt Struble, Acting Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and Mr. Paul Simons, the Acting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. They have come in the stead of Mr. Grossman.

Then we also have Marshall Billingslea, Under Secretary for Special Operations, Low-Intensity Conflict. He has joined General Hill to respond to any questions that we may ask. Again, two witnesses for one invitation, and we feel very fortunate to have these people with us.

I am sorry. I should have told you to come to the table as I was introducing you, so please come up here. Then, according to instructions from my staff, long statements will be put in the record and you don't have to ask us to do that, and then we would like to have you give whatever summary you want to give. We appre-

ciate very much your taking time, particularly traveling long distances for some of you to be here.

So, Mr. Struble, and then Mr. Billingslea.

STATEMENT OF PAUL E. SIMONS, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC. AND J. CURTIS STRUBLE, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC.

Mr. STRUBLE. Senator, thank you very much. I have agreed with Acting Assistant Secretary Paul Simons that he will give a short statement on behalf of both of us.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Thank you.

Mr. Simons.

Mr. SIMONS. Mr. Chairman, Senator DeWine, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you this morning to talk about the narcotics situation in Colombia, as well as the Department of State's response to that situation.

We have a longer written statement which we would ask be submitted for the record. In order to give sufficient time for questions, I would like to summarize that statement in four very brief points.

First of all, what we are doing in Colombia on the drug side makes a difference in terms of overall U.S. counter-narcotics objectives in the world. Colombia, as you know, is very much the center of the illicit narcotics industry. In recent years, as the Vice President noted, the rural security vacuum in Colombia created a situation in which Colombia has grown to now be responsible for over 70 percent of the world's total coca cultivation, as well as some 90 percent of the cocaine entering the United States. Colombia is also a significant source of heroin for the U.S. market. So we need to get it right in Colombia for our overall counter-narcotics objectives.

Second—and again this was a point that the Vice President touched on—directly linked to the illicit drug trade is the scourge of terrorism that also plagues Colombia. Terrorism in Colombia both supports and draws resources from the narcotics industry, and Congress' willingness to provide resources for a unified campaign against narco-trafficking and terrorist organizations, I think, is a very real demonstration of this linkage.

Third—and I refer again to the testimony of the Vice President which coincided so much with our thinking—since taking office, President Uribe has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to countering narco-terrorists. In spite of at least 15 assassination attempts, both before and after his election, he continues to implement bold policies that are intended to give Colombia back to the Colombians.

Most recently, during his meetings here in Washington at the end of April with both the executive branch as well as Members of Congress, President Uribe emphasized his commitment to complete elimination of Colombia's coca crop by the end of his term in office.

He is an avid supporter of the aerial eradication and alternative development programs that are the centerpiece of U.S. activity in Colombia. During his brief 10 months in office, the Colombian police, together with U.S. support, have sprayed an unprecedented

130,000 hectares of coca. And as the Vice President mentioned, we are starting to see results from Plan Colombia.

Coca cultivation overall is down by over 15 percent for the first time in a decade. Opium poppy cultivation is down by 25 percent in 1 year alone. President Uribe is working together with us to strengthen the presence of the Colombian State in the rural areas and to ensure the primacy of the rule of law and respect for human rights throughout Colombian territory.

His national security strategy includes commitments to respect human rights, to dedicate additional resources to the Colombian armed forces, and to reform the conscription laws. He is eager to ensure the effectiveness of joint efforts with the U.S. Government to achieve our common goals in combatting narcotics trafficking and terrorism.

Finally, after many years of effort, we believe that the money we have invested in Colombia is now beginning to pay off. The Plan Colombia equipment did take a couple of years to arrive—the helicopters, the spray planes, some of the training of counter-drug brigades, the support for the Colombian police. But we are now beginning to see that, having accumulated those assets and that training on the ground, we are achieving positive results.

We believe we have turned the corner, in particular, on the coca crop in Colombia. Nationwide, hectareage was down more than 15 percent in 2002. As the Vice President mentioned, we sprayed an additional 65,000 hectares during the first 5 months of this year. And our plan, together with the Colombian police, is to spray all of the remaining coca in Colombia by the end of this calendar year, as well as all of the opium poppy in Colombia.

A spray program with this level of dedication sends a strong signal to the Colombian farmers and cultivators that they simply cannot wait us out this time, that there is firm determination on the part of this Colombian government to see the course and to have a policy that emphasizes continuity. This is very important to the success of this program.

At the same time, we have strengthened our commitment to pursuing an environmentally sound aerial eradication program, and we have put into place a number of other programs which are described in my statement that have helped strengthen democratic institutions, protect human rights, assist internally displaced persons, and foster social and economic development. This is basically the coordinated approach that was designed for Plan Colombia and it is beginning to show results.

Finally, full realization of U.S. policy goals will require concerted Colombian strategy and effort, backed by sustained U.S. assistance to establish control over national territory, eliminate narcotics cultivation and distribution and terrorism, and promote human rights and the rule of law.

In this respect, we urge members of this Caucus and other supporters on the Hill to provide full funding for our fiscal year 2004 budget request. The Andean Counter-Narcotics Initiative element of this request comes to \$731 million, of which \$463 million is for Colombia. We also have an additional \$110 million in foreign military financing for Colombia that indirectly supports these efforts.

This budget reflects our continued support for the Uribe administration's courageous anti-narcotics and anti-terror agenda. The progress described earlier needs to be cemented if we are to achieve our long-term goals of improvements in all areas of Colombian life and a reduction of illegal drug cultivation, as well as terrorism.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statements of Simons and Struble follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PAUL E. SIMONS, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, Senator Biden, and members of the Caucus. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about the current narcotics situation in Colombia, and the Department of State's response to that situation. Because of the importance of our efforts in Colombia, I am especially pleased to meet with this Caucus, which is a key stakeholder in this process.

I. OVERVIEW

Situation in Colombia

Colombia is of great importance to the United States. It is a vibrant democracy and a country with extraordinary promise, facing an extraordinary threat. Colombia has four times the land area of California and a population of over 40 million. Its gross domestic product is more than \$90 billion a year. Colombia has important reserves of petroleum, natural gas and coal.

Unfortunately, Colombia is also a center of the illicit narcotics industry. In recent years, Colombia has been responsible for over 70 percent of the world's coca cultivation. Ninety percent of the cocaine entering the United States is either produced in or passes through Colombia. Colombia is also a significant source of heroin for the U.S. market.

The drug trade has a terrible impact on the United States. There are 50,000 drug-related deaths yearly in the United States with 19,000 directly attributable to drugs. This is six times the loss of life on September 11, and it happens every year. The drug trade also has devastating consequences in Colombia. Not only is that society rife with drug-related violence, its unique eco-system and environment are increasingly threatened by the slash and burn cutting of tropical forest for coca cultivation and the indiscriminate dumping of toxic chemicals used in drug processing.

Directly linked to the illicit drug trade is the scourge of terrorism that plagues Colombia. Colombia is home to three of the four U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) in this hemisphere, and has suffered a four-decades cycle of violence and conflict. Terrorism in Colombia both supports and draws resources from the narcotics industry. Nefarious narcoterrorist organizations also rely on kidnapping and extortion—including threats to U.S. citizens and economic interests—to support themselves. Colombia's terrorist groups have kidnapped 138 American citizens since 1980, and killed 11. Since February, three DOD contractors have been held hostage by the FARC and one of their colleagues was assassinated upon capture.

The country's 40-year-old internal conflict—among government forces, several leftist guerrilla groups, and a right-wing paramilitary movement—intensified during 2002. The internal armed conflict, and the narcotics trafficking that both fueled it and prospered from it, were the central causes of violations of international humanitarian law. In a 2001 report, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that all sides in the conflict failed to respect the principles of humanitarian law. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the paramilitaries are the principal perpetrators of these human rights violations. The Colombian Army is charged with committing very few of the human rights violations alleged in 2002.

Violence by the three FTOs—the FARC, the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC)—caused the deaths of thousands of civilians in 2002, including combat casualties, political killings, and forced disappearances.

Kidnapping continues to be a major source of revenue for both the FARC and ELN. The FARC continued to kidnap persons in accordance with its so-called "Law 002," announced in March 2000, which requires persons with more than the equivalent of \$1 million in assets to volunteer payments to the FARC or risk detention. The Free Country Foundation, a Colombian NGO, reported that guerrillas committed 75 percent of the 2,986 kidnappings reported during the year in which a perpetrator was identified. The Foundation reported that the FARC kidnapped 936 per-

sons and the ELN 776. In addition, the FARC often purchased victims kidnapped by common criminals and then negotiated ransom payments with the families.

Additionally, the ongoing terrorist offensive against democratic institutions and civil society has had tragic costs for Colombia. Each year the AUC, ELN and FARC kill more than 3,000 persons. Their victims have included judges and prosecutors, journalists, labor union leaders and human rights workers, soldiers, police, and ordinary citizens. Even clerics and Red Cross workers are not exempt from the violence.

The narco-terrorist threat is among the greatest the United States and Colombia face, and success against the drug trade and terrorism in Colombia will improve security in both countries, and in the Andean region as a whole. The ongoing internal strife that Colombia has suffered has hampered its economic progress, severely strained both military and civil institutions, and wreaked havoc on the civilian population who must live with the constant threat of terrorist violence. It has also resulted in a flood of illicit drugs into the United States.

What is occurring in Colombia matters to the United States. We stand in solidarity with the people of Colombia who, like us, know first-hand the scourge of terrorism. Although Afghanistan and Iraq currently receive more public attention, our important partnership with Colombia is yet another front in the war on terrorism, and remains a priority of this Administration. With the support of the U.S. Congress, the Administration has devoted considerable monetary resources and personnel to this effort.

Commitment of President Uribe

The recent visit of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, and President Bush's renewed pledge to support him in his efforts against the narco-terrorists, underscore the high value we place on our relationship and the importance of this struggle.

Since taking office, President Uribe has demonstrated unwavering commitment to countering the narco-terrorists. In spite of at least 15 assassination attempts, both before and after his election, he continues to implement policies that will give Colombia back to Colombians.

During his meetings in Washington, April 30 to May 2, with the Executive Branch and many members of this Caucus, President Uribe emphasized his commitment to complete elimination of Colombia's coca crops by the end of his term of office.

President Uribe is an avid supporter of aerial eradication and alternative development programs. During his tenure, eradication programs have reduced coca cultivation by more than 15 percent and opium poppy production by 25 percent from 2001 levels. President Uribe is working to strengthen the presence of the Colombian State and to ensure the primacy of the rule of law and respect for human rights throughout Colombian territory. He is also making the tough fiscal decisions that will allow him to fund these policies and reforms. He has increased government security expenditures for military and police activities from 3.5 percent of GDP in 2001 to a goal of 5.8 percent of GDP by the end of his term.

President Uribe's national security strategy includes commitments to respect human rights, to dedicate more resources to the Colombian Armed Forces, and to reform the conscription laws to make military service universal and fairer. He is eager to ensure the effectiveness of joint efforts with the United States government to achieve our common goals in combating narcotics trafficking and terrorism, and has proven an effective partner in the war on terrorism. Since the lifting of the ban against extraditing nationals in December 1997, Colombia has extradited more than 100 of its nationals charged with high-level narcotics trafficking, drug-related money laundering, hostage taking, and the murder of a retired New York City policeman. We have no better extradition partner.

United States Policy Toward Colombia

Beyond the struggle against the narco-terrorists, there are broad and important U.S. national interests in Colombia that include stability in the Andean region, trade, immigration, human rights, humanitarian assistance, and protection of the environment.

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

In implementing these programs, the Administration and Congress increasingly came to understand that the terrorist and narcotics problems in Colombia are intertwined and must be dealt with as a whole. Working with Congress, the Administration sought and Congress enacted new authorities in the 2002 Supplemental Appro-

priations Act (P.L. 107-206) that would help address this combined threat. These provisions were renewed in the fiscal year 2003 Omnibus Appropriations Act (P.L. 108-7).

Since 2000, the United States has provided Colombia with over \$1.7 billion in economic, humanitarian and security assistance to support these efforts, with another \$600 million appropriated for fiscal year 2003.

The U.S. counter-drug objective in Colombia is to reduce illegal drug production and trafficking. We use both eradication and interdiction programs in this effort. Through programs to eradicate coca leaf and opium poppy and to interdict their movement and that of precursor supplies, cash or final products, we expect to reduce the amount of cocaine and heroin entering the United States. Maintaining effective demand reduction programs will also be key.

Additional pressure can be brought against the illegal drug industry by more effectively controlling transportation corridors across the Andes that are used to import chemicals, supplies and cash into the growing areas, or to move illegal drug products out. If the drug producing areas are isolated from markets and necessary supplies, the costs and risks of moving narcotics products will increase.

Interdiction of cocaine and heroin at sea and in the air is another important element of drug market disruption. With U.S. assistance, technology, intelligence support, and law enforcement training, the Government of Colombia should be able to increase pressure on drug warehousing sites and go-fast boat movements, and increase seizures of cocaine and heroin.

Importantly, as a result of the ongoing Colombian criminal justice reform, including United States training of specialized task force units as well as prosecutors and police, and the bilateral cases developed with U.S. law enforcement, more and more seizures and arrests are leading to convictions and dismantling of narco-terrorist organizations.

II. FISCAL YEAR 2003 BUDGET

In 2003, Congress funded \$700 million of a requested \$731 million for the Andean Counterdrug Initiative account. Of that amount, more than \$433 million will go to Colombia, with \$284 million for eradication/interdiction support and \$149.2 million for alternative development, support for the rule of law, and institution building. Programs include the following:

The \$284 million for eradication/interdiction will go toward support for the Colombian military (pending the Secretary of State's certification that the conditions in section 564(3) of the fiscal year 2003 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act (P.L. 108-7) have been met) including its Army Counter Drug Brigade (CD BDE) and Army Aviation. These funds will also support a renewed Air Bridge Denial Program (after necessary legal steps and interagency coordination are completed), coastal interdiction and continued support for the Colombian National Police, to include aviation support and eradication and interdiction programs.

Funding for alternative development and institution-building (\$149.2 million) will fund programs which support the rule of law, such as the DOJ-supported specialized task force units on Human Rights, Anti-Corruption, Money Laundering/Asset Forfeiture and Narcotics, criminal code reform, judicial and witness protection programs and prosecutorial and police training; bomb squad; human rights reform and drug awareness and demand reduction projects; and the GOC "carabiniero" program which will establish permanent police stations and begin rural patrols in areas that have no government presence and are under virtual control of drug trafficking and insurgent organizations. Funding is also targeted for USAID's "Support for Democracy" and alternative development projects, and USAID and PRM programs to support vulnerable groups and internally displaced persons.

In addition, Congress appropriated \$34 million to the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) in the fiscal year 2003 Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L. 108-11) for Colombia, and the Administration is allocating an additional \$37 million in FMF funding from the Supplemental. These funds will go toward Presidential security; bomb squad support; increasing police presence in remote areas; support for internally displaced persons; and aerial eradication programs.

In fiscal year 2003, \$93 million in regular FMF funding will support the infrastructure security program for the area of the Cano-Limon pipeline and stop terrorist attacks on this important source of revenue for Colombia. IMET will improve the professionalism, technical competence and human rights performance of the Colombian Armed Forces through a variety of military educational training courses.

III. RETURNS ON INVESTMENT

Our years of effort, and the money that we have invested in Colombia are beginning to pay off. This year, we have turned the corner on coca and opium poppy cultivation. Nationwide coca hectareage was down by more than 15 percent in 2002 to 144,000 hectares, with additional declines in the first quarter of 2003. Key southern coca cultivation (Putumayo/Caqueta) declined by over 50 percent (82,300 to 40,550 hectares) in 2002. In the first 5 months of 2003, we sprayed approximately 64,000 hectares of coca, well on our way to meeting our goal of spraying all remaining coca this calendar year. Opium poppy cultivation has likewise decreased, with a 25 percent decline in 2002. The CNC estimates that there are currently 4,900 hectares yearly (2,450 hectares counted twice to account for two distinct crops) of opium poppy remaining. Our aim is to spray opium poppy three times during calendar year 2003. Through May, we have sprayed approximately 1,650 hectares of opium poppy, well on our way to meeting our target of spraying all remaining opium poppy in 2003.

At the same time, we have strengthened our commitment to pursuing an environmentally sound aerial eradication program. In September 2002, the Department switched to a more benign glyphosate formulation—one with decreased risk of eye irritation compared to the former mixture. We have evaluated the toxicity of the spray mixture and have also increased environmental training for our spray pilots, conducted toxicological reviews or medical investigations of each health concern brought to the attention of the Embassy, trained Colombian specialists who now conduct soil and water analysis, and coordinated with the OAS in its long-term monitoring of the spray program.

Beyond the achievements in eradication, U.S. programs have helped strengthen democratic institutions, protect human rights, assist internally displaced persons and foster socio-economic development. Specifically, we have succeeded in the following areas:

- deployment of Colombia's first Counternarcotics Brigade which has moved aggressively against drug labs and other illegal facilities and has expanded its interdiction efforts beyond southern Colombia;
- support for the police Anti-Narcotics Directorate (DIRAN) which destroyed 61 HCl labs and 401 coca base labs in 2002, and seized thousands of kilos of cocaine;
- support for police presence in rural areas, which has increased significantly with the addition of permanent police units to 79 municipalities that previously had no police presence;
- over 22,000 families have benefited from the alternative development program;
- 24,549 hectares of licit crops are being supported;
- 16,673 hectares of illicit crops have been manually eradicated by alternative development communities;
- 31 Justice and Coexistence Centers have been opened; these provide cost-effective legal services to Colombians who have previously not enjoyed access to the country's judicial system; over 1.6 million cases have been handled by the centers;
- USAID programs have provided protection to 2,731 human rights activists, journalists and union leaders;
- USAID has provided assistance to 774,601 Colombians displaced by violence;
- USAID is funding a program to rehabilitate former child soldiers, including those captured by the army or those who have deserted from the illegal armed groups. Some 733 children have received treatment, education and shelter;
- an Early Warning System (EWS) is helping Colombia avert massacres and violations of international humanitarian law; to date, over 194 warnings have identified threats to communities across Colombia, and have resulted in 154 responses by the military, police and/or relief agencies;
- the PRM bureau supports international and non-governmental organizations working in Colombia that provide food, temporary shelter, basic health and sanitation, education and other emergency humanitarian assistance to displaced people. PRM also supports the dissemination of information on international humanitarian law to the Colombian military and police, local civilian authorities, and illegal armed groups;
- DOJ-sponsored justice sector reform programs have helped the Government of Colombia to reform its judicial system and strengthen local government capacity; implement a comprehensive program to investigate and prosecute kidnapping and extortion offenses; trained a cadre of professional prosecutors; enhanced maritime enforcement capabilities; and improved witness and judicial protection programs;
- DOJ support to the Prosecutor General's Office has helped in establishing dedicated human rights satellite units arrayed throughout the country to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of human rights abuses.

Additionally, our focus on human rights is having an impact on Colombian institutions. President Uribe is working to end collusion between the Colombian military and the paramilitary AUC terrorist organization. Last year, 168 paramilitaries were killed, 764 captured and 20 turned themselves in. In the past 2 months, the GOC has increased its crackdown on illegal paramilitary groups. In four major operations, Colombian security forces detained an Army officer paramilitary collaborator, arrested a major paramilitary leader and apprehended large groups of illegal combatants.

The Department takes very seriously the human rights record of the Colombian military. For example on January 3, we suspended assistance to a Colombian Air Force unit (CACOM-1) due to lack of responsiveness and progress on an important human rights case. The suspension will remain effective until the Colombian government provides a credible account of what occurred at Santo Domingo and takes appropriate action consistent with the facts.

The State Department carefully monitors the human rights record of the Colombian Armed Forces. Pursuant to the "Leahy Amendment," we regularly vet units of the security forces and do not provide assistance to units for which there is credible evidence (as determined by the Secretary) that they have committed gross violations of human rights.

In addition, the Department is moving ahead toward rapid resumption of the Air Bridge Denial program. The U.S. and Colombia have signed a bilateral agreement, which lays out the safety procedures for the program. Our goal is to ensure that we have adequate procedures in place for the protection of innocent life while at the same time providing a credible deterrent to aerial trafficking of drugs.

Recently, a certification team visited Colombia to review whether the Colombians would be able to discharge their responsibilities to operate the Air Bridge Denial Program in accordance with the safety procedures agreed upon between Colombia and the United States. If the team recommends that Colombia's procedures meet the requirements of the bilateral agreement, which would be a major step toward facilitating the initiation of the program. Department officials will be on the Hill this week to seek Congressional advice. If the President signs a determination, the Air Bridge Denial program can recommence. We are hoping this will happen in the near future.

I would like to note that we have achieved all this while conforming to the limits on U.S. personnel in Colombia in connection with support of Plan Colombia—400 U.S. civilian contractors and 400 U.S. military personnel—established by Congress.

If present programs are sustained, then Plan Colombia's original goal of reducing coca cultivation in Colombia by 50 percent by the end of 2006 should be achieved. President Uribe has called for a more ambitious target: eradication of all coca by the end of his term of office in 2006.

If these eradication and interdiction objectives are achieved we would expect to see a major reduction in the amount of cocaine available for the United States, with corresponding impacts on cocaine price and purity in the U.S. market. Reductions in Colombian heroin availability might not produce comparable effects because of the availability of heroin supplies from other parts of the world.

IV. CHALLENGES TO OUR PROGRAMS

In addition to our success, many challenges also confront us in Colombia.

First and foremost among these is safety of our personnel. The terrorist organizations operating in Colombia are ruthless killers, and the aerial spray operations, particularly of opium poppy, are perilous. This weekend, another spray plane was destroyed when it hit a tree while spraying coca; fortunately, the pilot survived. Recently, we lost a U.S. citizen spray pilot during low-level application of herbicide to opium poppy. There was no evidence that the plane had been hit by ground fire; rather it appears that pilot error—in the difficult terrain of the high Andes—was the cause of the crash.

This latest tragedy brings to three the number of U.S. citizen civilian State Department pilot contractors who have died in Colombia since 1998. Two perished on July 27, 1998 in an aviation accident when their T-65 aircraft crashed during a training flight.

Colombia is a high-risk assignment and the U.S. military personnel, U.S. civilian contractors and the permanent and temporary U.S. Government personnel assigned to Colombia are well aware of this. Our personnel and official facilities maintain a high State of alert, take every possible precaution, and are very proactive in matters regarding safety. The Department continually strives to improve the already strong safety record of our spray program.

We are currently instituting additional safety procedures, including improved intelligence exchange, increased armed helicopter escorts, and joint operations that employ Counter Drug Brigade ground troops on interdiction operations in areas where increased hostile fire is expected.

V. THE ROAD AHEAD

Full realization of U.S. policy goals will require a concerted Colombian strategy and effort—backed by sustained U.S. assistance—to establish control over its national territory, eliminate narcotics cultivation and distribution, end terrorism, and promote human rights and the rule of law. We urge Members to support full funding of our 2004 budget request of \$731 million, of which \$463 million is for Colombia.

This budget reflects our continued support of the Uribe Administration's courageous anti-narcotics and anti-terror agenda. The progress described earlier needs to be cemented if we are to achieve our long-term goals of improvements in all areas of Colombian life and reduction in illegal drug cultivation and terrorism.

First, we would stress that the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) is a regional effort. It will require full support in Congress if it is to succeed. Among the goals we have set for ourselves is to ensure that accomplishments in Colombia do not reverse our gains in Bolivia or Peru. We also aim to prevent spillover into Brazil, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela.

We are making significant progress in our eradication efforts, but will require continued support for eradication and alternative development in order to eliminate remaining cultivation and replanting and to deter permanently the coca growers from pursuing this illicit business. Our budget request balances law enforcement with sustainable long-term development.

In Bolivia, we need to provide the GOB with strong incentives to reinforce counter-narcotics programs, particularly in light of increasing political pressure to stop eradication and increase licit coca cultivation. In Peru, the democratic government is experiencing unprecedented unrest and resistance in hardcore coca cultivation regions. We should not turn our backs on these partners when they most need our political and financial support to cement earlier eradication gains.

