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AID TO "PLAN COLOMBIA": THE TIME FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE IS NOW

A REPORT

TO THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

BY

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

May 3, 2000.

The Honorable JESSE HELMS,
Chairman,
Committee on Foreign Relations.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On April 19 and 20, I traveled to Colombia to examine counter-narcotics programs there. In particular, my objective was to discuss the "Plan Colombia" proposed by the Colombian Government, and the U.S. proposal to assist the plan. While there, I met extensively with President Pastrana, Minister of Defense Ramirez, the President's Chief of Staff, Jaime Ruiz, U.S. Ambassador Curt Kamman, and senior Embassy officials. I also met with representatives of Colombian non-governmental organizations working on human rights, and representatives of the Colombian offices of two U.N. agencies.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to the Colombian Government, particularly President Pastrana, for facilitating my visit. President Pastrana graciously hosted me at his government guest house in Cartagena. I also owe much to U.S. Ambassador Curt Kamman, Political Counselor Leslie Bassett (who served as the delegation control officer), and other staff of the Embassy who traveled with us to Cartagena.

I was accompanied and assisted on the trip by Minority Counsel Brian McKeon, and Professional Staff Member Marcia Lee. They also traveled to Colombia in March for four days, during which they conducted numerous meetings and visited forward operating locations in southern Colombia. Some portions of this report are based on their work in March.

The delegation was ably assisted throughout the trip by Lt. Cdr. Valerie Ulatowski, USN, to whom I am extremely grateful.

I came away from my visit convinced that the U.S. Congress should act quickly to approve President Clinton's request for supplemental funding for Colombia. Unless the Congress acts quickly to approve funding for this plan, a critical opportunity in the fight against narcotics trafficking in Colombia may be lost.

I understand the Committee on Appropriations will soon mark-up the Fiscal Year 2001 foreign operations appropriations bill, as well as the Colombia supplemental for Fiscal 2000. I hope this report will be useful to the Senate during consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.,
Ranking Minority Member.

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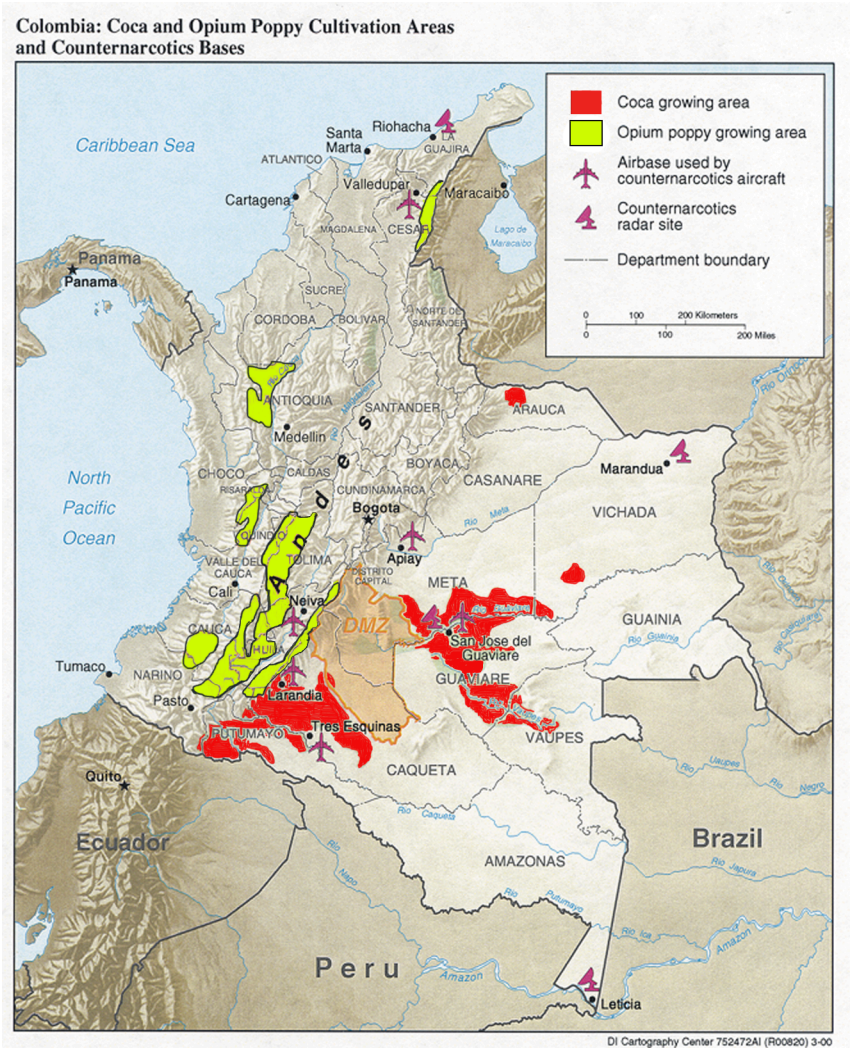

MAP OF COLOMBIA

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The United States has a rare enforcement opportunity in Colombia. Colombia today is the primary source of cocaine and heroin sold in the United States. It is the primary source of the raw material (coca leaf and opium poppy), the primary site of the major laboratories, and the primary site of the leading trafficking organizations. Never before in recent history has there been such an opportunity to strike at all aspects of the drug trade at the source. We also have an important opportunity because of the strong commitment of the Government of Colombia to fight narcotics trafficking. The United States should seize this rare enforcement opportunity by providing assistance to Plan Colombia.