Specifically, our 2004 ACI programs are intended to do the following:

- *Combat* illicit drugs and terrorism, defend human rights, promote economic, social and alternative development initiatives, reform and strengthen the administration of justice, and assist the internally displaced;
- *Enhance* counter-terrorism capability by providing advice, assistance, training and equipment, and intelligence support to the Colombian Armed Forces and the Colombian National Police through ongoing programs as well as by implementing the new authorities and the pipeline protection program;
- *Promote* economic growth and development through support for market-based policies, including negotiation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and implementation of the Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA) as amended by the Andean Trade Program and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA);
- *Reduce* the production and trafficking of cocaine and heroin from Colombia by strengthening counter-narcotics eradication programs; advise, train, and assist counterdrug organizations and units; dismantle drug trafficking organizations; disrupt the transportation of illegal drugs, precursor and essential chemicals, trafficker supplies, and cash; address major cultivation regions; and respond rapidly to shifts in cultivation regions; eliminate any remaining coca and opium cultivation, to include replanting of these crops;
- *Increase* institutional development, professionalization, and enlargement of Colombian security forces to permit the exercise of governmental authority throughout the national territory while ensuring respect for human rights; and
- *Reform and strengthen* the criminal justice system by enhancing the capabilities of the police investigators and prosecutors as the country moves in transition from an inquisitorial to a more accusatorial system with oral and open trials to increase effectiveness and build public confidence.

Along with ACI funding, Colombia assistance will include \$110 million in FMF funding, to include maritime interdiction support—a priority of President Uribe and one that meshes with U.S. counter-narcotics goals.

VI. CONCLUSION

Finally, I would like to thank you again for this opportunity to update you on the status of our counter-narcotics policy and programs. The Administration is committed to supporting the Uribe Administration and to working with our other part-

ners in the Andean region and beyond to stem the flow of illicit narcotics into our country and to check the influence of terrorist organizations wherever they reside.

These are important and costly missions—both in terms of financial and human resources. But they are worthy missions—which require the continued support of our Congressional partners. We thank you for the tremendous support and counsel you have provided in the past, and look forward to our continued partnership.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CURTIS STRUBLE, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE,
WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS

Good morning. Mr. Chairman, Senator Biden, members of the Caucus, allow me to first express our appreciation for your ongoing interest in and support for our policy toward Colombia. Your consistent availability to visiting Colombian government officials, such as Vice President Santos this morning, and your Congressional delegations to Colombia help sustain crucial support for our Colombia strategy.

My colleague Paul Simons has addressed in detail our counternarcotics policy in Colombia, I would like to offer an update on the current status of U.S.-Colombian relations, and our efforts to bolster regional and international support for President Uribe's goals of attaining peace and strengthening democracy.

Colombia is central to our regional counternarcotics and counterterrorism goals. We are committed to helping President Alvaro Uribe address Colombia's security, economic and narcotics issues, not only because it is in our national interest to do so, but because we recognize the unique, reliable partner we have in President Uribe. He has our full political support. U.S.-Colombian cooperation has never been better. Colombia is producing tangible results and deserves the full support of the region.

The focused high-level interest in Colombia, supported by the large number of two-way visits, including your Congressional delegations, is a positive contribution to our relationship.

President Uribe has been to Washington three times: once as President-elect (June 2002); then in September 2002; and most recently in early May.

Vice President Santos, Foreign Minister Barco, Defense Minister Ramírez, Peace Commissioner Restrepo, Minister of Commerce Botero, and others have made individual trips to solidify this relationship.

Our Cabinet level visits:

- Secretary Powell traveled to Colombia in December 2002.
- Secretary Snow visited in April 2003.
- USTR Representative Zoellick is planning a trip for July.

President Uribe's first year in office continues to be marked by unprecedented cooperation between Colombia and the United States. Last week (May 28th), Colombia extradited the first FARC terrorist to the U.S. for the kidnapping and murder of three U.S. indigenous rights workers in February/March 1999, bringing the total number of extraditions under Uribe to 44. This is in addition to the 64 extraditions former Colombian President Andrés Pastrana ordered during his presidency. Uribe has sent a clear message to the FARC and other illegal groups that reinforces the rule of law in Colombia: They will be held accountable for their actions.

President Uribe remains a stalwart supporter on Iraq. Even before Operation Iraqi Freedom began, Colombia was key in lining up support before rotating off the U.N. Security Council last December. As UNSC President, Colombia decided to distribute the Iraqi Declaration to UNSC: members with the expertise to assess risks of proliferation first, despite objections by Syria. Three months later, President Uribe expressed solidarity with the U.S. on Iraq at a high political cost because he believes the world must stand up to terrorists.

On May 5 the Colombian Army mounted an unsuccessful hostage rescue operation and the FARC responded by murdering 11 of its hostages, among them Antioquia's Governor Guillermo Gáiria and former defense minister and peace adviser Gilberto Echeverri. This brutality reminded Colombians and the international community of the ruthlessness with which the illegal armed groups rob Colombians of peace and security. Instead of cowering, the Colombian people maintained their support of President Uribe's aggressive stance against the FARC. His current approval rate is steady at 71 percent. No other Latin American leader comes close to this level of support.

The Uribe administration's concerted effort to extend "democratic security" throughout Colombia is still in its early stages, but President Uribe has underscored the importance of human rights as an integral component of his strategy. On May 16, he told graduating Colombian Police cadets, to act with:

“aggressiveness to defeat: terrorism, determination to defend human rights, respect and tolerance for critics, respect and tolerance for NGO’s, whether or not we share their points of view.”

He further said that respect for human rights and tolerance of critics is “fundamental for the respectability of our use of force, so that we can speak forcefully” on terrorism both in Colombia and abroad.

BUILDING INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL SUPPORT

We are committed to bolstering more support for President Uribe both regionally and internationally. Many of Colombia’s challenges do not stop at Colombia’s borders and require a regional solution. After February’s bombing of the El Nogal social club in Bogotá, we supported Colombian efforts to secure a UN Security Council resolution and an OAS resolution condemning this bombing and calling on member states to stop providing refuge to terrorist groups while cracking down on terrorists manipulating their financial institutions. In March, the Colombians organized a Defense and Security ministerial with representatives from Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela, to strengthen regional cooperation in pursuing, capturing, and punishing the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of terrorist acts.

In July, Colombia’s Foreign Minister Carolina Barco will have the opportunity to outline the Colombian government’s priorities to donors in order to increase international consensus for Uribe’s policies and to build better coordination of the various donor, NGO, and GOC programs. We will be there to lend our support. We have been working with the Europeans, the United Nations, the IDB, and the GOC to make this conference happen. It should gain additional EU support for Colombia, confirm for the international community the link between terrorism and narcotics, and help to better coordinate international assistance to Colombia.

Thank you again for your interest, and for your commitment to help us help Colombia confront the daunting challenges it still faces. This concludes my formal statement, but I am ready and eager to answer your questions.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Thank you very much.

General are you the one giving the statement?

General HILL. I am, Senator.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Please proceed.

We have been joined by Senator Sessions, as you can see.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL JAMES T. HILL, COMMANDER, U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND, U.S. ARMY, MIAMI, FLORIDA; ACCOMPANIED BY MARSHALL BILLINGSLEA, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WASHINGTON, DC.

General HILL. Mr. Chairman, other members of the Caucus, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss the U.S. Southern Command’s role in supporting our country’s efforts and assisting Colombia with the battle on narco-terrorism. I also have to say I have had the privilege of sitting here this morning and listening to Vice President Santos’ very compelling testimony.

Your soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardmen are performing in an outstanding manner in a variety of missions aimed at preventing the flow of illegal narcotics that kill over 19,000 Americans annually, while destabilizing the security and stability of Colombia and increasingly other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The illegal narcotics trade in Colombia is dominated by the FARC, ELN and AUC. These groups, all on the State Department’s list of terrorist organizations, are incredibly well-financed and sustain themselves by their involvement in every aspect of drug cultivation and production. They destabilize the region by operating in and out of Colombia’s neighbors, and fueling other illicit activities such as arms trafficking and money laundering. Additionally, tradi-

tional transit nations are now becoming consumer nations. Brazil, for example, has become a major consumer of cocaine and is suffering the terrible effects of the drug-fueled gangs in Rio and Sao Paulo.

I have traveled to Colombia 12 times since taking command in August and have met several times with President Uribe. I am impressed by his strong and principled leadership, as well as his determination and vision to get the job done. He knows the Colombian government must do more to succeed. He understands that there is no single military solution to the crisis of governance that is Colombia. He and the Colombian military know and understand they must fight the narco-terrorists justly, in accordance with democratic values and human rights. His actions are beginning to show results.

President Uribe is increasing the size of the military and the police. He levied a war tax on the wealthiest segment of Colombian society, and more importantly he has collected it. They are reclaiming areas where the government hasn't operated in for years and going after the leadership of the narco-terrorist organizations in ways the Colombian military has never done before.

Southern Command is actively engaging in non-combat roles with the Colombian military. We are assisting them in making the counter-narcotics brigade lighter and more operationally flexible. We have helped them develop a special operations command and commando battalion to go after counter-drug and narco-terrorist high-value targets throughout the country.

We are training units in northeast Colombia to protect oil pipelines and other infrastructure so vital to Colombia's economy which remain under attack by narco-terrorists. We are training Colombian riverine units to interdict the tremendous volume of illicit traffic along the waterways.

We are expanding our strategic and operational planning and assistance to Colombian staffs and units. We are working with the Colombian military to better allocate and use resources by planning and conducting more joint operations, and we are seeing progress.

The Colombian military is a capable, professional force that respects human rights. This progress is resulting in increasing success on the battlefield. With steady U.S. assistance and support, and under President Uribe's leadership, I am guardedly optimistic that Colombia will be able to establish the security and stability so necessary for other democratic reforms that President Uribe has advocated to take hold and mature.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and other members of the Caucus for this opportunity and for the support that you provide to the tremendous men and women of Southern Command. I look forward to your questions, sir.

[The prepared statement of General Hill follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GENERAL JAMES T. HILL, U.S. ARMY COMMANDER,
U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

Mr. Chairman, Senator Biden, distinguished members of the Caucus, it is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the United States Southern Command's role in assisting Colombia and the region's other countries with the battle on narcoterrorism. Every day our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen,

civilians and interagency members work hard to accomplish their missions in our part of the War on Terrorism. This work is vital for regional security and, given our nation's proximity to Latin America and general ease of access to the United States, shores up our own national security.

I have traveled to Colombia 12 times since taking command last August. Our unwavering fiscal, political, and military support provide their government steady reassurance that we stand with them in their fight. Practical measures are required, however, to augment our support. The most important of these measures is the continuation of Expanded Authority through Fiscal Year 2004. Expanded Authority successfully broke the artificial barrier that previously existed between counterdrug and counterterrorist efforts and synchronized disparate funding streams to address a common threat. It boosted the effectiveness of our support in 2003 and is the most logical way to continue combating Colombia's illegal armed groups, groups that are most accurately described as drug-fueled terrorist organizations.

These narcoterrorists pose a grave threat to Colombia as well as to the entire Andean region. All of Colombia's neighbors have experienced the total disregard for sovereign borders displayed by these groups. Most countries are taking efforts to address this threat, but we must help them coordinate and bolster their efforts. The region's countries are all consolidating democracies that will take time to mature. Meanwhile, these countries face uncertainty, whether from weak institutions that have yet to undergo multiple cycles of free elections or from disappointment that liberal market reforms have not yet produced sustained improvement. It is upon these inherent vulnerabilities that narcoterrorist organizations prey. The corruption, greed and instability narcoterrorists foster undermine the best efforts of dedicated public servants and honest citizens. Corruption and instability create safe havens for not only narcoterrorists but also for other international terrorist organization such as Hizballah, Hamas, and Islamiyya al Gammat, which have support cells throughout Latin America. Battling narcoterrorism and its beneficiaries is just one part of the overall War on Terrorism, but it is an essential part which must be waged, particularly in our hemisphere.

To outline United States Southern Command's efforts in this endeavor, I will discuss the threats we face, the progress we have made, and the way ahead. Helping the region's countries gain and maintain security is an ongoing, gradual process that requires us to stay the present course. Building security inside these countries is vital to our overall regional approach, because only nations that are secure can benefit from democratic processes and economic growth. In both the short and the long term, it is in our own best interest to help the Colombians and their neighbors help themselves. Our continuous, steady support is required to forge the way ahead.

THREATS IN THE REGION

The War on Terrorism is my No. 1 priority. While the primary front in this global war is in the Middle East, Southern Command plays a vital role in fighting branches of global and local terrorism in this hemisphere. We are increasingly identifying and assisting partner nations to engage those who seek to exploit real and perceived weaknesses of the region's democracies.

The primary threat in our region continues to come from the three largest illegal armed groups in Colombia, all named on the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or FARC, the National Liberation Army or ELN, and the United Self-Defense Forces or AUC. Many familiar with Colombia's conflict and many press accounts still sentimentally describe these terrorist groups as "revolutionaries," "guerrillas," "rebels" or "militias," lending them some kind of tacit legitimacy with those words. These terms are misleading and obsolete. A group that straps explosives to an 11-year-old boy, sends him into a police station, and then remotely detonates the explosives, as the FARC did on April 17th in Arauca, Colombia, forfeits any claim to legitimacy. While these groups surely retain fragments of their founding philosophies, they appear to have jettisoned ideology in favor of terrorist methods and illicit revenues. Today, these groups consist of criminals, more precisely defined as narcoterrorists, who operate outside the rule of law in order to profit at the expense of Colombia and its people. These terrorists directly challenge the legitimate authority of the Colombian administration yet offer no viable form of government themselves. Some of them have had 40 years to win the hearts and minds of their countrymen, yet they, and the FARC in particular, can garner no more than 3 percent public approval.

Colombia is on the very front line of the regional war against terrorism. Their citizens suffer daily from murder, bombings, kidnappings, and lawlessness practically unimaginable to us. In this war-torn country, the conflict has been accelerated by illicit drug money and claimed thousands of lives. Colombia is also experiencing an

unprecedented humanitarian crisis, with an estimated 1.5 million Colombians having been displaced from their homes. In 2001 there were more terrorist attacks in Colombia alone than in all other nations of the world combined—averaging four per day. Colombia has the highest homicide rate in the world—77.5 per 100,000—nearly 14 times the U.S. rate, making homicide the most likely cause of death. Moreover, about 3,000 people were kidnapped last year, making Colombia the kidnapping capital of the world. Colombia remains the world's leading producer of cocaine and accounts for 90 percent of the U.S. supply. The narcoterrorists have become dependent on drug income for much of their operational capacity. We expect them to fight to keep the drug industry productive as it comes increasingly under attack from the Government of Colombia.

One example of this trend is found in the *Cocaleros* movement in Bolivia, in which manipulative traffickers, in conjunction with a radical political party, seek to tap peasant frustration to undermine the elected government. There is evidence that outside forces are attempting to influence this movement. On April 10th, Bolivian authorities arrested suspected Colombian ELN member Francisco Cortes, along with Bolivian *Cocaleros* and two members of the Bolivian ELN. Authorities confiscated ELN literature, false identity documents, over two kilos of cocaine base, and material to fabricate explosive booby traps. Another example is becoming evident in Peru. The Shining Path is undergoing a resurgence, based on the FARC model, by protecting cocaine smugglers and collecting taxes on the coca trade. This resurgence already directly threatens U.S. interests, as evidenced by the Shining Path bombing near the U.S. Embassy prior to President Bush's visit last March. These examples of narcoterrorists operating transnationally and attempting to influence other movements set an unwelcome but likely precedent in the region.

Beyond the narcoterrorist threat concentrated in the Andean Ridge are extensions of Middle Eastern terrorism. Radical groups that support Hamas, Hizballah and Islamiyya al Gammat are all active in Latin America. These cells, extending from Trinidad and Tobago to Margarita Island off Venezuela to the tri-border area of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil, consist of logistics and support personnel. However, terrorists who have planned or participated in attacks in the Middle East, such as recently captured Khalid Shaihk Mohammed, have spent time in the region. These groups make millions of dollars every year via illicit activities. Hizballah, for example, smuggles Latin American cocaine to Europe and the Middle East. These cells continue to reach back to the Middle East and solidify the sophisticated global support structure of international terrorism. Not surprisingly, international terrorist groups and narcoterrorists in Colombia all practice the same business methods.

A derivative threat from continued narcoterrorist violence is the instability and corruption it provokes across the region. Governments that face direct challenges to their legitimacy and which cannot effectively police their entire sovereign territory can become safe havens for illicit groups of all persuasions. As the United States roots out international terrorists across the world, we must be careful not to overlook instability generated by narcoterrorists nearer to home, which makes threatened countries attractive destinations for terrorist groups. These countries are desirable to those who seek to harm the United States for many reasons. First, they are close to us. Second, they provide launching points along already established drug, arms, and human trafficking routes. Third, terrorists with large amounts of cash can procure counterfeit official documents in the region. Fourth, Islamic radicals can easily blend into Latin America's long established Arab communities to avoid scrutiny. Finally, the money generated by narcotrafficking cannot fail but to entice terrorist groups beyond those already operating in Colombia, such as we are seeing with the Shining Path in Peru.

While the threats to our Nation from international terrorism are well known, the threats spawned by narcoterrorism are lesser known yet reach deep into this country. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 19,000 Americans die annually as the direct result of drug-related causes. This equates, in my mind, to a weapon of mass destruction. This staggering number does not take into account the second and third order effects on families, the lost productivity of those lives cut short, or the additional thousands of Americans we lose to indirect drug-related causes. As a Nation we simply cannot afford to give up on tens of thousands of our own citizens every year. Taking the fight to the narcoterrorists is one way we as a Nation can effectively address one crucial part of this multi-faceted problem.

THE URIBE ADMINISTRATION'S PROGRESS

The threats we face in our hemisphere are real, but we are not standing idly by and watching them grow. Instead we are working with the nations across the region to shore up their internal security. Colombia faces the biggest challenge; the

narcoterrorist center of gravity lies within its borders. President Uribe won a landslide victory by running on a platform of aggressively hunting down the terrorists in his country. After years of failed attempts to negotiate with these groups, to include a bold experiment that gave the FARC a safe haven in the southern part of the country, the people of Colombia had finally had enough of terrorist groups, especially after seeing how the FARC had used their safe haven to plot terrorist acts instead of social progress and to cultivate coca rather than community.

President Uribe faces enormous challenges, but he is using his mandate to put deeds behind his words. He has only been in office for 8 months, and turning the government from a conciliatory posture to an aggressively focused one is not an easy task. We need to be steadfast in our support of him now to set the conditions for his longer-term success. We are only two and a half years into our substantial support for Plan Colombia. President Uribe will be the critical player in ensuring the overall success of this investment by the American people. The signs of his progress are already becoming evident. Colombia developed a comprehensive national security strategy that directs all the tools at the government's disposal toward a common end of defeating the terrorists. President Uribe has levied a war tax on the country's wealthiest citizens. He is increasing military and police end-strength. The government has developed a plan to protect travelers along the major roadways. He is pushing the military and the police to regain control of areas and neighborhoods dominated by the narcoterrorists. In those areas where the government is regaining control, they are providing more robust social services to support those who previously suffered most from their absence.

Specifically, the military has had growing operational success against mid-level leadership in narcoterrorist organizations across the country. Last October, elements of the Colombian 1st Counter Narcotics Brigade dealt the FARC a significant blow when they carried out an intelligence-driven combined arms operation that resulted in the death of the 15th Front Commander, Mocho Cesar, and the capture of several key subordinates. On February 15th of this year, Colombian forces captured Aparicio Conde, the finance chief of the FARC's Joselo Lozada Mobile Column. On March 10th, they captured 13 FARC members of the 37th Front in Barranquilla, to include Jose Olivero Ospina, the 37th Front operations officer. This notably cohesive operation was a joint and interagency undertaking, effectively coordinating the efforts of the police, the Army, and the Prosecutor General's office. On March 24th, the Colombian National Police captured Luis Armando Castillo, the finance chief of the FARC's Manuel Cepeda Vargas Front. Finally, throughout the month of April, Colombian security forces arrested senior members of the Antonio Narino Urban Front, the main unit that terrorizes Bogotá.

The Colombian military and National Police have also been more aggressive in rescuing a number of kidnap victims, to include an archbishop and the daughter of a prominent businessman. Eradication efforts showed marked improvement in 2002 as coca cultivation in Colombia decreased by 15 percent. These examples show the incremental progress that is being made against key actors and support systems in the narcoterrorist infrastructure. Meanwhile, the psychological benefits that all law-abiding Colombians derive from observing these successful and professional actions do much to strengthen their national morale.

A remarkable event occurred on April 25, 2003. Rafael Rojas, a 20-year veteran of the FARC and commander of the group's 46th Front under the alias Fidel Romero, turned himself in to Colombian authorities. On April 28th, flanked by President Uribe and the administration's top military leaders at a nationally televised press conference, Rojas called on his former comrades to surrender stating, "Positive things have not resulted . . . On the contrary, the prolonged war has left only desolation and destruction." More importantly, Rojas said the "movement had clear origins, but its ends are no longer known." While we don't know Rojas' motivation for turning himself in, his statement implies that he grasps the reality of what is occurring today in Colombia. We hope this marks the beginning of a trend. The firm resolve of the Uribe administration, backed by aggressive military operations, has resulted in increased desertions by enemies of the state. The government's actions are paired wisely with a complementary government program under which those who leave the FARC voluntarily are put in protected housing and receive health care, education, and work training.

In conjunction with military efforts, President Uribe has sponsored political, economic, and judicial reforms. With the support of his Congress, the government is calling for political reforms. These reforms aim to reduce the government bureaucracy, cap pensions, and eliminate corruption. These measures will streamline the government and increase its ability to focus on the internal disturbance. Economically, Uribe's stance and the promised reforms have buoyed the country's confidence. Colombia has raised over one billion dollars via bonds since the new administration

took office, and its stock market has increased by 50 percent this year. Likewise, President Uribe has sought to stamp out corruption and bolster judicial reform. He issued Presidential Directive No. 10, which was his anti-corruption strategy, designed to halt the revenue lost from corruption and political cronyism. He established a mechanism to oversee State contracting that will save an estimated two billion dollars annually, and he has established merit-based hiring practices. Though an overburdened judiciary continues to sort through an enormous pending case backlog, there are positive trends that those accused of crimes, especially those with money and influence, are being tried in due course and not being allowed to opt out of the system.

Colombia is fighting its illegal armed groups justly, in accordance with democratic values and human rights. This is instrumental in what we are collectively striving to achieve. The Colombian government is not resorting to rural concentration camps, peasant roundups, massacres, disappearances or other tactics used by their enemies. We continue to monitor closely the human rights record of the Colombian military. If one reads all of the Department of State's 2002 Colombian Human Rights Report instead of the snippets that have been circulating, one gains a deeper appreciation of the strides the government has made. The vast majority of allegations of human rights abuses, over 98 percent, are attributed to Colombia's illegal armed groups, primarily the three-narcoterrorist groups, and not to government forces. This report clearly demonstrates the institutionalization of human rights by the Colombian government, whose forces as recently as the mid-1990's were accused of 50-60 percent of human rights abuses.

The Human Rights report finds that,

"The government has an extensive human rights apparatus coordinated by the office of the President's Advisor for Human Rights. That office coordinates with local human rights groups. Most notably, it established a special 'momentum' committee to advance judicial resolutions of 100 key human rights cases."

Over 290,000 members of Colombia's security forces have received specialized human rights training since 1996, conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Colombian Red Cross, the Roman Catholic church, foreign governments, and other government offices and agencies. The Ministry of Defense signed an agreement with two prestigious, private civilian national universities and the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights to conduct research and training on human rights and international humanitarian law issues and to organize seminars designed to foster dialog with nongovernmental organizations and academics. I am convinced the Colombian government is serious about human rights and will continue to promote them aggressively.

An area of concern is the perception of collusion between the Colombian military and the AUC. President Uribe and the senior military leadership have made it perfectly clear that they will not tolerate any collusion with the AUC or other illegal "self-defense" groups, and that they are just as criminal as the other terrorists. Collaboration with any groups that operate outside the law is illegal and punishable by the civilian justice system. Despite great progress, it would be disingenuous to say that all collusion has been stamped out. Like any tough problem, this one will take time. I'm confident that as an institution, the Colombian military and its current leadership completely understand the seriousness of this matter and are headed in the right direction. As just one demonstration of their resolve in this area, the military doubled operations against illegal self-defense groups last year and has quadrupled the number captured since 2000.

This list is just a partial highlight of the coordinated effort the Colombian government is making to solve its own problems. President Uribe has infused his government with energy, organization, and a sense of purpose. He is getting results now, and will continue to direct all his resources toward snaking Colombia a safe, prosperous, democratic nation. He understands that this is primarily a Colombian problem, one which Colombia must solve, yet he still needs our help to make his efforts ever more effective. President Uribe stood by us as a member of the Coalition of the Willing in Operation Iraqi Freedom, a stance unpopular with both Colombian public opinion and his regional peers. He is providing the strategic leadership that Colombia needs to move ahead. Recent polls show public confidence in him and the military increasing. Now, early in his administration, is the time he most needs us to demonstrate to him, his government, and his people our continued resolve.

U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND ASSISTANCE TO COLOMBIA

Southern Command's assistance to Colombia is not operational but instead is in training and assisting the Colombians to deal with their internal problems themselves. We have a vested interest in the outcome, but it must remain primarily a

Colombian fight. President Uribe's actions have generated momentum against his country's criminals, and our deployed forces have seen a noticeable boost in the attitudes of those we are training. Our physical presence is rather modest, by law being no more than 400 troops and 400 civilian contractors. But you've seen what a few dedicated men working with allied forces can accomplish. We're having a similar effect in Colombia. Their military proficiency is improving. This means they can respond quicker, move faster, and fight better than ever before.

Our Special Forces have trained the staff and soldiers of Colombia's best units, giving these units an added edge of operational effectiveness that is paying dividends. The 1st Counter Narcotics Brigade has provided the Colombians a flexible, mobile, offensively oriented fighting force of three 600-man battalions that are able to conduct quick strike missions against narcoterrorists. The establishment and training of a Commando Battalion, modeled on our own Ranger battalions, has given the Colombians a unit that can strike high-value targets including enemy leadership. The Colombians plan on establishing another commando battalion in Fiscal Year 2004. We have also trained with the Colombian urban counter-terrorist unit and continue to work with them to upgrade their capabilities and equipment. Recently, U.S. Special Forces have also been training Colombian Armed Forces in Arauca to protect a portion of the 772-kilometer oil pipeline that has been a frequent target of FARC and ELN attacks. This training is just one part of a nationwide Infrastructure Security Strategy that protects critical facilities and reestablishes control in narcoterrorist influenced areas of the country.

We continue to train Colombia's helicopter pilots, providing their forces a growing ability to perform air assaults that are key in the battle against dispersed enemies. We deploy intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets in country that have provided timely, actionable intelligence to Colombian units. We are training their staffs with Planning Assistance Teams that increase their ability to plan and execute intelligence driven operations against illegal armed groups. We are working with Colombian Marines to establish two Mobile Training Teams that will work with the Riverine Brigade to raise proficiency for riverine interdiction. We contract logistics to help the Colombians maintain their own C-130 fleet. We are training the Colombian National Police Carabineros (Rural) with the goal of reestablishing governance throughout the country. We are providing medical training and assistance to help the Colombians improve their casualty evacuation methods as well as implementing other safety programs to help them preserve their combat power. In civil-military operations, we are helping the Colombians to build civil-affairs capability that will be implemented in the Arauca Rehabilitation Zone to bring humanitarian aid and functioning institutions to previously terrorized areas. This program will eventually be expanded across the country. Finally, we are working with the State Department to re-establish the Air Bridge Denial Program to be run by the Colombians with U.S. ground and air safety monitors. In support of this issue, the United States Department of Justice is assisting a certification team to ensure that legal controls are applied and implemented.

The one constant running through all of our efforts is the non-negotiable emphasis on human rights. Southern Command has played a leading role in advancing the cause of human rights in Colombia and throughout the region, and our efforts have certainly supplemented the government's program and helped professionalize the Colombian military. We are the only combatant command to have a full time human rights staff directorate. Respect for human rights is embedded in everything we do, whether training forces, educating officers, or conducting exercises. This guiding principle will remain our foundation.

Although we are not taking part in direct operations, Americans are still at risk during the course of their duties. Currently, three American contractors are being held hostage by the FARC. We have been working hard to recover them. There are several factors that make this recovery difficult, but two are overriding. First, the area where the search is being conducted is in some of the thickest jungle in the country. Second, this area is the FARC's backyard, and they have a first hand knowledge of the terrain combined with a sizable support network in the area. We are pressing forward with the search and rescue effort around the clock. There is at least one positive result so far. The Colombian Military, to include units from the 1st Counter Narcotics Brigade, has been leading the search, and in doing so are operating in parts of the country they haven't set foot in for 15 to 20 years. They are taking the fight to the enemy on his turf, and they are doing well. Our training shows.

REGIONAL SUPPORT BEYOND COLOMBIA

Colombia is the linchpin in the narcoterrorist battle, but we must be careful not to win the battle in Colombia and lose the war in the region. As the Colombians make progress, their success will push narcoterrorists to seek safer areas in which to operate. Already, the FARC, ELN, and AUC operate freely across the weak borders of Colombia's neighbors, and the remote nature of many of these areas makes them ever more attractive as safe havens. Those countries also lack the organization and resources to maintain territorial sovereignty in these ungoverned spaces. Consequently, across the Andean Ridge we are working with the bordering nations to increase cooperation, fortify borders and strengthen capabilities.

We are actively strengthening regional cooperation. In an ongoing multinational exercise, we are training with the Colombian Navy on littoral techniques in a combined operation with Panamanian, British, and Dutch participation. In Peru, we have built upon their riverine interdiction ability, as well as working with the interagency to support their eradication program and counternarcotics aviation. We are working to restart the Air Bridge Denial Program in Peru with additional safeguards. In Ecuador, we have supported their riverine capability and worked closely with them in completing the essential forward operating location at Manta. We are seeing a welcome acknowledgment of the Colombian border concern by their leadership, and we are studying the possibility of training; their 19th Jungle Brigade along the same lines as the units we've trained in Colombia. In Bolivia, we have worked on their riverine capabilities as well and supported their eradication efforts. We will continue to monitor the *Cocalero* movement. I am particularly encouraged by the bilateral talks President Lula of Brazil and President Uribe conducted in March during which they acknowledged the common interest their countries shared in controlling drug traffickers in the Amazon region. We have already seen the Brazilians take up active patrolling on their own border with Colombia.

Venezuela is undoubtedly a key player in overall regional security but also the most unpredictable. We are maintaining military-to-military contacts at the colonel level and below. Venezuelan officers come to our schools and we send U.S. officers to theirs. In the domestic turmoil so far, the Venezuelan military has not harmed its own citizens, which is a positive signal that the military is attempting to maintain its professionalism. We will maintain our contacts providing the Venezuelan military continues to act in a constitutionally correct manner.

WAY AHEAD

As the lead agent for the Department of Defense to implement U.S. policy for the military efforts in Colombia, U.S. Southern Command will continue to maintain a priority effort against narcoterrorism. Key in most of our recent endeavors has been approval by the U.S. Congress of Expanded Authority legislation. This legislation has allowed us to use funds available for counterdrug activities to provide assistance to the Government of Colombia for a coordinated campaign against the terrorist activities of its illegal armed groups. The granting of Expanded Authority was an important recognition that no meaningful distinction can be made between the terrorists and drug traffickers in our region. All three of Colombia's terrorist groups are deep into the illicit narcotics business. Trying to decide whether a mission against a FARC unit was a counterdrug or counterterrorist one was an exercise in futility and hampered operational effectiveness on the ground. Expanded Authority has eliminated the time consuming step of first evaluating the mission based on its probable funding source and now allows us to bring to bear all our assets more rapidly. As just one example, it will allow assets controlled by Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) to continue being used to their full potential to provide real-time, actionable intelligence that is key in conducting effective operations against the narcoterrorists. Expanded Authority for FY04 is the single most important factor for us to continue; building success in Colombia.

Expanded Authority is foundational for the overall way ahead for Colombia, but it will be supplemented on many fronts across the region. JIATF-South, a model of interagency cooperation for our entire government, will broaden its focus beyond narcotics to use its assets to counter all illicit trafficking, including arms, ammunition, explosives and weapons of mass destruction. We will continue to conduct exercises and training in the region. We are working with nations in the region to build their intelligence capabilities and to protect their critical national infrastructures. We are working with them to build effective logistics and communications architectures that will support intelligence driven operations.

We will continue to bring Latin American officers, non-commissioned officers, enlisted members, and defense civilians to our professional schools in the United States. Hand-in-hand with our professionalization efforts is a continued emphasis

on human rights and international humanitarian law. All of these efforts help build a coordinated regional approach and regional cooperation. While our efforts are, for good reason, Colombia-centric, we are not letting others fall behind to become the next targets for terrorist groups. The cooperative counter narcoterrorist groundwork we are laying today will further our national security for decades to come.

CONCLUSION

For most nations in our region, the threats come from within. It will be up to those nations to demonstrate their ability to govern, enforce the rule of law, implement judicial reform, and develop a profound respect for human rights. These fundamentals provide the stable and secure environment necessary for economic growth—growth that will improve the quality of life for ordinary citizens. Southern Command plays a crucial role in assisting the development of security forces that help provide the ability to govern throughout the region, particularly in Colombia.

We are at a critical time in Colombia's history. The elected government of President Uribe enjoys unparalleled approval ratings approaching 70 percent. Under his leadership, the military and police are helping to regain control of areas long held by narcoterrorists. Colombia's citizens are taking a more active role in their nation's defense and providing actionable intelligence to the Colombian Armed Forces. There is a renewed sense of momentum, commitment, and hope as the Colombian people struggle to save their country, but there is also a finite window of opportunity beyond which public opinion and support will wane without significant progress.

I am cautiously optimistic about Colombia, though there remains an enormous amount of work to be done. I am proud to say we do a great deal to further our nation's interests in this hemisphere with very few resources and a modest presence. We are at a critical point where the progress in eliminating conflict, reducing tension, and establishing democracy throughout the region could be at risk if we are not steadfast in our efforts. While our attention is drawn to another region of the world, we must keep in mind that we live in this hemisphere, and its continued progress as a region of democracy and prosperity is paramount to our national security.

I would like to thank the Chairman and the Members of the Caucus for this opportunity and for the tremendous support you have provided this command. I can assure you that the men and women of the United States Southern Command are working to their utmost to accomplish their missions for our great country.

Chairman GRASSLEY. What I am going to do here is ask questions that both of you can respond to, but you don't have to both respond. When I say both, I mean the four of you as two different entities.

Originally, Plan Colombia called for significant levels of assistance from several European countries. I hope I am right in understanding that very little assistance has been forthcoming, despite current estimates that close to 50 percent of all cocaine produced in Colombia is ending up in Europe.

Is that accurate, and what changes have had to be made to U.S. assistance to compensate for the lack of help we expected from the Europeans?

Mr. STRUBLE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. You are correct that we have been very disappointed.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Just a minute. I think that we should put the clock on so that I don't eat up all the time of my colleagues.

Proceed.

Mr. STRUBLE. Thank you, sir. We have been disappointed by the failure of the European Union and individual European countries to come in to support the goals of Plan Colombia. As you have noted, they have a strong interest in this.

I am pleased to say, though, that there are some increasing signs of recognition on the part of European countries that they need to do more. We believe that they could most particularly make a contribution to the social goals of Plan Colombia.

The United Kingdom will be sponsoring a conference on July 10. It is actually a preliminary conference which is aimed at getting donor countries to talk about the unmet needs of Colombia. And then a second conference later on in the year will seek to ensure that there is a more robust answer to those needs.

Now, I will say that some European countries have been an exception to this general rule. The Government of Spain, for example, has donated some aircraft to Colombia and the British government has provided some very useful military training of special units in, for example, long-range reconnaissance.

Chairman GRASSLEY. The United States has spent, I believe, over \$2.5 billion since the year 2000 to assist Colombia in this way. Have there been some changes in the original time lines that were very wildly optimistic?

Now that all assistance called for in Plan Colombia has been delivered, could you highlight what performance measures are being used to assess the success or failure of the eradication and military training assistance that has been funded, and what is the time line for either the completion of the eradication or the military assistance programs currently being conducted?

Mr. Simons.

Mr. SIMONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The original Plan Colombia document included a policy objective of reducing the coca crop by 50 percent in 6 years' time, and that would essentially mean a 50-percent reduction in cropping levels by the end of 2005.

I think it is fair to say that because of initial delays in the provision of some of the helicopters and some of the spray planes that we got going a little later than we originally thought. But we believe that, in particular, with the results that were demonstrated last year and with the pace of spraying that we are on now, including the goal of spraying all remaining coca in Colombia during the course of calendar 2003, we are on track to meet that original deadline of a 50-percent reduction by the end of 2005.

Now, President Uribe has staked out an even more ambitious goal of complete elimination of coca by the end of his term in office. And, again, our goal for 2003 is to spray all remaining coca, spray all remaining poppy.

The other area that we have set, I think, a fairly—

Chairman GRASSLEY. Can I ask you if those time lines have been affected in any way because we have lost two spray planes since the first of the year, and presumably they haven't been replaced yet?

Mr. SIMONS. That is correct, but fortunately we recognized during the course of 2002 that we were going to have to step up our spray operations, including stepping up our infrastructure. So what we have been able to do, with the cooperation of Congress, is we have adjusted our 2003 budget to provide an additional \$9 million for the spray program. Congress also, in the context of the emergency supplemental for 2003, provided us an additional \$14 million for the spray program. So with those resources, we believe that we can achieve our objectives for this year.

I would like to make one other point, though, on the question of objectives. On the helicopter side, 2 years ago the Colombian army had no helicopter fleet at all. We essentially stood up from scratch

a 72-unit helicopter fleet. In 2 years' time, while it has been costly in terms of the amount of operating expenses that we have had to cover, we now have 72 helicopters up and running at an 80-percent operational readiness rate.

I believe this is a very strong achievement, and these helicopters are the ones that are providing the mobility for the counter-drug brigade to undertake interdiction operations to support the spray operations on the ground. So I think actually, while it took some time to get these helicopters up and running, they are making a major contribution now 2 years into Plan Colombia.

Chairman GRASSLEY. General Hill, does that speak for you, too, or do you have a different perspective or an added perspective from where you are posted?

General HILL. Yes, sir. From my perspective, especially since President Uribe took office in August, the ability of the Colombian military to conduct military operations, both in a counter-drug and a counter-terrorist situation, has gone up exponentially.

We did a wonderful job and they responded greatly in terms of training the counter-narcotics brigade, especially, and then they went into operations in the Putumayo and Caqueta area. We have essentially moved drug trafficking out of those two provinces closer to the coast to the Narino area, and the Colombian military is now undergoing major operations in Narino and doing a wonderful job there, also, collecting significant seizures.

Those kinds of military operations, though, are simple operations when compared to going after high-value targets, infrastructure, and the leadership of the illegal narco-terrorist organizations. In the last 90 days, we have done some work with their commando unit and those operations are also paying off tremendously.

I think that over the next year you will see those operations, as the Colombian military even gets better at those very sophisticated operations, paying off in even greater dividends. But you cannot overstate the importance of the mobility of the helicopter fleet. It is what gives the Colombians the ability to get out into the countryside and to carry out operations where they have not been to go for years.

Thank you, sir.

Chairman GRASSLEY. This will be my last question and it is in regard to our bilateral agreement regarding the number of personnel that are available for helicopter operations and maintenance.

While initial levels for trained personnel were met, we are going to have the General Accounting Office later on today testify that many of the trained personnel cannot be currently located. This means that this program is heavily dependent, then, on contractor support for operations.

What is being done to ensure that trained Colombian military personnel can be identified and are putting their U.S.-funded training to use?

General HILL. I think there are two pieces to that, so I will have Mr. Simons start.

Mr. SIMONS. Mr. Chairman, I think this is a very good point that we have been in discussions with the GAO about for some period of time and it is one that we focus a lot of energy on. I think I

would like to address it in two separate pieces; first, the pilot situation and, second, the situation of the mechanics.

Again, we were creating a Colombian army aviation capacity from the ground up, and in the case of the pilots for the 72 helicopters that we have up and running now, we have identified and trained a total of 126 Colombian pilots in the past 2 years. So all the helicopters now have Colombian co-pilots full qualified and we are in the process of converting those co-pilots into pilots and command. That process is going to take a couple of years, but we are well on our way to a Colombianization of the pilot crews for all of these helicopters.

With respect to mechanics, we have approximately 65 Colombian army mechanics available to perform maintenance on the helicopters and they are undertaking training under the contractor's supervision. I have discussed this issue this morning with my staff and I understand it takes about 6 years to get a fully trained helicopter mechanic operational.

So this is going to be again something that is going to take some period of time, but we are fully committed to it. We are fully committed to working with the Colombians to try to get them to enforce agreements such that when we put people through the training program, they stay on the job for a significant period of time. But this will be something that will take a number of years to fully phase in.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Does that speak for you, General, or did you have something to add?

General HILL. No, sir. It does speak for me.

Chairman GRASSLEY. I thank each of you for coming here and for your testimony. I am going to call on Senator DeWine now, but I am also going to call on him to Chair the Caucus because I have the responsibility as Chairman of the Finance Committee for the prescription drug program and I have to go to a meeting on that now.

So would Senator DeWine take over?

Senator DEWINE. I certainly will, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman GRASSLEY. I apologize to the third panel that I am not going to be able to hear them. I have a lot of questions of this panel, so I may submit some for answers in writing because I didn't get very far down the line.

Senator DEWINE [PRESIDING.] Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me ask members of the panel—and you have covered this really a little bit, but if you could kind of summarize for me what has been the biggest disappointment or disappointments of Plan Colombia. Where are we behind? Just kind of give me a list.

Who wants to start? And if we are behind, how are we going to get caught up?

Mr. STRUBLE. I will start, Senator, by saying that we acknowledged a year when we requested new authorities from this Congress that the original premise of Plan Colombia was too limited, that the actions of narcotics traffickers and of Colombia's terrorist groups were so intertwined that an effort that focused simply on the law enforcement piece of this, on going after the narcotics traffickers, created a number of anomalies in intelligence-sharing, for example, and in our ability to provide training for some key Colom-

bian units that were needed in that integrated counter-terrorism role.

I believe, though my colleague, General Hill, could comment on this more, that the provision of the new authorities has been extremely important in setting us on the right course and allowing us to set the stage for the rapid progress that we have seen.

Senator DEWINE. But you have that now.

Mr. STRUBLE. We have that, yes.

Senator DEWINE. So you are catching up, is what you are saying.

Mr. STRUBLE. We are catching up, indeed.

General HILL. Sir, let me add to Mr. Struble's comments, especially on the expanded authority. If you said to me what are the two biggest issues, one is the expanded authorities that allowed us to break the drug nexus into narco-terrorism, counter-terrorism operations, is the single greatest deficiency.

We focused so long only on the drug nexus that we were unable to go after the leadership. We can now do that—greater intelligence-sharing with the Colombian military, use of the Plan Colombia helicopters, dollars, and other assets, and the ability of the Colombian military to take that actual intelligence and operate with it. That is before the Congress again and we just simply have to have it. If we walked back from expanded authority, it would be a terrible mistake.

I will give you two anecdotes, one good, one bad.

Senator DEWINE. That would be helpful.

General HILL. When Ms. Bettencourt was kidnapped, before expanded authorities, the Colombian military came to us and asked us for helicopter support to go in search of her. We could not provide it because there was no drug nexus to support that operation.

Senator DEWINE. You could not supply—

General HILL. The helicopters to look for Ms. Bettencourt.

Senator DEWINE. What about intelligence?

General HILL. We couldn't provide the intelligence either.

Senator DEWINE. So you can't do intelligence, you can't share intelligence?

General HILL. No, sir.

Senator DEWINE. There was a wall there?

General HILL. An absolute firewall between, if you couldn't prove a drug nexus, you could not provide the intelligence. That put the burden on the intel analyst to sit there and to show you that there really was a drug nexus in order to do it. That is ludicrous and we are beyond that.

Senator DEWINE. So it is equipment, plus intelligence.

General HILL. Yes, sir. If the Congress gave it to us with drug money, before expanded authority, we could not use that money in support of activities in Colombia. We are beyond that.

Senator DEWINE. OK, one example.

General HILL. Yes, sir. I will give you a good example. About 4 months ago, after we had expanded authority, the Colombian military and the counter-narcotics brigade was running an operation in the Putumayo area and they were doing operations going from village to village with our helicopters, Plan Colombia helicopters.

In one little village, a man walked up to them and said, "You know, the 45th Front FARC commander comes in here all the time;

if you will give me a cell phone, I will call you the next time he is in town and you can come and get him.”

About 3 weeks later, the phone rings, it is a Saturday morning, and it is this villager who said, “Hey, they’re here”, and described the building that they were in and all the details. As luck would have it, and sometimes wars are won on luck, there was a platoon sitting on an airstrip and an aggressive commander who was able to get some helicopters.

They had been in that village a couple of weeks before. They got the helicopters in, they planned the attack, they flew there, they took down the village, and got the FARC commander and 300 kilos of cocaine and a lot of ammunition. Start to finish, 6 hours. If that was a unit from the 101st Airborne Division Air Assault at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where I used to command a brigade, you would applaud it. It was an excellent operation. It could never have taken place before expanded authorities.

Senator DEWINE. Good, that is helpful.

General HILL. I think Mr. Billingslea would like to add something.

Mr. BILLINGSLEA. Senator, I think we came to the realization that the FARC is fundamentally a narco-terrorist organization somewhat late, and we inherited a structure related to the Plan Colombia program that was somewhat stovepiped, as you have heard, between the counter-drug approach and the counter-terrorism approach.

Because we have not only obtained the expanded authorities, but because we have, I think, more prudently defined the term “counter-drug” to include measures that are reasonably related to narcotics trafficking, we have been able to provide a variety of assistance that previously was not provided.

We have been able, for instance, to provide military assistance teams to translate intelligence information into operational capacity. Just because you have intelligence on a terrorist group doesn’t necessarily mean that you have the gears engaged to then take action to thwart a planned terrorist attack. That is something that has been evolving and is going to be crucial to the process.

Second, you will find that we have been able to train a larger variety of units, all carefully vetted through the Department of State process. That is critical, but sometimes can be slow, and that can impede the rapidity with which we can act in concert with our partners.

But you will find that we have been able to train not only a counter-narcotics brigade, but also a special forces commando battalion; a lancero battalion, which is a rangers type of unit; and a special operations command headquarters staff. All of this training is essential to bring the other pressure point to bear, which is not just eradication of the coca fields and the financial mechanisms that the FARC uses to fund itself, but to move against the FARC itself, to move against the leadership, to assist the Colombian government in deploying small, agile teams that are capable of going after this terrorist group to strike them before they are able to conduct further attacks.

Senator DEWINE. My time is up and I am going to turn to Senator Sessions, but I want to get back to the question of what is not

working. You have told me now we have changed something and we are moving in the right direction, but if we look at the overall Plan Colombia, what is not working?

General HILL. From a military perspective, in my view, the Colombian military, especially in the last 9 months, has made significant strides in their ability to take actionable intelligence that we can provide them and operationalize that intelligence. They are still a long way away from doing that routinely or without our assistance. They are getting better everyday, but they have a way to go.

The other thing that the Colombian military needs to improve upon is the ability to operate jointly, but again we are working with them in order to do that.

Senator DEWINE. What does that mean, General?

General HILL. Sir, that means the ability for the army and the air force to coordinate an operation, again, in a routine manner effectively and efficiently. It means that if there is an operation that requires the police and the military to act coherently that they do. They are getting better at it.

As I remind many of my colleagues both in the State Department and in the military, this is a learned skill, jointness. The U.S. military became joint at the point of a Congressional gun in 1986, and we are still not as joint as we should be. This is hard work, but I applaud them on their efforts.

Senator DEWINE. We have a cap on the number of U.S. military in Colombia. We have trainers there. Describe for me in layman's terms what our role there is as far as training. What kind of impact can we have?

We are doing training and I look at this and say, well, how can we have much of an impact? I will play the devil's advocate. How can we have much of an impact with a relatively small number of trainers? Now, maybe from a military point of view, it is not a small number of trainers.

General HILL. What is a small number of trainers?

Senator DEWINE. I mean, just tell me what is it, General, from a military point of view.

General HILL. I think the results that we have—I will go back to the first part of your question, which is what is our job. Our job is, from a military perspective, to work with the Colombian military to help them more professionalize themselves to gain greater proficiency in operationalizing on actionable intelligence and to work jointly, as I just discussed, and at the unit level to be more tactically correct.

What is happening with our ability to do this with a small number of trainers is that we started with a pretty professional army and military. They were not an unprofessional group before we started working with them. They have a long history of being a good, capable force. We are helping them become a more capable force.

We do it only after we have vetted a unit and that unit then can receive U.S. training. All the units that we have trained you can point to and see the difference, how much better they are. I will also say to you there is an ancillary benefit. I can also go down and point to units that the United States has not helped train and they

are getting better because there is, in fact, cross-fertilization as people move between units.

Senator DEWINE. Good, thank you.
Senator Sessions.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF SESSIONS, U.S. SENATOR
FROM ALABAMA**

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you very much, Senator DeWine, and I want to express my appreciation to Senator Grassley and to you for your consistent and dedicated interest in this issue. I know you have been to Colombia and other countries, and probably more than anybody in this Senate have personally been engaged on the ground with the problems of drugs from this area of the world.

I do remember a number of years ago when I came here that I asked a series of questions about our role. Ambassador Pickering, a fine public servant, insisted under the previous administration that our goals were solely anti-narcotics. And I said, "Are we on the side of the Colombian government against the communist narco-terrorists?", and he basically said our interest is narcotics. And I pressed him again. Our interest is narcotics. To me, that was always an absurd philosophy and I am glad to hear that we have made some substantial progress over the years in eliminating that.

General Hill, it would be irrational to expect a government like the Government of Colombia to eliminate narcotics in an area of the country they don't even control, would it not?

General HILL. It would certainly be a very difficult thing to do that, for sure.

Senator SESSIONS. It seems to me that from the beginning we have had two goals, to encourage the Colombian government to assert its control over its entire country, and in the course of that victory against these terrorist insurgents we can expect and would expect that they would take strong efforts to eliminate narcotics trafficking in the process.

Secretary Struble?

Mr. STRUBLE. I fully agree, sir. That is one reason why we have, for example, provided such enthusiastic support for the efforts described by Vice President Santos earlier today to help the Colombians establish a police presence in the municipalities where they have not had one. It is absolutely key that there be an official presence throughout the national territory of Colombia.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, as a Federal prosecutor and a U.S. Attorney for a number of years on the Gulf Coast, we prosecuted a lot of cases that traced back to Colombia. I remember indicting a number of Colombians and we hoped that there would be extraditions. They never occurred.

I remember a young police officer coming and testifying from Colombia and he was utterly courageous. I asked him about his personal safety and he had no fear. He told the truth and if they came after him, so be it. So there are a lot of superb people in Colombia that are dedicated to changing what is occurring.

General Hill, is the Government of Colombia making progress in expanding its control of territory, and how would you characterize the strength of the FARC and the other groups?

General HILL. Yes, sir, they are, in fact, expanding their territory, as Vice President Santos testified earlier this morning. There are two major programs underway by the Uribe government to go into areas that they had either vacated before or have never been in, and there are many locales where they have never had much government presence.

One, there is a campesino program where they have trained volunteers to give them some sort of military training under the control and guidance and leadership of a Colombian military person to go back into the villages to provide security. They have also expanded police presence. The number that I have seen is about 127 villages over the last 3 or 4 months that they have put police presence back into.

The FARC and the ELN and the AUC are strong opponents. They have lots of money, they have a defined ability of infrastructure and communications, and they are ruthless in their application of power. We have, however, over the last several months seen some intelligence indicators that you make you want to smile.

We are seeing a little bit of the money dry up because of the effort that goes after the drugs and the narco-terrorism. We are seeing some areas where they have not been able to make their coca paste production. The eradication effort is beginning to really make some inroads in their ability to fund themselves. The desertion rates are up tremendously. A lot of that I think is because they have gone out and forcibly recruited children and other people, and those folks are taking off and there are some good signs in all of that.

Senator SESSIONS. It seems to me that President Uribe is what Colombia needed. I think in the United States and in Colombia there was a sort of generalized feeling that this war had gone on so long and it was just going to go on forever and it just couldn't be ended. But it can be ended. There is no doubt in my mind that if the people of Colombia make up their minds that they will not allow this to continue that they can defeat this group.

I mean, they have so many advantages, General. Wouldn't you agree that, militarily, a united, determined Colombia can defeat these insurgent groups and restore the democracy which Colombia is known for? As one of the oldest democracies in the hemisphere, it is in a life-and-death struggle, it seems to me, for its heritage and future.

General HILL. Yes, sir, and I agree with that. I would also say to you that, militarily, they have made great strides. They will continue to make great strides and, militarily, I believe they have the momentum and they can continue the momentum.

But I think just as importantly, what the Uribe government has done is understand that it can't be only a military victory. They must, in fact, have political reform, labor reform, and judicial reform, which is a major point. And they have programs and they are, in my view, moving in the correct direction in all of those areas, and it is paying off both in terms of political and people support for the Uribe government, about a 65-percent popular government, and the fact that the military has emerged as the single most respected institution in the country.

If that military was out there violating the human rights of the citizenry, they would not be the most respected institution in the country. I think that all of those things bode well for two things to happen: the Uribe government stays the course, along with the Colombian people, and I believe they will, and that the United States, with the support of this Congress, does the same.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you very much.

Mr. BILLINGSLEA. Senator, I might add denial of territory in the spraying program which is having an effect on the revenue stream as the coca crops dry up is one piece of the Uribe administration's strategy. They have got several other pieces that are also working very effectively.

They have an amnesty program which is inducing not only foot soldiers and conscripts to come in and lay down arms, but has also induced the defection of a number of key personnel from the FARC and the ELN, including some financiers.

They have made progress in Europe with disrupting FARC fundraising in Europe. Gone are the days when the FARC is romanticized as some kind of egalitarian revolutionary movement. It is now recognized for being a brutal, drug-running terrorist organization. So the information campaign and the perspective on the organization has changed in a very positive way.

Senator SESSIONS. Marxist in its heritage, is it not?

Mr. BILLINGSLEA. Marxist in its heritage, but those individuals are increasingly taking a back seat to the drug-running crowd.

Then, finally, there is a program to degrade the FARC infrastructure and the cell structure that it has as the Colombian military gets more agile and is able to operate in remote areas in small units for sustained periods of time. So there is a very positive picture that is evolving here.

Senator DEWINE. I would like to turn to the topic we have not talked about today, and that is the Air Bridge Denial Program. Who is going to be my volunteer to talk about that? Mr. Secretary, very good.

Now, my understanding is that we are getting close to starting that back up. Is that correct?

Mr. SIMONS. That is correct, Mr. Chairman. We have made substantial progress over the past 6 months in moving toward standing up this program.

Senator DEWINE. How far away are we?

Mr. SIMONS. We are very close. I would expect in the next couple of weeks you will be hearing from us on this. We have had very good cooperation from the Colombians. We held two rounds of negotiations with them during the course of this year. Colombia agreed to establish air bridge zones. They agreed to the revised safety procedures which we needed to put into place following the shoot-down in Peru.

They have agreed to a vigorous process of notifying their own public of the existence of the air bridge zones. Again, we have had good cooperation with the air force, civil aviation, the Colombian police.

Senator DEWINE. As you know, I think this is something that we have to do. I don't want to take a lot of time today to go into all the details. I know you are going to roll this out at some point in

the future, but what I would like to talk about is the U.S. accountability. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that and who is going to make that decision and do the sign-off and what our role will be.

Mr. SIMONS. That has been very carefully worked out between the State Department, the Defense Department, the Colombians, and the Customs Service, which is also a participant. We have just sent an interagency team down to Colombia which was represented by State, Defense, Customs, and Homeland Security.

There are various players on the U.S. side who are providing intelligence, who are operating the aerial frames, or who are involved as riders in some of the Colombian trackers. There is a very detailed procedure for the steps that we need to go through in order to ramp up to an eventual decision.

All of these procedures have been worked out. They have been fully coordinated here, interagency, with the Department of Justice. There has been a testing of these procedures on the ground with the Colombians, and so we are ready to move on this.

Senator DEWINE. What is the role, if any, of any contract employees?

Mr. SIMONS. There is a contractor, a State Department-hired contractor, that will be performing some of the ground safety monitoring function, as well as the air safety monitoring function. But the overall coordinator of the process will be JATF South, in Florida. They will be essentially in charge of making sure that the steps are passing through.

Senator DEWINE. Well, again, I have a concern about what the role of the contractor is going to be; in other words, that we don't contract out ultimate responsibility here. Do you want to get into a little more detail for me here about the role of the contractor?

Mr. SIMONS. The contractor clearly will play a key role, but there will be other players that are direct-hire U.S. Government employees that will also be involved in the process, as well as the Colombians.

Senator DEWINE. What you are telling me is you don't want to talk about it today.

Mr. SIMONS. I think it is a shared responsibility.

Senator DEWINE. Well, what is the role? What is the contractor's role?

Mr. SIMONS. The contractor has a role in sitting with the Colombians at the command center of the Colombian Air Force, in Bogotá, in making sure that the various steps are being followed. There are contractors also that will be flying with the Colombians as air safety monitors, making sure that those steps are gone through.

But there is also someone back in Florida who is monitoring the entire process, who is bringing the intelligence together through JATF South, who is also following the same sheet of music going down the steps to make sure that all the steps are followed that have been agreed to in terms of meeting our security conditions. So there are a number of checks and balances that have been built into the program.

Senator DEWINE. Well, I won't belabor it.

General do you have anything you want to add about this?

General HILL. The only thing I would add, Senator DeWine, is that as the contractor who is overseeing and making—he has a checklist and making sure that they are following exact procedures. But the person in charge who eventually gives that instruction goes back to JATF South, our folks sitting, understanding all the intelligence, what they are looking at, and ensuring that all the proper steps are being taken to do it.

Senator DEWINE. Who ultimately makes the decision to shoot down?

Mr. SIMONS. The Colombians make the decision, in consultation with the various U.S. operators.

Senator DEWINE. And the various U.S. operators include who?

Mr. SIMONS. Contractor, as well as JATF South; Customs, if they are involved, and anyone else who has provided intel into a particular operation.

Senator DEWINE. Well, I support starting this up. I think we have to do it. I don't think we have any choice. Obviously, we want to have as many safeguards as we can. We all have that same interest. I just want to put everyone on notice as someone who has looked at this before that I have a concern about the role of a contractor and the role of contracting anything out that is ultimately a governmental responsibility. I am going to be looking at it.

I think we in the Congress have a responsibility to look at this and to have some oversight over this. So when you all are ready to totally roll this out, that is fine, but this is one Senator who is going to be looking at it. That is all. I am very sympathetic to doing it, but I am also very leery, frankly, of having a contractor, a contract employee, doing this.

Mr. SIMONS. We will be up to brief you in the next couple of weeks in detail on this.

Senator DEWINE. I look forward to that.

Mr. BILLINGSLEA. Senator, we are also very aware of that. We labor in Colombia under some unusual requirements that you don't find anywhere else in the world. There is a congressional restriction that caps our military presence at 400 people and our contractor presence at 400 people.

Senator DEWINE. I understand.

Mr. BILLINGSLEA. So there is that context to all of this.

Senator DEWINE. You have got both, though; I mean, you have got both caps.

Mr. BILLINGSLEA. Yes, sir. I think you will find when we brief you that there are a number of safeguards built in for legal protection of all U.S. personnel involved in the program, as well as a structure which was negotiated with the Colombian government that is designed from beginning to end to guard against and to protect against the loss of innocent life.

Senator DEWINE. Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Just to reiterate how proud I am of the Colombian people and President Uribe, I just can't overstate that. I think he has an opportunity to be the Abraham Lincoln of Colombia. The Civil War in the United States was not an easy battle. A lot of people lost their lives, but you had consistent, strong leadership from the top and we are now a united Nation. So I think it is a big, big deal what is going on.

General Hill.

General HILL. If I could, sir, you said Abraham Lincoln and I wanted to relate to you a story. When President Uribe was here several weeks ago to visit President Bush—and I know he made lots of rounds on the Hill, also—I had the privilege of taking him to Gettysburg on Saturday morning. He wanted to go; he asked to go.

He and I and several people walked the battlefield with some experts. He asked very pointed questions, because he made that same analogy in his mind—I could see it—the comparison between what Lincoln had to do to save this country and what President Uribe has to do to save his.

Senator SESSIONS. I think there is a legitimate analogy there and it has just gone on longer. I am sure it is more difficult to rally the country.

One of the things that troubled me, General Hill, was the recruitment of the military, the length of their service, and some of the things that indicated a lack of commitment there. Have they made improvements in that, and what would you say are the problems that remain?

General HILL. They have, sir. They have done a couple of things to improve that situation. One, they are increasing the length of service from 18 months to 24 months. They have essentially done away with, without the law, the bachelaras program that said high school grads couldn't serve in certain capacity. They have, on their own, whittled that down to almost nothing. In fact, there is proposed legislation to just do away with that program completely. Those are major steps forward to demonstrate the commitment of the Colombian people, not just a small segment of it.

I would also say one other thing on that issue. If you are a recruit in the Colombian military, you can elect to stay on as a professional soldier after your 18-month, or now 2-year stint. At that point, you go into a school of the professional soldier and after that is over with, you are integrated into the army as a professional soldier.

We have encouraged them, and the Colombian army, in particular, has wanted to build a professional non-commissioned officer corps. I have had my command sergeant major on about five different trips to Colombia in the last couple of months, both looking at their procedures and talking with their senior commissioned and non-commissioned officers, and have brought up several of their non-commissioned officer leadership to some of our schools, in particular at Fort Benning, not WINSEC, but our non-commissioned officer academies at Fort Benning. I believe that the army will name a sergeant major of the army sometime in August. This is a major step forward in terms of professionalizing their force.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

Senator DEWINE. Let me turn to the pipeline security issue. Last month, the State Department released its report on international terrorist activity and according to that report, there were 199 international terrorist attacks during 2002 in Colombia, which was a 44-percent drop from the previous year.

But what many people fail to notice is that one of the biggest reasons for the decrease was the sharp drop in the number of oil

pipeline bombings in Colombia. There were 41 such bombings last year, which was down from 178 in 2001. Really, that decrease is remarkable, and wonder, General, or anyone else on the panel if you would like to comment about what this decrease is due to and what the change in the policy has been and what our program has been, and talk a little bit about that. And if you could explain whether we have any other plans to change that policy or to expand that policy, whoever would like to take that one.

Mr. STRUBLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will begin and then ask General Hill to fill in. The most remarkable thing about that decrease, Senator, is that it precedes the main deployment of our trainers into Arauca Province. But in point of fact, a number of steps have been underway since we originally requested the Congress' authorization for this program that have already, as you have noted, had a big impact.

The first was our discussions with the Colombians about dedicating adequate force to this mission. The Colombians, even before the arrival of our trainers, began to essentially double the number of troops on the ground that were devoted to security in Arauca Province.

Senator DEWINE. These were Colombian forces on the ground?

Mr. STRUBLE. These were Colombian forces on the ground, sir.

The second was to ensure that the Government of Colombia took a general approach to the problem of security here. So to give one very important example, there is now a fiscal, a prosecutor—Senator Sessions can identify with this—who has been assigned from Bogotá to that area because the local prosecutors were too compromised, if you will, by the violence in the area by association with some of the illegal actors.

This person, this prosecutor, lives on a Colombian military base and has been brought in to ensure that those who have been detected or suspected or are being investigated for bombings and other terrorist acts are, in fact, detained and subjected to the process of justice.

And then, last, we have had a number of assessment missions that came out to help us design the most productive training program that had some fast-acting recommendations for the Colombians on how they integrate intelligence and put it in the hands of those who most need it.

General HILL. Sir, I will just add a couple of short statements to that very good answer. I think one thing it shows is our determination, the United States' determination to stay the course, and bolsters the Colombian military's self-confidence. It urges them to take the fight to the enemy and helps in their ability to do that.

Also, the early training and discussions that we did and the fact that they added more people up in the Arauca area and Sarvina area—when you say “regarding the pipeline,” that conjures up someone sitting on top of the pipeline, and that is what they used to do. What we do now is we have got them out in the countryside taking the fight to the enemy where the enemy is, not waiting for something to simply blow up and to go back and fix.

Mr. BILLINGSLEA. Which, in turn, translates into one simple thing, which is every day of unimpeded oil that goes through that

pipeline is an additional day of revenue for the government to use in this struggle.

Senator DEWINE. We have talked today specifically about Colombia and we have gotten some very good news about Colombia, but as we look around the region, we have seen some other countries around the region and drug production going up.

We always talk about this balloon effect. We have good news here and we push it here and then we have it go out in other regions or in other parts of the region. What are we going to do about that?

We look at the funding for the region, \$731 million. The funding that is requested for the Andean Counter-Drug Initiative is \$731, which is really the same amount that was requested in the previous two fiscal years, flat-funded. The bulk of the funding goes to Colombia. I don't think anyone is disagreeing with that, but we have got problems in surrounding countries. What are we going to do about that?

Mr. STRUBLE. I think that there are two answers to that question, Senator. One of them has to do with the political approach to it, and the second is the programmatic approach. I know that Assistant Secretary Paul Simons can speak to the latter.

On the political side, you are right that we do have a very serious problem. First of all, there is a need for greater regional coordination. In fact, I should have stepped in when you asked earlier what are the areas where we still have deficiencies in Plan Colombia. That is one.

Colombia's neighbors need to realize that Colombia's fight is their fight, too, that they have a strong stake in the Colombian government establishing effective security over its national territory, and especially the border regions. I commend the Colombian government for having taken the initiative on March 12 of this year to invite foreign ministers and defense ministers from all the neighboring countries for a very open discussion of this problem, in which they shared, for example, an intelligence brief that talks about the presence in border areas of foreign terrorist organizations.

The second issue here is we have made significant progress in Peru and Bolivia over the past 5 or 6 years in decreasing coca cultivation. It is down about 70 percent, even with some increase last year. But what we have seen, as that number gets lower and lower, is that core group of people whose livelihoods, especially farmers whose livelihoods depend upon coca production start to resist more the continued eradication. In the case of Bolivia where that has come together with a number of other problems, a drop in growth rates in the last few years, it has created a very, very significant political problem for the government.

We are working very closely with the international donor community, with the international financial institutions and bilaterally to ensure that there is an increased flow of money to Bolivia for development in order to show that staying the course on this is going to be productive for the vast majority of Bolivian citizens.

Mr. SIMONS. I agree with Curt's observations. I would just add one point, which is that when the Andean Counter-Narcotics Initiative was put together initially, this problem was anticipated, the

fact that we could be successful in Colombia and therefore pressures would grow. So there was a rather substantial increase up front in our funding for both Peru and Bolivia, in particular on the alternative development side.

So we were able to create very robust alternative development programs both in Bolivia and in Peru that have to some extent given us a head start. So, clearly, there are going to be more pressures. To the extent we are successful in Colombia, pressures will grow. Pressures are already growing, but we have to some extent built an infrastructure.

The funding that we have requested for 2004, \$207 million for Peru and Bolivia, we think is adequate to provide the assistance that is needed both on the alternative development side as well as on the eradication and interdiction side.

On the eradication and interdiction side, we have some advantages that we don't have in Colombia. We have a much better security situation. We have a long history of working with the military and the police on a lot of these programs. So, for instance, some of the difficulties we have with mechanics and pilots, we don't have these problems in Bolivia and Peru because we have been there a long time and we have worked out a lot of bugs in the programs. So we can get a little more efficiency out of those programs and we can get the job done.

Senator DEWINE. Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Senator DeWine. Again, I want to express my appreciation for your leadership. I know you have been to Colombia four times. That is probably as much as anybody in this Senate. You care about it and are providing good leadership there.

I guess, Secretary Struble, the economic damage from terrorism and what is happening in Colombia is significant. Isn't that another big reason why Colombia needs to break the back of this terrorist insurgency?

Mr. STRUBLE. It is indeed. In his written testimony, Vice President Santos said that terrorism in Colombia costs the country 2 percent of its domestic product every year, year after year. And, of course, the human cost is horrific as well, with 30,000 deaths. Frankly, I think that is the reason why the Colombian people have responded to President Uribe's call for greater sacrifice.

If we look at what has happened in that country in the past 10 months, where the people have been asked to pay a special tax contribution based upon their assets that is equivalent to 1 percent of GDP, where the Congress has passed a number of tax efficiency measures in December of last year and government reform measures that are intended to save hundreds of millions of dollars and to generate additional resources for the state, where the government has announced its intention to increase spending on the security services from about 3.5 percent of GDP to 5.8 percent of GDP in the next few years, what we have seen is the people are tired of this and they recognize that the cost is borne by society as a whole and that they are willing to contribute to meeting that cost.

Senator SESSIONS. I think there is a possibility of victory here and it encourages me to hear some of the numbers that you mentioned, such as we have got more territory taken back by the gov-

ernment, sabotage of the pipeline is down, defections have increased in the FARC. Those kinds of things can be sustained and actually can sometimes increase as the doom becomes more obvious to those who are resisting.

I don't want to be overly optimistic. I know this has gone on for a long time, but I also think that we can see cause for optimism here. Would you agree?

Mr. STRUBLE. I would very strongly agree. In fact, I will add another area that you have not cited to the successes and that is on the institutional side. You mentioned your experience as a Federal prosecutor when you couldn't get extraditions from Colombia. It was because the judiciary in Colombia was so intimidated that it didn't process them effectively even in those moments when there was not a constitutional prohibition against it.

If my colleagues from the Department of Justice were here today, I am confident they would tell you, as they have told me, that the best extradition relationship we have in the Western Hemisphere today is with Colombia.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, let's ask about that because you say they were intimidated. That should not demean the judges too seriously because, in fact, they were being killed in large numbers. They killed nine members of the Supreme Court of Colombia. Judges who took courageous actions, they and their families could expect to be killed frequently and it was a very, very difficult time.

What is the status of the ability to prosecute a significant drug dealer or a significant insurgent member in the courts of Colombia today?

Mr. STRUBLE. What I would like to do, Senator, is respond for the record in writing with some more specific detail about the number of prosecutions and the decrease in time of people in the system.

What I will note in terms of strengthening the judiciary is that, in part thanks to U.S. assistance over the past few years, a lot of hardened courtrooms have been built. Security details have been provided for prosecutors and judges to protect them. Justice has been made available to people who were formerly denied it because they lived miles and miles away from any courtroom.

I think one of the most successful programs we have is that of the *casas de justicia*. There are now some 31 that we have funded in Colombia and they have adjudicated 1.6 million cases. Many of those are civil cases, but you also understand perfectly well the importance of having access to civil law as well as civil law, and I think that we have seen the Colombian judiciary measurably perform in these areas over the last few years.

Senator SESSIONS. One more brief question, General Hill. You talked about the essential need for helicopter lift to respond rapidly to opportunities in the conflict there. We had some debate here about the proper mix between Blackhawk helicopters and Hueys. Let me ask you how you feel about that mix and would it be helpful if there were more helicopters provided.

General HILL. Well, more is always better, and the Blackhawk helicopter is the finest helicopter made in the world and there is no comparison between the Blackhawk helicopter and any other type of assault helicopter or troop-carrying helicopter that is necessary. However, it is also more expensive.

The Colombians, in fact, do have a mixture of air frames that makes it more difficult in several areas—spare parts, mechanics, pilots, all the above. The reality of life, however, is they do have that mixture. There is something to say for more than less. For example, with the infrastructure money for the pipeline that is coming, we are going to get 2 Blackhawks, 6 UH-2s, and we are going to fix another Blackhawk and give them some more spare parts. I think that is a good mixture. It has been worked out between the Colombians and us, the State Department. I think that is a good mixture.

Would it be better if they were pure-fleeted? Absolutely. Could they or we afford that? I think the answer is no.

Senator SESSIONS. I tend to agree. The Huey is still a valuable aircraft and can do many things. Isn't it more expensive to maintain a Blackhawk, in addition to just the cost?

General HILL. The Huey and the Huey-11, in particular, are excellent aircraft. They get the job done for what the Colombians need. They are easier to fly. They are, in fact, if you have the spare parts, easier to maintain. So there is a lot to say for that and I am not in any way taking away from that.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

Senator DEWINE. Gentlemen, thank you very much. I think it has been a very helpful panel, very informative. We appreciate your testimony and we also appreciate your service. Thank you very much.

Let me introduce our third panel, and I would ask our third panel to start coming up as I introduce you. Our third panel today is here to give us their take on what all this means.

Jess Ford, the Director of the International Affairs and Trade Division at the General Accounting Office, will be presenting testimony drawn from GAO's extensive oversight of our activities in Colombia. The GAO is currently finishing up their latest work on U.S. assistance to the region which, I understand should be published later this month.

Mr. Phil McLean is currently a Senior Associate with the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Americas Program. He previously served for more than three decades in the U.S. Foreign Service with overseas assignments in Latin America and Europe. After retirement from Government service in 1994, he was appointed Assistant Secretary for Management at the Organization of American States and served as adviser to the OAS Secretary.

As a standard practice, gentlemen, you may submit a lengthier statement, but I would ask that you keep your opening comments to 5 minutes. Thank you very much and we look forward to your testimony.

Who wants to start?

Mr. Ford, do you want to start?

STATEMENT OF JESS T. FORD, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRADE, U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE, WASHINGTON, DC.

Mr. FORD. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to be here to discuss GAO's work on U.S. counter-narcotics in Colombia. As you men-

tioned in your opening statement, we will be issuing a report later this month.

Today, I am going to focus on two key areas that the Caucus asked us to examine, as well as the Senate Appropriations Committee, dealing with the status of U.S. assistance to the Colombian army from fiscal years 2000 to 2003, approximately the time of Plan Colombia, and what the U.S.-supported police aerial eradication program has accomplished in recent years. And then I am going to talk a little bit about some of the remaining challenges, as we see them.

First, with regard to the army, the United States has provided approximately \$640 million to train and equip the Colombian army counter-narcotics brigade, and supplied the army with 72 helicopters, which was mentioned this morning. All of the helicopters have been delivered to Colombia, and based on the information we have obtained, all of them should be operational by sometime this month.

After the successful first year of operations, the brigade's results dropped off in 2002. The brigade initially busted 24 labs in 2001. The number of labs busted in 2002 was reduced to four. As a consequence, U.S. Government and Colombian officials decided to retrain the brigade and provide it with greater mobility. The training occurred in late 2002. The Colombian army reorganized the brigade, made it smaller, more professional and more mobile. They currently, as you heard this morning, are conducting operations in Narino.

Although all the U.S.-produced helicopters are in Colombia, there were a number of unanticipated problems in training the Colombian army pilots and mechanics to operate and maintain the helicopters. Some of these problems continue to limit the army's ability to operate and maintain the aircraft.

These include insufficient numbers of trained pilots and mechanics, the availability of pilots and mechanics, and limited financial support from the Colombian government. Consequently, the army will have to rely on contractor support because it will not have enough trained pilots in command and senior mechanics for the foreseeable future.

U.S. assistance to support the helicopters was originally planned to end in 2006, with the Colombian army taking over responsibility for operating and maintaining the aircraft. However, U.S. and Colombian officials stated that a continued level of U.S. assistance will be needed beyond this date because the army is not expected to have the personnel trained and the resources necessary. Although U.S. embassy officials stated that they have not officially estimated what the assistance level will be, they have tentatively projected it will cost approximately \$100 to \$150 million a year to sustain this operation.

Now, I am going to turn to the police. In recent years, the Colombian National Police aerial eradication program has had mixed results. Since 1995, net coca cultivation rose every year, until 2002. As you heard this morning, the official numbers are there has been a reduction of 15 percent in overall coca cultivation. The story for poppy is even better. The results for the last 2 years are a 35-percent reduction in poppy cultivation.

U.S. embassy officials attributed these recent successes primarily to the Colombian government's willingness to spray coca and poppy plants in all areas of the country. Since 1998, U.S. embassy officials have been concerned with the rising U.S. presence in Colombia and the associated costs. Since 1998, the costs of the aerial eradication program from the U.S. perspective has almost doubled.

Now, I want to turn to some of the challenges. Although the U.S.-supported counter-narcotics program has recently shown some results, Colombia and the United States continue to face financial and management challenges in sustaining these programs.

Colombia's financial resources are limited. Neither the army nor the police can sustain ongoing counter-narcotics programs without continued U.S. funding for the foreseeable future. According to our analysis and our discussions with U.S. officials, ongoing programs for the police and the Colombian army will cost approximately \$230 million a year, and future costs for some other programs have not yet been determined.

Colombia also continues to face challenges associated with its political and economic instability fostered by the longstanding insurgency. For U.S. assistance to continue, there will be a need for the army and the police to comply with human rights standards. The aerial eradication program will need to meet environmental conditions, and alternative development projects must be conducted in the areas where aerial eradication occurs.

Colombia is a long-time ally and significant trading partner of the United States, and therefore its economic and political stability is important to the United States, as well as the Andean region. Colombia's longstanding insurgency and the insurgents' links to the illicit drug trade complicate its efforts to tap its natural resources and make systematic economic reforms. Solving these problems is important to Colombia's future.

As we noted in 2000, the total costs of the counter-narcotics program were unknown. Nearly 3 years later, the Department of State and the Department of Justice have still not developed estimates for the future costs of the program, defined their future roles in Colombia, identified the proposed end state, or determined how they plan to achieve it.

Mr. Chairman, that is a summary of my comments. I would be happy to answer any of your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ford follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JESS T. FORD, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
AND TRADE

DRUG CONTROL—FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES CONTINUE TO
COMPLICATE EFFORTS TO REDUCE ILLICIT DRUG ACTIVITIES IN COLOMBIA

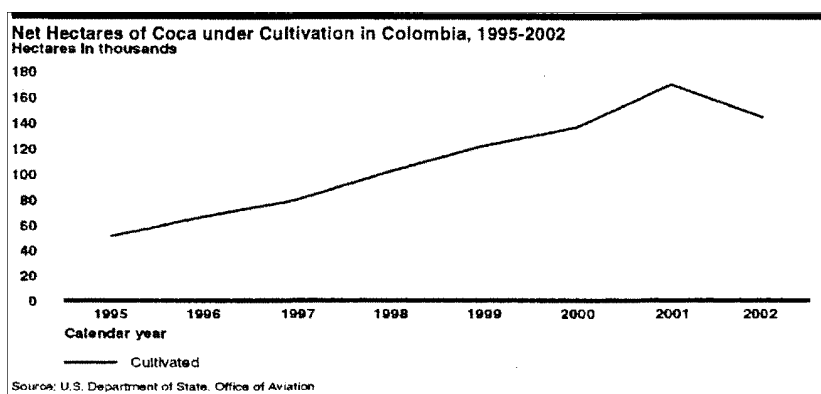
WHAT GAO FOUND

In fiscal years 2000–03, the United States provided about \$640 million in assistance to train and equip a Colombian Army counternarcotics brigade and supply the army with 72 helicopters and related support. Most of this assistance has been delivered and is being used for counternarcotics operations.

In recent years, the Colombian National Police aerial eradication program has had mixed results. Since 1995, coca cultivation rose in every year until 2002 and opium poppy cultivation remained relatively steady until 2001. But, for 2002, the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy reported that net coca cultivation in Colombia decreased 15 percent and net opium poppy cultivation decreased 25 per-

cent—the second yearly decline in a row. U.S. officials attributed this success primarily to the Colombian government's willingness to eradicate coca and poppy plants without restriction.

Although the U.S.-supported counternarcotics program in Colombia has recently begun to achieve some of the results envisioned in Plan Colombia, Colombia and the United States must continue to deal with financial and management challenges. Neither the Colombian Army nor the Colombian National Police can sustain ongoing counternarcotics programs without continued U.S. funding and contractor support for the foreseeable future. According to U.S. embassy officials, these programs alone may cost up to \$230 million per year, and future costs for some other programs have not been determined. Because of overall poor economic conditions, the government of Colombia's ability to contribute more is limited, but the continuing violence from Colombia's long-standing insurgency limits the government's ability to institute economic, social, and political improvements. Moreover, Colombia faces continuing challenges associated with the need to ensure it complies with human rights standards and other requirements in order for U.S. assistance to continue. As GAO noted in 2000, the total costs of the counternarcotics programs in Colombia were unknown. Nearly 3 years later, the Departments of State and Defense have still not developed estimates of future program costs, defined their future roles in Colombia, identified a proposed end state, or determined how they plan to achieve it.



Mr. Chairman and Members of the Caucus:

I am pleased to be here to discuss GAO's work on U.S. counternarcotics assistance to Colombia. Today we will highlight the preliminary findings from our ongoing review of U.S. assistance to Colombia. Our draft report is with the responsible agencies for comment; we expect to issue a final report in mid-June. I will focus my comments on (1) the status of U.S. counternarcotics assistance to the Colombian Army in fiscal years 2000–03 and how this assistance has been used, (2) what the U.S.-supported Colombian National Police aerial eradication program has accomplished in recent years, and (3) what challenges Colombia and the United States face in sustaining these programs.

In 1999, the Colombian government introduced Plan Colombia—a \$7.5 billion program that, among other things, proposed reducing the cultivation, processing, and distribution of illegal narcotics by 50 percent over 6 years.¹ A key component of the Colombian-U.S. counternarcotics strategy was the creation of a Colombian Army 2,285-man counternarcotics brigade, for which the United States agreed to provide helicopters to help it move around southern Colombia to reduce cocaine production and trafficking. Closely allied with this objective was U.S. support for the Colombian National Police's aerial eradication program to significantly reduce, if not eliminate, coca and opium poppy cultivation.²

¹For more information on U.S. assistance for Plan Colombia, see U.S. General Accounting Office, *Drug Control: U.S. Assistance to Colombia Will Take Years to Produce Results*, GAO-01-26 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 17, 2000).

²The leaves of the coca plant are the raw ingredient of cocaine, and opium poppy is used to produce heroin. The aerial eradication program involves spraying the coca and poppy plants from low-flying airplanes with a herbicide that attacks the root system and kills the plant.

SUMMARY

In fiscal years 2000–03, the United States provided about \$640 million to train and equip the Colombian Army counternarcotics brigade and supply the army with 72 helicopters and related training, maintenance, and operational support. Most of this assistance has been delivered and is being used for counternarcotics operations. However, some problems were encountered. For example,

- After a successful first year of operations, the brigade's results dropped off in 2002. U.S. and Colombian officials attribute this, in part, to coca growers and producers moving out of the brigade's range in southern Colombia. In late 2002, with U.S. assistance, the Colombian Army reorganized the brigade and gave it authority to operate anywhere in the country. This change, according to U.S. embassy and Colombian Army officials, will improve the brigade's ability to conduct operations against high-value, drug-trafficking targets, such as cocaine production laboratories and the leadership of insurgent groups involved in drug-trafficking activities. One of the brigade's retrained battalions has been operating in Narino department since early May 2003.

- Some initial impediments slowed the delivery and operational use of the helicopters. The start of entry-level helicopter pilot training was delayed 5 months while the United States determined who would provide and fund the training. The delivery of 25 UH-1H helicopters was delayed 5 months while the United States and Colombia decided what type of engine to use in the aircraft. U.S. funding for the brigade's operations was slowed for a total of about 5 months in 2002 because the Department of State did not meet congressional deadlines for reporting on Colombia's progress in addressing human rights violations.

U.S. assistance to support the helicopters provided as part of Plan Colombia was originally planned to end in 2006 with the Colombian Army taking over the responsibilities of operating and maintaining the aircraft. However, U.S. embassy and Colombian officials stated that a continued level of U.S. assistance will be needed beyond this date because the army is not expected to have the personnel trained or the resources necessary. Although U.S. embassy officials stated that they have not officially estimated what this assistance level will be, they tentatively projected that it would cost between \$100 million and \$150 million a year to sustain ongoing counternarcotics programs. In addition, other recently initiated U.S. programs will require additional support.

In recent years, the Colombian National Police aerial eradication program has had mixed results. Since 1995, net coca cultivation rose in every year until 2002 and net opium poppy cultivation remained between 6,100 to 7,500 hectares. But in recent months, the Office of National Drug Control Policy reported that:

- net coca cultivation in Colombia decreased 15 percent in 2002, from 169,800 hectares in 2001 to 144,450 hectares, and

- net opium poppy cultivation in Colombia decreased 25 percent in 2002, from 6,500 hectares in 2001 to 4,900 hectares—the second yearly decline in a row.

U.S. embassy officials attributed this recent success primarily to the current Colombian government's willingness to spray coca and poppy plants without restriction in all areas of the country. However, since at least 1998, U.S. embassy officials have been concerned with the rising U.S. presence in Colombia and the associated costs of the aerial eradication program. At the time, the embassy began developing a 3-year plan to have the Colombian National Police assume control over the program; but, for various reasons, the police never agreed to the plan. Since then, contractor involvement and the associated costs have continued to rise, and the Colombian National Police are not yet able to assume more control of the aerial eradication program. In fiscal year 1998, U.S. embassy officials reported that the costs for the U.S. contractor, fuel, herbicide, and related support totaled \$48.5 million. For fiscal year 2003, U.S. embassy officials estimated that the comparable costs totaled \$86.3 million. Much of this increase occurred between fiscal years 2002 and 2003 to support the additional spray aircraft, multiple operating locations, and the anticipated continuation of spray operations throughout Colombia. According to U.S. embassy officials, these costs are expected to remain relatively constant for the next several years.

Although the U.S.-supported counternarcotics program has recently shown some of the results envisioned when Plan Colombia was first introduced, Colombia and the United States continue to face financial and management challenges in sustaining programs in Colombia.

- Colombia's financial resources are limited. Neither the Colombian Army nor the Colombian National Police can sustain ongoing counternarcotics programs without continued U.S. funding and contractor support for the foreseeable future. According

to U.S. embassy officials, ongoing programs alone may cost up to \$230 million per year, and future costs for some other programs have not been determined.

- Colombia also continues to face challenges associated with its political and economic instability fostered by its long-standing insurgency and, for U.S. assistance to continue, the need to ensure that (1) the military and police comply with human rights standards, (2) the aerial eradication program meets certain environmental conditions, and (3) alternative development is provided in areas subject to aerial eradication.

Colombia is a longtime ally and significant trading partner of the United States and, therefore, its economic and political stability is important to the United States as well as the Andean region. Colombia's long-standing insurgency and the insurgents' links to the illicit drug trade complicate its efforts to tap its natural resources and make systemic economic reforms. Solving these problems is important to Colombia's future stability. On the other hand, recent world events—from the global war on terrorism to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—have diverted scarce U.S. resources and made it paramount that the United States fully consider the resources committed to its overseas assistance programs. As we noted in 2000, the total costs of the counternarcotics programs in Colombia were unknown. Nearly 3 years later, the Departments of State and Defense have still not developed estimates of future program costs, defined their future roles in Colombia, identified a proposed end state, or determined how they plan to achieve it.

BACKGROUND

The United States has provided assistance to help reduce illegal drug production and trafficking activities in Colombia since the 1970's. Yet, Colombia is still the world's leading cocaine producer and distributor and a major source of the heroin used in the United States. According to State, Colombia provides 90 percent of the cocaine and about 40 percent of the heroin entering the United States. The Drug Enforcement Administration reports that several billion dollars flow into Colombia each year from the cocaine trade alone, and this vast amount of drug money has helped the country's two largest insurgency groups—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the National Liberation Army—gain unprecedented economic, political, and social power and influence. The insurgents exercise some degree of control over 40 percent of Colombia's territory east and south of the Andes where much of the coca is grown.

In an effort to address the influx of cocaine and heroin from Colombia, the United States has funded a counternarcotics strategy in Colombia that includes programs for interdiction, eradication, and alternative development, which must be carefully coordinated to achieve mutually reinforcing results. Besides assistance for the Colombian Army counternarcotics brigade and the Colombian National Police aerial eradication program, the United States has supported Colombian efforts to interdict illicit-drug trafficking along rivers and in the air as well as alternative development, judicial sector reform, and internally displaced persons programs. The Departments of Defense and State have provided most of the funding and State, through its Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and Narcotics Affairs Section in the U.S. Embassy Bogotá, oversees the program. In fiscal years 2000 through 2003, the United States provided more than \$2.5 billion to Colombia for counternarcotics assistance. (See table 1.) For fiscal year 2004, the administration has proposed an additional \$700 million in aid.

Table 1.—U.S. Counternarcotics Assistance to Colombia, Fiscal Years 2000–03

[Dollars in millions]

Agency	Fiscal years				Total
	2000 ¹	2001	2002	2003 ² (estimated)	
State	\$744.9	\$48.0	\$275.4	\$452.0	\$1,550.3
DOD	128.5	190.2	119.1	149.9	587.7
USAID ³	123.5	0	104.5	151.0	379.0
Total	\$1,026.9	\$238.2	\$499.0	\$752.9	\$2,517.0

Source: Departments of Defense and State and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

¹ Includes funds appropriated for Plan Colombia through the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 2000 (Division B of P.L. 106–246).

²Includes \$93 million in Foreign Military Financing funds appropriated in the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Appropriations Act, 2003 (Division E, Title III of P.L. 108-7); \$34 million appropriated to State and \$34 million appropriated to Defense in the Supplemental Appropriations Act to Support Department of Defense Operations in Iraq for Fiscal Year 2003 (P.L. 108-11); and \$37.1 million for Foreign Military Financing allotted from fiscal year 2003 supplemental appropriations.

³In fiscal years 2000-03, State transferred \$375 million to the U.S. Agency for International Development for alternative development, judicial sector reform, and internally displaced persons programs.

Following increased violence in Colombia during early 2002, the Congress provided “expanded authority” for the use of U.S. assistance to Colombia, which enabled the Colombian government to use the U.S.-trained and—equipped counter-narcotics brigade, U.S. provided helicopters, and other U.S. counter-narcotics assistance to fight groups designated as terrorist organizations as well as to fight drug trafficking. Similar authority was provided for fiscal year 2003 and is being sought for fiscal year 2004.

ASSISTANCE TO THE COLOMBIA ARMY HAS BEEN DELIVERED, BUT PROBLEMS WERE ENCOUNTERED

U.S. assistance to the Colombian Army during fiscal years 2000-03—\$640 million for the counter-narcotics brigade, 72 helicopters, and related support—has, for the most part, been delivered and is being used for counter-narcotics operations. However, both the United States and the Colombian Army experienced some unanticipated problems that delayed the operational use of the helicopters. In addition, U.S. support will be needed for the foreseeable future to sustain operations.

Status of the Brigade

The United States initially agreed to train and equip a Colombian Army counter-narcotics brigade of three battalions and a total of about 2,285 professional and conscripted soldiers. The United States provided the counter-narcotics brigade with about \$45 million in training and equipment—from weapons and ammunition to rations, uniforms, and canteens. The brigade’s primary mission was to plan and conduct interdiction operations against drug-trafficking activities, including destroying illicit drug-producing facilities, and, when called upon, to provide security in insurgent-controlled areas where aerial eradication operations were planned. According to U.S. and Colombian officials, the brigade was highly effective in 2001—for example, it destroyed 25 cocaine hydrochloride laboratories³—but was less successful in 2002, when it destroyed only 4 such labs. U.S. embassy officials stated that the brigade became less effective because the insurgents moved their drug-producing activities, such as the laboratories, beyond the brigade’s reach. In addition, according to these officials, the brigade became more involved in protecting infrastructure, such as bridges and power stations, and performing base security. Moreover, the aerial eradication program did not call on the brigade to provide ground security on very many occasions, essentially planning spray missions in the less threatening areas.

In August 2002, U.S. embassy and Colombian military officials agreed to restructure the brigade to make it a rapid reaction force capable of making quick, tactical strikes on a few days’ notice. As part of this restructuring, the Colombian Army designated the brigade a national asset capable of operating anywhere in Colombia rather than just in its prior area of responsibility in southern Colombia. The newly restructured brigade consists of three combat battalions and a support battalion with a total of about 1,900 soldiers, all of whom are professional. Two of the combat battalions have been retrained. The third combat battalion should be retrained by mid-June 2003. This change, according to U.S. embassy and Colombian Army officials, will improve the brigade’s ability to conduct operations against high-value, drug-trafficking targets, such as laboratories containing cocaine and the leadership of insurgent groups involved in drug-trafficking activities. One of the retrained battalions has been operating in Narino department since early May 2003.

Status of the Helicopters

A key component of U.S. assistance for Plan Colombia was enhancing the brigade’s air mobility. To do this, the United States provided the Colombian Army with 33 UH-1N helicopters, 14 UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, and 25 UH-1H helicopters.⁴

- The 33 UH-1N helicopters were supposed to serve as interim aircraft until the UH-60 and UH-1H helicopters funded under Plan Colombia were delivered. The UH-1Ns were delivered in stages between November 1999 and March 2001. Since flying

³The laboratories are used in the final stages of processing coca into cocaine and are considered high-value targets.

⁴Of the 33 UH-1Ns, 28 remain available for use by the brigade; 1 crashed on a mission and 4 were transferred to support the aerial eradication program.

their first mission in December 2000, the helicopters have logged 19,500 hours in combat and have supported more than 430 counternarcotics brigade operations. Colombian Army personnel are qualified as pilots and mechanics, but many of the experienced pilots and mechanics who operate and maintain the aircraft are provided through a U.S. contractor.

- The UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters were delivered between July and December 2001 but did not begin support operations for the brigade until November 2002 because of a shortage of fully qualified Colombian Army pilots. Forty-two Colombian Army personnel have completed the minimum UH-60 pilot training, of which 13 have qualified as pilot-in-command. U.S.-funded contract pilots fill in as pilots-in-command. In addition, a U.S.-funded contractor continues to maintain the helicopters and provide maintenance training.

- State procured 25 UH-II helicopters under Plan Colombia and planned to deliver them to the Colombian Army between November 2001 and June 2002. However, they were delivered between March and November 2002 instead because the Colombian military was considering whether to use a more powerful engine in the helicopters than the one usually installed. Ultimately it decided to use the more common engine. According to NAS officials, although some of the UH-II helicopters are being used for missions, all the helicopters will not be operational until June 2003. As of January 2003, 25 Colombian Army pilots had completed their initial training and 21 of these pilots are completing the training needed to qualify for operational missions. However, contractor pilots continue to supplement Colombian Army pilots and a U.S.-funded contractor continues to provide maintenance support.

Problems with Pilot and Mechanic Training

Although all the U.S.-provided helicopters are in Colombia, a number of unanticipated problems in training Colombian Army pilots and mechanics to operate and maintain the helicopters were encountered. Some of these problems continue to limit the Colombian Army's ability to operate and maintain the aircraft. Primarily, the Colombian Army will have to continue to rely on contractor support because it will not have enough trained pilots-in-command and senior mechanics for the foreseeable future.

- When the United States agreed to provide the UH-60 and UH-II helicopters for the Colombian Army in July 2000, the assistance for Plan Colombia did not include any funds to train the Colombian pilots and mechanics needed to operate and maintain the helicopters. About 6 months after passage of U.S. assistance for Plan Colombia, Defense agreed to provide the training and reported that it would transfer up to \$20 million from other counternarcotics projects in Colombia to pay for it.

- A training plan was approved in mid-2001. Although the plan provided training for Colombian Army personnel to meet the minimum qualifications for a pilot and mechanic, it did not include the additional training necessary to fly missions in a unit or to become a senior mechanic. Basic training for 117 helicopter pilots—known as initial entry rotary wing training—began in November 2001 and is projected to be completed by December 2004. This training is intended to provide a pool or pipeline of pilots for more advanced training to fly specific helicopters. In addition, according to U.S. embassy officials, a new pilot takes an average of 2 to 3 years to progress to pilot-in-command.

- According to U.S. embassy and contractor officials, 105 out of 159 Colombian Army personnel have completed the basic UH-60 and UH-II maintenance training and are taking more advanced training to qualify as senior mechanics. These officials told us that the remaining 54 personnel will receive the contractor-provided basic training in the near future, but they did not know when it would begin. Moreover, these officials also told us that it typically takes 3 to 5 years for mechanics to gain the experience necessary to become fully qualified on speck helicopter systems, in particular the UH-60 Black Hawks.

- The Colombian Army Aviation Battalion is responsible for providing helicopters and other aircraft and personnel for all Colombian Army missions with an aviation component, including counternarcotics and counterinsurgency operations throughout Colombia. Information provided by the Colombian Aviation Battalion shows that it is staffed at only 80 percent of its required levels and that, over the past several years, it has received between 60 percent to 70 percent of its requested budget for logistics and maintenance. The Colombian military's decision to continue using the UH-1N helicopters in addition to the UH-60 and UH-II helicopters will also make it more difficult for the Aviation Battalion to provide the numbers of personnel needed to operate and maintain the helicopters. State originally intended that the UH-1N helicopters would not be used after the UH-60 and UH-II helicopters were available to support operations.

- According to bilateral agreements between Colombia and the United States, the Colombian Army must ensure that pilots and mechanics who receive U.S. training be assigned to positions using their training for a minimum of 2 years. This has not always been the case. For example, although 19 Colombian Army personnel were qualified to serve as pilots-in-command on UH-1N helicopters, only 1 pilot was assigned to serve in this position. The remaining pilots-in-command were provided by a U.S. contractor.

- Of the funds appropriated for fiscal year 2002, \$140 million was used to support Colombian Army counternarcotics efforts. Most of this amount was used for U.S. provided helicopter operations and maintenance, logistical, and training support. However, not all the funding could be released until the Secretary of State certified, in two separate reports to appropriate congressional committees,⁵ that the Colombian military was making progress meeting certain human rights conditions. Because State was late in providing these reports, the U.S. embassy could not use this funding for operations and training on two occasions for a total of about 5 months during 2002.⁶ These delays resulted in fewer counternarcotics operations and limited the training and experience Colombian Army pilots could obtain to qualify as pilots-in-command.

Continued U.S. Support Needed to Sustain Operations

U.S. assistance to support the helicopters provided as part of Plan Colombia was originally planned to end in 2006 with the Colombian Army taking over these responsibilities. However, U.S. embassy and Colombian Army officials stated that a continued level of U.S. contractor presence will be needed beyond this date because the Aviation Battalion is not expected to have the personnel trained or the resources necessary. Although the embassy officials stated that they have not officially estimated what this assistance level will be, they tentatively projected that it would cost between \$100 million and \$150 million annually to sustain the U.S.-supported counternarcotics programs. Moreover, other recently initiated U.S. programs will likely require U.S. assistance and contractor support, but the long-term costs of sustaining such programs are not known.

COLOMBIA'S AERIAL ERADICATION PROGRAM HAS HAD MIXED RESULTS

Since the early 1990's, State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (through the U.S. Embassy's Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) and the Office of Aviation) has supported the Colombian National Police's efforts to significantly reduce, if not eliminate, the cultivation of coca and opium poppy. However, for the most part, the net hectares of coca under cultivation in Colombia continued to rise until 2002, and the net hectares of opium poppy under cultivation remained relatively steady until 2001–02.⁷ In addition, the U.S. embassy has made little progress in having the Colombian National Police assume more responsibility for the aerial eradication program, which requires costly U.S. contractor assistance to carry out.

Recent Progress in Reducing Net Cultivation of Coca and Poppy

As shown in figure 1, the number of hectares under coca cultivation rose more than threefold from 1995 to 2001—from 50,900 hectares to 169,800 hectares—despite substantially increased eradication efforts.⁸ But in 2002, the Office of Aviation

⁵Section 567 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2002 (P.L. 107–115). Specifically, the act provided that not more than 60 percent of the funds could be obligated until after the Secretary of State made a determination and certification that the Colombian military was (1) suspending members of the Colombian Armed Forces who have been creditably alleged to have committed gross violations of human rights, (2) cooperating with civilian prosecutors and investigators, and (3) severing links between the Armed Forces and paramilitary groups. In addition, the remaining 40 percent of the funds could be obligated only after June 1, 2002, and after the Secretary of State made a second determination and certification with respect to the same conditions.

⁶According to U.S. embassy political section personnel, they encountered difficulties developing the information required to make the human rights determination and certification. The first report was issued on May 1, 2002—almost 2 months later than State's target date. The second report was issued on September 9, 2002—almost 3 months later than State's target date.

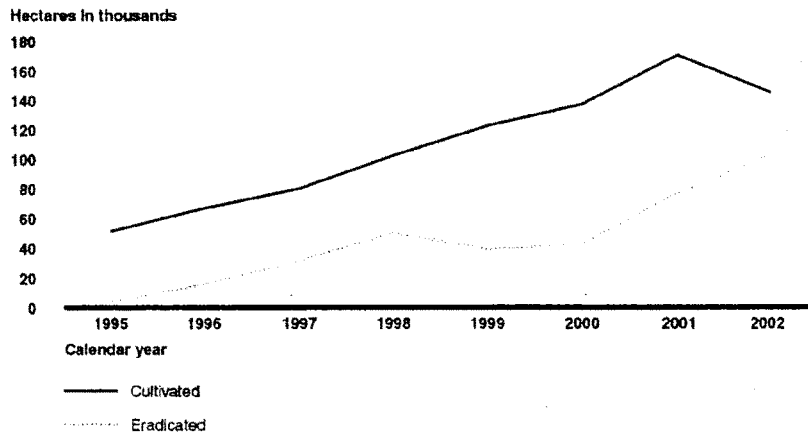
⁷The estimates of net hectares of coca and opium poppy under cultivation are prepared annually by the U.S. Director of Central Intelligence, Crime and Narcotics Center. See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Drug Control: Coca Cultivation and Eradication Estimates in Colombia*, GAO-03-319R (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 8, 2003).

⁸The number of hectares eradicated is provided by the Office of Aviation and is based on the number of net hectares sprayed multiplied by an estimated "kill rate." Although many thousands of hectares of coca and poppy are killed, coca and poppy farmers often replant in the same

Continued

estimated that the program eradicated 102,225 hectares of coca—a record high. In March 2003, the Office of National Drug Control Policy reported for the first time since before 1995 a net reduction in coca cultivation in Colombia—from 169,800 hectares to 144,450 hectares—a 15 percent decline.

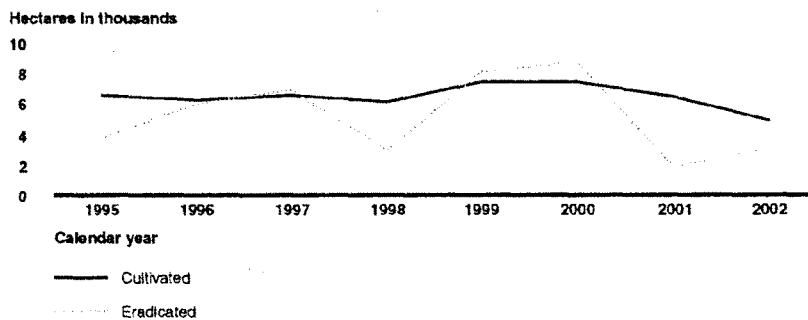
Figure 1: Net Hectares of Coca under Cultivation and Hectares Eradicated in Colombia, 1995-2002



Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of Aviation

As shown in figure 2, the net hectares of opium poppy under cultivation varied between 6,100 and 6,600 for the period 1995–98 but rose to 7,500 hectares in 1999 and 2000. In 2001, the net hectares of poppy estimated under cultivation declined to 6,500 and, in 2002, further declined to 4,900—nearly a 35 percent reduction in net cultivation over the past 2 years.

Figure 2: Net Hectares of Poppy under Cultivation and Hectares Eradicated in Colombia, 1995-2002



Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of Aviation

U.S. embassy officials attributed the recent unprecedented reductions in both coca and poppy cultivation primarily to the current Colombian government's willingness to allow the aerial eradication program to operate in all areas of the country. They also noted that:

or other areas, which helps explain why the number of hectares under cultivation often does not decline.

- the number of spray aircraft had increased from 10 in July 2001 to 17 in January 2003;
- recently acquired spray aircraft can carry up to twice the herbicide as the older aircraft; and
- as of January 2003, aircraft were flying spray missions from three forward operating locations—a first for the program.

The ability to keep an increased number of spray aircraft operating out of three bases was made possible, at least in part, because the U.S. embassy hired a contractor to work with the Colombian National Police to, among other things, help maintain their aircraft. As a result, the availability of police aircraft for the spray program increased. Moreover, in August 2002, the Colombian government allowed the police to return to a higher strength herbicide mixture that, according to embassy officials, improved the spray's effectiveness.⁹ These officials project that the aerial eradication program can reduce the amount of coca and poppy cultivation to 30,000 hectares and 5,000 hectares, respectively, by 2005 or 2006, assuming the police continue the current pace and can spray in all areas of Colombia.

Colombian National Police Have Not Assumed Control Over Aerial Eradication Operations

As we reported in 2000,¹⁰ beginning in 1998, U.S. embassy officials became concerned with the rising U.S. presence in Colombia and the associated costs of the aerial eradication program. At the time, the embassy began developing a 3-year plan to have the Colombian National Police assume increased operational control over the program. But for various reasons, the police did not agree to the plan. Since then, contractor involvement and the associated costs have continued to rise and the Colombian National Police are not yet able to assume more control of the aerial eradication program.

As shown in table 2, in fiscal year 1998, the Office of Aviation reported that the direct cost for a U.S. contractor providing aircraft maintenance and logistical support and many of the pilots was \$37.8 million. In addition, NAS provided \$10.7 million for fuel, herbicide, and related support, for a total of \$48.5 million. For fiscal year 2003, the comparable estimates for contractor and NAS-provided support were \$41.5 million and \$44.8 million, respectively, for a total of \$86.3 million. Most of this increase occurred between fiscal years 2002 and 2003 and is for the most part to support the additional spray aircraft, multiple operating locations, and the anticipated continuation of spray operations throughout Colombia. According to NAS and Office of Aviation officials, these costs are expected to remain relatively constant for the next several years.

Table 2.—U.S. Support for the Aerial Eradication Program, Fiscal Years 1998–2004

[Dollars in millions]

Cognizant office	Fiscal years							Total
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 (estimated)	2004 (proposed)	
Office of Aviation	\$37.8	\$36.8	\$52.5 ¹	\$38.0	\$38.2	\$41.5	\$45.0	\$289.8
Narcotics Affairs Section	10.7	14.1	20.9	11.1	17.6	44.8 ²	44.2	163.4
Total	\$48.5	\$50.9	\$73.4	\$49.1	\$55.8	\$86.3	\$89.2	\$453.2

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and the Office of Aviation.

¹ Includes \$20 million for additional spray aircraft.

² In addition, NAS paid \$38.8 million for a contractor to support the Colombian National Police Aviation Service. NAS could not readily identify the proportion of this contract that is related to aerial eradication. NAS officials stated that they expect this expenditure to continue for the next 2 years and possibly up to 4 years.

The Colombian National Police do not provide funding per se for the aerial eradication program and, therefore, the value of its contributions is more difficult to quantify. In recent years, the police have provided helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft for spray mission support and the use of many of its facilities throughout Colombia. In addition, the police have about 3,600 personnel assigned to counter-narcotics missions and estimate that 84 are directly supporting the aerial eradication program.

⁹ In March 2002, the previous Colombian government reduced the strength of the spray mixture because of environmental concerns.

¹⁰ GAO-01-26.

U.S. Efforts to Improve Police Capacity for Aerial Eradication

To help the Colombian National Police increase its capacity to assume more responsibility for the aerial eradication program, NAS has initiated several efforts.

In February and March 2002, the Office of Aviation conducted an Aviation Resource Management Survey of the Colombian National Police Aviation Service. According to Office of Aviation officials, these surveys are intended to provide a stringent onsite assessment of flight operations from management and safety to logistics and maintenance. The survey team made a number of critical observations. For example,

- The Aviation Service's organizational structure, lines of authority, and levels of responsibility were not clear. Relying on an overly centralized command structure resulted in unnecessary delays and the cancellation of some planned aerial eradication missions because the commanding general could not be reached.

- The Aviation Service did not have a formal flying hour program to help forecast its budgetary requirements and enhance maintenance scheduling.

- About 35 percent of the maintenance staff were inexperienced. According to the survey team, this could result in improper maintenance procedures being performed, which could adversely affect flight safety and endanger lives.

- Management of items needing repair and control of spare parts were deficient. The survey team found 230 items awaiting repair—some from August 1998—and more than \$4 million in UH-1H helicopter blades and parts stored outside and unprotected.

As a result of the survey, in July 2002, a NAS contractor (a \$38.8 million, 1-year contract with options for 4 additional years) began providing on-the-job maintenance and logistical training to the Aviation Service and helping the police address many of the issues raised by the Aviation Resource Management Survey team. Embassy officials noted that a more formal flying hour program has improved the availability rates of many of the Aviation Service's aircraft. For example, the availability rate of the Aviation Service's UH-1H helicopters—often used to support aerial eradication missions—increased from 67 percent in January 2002 to 87 percent in December 2002. According to these officials, improved availability rates made it easier to schedule and conduct spray missions.

In addition, NAS has begun a program for training pilots to fly T-65 spray planes and plans to start training for search and rescue personnel who accompany the planes. U.S. officials stated that the contractor presence should decline and the police should be able to take over more of the eradication program by 2006, when NAS estimates that coca and poppy cultivation will be reduced to "maintenance levels"—30,000 hectares and 5,000 hectares, respectively.

FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES CONTINUE TO COMPLICATE EFFORTS TO
REDUCE ILLICIT DRUG ACTIVITIES

The U.S.-supported counternarcotics program in Colombia has recently begun to achieve some of the results envisioned in 1999–2000. However, Colombia and the United States must continue to deal with financial and management challenges.

- Under the original concept of Plan Colombia, the Colombian government had pledged \$4 billion and called on the international community to provide \$3.5 billion. Until recently, Colombia had not provided any significant new funding for Plan Colombia and, according to U.S. embassy and Colombian government officials, anticipated international assistance for Plan Colombia—apart from that provided by the United States—did not materialize as envisioned. But because of overall poor economic conditions, the government of Colombia's ability to contribute more is limited.

- The Colombian government has stated that ending the civil conflict is central to solving Colombia's problems—from improving economic conditions to stemming illicit drug activities. A peaceful resolution to the long-standing insurgency would help stabilize the nation, speed economic recovery, help ensure the protection of human rights, and restore the authority and control of the Colombian government in the coca-growing regions. The continuing violence limits the government's ability to institute economic, social, and political improvements.

- For U.S. assistance to continue, Colombia faces continuing challenges associated with the need to ensure that the army and police comply with human rights standards, that the aerial eradication program meets certain environmental conditions, and that alternative development is provided in areas subject to aerial eradication.

Overall, neither the Colombian Army nor the Colombian National Police can sustain ongoing counternarcotics programs without continued U.S. funding and contractor support for the foreseeable future. According to U.S. embassy officials, these programs alone may cost up to \$230 million per year, and future costs for some recently initiated programs have not been determined. In addition, we note that this

estimate does not include future funding needed for other U.S. programs in Colombia, including other aerial and ground interdiction efforts; the police Aviation Service's U.S.-funded contractor; and alternative development, judicial sector reform, and internally displaced persons programs.

In recent years, world events—from the global war on terrorism to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—have diverted scarce U.S. resources and made it paramount that the United States fully consider the resources committed to its overseas assistance programs. As we noted in 2000, the total costs of the counternarcotics programs in Colombia were unknown. Nearly 3 years later, the Departments of State and Defense have still not developed estimates of future program costs, defined their future roles in Colombia, identified a proposed end state, or determined how they plan to achieve it.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

In conducting our work, we reviewed pertinent planning, implementation, and related documentation and met with cognizant U.S. officials at the Methodology Departments of State and Defense, Washington, D.C.; the U.S. Southern Command headquarters, Miami, Florida; and the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia. In Colombia, we interviewed Colombian military, police, and government officials and visited the Colombian Army bases at Larandia, Tolemaida, and Tres Esquinas and other sites in the primary coca-growing regions of Colombia. In addition, we observed a Colombian Army counternarcotics brigade airlift operation and several aerial eradication missions.

We also discussed this testimony with cognizant officials from State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and its Office of Aviation and State's Bureau for Western Hemisphere Affairs. They generally concurred with our treatment of the issues presented.

We conducted our work between July 2002 and May 2003 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my prepared statement. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator DEWINE. Very good.

Mr. McLean.

STATEMENT OF PHILLIP McLEAN, SENIOR FELLOW AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR, THE AMERICAS PROGRAM, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, WASHINGTON, DC.

Mr. McLEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to this Caucus, and let me make a few brief remarks from my written testimony which is submitted to you.

I think there is a question in the public mind when the discussion of Colombia comes up, is this a narcotics-only activity or is the main objective terrorism. I would like to make the case today that, in fact, the narcotics target is, in fact, the correct target. If you are going to conquer terrorism and conquer the chaos in the country, you have got to get at this narcotics heart of what the problem is.

Colombia some years ago was a very promising country. It stood with Chile as one of the best-performing countries in the hemisphere. But you can draw a strict correlation from the rise of narcotics in Colombia to the decline of the Colombian institutions and states. So it is not inappropriate, in my view, to make narcotics the central focus and target of what you are doing.

Colombia in the 1970's, as you had the rise of the narcotics culture, which has brought into the country something like 2 percent of the gross national product in illegal funding—that money overcame the institutions, and particularly the institutions of law and order. The military to some degree, the police, but most specifically the judicial system has been deeply damaged, and these damages

to these institutions is not something that you cure with a 1-year appropriation or even a decade of appropriations.

That country, which had the ability before to stand up and be among the proud countries of the world, is, in fact, being—almost a generation has got to be worked through as those countries refocus their attention. Clearly, the corruption and the violence which is so impressive if you have lived there—and you, Senators, have visited the country. You know many of these stories.

I lived there for 3 years as No. 2 in the embassy and the charge, and I left the country in 3 years and I knew 11 people who had been murdered in that short period of time. Since that time, of course, I have known a great many more. It is an enormously tragic event.

I would just like to address some fallacies that often come up. There is a fallacy that the United States can't do anything about this. I disagree with that. That perhaps the only thing we could do would be to legalize drugs. I certainly disagree with that. That there is a balloon effect. I can't disagree that there is not a balloon effect to some degree. But, in fact, my experience is that the balloon effect depends upon some assumptions. One of them is that the demand for drug must necessarily be constant. And, in fact, we know that it is not. Americans can change to other drug formulas, or, in fact, one would hope, reduce our drug consumption.

Another fallacy is that you have to have a crop substitution program. Well, of course, given the price of the narcotics products, the illegal products, there can be no substitution. But I have seen, in fact, that when you have a program where you combine law enforcement with programs that help people, you can get people to move off that particular economy.

Another fallacy is that these are poor campesinos, poor peasants who have been living there for years and have gotten hooked into this particular trade. The story in Colombia is not that. The story in Colombia is they are people who go there to produce drugs. They are, in fact, called colonos, colonists, who move into these areas. Therefore, that is one of the reasons you can, in fact, give them incentives to move away.

What Colombia needs is a vibrant, restored economy, and the United States, in fact, has taken a number of steps. Certainly, the Andean trade preference initiatives by this Congress and were just renewed are said to have produced 100,000 jobs in the last round of that preference initiative, and is expected to produce another 100,000 to 300,000 in the coming years.

So my point is that the United States should, in fact, choose narcotics as the focus of what we are doing. It is very important in this particular instance to keep our programs very focused and not try to cure or address every Colombian need.

I think, in fact, by and large we have been doing that, but there obviously are big pressures, in fact, to expand and try to address every single need of the Colombian people. My experience is that President Uribe, whom I have known for many, many years, is, in fact, focused in this way.

One of the strange things is as I begin to hear in the United States, oh, narcotics is not the appropriate target for our assistance, it is just at this time that the Colombians themselves, includ-

ing their President, are saying narcotics should be what the United States is directing itself to.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McLean follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PHILLIP McLEAN, SENIOR FELLOW AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
THE AMERICAS PROGRAM, THE CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

OVERCOMING NARCOTICS AND VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak to this Caucus about a topic that has been a concern to the United States for many years. Are U.S. policies ever going to make a difference in slowing the flow of narcotics to this country? What can be done to help Colombia overcome the constant violence that has plagued that country and is the most obvious threat to peace in our own hemisphere? And, in fact, should not terrorism, rather than narcotics, be the main object of U.S. involvement in Colombia?

I followed the growing crisis in the Andes, and in Colombia especially, during more than a decade of my professional career in the Department of State and in recent years have made Colombia a subject of my writing and other activities at CSIS. My belief is that narcotics should very definitely be the main target of U.S. programs in Colombia. It is no accident that the Colombian government, encouraged and strengthened by the programs authorized and funded by this Congress, is beginning to have success against both the drug trade and violence. From what I have observed, the arrival of U.S. aid is making a difference. The hard part now will be to keep both the U.S. and Colombian governments focused on achievable counter narcotics goals.

The story of Colombia in recent years is most often told with vivid anecdotes. Dry statistics do not quite get across the depth of the tragedy and the frequently bizarre results of so much illegal money flowing into the economy of a poor country. Estimates are that some \$35 billion drug profits enter Colombia each year. These vast sums distort normal economic incentives and have ironically made Colombia a poorer nation. The greed unleashed by the narcotized economy has broken down the institutions that normally protect people and led to devastating personal stories. Drug earnings finance death and corruption.

- I had the privilege of knowing the charismatic Luis Carlos Galan. He stood up to the Medellin Cartel but then was assassinated by Pablo Escobar in the middle of his campaign for the presidency. His interrupted political career promised to unite the country as never before.

- Just a year ago I met with the wife of the Governor of Colombia's important Antioquia department a month after he was taken hostage by the FARC (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). The Governor had thought that he could use the principled tools of the U.S. civil rights movement to shame the guerrillas into making peace with civil government. After holding him for a year, the guerrillas killed him and ten other captives when they heard army helicopters arriving for a rescue attempt.

- It came to light in recent weeks that a Colombian army company sent to re-take a guerrilla zone had stumbled across barrels of money totaling some \$14 million buried in the jungle. Higher-level officials discovered that the troops had shared the cash among themselves rather than turning it in when non-commissioned officers began resigning and troops showed up with expensive purchases. Many Colombians expressed sympathy with the poorly paid soldiers—an example of how hard it is to hold to a sensible moral discipline when challenged by waves of narcotics wealth.

SOME FALLACIES

For many years a common view among Americans, repelled by the bloodshed and chaos, was that we should not get involved. If the United States were to do anything, according to some, it would only be to legalize the consumption of narcotics. Efforts to suppress drug production and trafficking, they assert, send the price of the illegal products up and that just feeds criminality. Moreover, there is a "balloon effect." Suppression necessarily drives the drug business to other places and other criminal networks. Eradication, according to this argument, deprives poor *campesinos* of their only possible livelihood because alternative development programs do not work. Alienated peasants then join the guerrilla bands that have engaged the Colombian government in a "civil war" for the last 40 years.

My experience suggests that all of those arguments are essentially wrong.

- “Legalization” may be an interesting proposition for a debate, but no reasonable person would ever want to see the United States experience the increased drug consumption that would follow, certainly not of the “hard” drugs now produced by Colombia. By working on both the demand and supply side of the problem, the United States has reduced cocaine consumption by two thirds since the late 1980’s. Drug use is still, of course, intolerably high, but, while the signs are mixed, there is reason to believe we are about to see a further decline in cocaine use.

- The usual rules of economic analysis are of only limited value when it comes to criminal enterprises, particularly one so large and constantly changing as the drug trade. Criminals don’t keep accurate records. Statistics derived from indirect evidence are often at best indicators. When Bolivia and Peru reduced their coca harvests, cultivation in Colombia did increase but not proportionately to what had been destroyed, and now that Colombia is having success with its eradication program, production in the southern Andean countries has increased only slightly. Studies indicate the total amount of cocaine produced has decreased every year since 1988. Within Colombia, cultivation does move from one area to another but is pushed more by movement of the drug producers and less by economics.

- The simple version of the “balloon” theory assumes that demand is constant. It is not. After the sharp drop of cocaine consumption in the United States beginning 15 years ago, demand for the drug continued to fall, if only marginally, in this country. Sadly, during the 1990’s it increased significantly in Europe and Brazil. Now it appears the supply of cocaine is destined to be squeezed, at least in the short run. It will be an opportunity for the United States to reduce addiction. Whether or not that happens will depend on other factors since the millions who now consume cocaine will be able to substitute other drugs. Whatever the outcome here, the result will be favorable for Colombia.

- Contrary to the image often portrayed, coca cultivation is not good for poor Colombians. Rather it is a bonanza economy that leaves people miserable over the long run.

- No agricultural product can compete with its very high immediate returns—and therefore there is no such thing as “crop substitution.” The prospect of such high short-run returns draws subsistence farmers into remote parts of the country for what is generally a primitive slash-and-burn form of agriculture that destroys tropical forests.
- In several recorded cases, these new arrivals have driven indigenous native people of their historic lands. In the Catatumbo near the Venezuelan border the Motilon people once lived in peace. Now the region, largely stripped of its jungle cover, is the battleground where two distinct guerrilla bands and paramilitary forces seek to dominate the newly arrived coca cultivators.
- The life of the coca farmer is not just violent but also contaminated by the chemical used to extract the coca base from the plant’s leaves. The smell of kerosene and other chemicals is characteristic of a coca farm.
- Experience shows that if laws against narcotics production are seriously enforced and some alternative economic activity is offered, most cultivators get out of the drug business. Clearly, even with the aid of government programs—however well designed—only a fraction of those currently engaged in drug production will be able to make a living out of the weak tropical soils.
- Ultimately their welfare and that of all poor Colombians will depend on the growth and diversification of the Colombian economy as a whole. In that regard, it is interesting to note that the Andean trade preferences initially extended to Colombia in 1991 have created some 140,000 jobs in the modern sector of Colombia’s economy, and the act renewed and amplified last year by the Congress will, according to estimates, create an additional 100,000 to 300,000 jobs.
- The final fallacy is to say that Colombia is in a “forty-year-old-civil war.” The two major guerrilla movements are widely unpopular and attract minuscule support. They may have had some ideological underpinning early in their histories, but they are now best understood—given their mafia-like loose organization, their criminal methods of extortion, kidnapping and narcotics trafficking—as criminal gangs. In the same way, the paramilitary groups that in some cases began as local defense forces are now dependent on criminal activity to support their existence. It is all good and well to offer to “keep the door open” to discussion with all of them, as President Uribe has, but ending Colombia’s plague of violence will be more similar to a campaign against lawlessness than a war.

U.S. APPROACH TO COLOMBIA'S CRISIS

If the Colombia conflict is more a gigantic law and order problem rather than a war in the classic sense than the United States must manage its assistance accordingly. Counterinsurgency models from El Salvador or even less Vietnam are not appropriate. U.S. aid, as large as it currently is, would be diluted if it were simultaneously directed at every aspect of Colombia's security crisis. Moreover, it is not clear that this country could properly select and prioritize the best targets for such a comprehensive approach. Colombia's needs are urgent and important, but it just seems in the complex conditions there to be good management sense for the United States to choose specific tasks, with specific goals and performance measures rather than searching for a wider role.

The security assistance given to Colombia under Plan Colombia has up to now, in fact, followed that practice. Stopping narcotics trafficking has been the main goal, and even though the Congress loosened the strict prohibition against using U.S. resources for other than counter narcotics purposes, my understanding is that the anti-drug goal is still the primary focus. In several instances, I have heard, even when the United States has authorized the diversion of Plan Colombia aid, the operation ended up uncovering narcotics or tracking related activity—a further illustration of the extent of link between violent groups and criminality.

Instead of having an open-ended commitment and the U.S. purpose defined as "strengthening the Colombian state" or some other highly desirable but ill-defined goal, the narcotics control objective gives U.S. activities a clear way to judge success or failure.

Curiously, the much smaller U.S. program to assist with the protection of the Caño Limon-Covenas pipeline similarly has a specific objective and means of measuring accomplishment. But defeating the narcotics trade deserves to be the main objective of U.S. security efforts both because of its direct connection to one of our country's leading social concerns but also because narcotics corruption is the principal cause of Colombia's failure in the last two decades.

Before the scourge of the narcotics trade, Colombia was one of the best-regarded countries in Latin America. Now many fear that it could become a troubling base for terrorism. Certainly, President Alvaro Uribe puts a high priority on narcotics control. If it can find the will, as it seems to have in the last year, Colombia can do much on its own to confront its antagonists. The United States can best help him save his country by staying focused on specific objectives. With the arrival of the U.S. resources anticipated under Plan Colombia there is a chance of breaking the power of the narcotics interests, helping Uribe and finally reducing cocaine shipments to the United States.

Senator DEWINE. Mr. Ford, the GAO previously reported that alternative development programs were having trouble getting off the ground mainly due to poor security and the fact that they were originally focused on a flawed strategy geared toward crop substitution.

From what I understand, we have shifted strategy somewhat to focus less on crop substitution and more on creating jobs and improving infrastructure. How are we coming in regard to that?

Mr. FORD. Mr. Chairman, we are aware of the changes. They made a change in strategy after we issued our report in February of 2002. I have seen the State Department's recent progress report, issued, I believe, in the second quarter of this year which has indicated that they have made quite a bit more progress from the time we issued our report.

We have not independently analyzed that information, but I will say that there is a clear sign that they are making progress in the area. They did adjust from the idea of crop substitution, particularly in southern Colombia where they found it was not going to be viable and security wasn't going to allow them to operate programs down there. So they have made adjustments in areas where they think they can have more of an impact.

Senator DEWINE. Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Mr. McLean, I think you made some very good points. The first one is that the United States can do something and can be a positive influence. But I think you would agree that ultimately the success or failure in Colombia will be determined by the will of the Colombian people.

No. 2, I think you are correct about crop substitution programs. That is a nice-sounding idea, but it has never struck me as particularly realistic. There was an article some professor wrote in the Washington Post that showed just how little—if I recall, it is something like 10 cents is paid to the crop grower for cocaine that sold for over \$100 an ounce. So you could afford to pay the crop grower a dollar or ten dollars and still have a huge profit on cocaine.

Be frank with us. Isn't that the difficulty? If the demand is strong, it would be difficult to create an economic system in which an alternative crop could still compete economically with cocaine production.

Mr. MCLEAN. Senator, I would say that any program has to have a one-two punch and the lead has got to be the strong line. You have got to have law enforcement. Unless it is illegal, unless you are establishing a legal order, you are not going to have effectiveness.

I do believe that you can top it off. If you have an alternative development program in the area, it can help lure people away at the end. I will give you an experience of the anti-marijuana programs of the 1980's. It is hard to remember, but there used to be something called Colombian Gold. I was a little bit too old to enjoy it, but I am told it was a much-used product.

The United States came in and had a very strong program of eradicating marijuana. It was an easier crop to take care of, and we did it year after year after year. And suddenly—and I mean suddenly—it just stopped. Now, it stopped because the Colombian government on its own, not with pressure from the United States, came in behind us after years and years of eradication and came in with an assistance program to lure those discouraged farmers to finally get them off the land and doing something else.

So if you use the two things together, I think it is possible, but most of all it is the health of the economy and the law enforcement regime that you have to put in place.

Senator SESSIONS. So strong law enforcement with efforts to strengthen the economy so that there are other ways to make a living is the combination.

Mr. MCLEAN. That is right.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, that is an interesting story about marijuana. When I first became a Federal prosecutor in the mid-1970's, and even in the early days of the 1980's when I was a U.S. Attorney, we still saw boat loads of marijuana coming from Colombia. But by the mid-1980's, I think virtually it dried up to zero. Marijuana comes, I guess, from Mexico or is home-grown from what we see, but the huge multi-ton, 15-ton, 20-ton boat loads that were coming through virtually ended. So that was a success story that we should not forget.

I don't think I understand you to be suggesting, do I, Mr. McLean, that it is not important for the Colombian government to take over its country, to be able to enforce law and order in every

area of the country, and ultimately that means confronting these insurgent groups?

Mr. McLEAN. Not at all, Senator. I, of course, have dealt with the Colombian police and military for many, many years and have the greatest respect for some of them. I feel there have been some failures over the years, but I blame it more to a condition of defeat than anything else.

Certainly, the United States, I think, should be a helpful partner, but I am talking about specifically where we put our \$2.5 billion and how we perform as a friend. I think we perform best as a friend by keeping ourselves in the types of things where you can measure performance.

I think that is, in fact, one of the good things about the narcotics program is that the GAO and others can come along and say you said you were going to do this and you have done this, but not fully fulfilled. You have a program that has a measure of success or failure and if you are failing, you may get out, but in this circumstance I think you would probably adjust what you do. That is perfectly right.

But if you take on a goal such as strengthening the Colombian state, it is so broad, it is so wide, you will never accomplish it. And my own experience is that there will be a lot of pressures for the operators of the U.S. Government to push their funds into areas where there is an immediate demand.

Unless we have some restraint—and I am not saying going back to what I think was an erroneous policy of a strict firewall, as General Hill talked about, but I think there must be a strong orientation. I am not quite sure how the Congress handles that or the administration. My understanding is, in fact, at this point people are well-focused, but my fear is that we will get off focus in the future.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

Senator DeWINE. The two of you had the opportunity to listen to the first two panels and I would like to give you an opportunity to react. Mr. McLean has already reacted to the balloon analogy, but I wonder if either one of you would like to react to anything else that was said in the last 2 hours, I guess.

Mr. Ford. Well, I think from where we sit, first of all, we have been going down to Colombia since the mid-1990's, so we have kind of a longer view of what we have tried to do there. I believe that there are clear signs that there is progress there and a lot of it has to do, I think, with the attitude of the Colombian government to support the kinds of things that the United States is interested in.

I think that the point we tried to make and we will be making in our report is that there is a cost associated with this, and that we would like to see from a GAO point of view a little more transparency from the administration about what these programs are going to cost, because they have new initiatives that they talked a little bit about this morning and there is a dollar tag to that.

On some of these things, we are not aware of what their costs will be and we think that we would like to see those costs up front, and we would like to see some time line that lets the Congress know how long it is going to take for some of these programs to reach fruition and get some real results.

So I think we are favorably disposed that progress is being made, but we would like to see a plan from the administration that lays out how much it is going to cost and some benchmarks along the way so we can measure whether we are moving in the right direction.

Senator DEWINE. Well, Mr. Ford, that is an interesting comment. I think that is certainly a legitimate position.

When you are dealing with the situation in Colombia, I think it is quite frankly difficult to tell how long this is going to take. If you can project it—I don't know; maybe you can, but I don't think I can. You know, this is going to take a while.

One thing I do know is it is going to take a while. I don't know what a while is, but we are in this for a number of years, I think. I understand your point, but this is not any short-term problem, at least from my perspective.

Anything else you want to add, Mr. McLean?

Mr. MCLEAN. Well, Senator, I would only say thank you again for having me. I do think that the question of keeping focused on our security system is very important, but clearly Colombia has many, many other problems. I think that the United States is, in fact, taking certain portions of those problems, but I wouldn't undersell the Colombians.

As you saw here today with Francisco Santos, the Vice President, they are people of enormous talent and energy, and they are able to do a lot. But we have to think about the way that we relate to those problems. We now have certainly more than 1,000 official Americans in Colombia. This is a management problem and if our relationship to them is to be successful, we have got to be very clear on what we are trying to accomplish.

Thank you.

Senator DEWINE. Well, let me thank both of you for coming in, very helpful, a very, very important topic, and we appreciate it. I thank all of the members of the three panels for coming in. I think it has been a very productive hearing. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 12 p.m., the Caucus was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOSEPH BIDEN TO J. CURTIS STRUBLE, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY (WHA) AND PAUL SIMONS, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (INL)

Question 1a. Over the past few years, as you know, there has been significant and legitimate concern about the human rights situation in Colombia. Indeed, the Department's most recent Human Rights report, released in March, states that in 2002:

“The [Colombian] Government's human rights record remained poor . . . some members of the government security forces continued to commit serious abuses, including unlawful and extrajudicial killings. Some members of the security forces collaborated with paramilitary groups that committed serious abuses.”

The Colombian military needs to make significant progress on human rights and severing ties with paramilitaries—yet according to the Department's report, serious problems remain.

I understand that you are in the process of determining whether or not Colombia will be certified this year on its progress on human rights.

Can you speak to these continuing concerns, especially those outlined in the Department's report?

Answer. Over the last several years, the Colombian Armed Forces have made significant progress in improving their human rights record. Still, some military personnel continue to maintain ties to paramilitary units that are a major source of human rights violations. A high level of criminality in Colombia, together with a weak judiciary, further undermines the rule of law and human rights in Colombia. A lack of accountability for many types of criminal activity, including human rights violations, remains a significant issue.

Question 1b. What can we point to, specifically, that indicates that Colombia is making significant progress on human rights?

Answer. The Uribe Administration has taken steps to improve the human rights situation in Colombia. Vice President Santos has reinvigorated the Presidential Human Rights Program creating a Special “Momentum” Committee to promote more actively the judicial resolution of high-priority human rights cases. He has also established regular dialog with local human rights groups. Additionally, at the request of President Uribe, the mandate of the Colombia office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) was extended through 2006. To create an environment conducive to the protection and promotion of human rights, Uribe has instituted a Democratic Security plan designed to increase and consolidate state presence throughout the country, particularly in previously neglected areas where U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations have traditionally had significant influence.

As we have certified in past reports to Congress, the Colombian Armed Forces are taking effective action to sever links between military personnel and paramilitary units. Intelligence activities and combat operations by the Colombian Armed Forces against paramilitaries increased in 2002. As of November 30, 2002, Colombian military operations have resulted in the deaths of 183 paramilitaries (compared to 117 in 2001) and the capture of 1,214 (compared to 1,089 in 2001).

We are committed to continue working closely with the GOC to strengthen and increase access to the judicial system, prevent human rights violations, and to promote the rule of law.

Question 1c. I understand that there has been an increase in the number of arrests of paramilitaries—however, have any high-ranking members of the paramilitary been arrested?

Answer. There has been progress in apprehending paramilitary members and their high-ranking leaders. On June 21, 2003, the Colombian armed forces seized a far-right paramilitary warlord, Bolmar Said Sepulveda, sought in the killings of 450 people in Barrancabermeja.

Question 2a. As you know, U.S. personnel are under high security risk in Colombia. Drug traffickers view the Drug Enforcement Administration as enemy No. 1, embassy personnel must travel by armored vehicle, dozens of U.S. citizens have been kidnapped in the last decade, and three are currently being held hostage.

What can you tell us about continuing efforts to locate the three U.S. citizens who are currently being held hostage by the FARC?

Answer. Since the February 13 plane crash, the Colombian Government has committed significant resources to an extensive and intense search and rescue effort. It initially deployed more than 2,000 Colombian Army troops to the area where the Americans were most likely being held. The Colombian government committed another 5,000-plus to support operations. To support the Colombian Army's efforts, the U.S. sent additional personnel to Colombia, and made available resources and equipment that were already in-country.

Despite several engagements with FARC units, it appears that the FARC has moved the three hostages to a remote area outside the immediate reach of the Colombian military. We continue to provide intelligence and logistical support to Colombian security forces involved in the search and rescue effort.

Our primary concern is the safe return of the hostages. We are assessing additional steps to bring about their recovery. As tactical search operations involving large-scale deployments of troops are reduced, good, actionable intelligence becomes more important. We continue an active campaign to locate the hostages.

The Department of State continues to maintain close, regular contact with the families of the three hostages to keep them apprised of events on the ground in Colombia. The United States has made clear that we hold the FARC responsible for the safety of these three individuals. We have made clear that we will not press the Government of Colombia to make concessions nor will we make concessions to the FARC to obtain their release.

Question 2b. Are we considering any significant policy changes toward Colombia as a result of the kidnappings?

Answer. The holding of American hostages underlines the imperative that we continue our current policy for providing support—both financial and diplomatic—to the Colombian government as it seeks to combat the twin threats of terrorism and narco-trafficking in that country. As Colombia advances toward its aim of projecting a stabilizing security presence throughout its territory, threats to U.S. citizens and interests will gradually recede.

Question 2c. Are we seeing increased threats to U.S. personnel and facilities in Colombia in general?

Answer. Colombia is a dangerous environment for U.S. personnel and American citizens in general. From November 2002 until May 2003, Embassy Bogotá received an increase in the number of threats. The Embassy's assessment is that the seizure does not necessarily signal an elevated threat against Americans. The FARC has routinely and repeatedly designated Americans as legitimate "military" targets; however, to our knowledge, it has not conducted premeditated operations with the specific intent to kill or capture American citizens. That said, the general threat to Americans of kidnapping remains significant.

The threat of collateral damage impacting U.S. citizens has increased significantly. Although the local police and military have had many successful operations targeting FARC cells, a higher number of urban bombings have occurred since the beginning of the year. In the past, the majority of bombings targeted Colombian government facilities in rural areas, or in the southern part of Bogotá. However, the attack on an exclusive social club just three blocks from the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Northern Bogotá is evidence that the FARC has broadened its targeting spectrum. We have not seen an increase in crime against Americans, but U.S. businesses frequently received extortion threats from November 2002 until early May 2003.

Question 2d. What additional security measures can be put in place to protect U.S. citizens and facilities in Colombia?

Answer. The Embassy has already tightened its security significantly since November 2002, even before the February hostage situation began.

The USG relationship with the police and other Colombian security services is excellent; however, the Colombian forces are stretched very thin. The Embassy's Consular Section, in consultation with the Regional Security Office, sends warnings to American citizens via its network of wardens when the Embassy obtains specific and credible threat information. Realistically, however, the large presence of Americans in Colombia makes it likely that many will continue to frequent popular malls, clubs, and restaurants. Embassy announcements have no binding authority over

non-official Americans, but serve to alert them of possible dangers and advise them to vary their patterns of activity.

Embassy Security Officers also work very closely with American companies through the Overseas Security Advisory Committee, which has about 120 members and associate members. This has been an effective source for disseminating security information to U.S. companies throughout the country.

Question 3. I understand that civilian contractors often experience ground fire as they fly spray missions over FARC-controlled territory. Recently, one press report quoted one U.S. official that planes have been hit by bullets seventy times so far in 2003.

- How do we provide protection to U.S. and Colombian personnel, who are conducting these highly risky missions?

Furthermore, we are all aware of the three fatal plane crashes of U.S. contractors since February, two of them involving Cessna 208 aircraft. I understand that contractors have raised concerns that the single-engine Cessna 208, which is used for the U.S.-supported spray programs, is not suitable for Colombia's mountainous regions because it cannot perform the steep climbs required by the terrain.

- Do we know the reason for the engine failure that caused the two recent crashes?

- Are the contractors and other analysts raising a valid concern about the use of single-engine aircraft in the mountainous areas of Colombia? If so, why are we using this type of plane, and putting U.S. contractors at further risk?

- Is the Department contemplating leasing or acquiring alternate aircraft for surveillance and spray missions?

Answer. We have seen a sharp increase in ground fire hits against the spray aircraft and escort helicopters in our counter-drug efforts. As of June 3, 2003, there have been 184 ground fire hits—compared to a total of 194 hits for all of CY2002. We believe the aggressive spray program is really hurting illicit drug crop growers—and that they and narcoterrorist groups such as the FARC and AUC, all of which thrive on the narcotics trade, are responding by shooting more often.

With respect to the three fatal plane crashes of U.S. contractors since February, the two Cessna 208 aircraft were operated by Department of Defense contractors and the one Ayres "Thrush" spray aircraft was operated by the INL Air Wing contractor. INL was in no way involved in the maintenance, operation, and accident investigation process for those two Cessna 208 aircraft. Therefore, Department of Defense is the appropriate agency to respond to questions about the results of the crash investigations and concerns about the single-engine Cessna 208 aircraft's ability to perform the Department of Defense missions they are assigned. However, we would comment that INL pilots who fly the Cessna 208 are confident in the performance of our aircraft.

Of six Cessna 208 aircraft supported by the INL Air Wing, only one is operated in Colombia, for the purpose of coca crop targeting and coca spray verification. That aircraft, equipped with a MDIS (multispectral digital imaging system), performs its missions at altitudes that are well beyond the range of most small arms. While we have found our Cessna aircraft to be very reliable over the years, we have a request into the Pentagon for the transfer of several excess twin-engine C-12 "King Air" planes as replacements for our aging Cessnas. The multi-engine C-12 aircraft will yield increased area coverage on each MDIS mission due to its greater airspeed. It will also provide an enhanced margin of safety for its crewmembers, as our MDIS camera aircraft usually operates as a single-ship mission without a wingman or escort aircraft.

On April 7, we lost one of our pilots in the crash of a single-engine, Ayres "Thrush" spray aircraft. The accident was due to pilot error and not ground fire. Though we practice extensive security procedures to minimize risk to pilots and planes, it must be noted that there is no procedure that perfect, in itself, to ensure total safety during flight operations. INL's Air Wing continues flying what is universally recognized as a very difficult mission in an increasingly hostile environment. To meet that environment, we are increasing security of our spray program through an integrated program—one that provides for improving intelligence coordination and exchange, using armed Black Hawk helicopter escorts, adding Colombian ground troop presence in the aerial spray zone, and flying twin-engine spray aircraft in the higher risk areas.

Question 4. According to the report that the General Accounting Office (GAO) released at the hearing, there have been numerous problems with pilot and mechanic training as well as pilot retention: Pilots are not showing up for training; qualified Colombian pilots are not being assigned to flying missions; and trained pilots are

not remaining in the program. The report contends that the U.S. must, as a result, spend \$150M a year to sustain ongoing operations with contractors.

- How can we get enough pilots trained if we can't even get them to show up?
- What can we do to keep the pilots we train in the program? Why do you think they are dropping out?
- When do you think the Colombian military will be able to operate without extensive U.S. assistance? When will we be able to scale back on aid to the military?

Answer. The challenges associated with training pilots and mechanics for 72 helicopters provided to the Colombian Army over a relatively short period of time have been great. With help from the Department of Defense, we have made excellent progress. There are now 126 Colombian Army pilots for the Plan Colombia helicopters, and training is continuing. Of these pilots, 31 are Pilots-in-Command or Instructor Pilots. Approximately 220 COLAR personnel have received maintenance training from Department of Defense, and many of these personnel have obtained additional formal and informal instruction from INL's aviation support services contractor.

As noted in the GAO report, there have been some difficulties in ensuring that COLAR's internal management of these resources is as effective as possible. Because of maintenance demands associated with COLAR's FMS-purchased (non-Plan Colombia) helicopters and other military requirements, at times the full complement of trained personnel was not available to fly or work on the helicopters. We have not experienced COLAR personnel "dropping out," but COLAR leaders have not always managed the workforce effectively. We are working as closely as possible with the COLAR to maximize the availability of their personnel to perform operations and to step up training and development in preparation for assuming full responsibility for operation and maintenance of these important assets in the future.

We are working very hard to expedite the transfer of responsibility for running this program to the Colombians, and will make the transition as quickly as possible without compromising safety or mission effectiveness. As part of that process, we do anticipate significant contractor participation for the foreseeable future while the COLAR continues to train and gain experience and maturity.

Question 5. We have all discussed that to have an effective counternarcotics policy, we need to advance a three-pronged approach: interdiction, eradication, and alternative development.

Yet, last year a report prepared for the Agency of International Development (AID) concluded that the alternative development programs originally planned for Colombia are not likely to work for a number of reasons: the farmers in the southern part of the country distrust the government so they continue to plant coca as an insurance policy even as they agree to stop growing it; the soil is not conducive to many legal crops, and costs of production are too high for them to be competitive; the infrastructure is so poor that they cannot get products to market; and security concerns make it difficult to operate.

More recently, AID has estimated that a comprehensive alternative development program may be cost prohibitive: about 130,000 families are involved in the illicit crop business and it costs around \$12,000 per family per year to provide a long-term sustainable economic development program. That brings the total to about \$1.5 billion a year.

What is the plan to create an effective and sustainable alternative development program in Colombia?

Answer. The report which you mention identified a number of constraints that make it difficult and sometimes dangerous to carry out development activities in areas where there is not a significant and visible national government presence. It was written just as the alternative development program was beginning in Putumayo Department and at a time when the aerial spray program had been largely suspended there.

Since that report was written, USAID has made a series of implementation adjustments in the alternative development program and the aerial spray program has been reactivated. The results have been impressive. Production of coca in Putumayo Department (the focus of the alternative development program) has been *reduced from about 60,000 hectares to approximately 1,500 hectares*. This experience shows that the USG's counter-narcotics strategy which calls for a combination of alternative development, forced eradication (aerial spraying) and interdiction is fundamentally sound. We are, nevertheless, continuing to learn from our experiences and have consequently expanded our thinking regarding the essential elements of an effective and sustainable alternative development program.

Current thinking regarding creation of an effective and sustainable alternative development program in Colombia calls for a broad program of activities with five important elements:

- Alternative Development assistance to identify, promote and develop licit production and employment alternatives;
- Forced eradication (by aerial spraying or other methods);
- Interdiction;
- Public Diplomacy; and
- Governance assistance.

As Public Diplomacy and Governance are relatively recent additions to our set of counter-narcotics tools, we are still discussing how they may best be applied in particular situations.

The central features of Public Diplomacy include:

- Provision of information to the public regarding the ways that international narcotics activity damages the economy and society as a whole;
- Information on how drugs and the drug culture harms individuals; and
- Development of anti-cocaine norms and values.

Important features of the Governance element include:

- Establishment of police and military presence to ensure that illegal armed groups do not control the area and become the “*de-facto*” government.
- Expansion of national government presence in rural areas by providing support for rural infrastructure and socioeconomic services such as: health care, education, access to justice, agricultural extension and related services.

- Support for activities that strengthen links between communities and the State; and
- Support for local governments and activities that strengthen municipal management capacity, community cohesion and collaboration among local groups.

Question 6a. I am concerned about reports that the office of the Colombian Attorney General is not improving its record in prosecuting human rights cases. According to the March 2003 State Department Human Rights Report, of the 116 killings of labor union members documented as of September 2003, there were no arrests, prosecutions or convictions at year’s end.

Furthermore, I am aware of concerns that members of the Uribe Administration have made statements that threaten non-governmental human rights workers in Colombia.

Can you speak to these points, especially in light of the Department’s pending human rights certification of Colombia?

Answer. Colombia’s under-equipped and overworked judiciary confronts profound challenges, such as corruption and intimidation by guerrillas, paramilitaries, and other wealthy criminal organizations. Limited accountability for human rights violations and other crimes is the single greatest obstacle to the integrity of the Colombian State and the creation of a culture of respect for human rights.

Owing to these systematic weaknesses, prosecuting murderers of trade unionists has proven extremely difficult. Prosecutors have been unable to identify the assailants in 125 of the 178 such murders in 2002.

However, Colombia has made improvements. The National Labor School in Medellín (a labor NGO) reports a downward trend in the number of murders of trade union officials over the past 2½ years: from 184 in 2001 and 178 in 2002 to 29 in 2003 (through mid-May).

Colombia’s vice-President has created a special committee dedicated to trade union murders, particularly in the conflictive areas of Barrancabermeja, Arauca, and Cauca.

Question 6b. Are you aware of an increasing climate of threat and intimidation toward human rights workers, perpetuated by members of the Uribe Administration?

Answer. Several NGO’s have claimed that statements made by Colombian officials contribute to a climate of threat and intimidation for human rights workers. For example, Human Rights Watch stated that Brigadier General Camelo accused NGO’s of waging a “legal war” against the military, calling them “friends of subversives.” In our conversations with Colombian officials, we have stressed that such comments, particularly from military officials, are counterproductive and undermine the credibility of the Uribe Administration’s commitment to improve human rights.

President Uribe has publicly addressed these concerns. At the 96th Anniversary of the Jose Maria Cordova Cadets School, Uribe called for respect and tolerance for NGO’s. At a recent conference on security and individual liberties, he emphasized that democracies require the defense of human rights workers so that they can pursue their activities without fear.

The President has acted on this commitment, instituting a Democratic Security Plan designed to increase and consolidate the government presence and rule of law throughout the country, and reinvigorating the Presidential Human Rights program.

Under the Vice President's leadership, the GOC conducts regular discussions with local human rights groups and has encouraged efforts to more aggressively resolve 100 high priority human rights cases. President Uribe has requested the extension of the mandate of the Colombia office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) to the end of his term in 2006. He has also instructed the Foreign Ministry to more energetically pursue settlements of cases currently before the Inter-American commission on Human Rights.

Question 6c. Is the Uribe Administration making adequate efforts to prosecute cases of human rights violations?

Answer. The Uribe Administration is committed to holding members of the Colombian Armed Forces accountable for their actions. The Colombian judiciary continues to process cases. On June 19, a Colombian judge sentenced Colonel Lino Sanchez to 40 years in prison for conspiring with paramilitaries to massacre peasants in Mapiripan in 1997. In March, the Prosecutor General's Office charged Lt. Col. Orlando Pulido Rojas with homicide and conspiracy for collaborating with paramilitaries in the murder of five alleged FARC collaborators. At the same time, he issued an arrest warrant for former General Jaime Humberto Uscategui for failing to prevent a paramilitary massacre in Meta Department in 1997.

Question 6d. What are we doing to support investigation of the assassination cases of trade unionists?

Answer. U.S. Government judicial sector reform programs and assistance to protect human rights are strengthening the Uribe Administration's ability to investigate and prosecute trade union cases. As part of Plan Colombia, the Embassy has provided support to the Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia) in an effort to aid investigations of assassination cases of trade union officials. Plan Colombia funding has established 11 satellite Fiscalia Human Rights throughout Colombia, enhancing the Fiscalia's ability to identify, investigate and prosecute human rights violations, including cases involving trade union activities. In total, we have provided \$3,711,734.07 for crime scene kits, modular furniture, office equipment, armored vehicles, operational support funds, and specialized training in human rights and forensic sciences. In FY03, the USG provided \$154,030 directly to support investigations.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. CHARLES GRASSLEY TO J. CURTIS STRUBLE, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY (WHA) AND PAUL SIMONS, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (INL)

Question 1a. The United States has spent over \$2.5 billion since 2000 to assist Colombia in its fight against narco-trafficking. The press has been full of reports questioning the success of our efforts in Colombia, pointing to reports that just as much cocaine is available in the United States today as was available 5 years ago, at higher purity and lower price. While there may be questions regarding the interpretation of statistics, it does raise a fundamental question of what measures should be used to gauge the progress of our efforts.

What performance measures are being used by the State Department to assess the success or failure of U.S.-funded counter-narcotics programs to Colombia?

Answer. The main goal of the United States' counter-narcotics programs in Colombia is to supply side reduction. The availability of illegal narcotics is reduced through destruction of the illicit crops that are the essential ingredients of illegal drugs in Colombia coupled with attacks on the narcotics processing and trafficking infrastructure. Crop reduction programs include forced eradication (through aerial spraying) and alternative development programs administered through USAID.

The eradication program measures progress toward its goals by tracking illicit crop production estimates, provided for the U.S. Government by the CIA's Crime and Narcotics Center (the United Nations Drug Control Program separately conducts an estimate). The eradication program also measures progress by monitoring the number of hectares of illicit; crops sprayed and by estimating the effectiveness of the spraying as evaluated through ground truth verification of previously sprayed fields. These figures are then combined with processing efficiency estimates to estimate how much processed cocaine has been removed from the supply chain to U.S. and other markets for consumption.

USAID gauges progress of its alternative development efforts through illicit crop size estimates, coupled with other performance measures—including the number of families that USAID programs assist with programs to provide legal employment and the number of hectares of legal crops that USAID generates through alternative development programs.

Other Department of State-assisted programs support supply reduction by helping the Government of Colombia's security forces (Colombian National Police and the Colombian Armed Forces) to destroy laboratories where drugs are produced and to interdict narcotics trafficked through Colombian road, sea, and air corridors. These programs evaluate success with statistics recorded by the Government of Colombia. The leading indicators include the number of laboratories destroyed (both coca base and cocaine hydrochloride), and quantities of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals interdicted. Other important performance measures are the number of drug traffickers arrested in Colombia and the number of Colombians extradited to the United States for narco-trafficking offenses (through the Department of Justice's Multilateral case Initiative program).

The ultimate goal of the supply side narcotics reduction strategy is to reduce the amount of illegal drugs available in the United States. Performance measures to track progress toward this goal—the price and purity indices alluded to in your question—also measure supply side efforts in other drug producing countries as well as law enforcement programs in the drug transit zone and on U.S. soil. These indices are determined by the USDEA.

Question 1b. Please provide a summary of each ongoing counternarcotic program in Colombia, the baseline for these programs, what has been accomplished to date, and what the Department believes will be accomplished by these efforts should Congress provide full funding, and an associated timeline for these programs.

Answer. The recently published GAO report that you solicited recommended that “the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, establish clear objectives, including developing specific performance measures, and estimate future U.S. funding requirements for the programs with the Colombian Army and the Colombian National Police.” The State Department concurs with the GAO recommendation and is in the process of developing revised goals, estimates of funding requirements, and timelines for U.S. assistance to Colombia for the remainder of Plan Colombia and beyond. It is our intention to provide this information to the Congress for consideration in the fiscal year 2005 appropriations cycle.

Question 2a. The U.S. Agency for International Development has received approximately \$350 million for alternative development for Colombia since fiscal year 2000. The funding information I have received from USAID (see attached table) provides funding levels for general program functions and purposes.

Within the categories on the attached worksheet, what specific programs in Colombia are currently being funded through USAID and how much is currently being spent to run each of them?

Answer. USAID has received \$351 million for its program in Colombia since fiscal year 2000. These resources have been used to support three programs.

Strengthening Democracy	\$99 million	(28 percent)
Alternative Development	160 million	(46 percent)
Internally Displaced Persons	92 million	(26 percent)
Total	\$351 million	(100 percent)

The attached fiscal year 2004 ARI funding worksheet shows that \$150 million has been requested for Alternative Development/Institution Building in Colombia. USAID will receive \$122.2 million (81 percent) of this amount. The remaining \$27.8 (19 percent) will be used to support Alternative Development/Institution Building projects that are implemented by the Department of Justice and the State Department's Bureaus for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), and for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). The \$122.2 million that USAID expects to receive in fiscal year 2004 from the Alternative Development/Institutions Building line item will be used as shown below.

Strengthening Democracy	\$24 million	(20 percent)
Alternative Development	60 million	(49 percent)
Internally Displaced Persons	38 million	(31 percent)
Total	\$122 million	(100 percent)

Questions 2b and 2c. How much, if any, additional funding will be needed to see these projects (identified in A) through to their completion?

What timeframe has been established for their completion?

Answer. It will take approximately five to seven more years to consolidate USAID's existing alternative development achievements and help the Colombians expand the national government's presence into areas formerly controlled by illegal armed groups. USAID's resources will be crucial in assisting the GOC to provide alternative development, administration of justice, human rights and related socio-economic assistance in areas that were heretofore neglected by the national government. The Department of State and AID are in the process of discussing future funding requirements with the GOC. As these discussions progress, we will be able to better specify the level of funding that will be needed to see our programs to a successful conclusion in order to consult with Congress.

Question 2d. What measures will be used to judge the success or failure of these programs?

Answer. Each USAID project has results indicators and targets for implementation activities that are used to determine if the project is on track. Illustrative indicators which USAID has used in Colombia are as follows:

- Hectares of licit crops established to replace drug crops;
- Number of social infrastructure projects completed;
- Number of internally displaced persons assisted;
- Number of justice houses established;
- Number of alerts issued by the Early Warning System; and
- Number of responses by the Colombian police, military; ombudsman or other government institutions to Early Warning System alerts.

USAID will continue to use these indicators as long as they remain relevant. New indicators will be identified and adopted, as needed, to monitor progress and demonstrate results for existing or new activities.

Question 3. We have been providing assistance to Colombia for over two decades. Can you please provide two or three examples of alternative development programs that were established in Colombia during that period but no longer require U.S. assistance to be maintained?

Answer. USAID assistance to Colombia today is the result of international drug trafficking and terrorist activities that have almost destroyed the Colombian economy and are a serious threat to Colombian democracy. USAID support for Plan Colombia is not simply a continuation of USAID assistance over the last two decades and programs today bear little resemblance to USAID's Colombian programs from 1980 to 2000.

- USAID assistance to Colombia was scheduled to end by the year 2000 and was reduced to about \$200,000 in fiscal year 1998.
- Very little (if any) USAID assistance during the period 1980–1998 was for alternative development (AD).
- USAID support for alternative development began in 1999 with a small program to assist poppy farmers and was greatly expanded in fiscal year 2001 when Plan Colombia Funds became available.
- The USAID program since fiscal year 2001 has been highly successful. Significant AD achievements since fiscal year 2001 include:
 - Establishment of over 30,000 hectares of licit crops;
 - Provision of AD assistance to nearly 33,000 families;
 - Voluntary manual eradication of nearly 18,000 hectares of illicit crops; and
 - Completion of over 400 social infrastructure projects.
- Most of USAID's assistance to Colombia during the last 20 years provided support for health and democracy programs.
- The health sector is one example of an area in which previous USAID assistance had strengthened Colombian institutions to the point where minimal outside assistance was needed.
- The corrupting influences of huge narco-trafficking operations have, however, weakened the fabric of society and virtually all government institutions to the point that some observers are asking if additional health assistance may be necessary.

Questions 4a and 4b. There was a considerable increase in the number of hectares of coca sprayed during 2002. Much of this increased spraying has been attributed to the new policies put into place by the Uribe administration. For 2003, President Uribe has set a goal of spraying 200,000 hectares—almost 60,000 more than were sprayed in 2002.

Do you believe that this is a realistic objective, or is this a “stretch” goal that we hope, but do not expect, to meet? Please include an assessment about what effect, if any, the loss of two spray planes since this goal was established has on the ability to reach this goal.

If this objective is a stretch, what combination of assets and funding must be added to the current levels of U.S. assistance to make sure that the goal of eradicating 200,000 hectares is reached?

Answer. INL's stated goal for 2003 is to spray all of the remaining coca in Colombia, up to 200,000 hectares. This is an ambitious target, but spray goals have expanded commensurate with the recent expansion of Government of Colombia political will mentioned in the preface to your question. Whether all the remaining coca in Colombia really means spraying 200,000 hectares depends largely on whether there are 200,000 hectares of coca available for spraying in 2003.

In 2002, coca eradication markedly outpaced replanting and new cultivation, resulting in a CNC estimate that Colombian coca cultivation dropped by 15 percent from the previous year (the first CNC-registered decline in Colombian coca cultivation in over a decade). The CNC estimates Colombian coca cultivation at 144,450 hectares as of year-end 2002. The UNDCP estimated that Colombia cultivated 1.02,000 hectares of coca in 2002.

Certainly, 2003 is a year of decision for coca eradication. We are now in a position to convince growers that nowhere in Colombia is safe for investing in coca. Coca eradication in 2003 is on pace to surpass last year's record spraying—planes have already sprayed some 71,000 hectares of coca in Colombia as of June 24. This should allow us to spray more than 144,450 hectares in the CNC estimate, meaning that planes can return to some areas more than once—to discourage replanting and new cultivation.

We are concerned about the loss of two spray aircraft and have noted a sharp rise in the levels of hostile fire that the spray planes receive from the ground (planes have received 204 impacts to date this year, already surpassing the entire year totals for 2001 and 2002). However, we still have sufficient fixed wing (and related helicopter) assets to maintain spray operations from three spray bases consecutively. Congress has provided \$15 million, through the 2003 counter-terrorism supplemental, to sustain increased eradication and will fund the purchase of replacement spray aircraft.

Barring additional, unfortunate accidents, our fleet of aircraft should allow us to target Colombia's decreasing illicit crop, even as we face the law of diminishing returns. 2002 and early 2003 levels of eradication will be hard to sustain over time, as field dispersal, smaller fields, and aircraft range limitations will require that planes have to fly more to spray less.

Question 5a. I understand that the 200,000 hectares scheduled to be eradicated next year is part of a larger strategy by the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá to move coca cultivation in Colombia to a "manageable level" of about 30,000 hectares.

Is this strategy a written document with periodic benchmarks and other measures to ensure that the strategy is on track? If so, please include a copy for the record.

Answer. Initial Plan Colombia eradication goals were drafted under the previous Colombian Administration and contained more modest assumptions about the amount of spraying that the Government of Colombia would allow. As stated in the Department's answer to your question 1(b) above, the Department is leading an interagency review of Plan Colombia and intends to provide this information to the Congress for consideration in the fiscal year 2005 appropriations cycle. An updated eradication strategy with eradication goals and benchmarks to gauge progress will be a fundamental part of that revised assessment.

Question 5b. What role did the Government of Colombia play in arriving at the conclusion that our ultimate objective should be to reduce coca production in Colombia to this manageable level?

Answer. The U.S. Embassy in Bogotá maintains a constant dialog with the Government of Colombia on counternarcotics policy and operations, including the setting of goals for U.S.-supported counter-narcotics programs. This coordination will continue as we determine goals and objectives, benchmarks for success, required resources, and a new timeline.

Question 5c. What resources (planes, funding, etc.) are expected to be necessary to "manage" coca production at this level?

Answer. As per the Department's answer to 5(A) above, this information will be provided to the Congress for consideration in the fiscal year 2005 appropriations cycle.

Question 6a. Protection of the basic human rights of all individuals in Colombia is an important priority of the United States. In addition, Congress has placed some restrictions on the assistance that we provide Colombia in an attempt to encourage human rights reforms.

Are the current human rights restrictions (commonly known as the “Leahy Amendment”) on U.S. assistance adequate to ensure that funding is not being used for actions that violate human rights?

Answer. The Leahy Amendment has been an effective tool to help us identify problem individuals and units within Colombia’s security forces. Those receiving U.S. assistance and training are being thoroughly vetted by all relevant U.S. Government agencies to ensure that such assistance is not provided to human rights violators.

Question 6b. Are the current restrictions overly burdensome to the implementation of U.S.-funded programs?

Answer. Vetting foreign security forces can be a lengthy process, involving both the Embassy in Bogotá and the Department of State in Washington. U.S. funded training at times has been delayed by vetting requirements. We do not consider this an obstacle but rather an example of the seriousness we place on human rights vetting.

Question 6c. How successful do you believe the human rights training programs have been in reducing violations in the Colombian Military?

Answer. USG-funded human rights training programs have placed human rights concerns firmly on the agenda of our bilateral security relationship, and have helped create a culture of respect for fundamental rights among military and police officials. Rights violations by State actors continue to occur, but on a far smaller scale than in years in which U.S. security assistance was minimal.

Question 6d. Have these changes been made institutionally—that is, are they permanent? If so, are the restrictions created by the Leahy Amendment still needed?

Answer. A commitment to severing military-AUC ties exists at the highest levels of the Colombian government. President Uribe and senior Colombian officials have stated repeatedly stressed the importance of respect for human rights and taken actions to back up their commitment to improve performance in this area. The Government of Colombia has responded more aggressively to cases where members of the Colombian military committed human rights violations. Most recently, a Colombian judge sentenced retired Army Colonel Lino Sanchez to 40 years in prison for conspiring with far right paramilitaries to massacre 30 peasants in 1997. This sentence is considered one of the heaviest ever levied against such a high-ranking Colombian military officer.

There is more that must be done, while the majority of human rights violations in Colombia continue to be committed by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), a small portion of human rights violations can still be traced to the Colombian military. The Leahy Amendment is a useful mechanism that helps the U.S. identify problem individuals and units and focus the attention of the Government of Colombia on the issue. We are committed to human rights and continue to underscore this issue with Colombian officials.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO COLOMBIA HEARING (CLASSIFIED ANSWERS ARE BEING
RETAINED IN COMMITTEE FILES)

COLOMBIA HEARING QUESTIONS TO BE SUBMITTED—DoD

Question 1. United States assistance for the helicopter program was originally supposed to end in 2006 when the Colombian Military was to assume complete control. That deadline has been pushed back indefinitely.

- What steps are being taken to re-establish this time line?
- What recommendations have been made to create an internal capacity within the Colombian Military to foster the successful assumption of program control?

Question 2. Protection of the basic human rights of all individuals in Colombia is an important priority of the United States. In addition, Congress has placed some restrictions on the assistance that we provide Colombia in an attempt to encourage human rights reforms.

- Are the current human rights restrictions on U.S. military aid adequate to ensure that funding is not being used for actions that violate human rights, and are they overly burdensome?
- How successful do you believe the human rights training programs have been in halting violations in the Colombian military?
- Do you believe these changes have been made institutionally—that is, are they permanent?

Question 3. After a very successful year in 2001, the productivity of the Counter-Narcotics Brigade diminished significantly in 2002. In response, the Brigade was reorganized and their area of operations was expanded to include all of Colombia. In support of this shift, the U.S. agreed to provide advanced training to take advantage of the expanded function areas.

- Please provide an update on the current status of this new training. In particular, highlight the new capabilities the Brigade should have once the training is complete.
- Does this new training, take advantage of the expanded authorities the Senate reauthorized for 2 years in the 2004 Defense Authorization Act?
- How has the Counter-Narcotics Brigade been integrated with the rest of the Colombian military operations?

Question 4. Both the Colombian National Police and the Colombian military have noted successes in forcing cocaine-processing facilities to move from one area of the country to another. In my view, this is a measure of activity, not of success which would be the reduction of coca processing throughout the region. However, this cannot happen until the Government of Colombia fully regains control of the countryside.

- Is it possible, with our current levels of assistance to Colombia, for the Colombian military and police to significantly deter and reduce the creation of new coca labs throughout Colombia?

COLOMBIA HEARING QUESTIONS TO BE SUBMITTED—JESS FORD, GAO

Question 1. Mr. McLean's testimony touches briefly on the "balloon effect." While coca production in Colombia has decreased, it has slightly increased in other countries of the region.

- Do you believe there is more that we should be doing today to prevent the spread or re-emergence of coca cultivation outside Colombia?
- Given that we live in a world of limited resources and based on your familiarity with the region and understanding of the current situation, do you believe that some of our funding and efforts currently directed toward Colombia should be redirected to other drug producing countries in the region?

COLOMBIA HEARING QUESTIONS TO BE SUBMITTED—PHILLIP MCLEAN, CSIS

Question 1. Currently, the various guerilla forces have control over approximately 40 percent of the countryside which impedes the ability of both the Colombian and U.S. governments to implement programs in many regions of the country. You have described the Colombian government's struggle to gain control as more of a campaign against lawlessness than a war.

- How central is the elimination of lawlessness to our efforts to eliminate narcotics production? Should our efforts and attention be refocused away from eradication and toward a campaign to end this lawlessness?

Question 2. Your testimony touches briefly on the "balloon effect." While coca production in Colombia has decreased, it has slightly increased in other countries of the region.

- Do you believe there is more that we should be doing today to prevent the spread or re-emergence of coca cultivation outside Colombia?
- Given that we live in a world of limited resources and based on your familiarity with the region and understanding of the current situation, do you believe that some of our funding and efforts currently directed toward Colombia should be redirected to other drug producing countries in the region?

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR. FOR THE RECORD FOR
GENERAL HILL

Question 1. As you know, the 2002 supplemental appropriations bill changed long-standing policy that limited the use of U.S.-provided equipment to counter-narcotics missions by giving Colombia authority to use the equipment for counter-insurgency purposes.

- To what extent is this new authority being used?
- What types of missions are being carried out under this new authority?
- To what degree is the counter-insurgency authority distracting from the counter-drug mission?

- What is the decisionmaking process in the Embassy for approving missions that do not involve a direct counter-narcotics mission?

Question 2. According to the report that the General Accounting Office (GAO) released at the hearing, there have been numerous problems with pilot and mechanic training as well as pilot retention: Pilots are not showing up for training; qualified Colombian pilots are not being assigned to flying missions; and trained pilots are not remaining in the program. The report contends that the U.S. must, as a result, spend \$150 million a year to sustain ongoing operations with contractors.

- How can we get enough pilots trained if we can't even get them to show up?
- What can we do to keep the pilots we train in the program? Why do you think they are dropping out?
- When do you think the Colombian military will be able to operate without extensive U.S. assistance? When will we be able to scale back on aid to the military?

COLOMBIA HEARING QUESTIONS TO BE SUBMITTED—STATE DEPARTMENT

Question 1. The United States has spent well over \$2.5 billion since 2000 to assist Colombia in its fight against narco-trafficking but with only limited success.

- What performance measures are being used by the State Department to assess the success or failure of U.S. funded programs?
- What is the ultimate objective for our counter-narcotics assistance programs in Colombia?

Question 2. The U.S. Agency for International Development has received over \$350 million for alternative development since FY2000.

- What alternative development projects have been identified and what time-frame has been established for their completion?
- How much, if any, additional funding will be needed to see these projects through to their completion?
- What goals and purposes have been established for each of these alternative development projects and how successful have the programs been in meeting their goals to date?
- We have been providing assistance to Colombia for over 2 decades. What programs have we helped the Government of Colombia set up that no longer require U.S. assistance?

Question 3. There was a considerable increase in the number of hectares of coca sprayed during 2002. Much of this increased spraying has been attributed to the new policies put in place by the Uribe administration. For 2003, President Uribe has set a goal of spraying 200,000 hectares—almost 60,000 more than were sprayed in 2002.

- Do you believe this is a realistic objective, or is this a “stretch” goal that we hope, but do not expect, to meet?
- If this objective is a stretch, what combination of assets and funding must be added to the current levels of U.S. assistance to make sure that the goal of eradicating 200,000 hectares of coca is reached?

Question 4. I understand that the 200,000 hectares scheduled to be eradicated next year is part of a larger strategy by the U.S. Embassy in Bogota to move coca cultivation in Colombia to a “manageable level”.

- Is this strategy a written document with periodic benchmarks and other measures to ensure that the strategy is on track?
- Has this strategy been agreed to by the Government of Colombia?
- Can a copy of the strategy be provided to the members of this Caucus?

Question 5. I understand that as part of the eradication strategy for Colombia, the threshold of 30,000 hectares of coca cultivation is being considered a “manageable level”.

- Can you please define what a “manageable level” of coca production is and how this amount was determined to be a “manageable level”?
- What resources (planes, funding, etc.) are expected to be necessary to “manage” coca production at this level?

Question 6. The Colombian National Police Anti-Narcotics Directorate has noted successes in forcing cocaine-processing facilities to move from one area of the country to another. In my view, these should not be considered successes because the cocaine is still being produced but the facility has simply changed its location.

- What, if anything, is being done to completely shut down the labs?

Question 7. Protection of the basic human rights of all individuals in Colombia is an important priority of the United States. In addition, Congress has placed some

restrictions on the assistance that we provide Colombia in an attempt to encourage human rights reforms.

- Are the current human rights restrictions on U.S. military aid adequate to ensure that funding is not being used for actions that violate human rights, and are they overly burdensome?
- How successful do you believe the human rights training programs have been in halting violations in the Colombian Military?
- Do you believe these changes have been made institutionally—that is, are they permanent?