2. The security crisis in southern Colombia warrants increased U.S. counter-narcotics assistance. Guerrilla fronts have a heavy presence in southern Colombia and have a significant role in protecting drug trafficking operations. Similarly, right-wing paramilitary organizations are operating in portions of southern Colombia. Because of security concerns, U.S.-Colombian coca eradication operations were temporarily suspended in late March. Increased U.S. assistance to Colombian military units which will assist the Colombian National Police in counter-narcotics operations is warranted by the serious guerrilla and paramilitary threat to the Police.

3. There are considerable costs associated with Congress' delay in approving the Colombia supplemental. Among the costs are delayed delivery of the Blackhawk helicopters, delays in training of the Colombian counter-narcotics battalions (which have already occurred), and reduction in U.S.-Colombian eradication operations. The delay also undermines President Pastrana's ability to implement Plan Colombia.

4. The U.S. and Colombian Governments should ensure that Plan Colombia focuses on drug trafficking both in the north and south of Colombia. Plan Colombia focuses initially on southern Colombia, where guerrilla organizations predominate. The plan should also focus on coca trafficking in the north of Colombia, where paramilitary organizations predominate. This is necessary not only to demonstrate that no trafficking organization is immune from attack, but also to contain the further spread of narcotics trafficking in the north.

5. The Colombian Government should continue to make strong efforts to improve the human rights record of the Colombian Armed Forces, and to prosecute all violations of human rights. U.S. engagement with Colombia is an important factor in continued improvement of the human rights situation in Colombia. President Pastrana reiterated his personal commitment, and that of the Co-

lombian Government, to improving human rights. Congress should consider increasing the amount of U.S. assistance proposed for human rights efforts.

6. Coordination between the Army and the Police needs improvement. Important to the success of the military component of Plan Colombia will be coordination between the Colombian Army and the Colombian National Police. There are indications that the Police are unreceptive to working closely with the Army. Similarly, the Army counter-narcotics battalion at Tres Esquinas has conducted operations unilaterally—without including the police in planning or giving them adequate notice to participate. The United States must continually emphasize to the Colombian Government the importance of improving Army-CNP cooperation.

7. The United States is well-served by the Country Team, but more staff are needed. The U.S. Embassy team working on Plan Colombia is led by a veteran Ambassador, is highly motivated and is working diligently to advance U.S. counter-narcotics objectives. Morale appears to be high. But the Narcotics Affairs Section is understaffed and needs additional personnel, and the Political Section needs additional officers to monitor human rights.

OVERVIEW: AID TO "PLAN COLOMBIA" IS A CRITICAL OPPORTUNITY FOR THE UNITED STATES

Since February, a request by President Clinton to provide nearly $1 billion in supplemental funding in Fiscal 2000 to help Colombia and its neighbors fight drug trafficking has been pending in Congress. The request was approved by the House of Representatives in March, but it has since languished in the Senate.

During the Easter recess, I traveled to Colombia for a first-hand look at the situation and to discuss U.S. and Colombian counter-narcotics programs with senior Colombian Government officials, U.S. Embassy officials, and representatives of non-governmental and international organizations.

I spent several hours over the course of two days with President Pastrana, who graciously hosted me at the presidential guest house in Cartagena. I believe that my lengthy meetings with him, mostly in informal settings, afforded me the opportunity to take the full measure of the man. I am fully convinced of President Pastrana's personal commitment to the counter-narcotics effort. I also spent several hours with U.S. Ambassador Curt Kamman and his team, both in Bogota and in Cartagena. I was deeply impressed by the dedication, knowledge and commitment of the senior Embassy team.

I came away from my visit convinced that the U.S. Congress should act quickly to approve President Clinton's request for supplemental funding for Colombia. Unless the Congress acts quickly to approve funding for this plan, a critical opportunity in the fight against narcotics trafficking in Colombia may be lost. Colombia today is the primary source for two leading narcotics sold on the streets of the United States: cocaine and heroin. It is the primary source for the raw materials (coca leaf and opium poppy), the site of the major processing labs, and the site of the major trafficking organizations. Never before in recent history has there been such

an opportunity for the international community to strike against the bulk of the narcotics industry at the source.

Colombia today has a president committed to working closely with the United States. He has developed a $7.5 billion dollar plan—"Plan Colombia"—to fight traffickers and revive his country's economy. President Clinton has proposed that the United States provide $1.6 billion to assist Colombia and other Andean nations, or about 20 percent of the plan. International financial institutions have provided nearly $1 billion. Europe and Japan are being asked to contribute as well.

Every day that the Senate delays imposes a cost on this plan and to U.S.-Colombian counter-narcotics efforts. Production of the proposed helicopters will be delayed, as will training of the necessary pilots. Training of two Colombian counter-narcotics battalions has already been delayed. The Colombian effort to raise money from Europe is proceeding slowly in part because of hesitation in Washington. Most important, delay in Washington undermines President Pastrana and his ability to implement the plan in Colombia.

Helping Colombia is squarely in America's national interest. It is the source of many of the drugs poisoning our people. It is not some far-off land with which the United States shares little in common. It is an established democracy in America's backyard—just a few hours by air from Miami.

Colombia is hardly a stranger to the drug war. It has been battling this scourge for decades. In the 1980s, its equivalent of the Supreme Court was attacked by traffickers. A decade ago, its presidential candidates were gunned down. The current president, when a candidate for Mayor of Bogota, was kidnapped by traffickers. The people of Colombia have demonstrated great courage in fighting drug trafficking. Colombia has achieved some major successes in this effort—in the 1990s it dismantled the major cartels in Medellin and Cali—cartels that a decade ago were thought to be invincible. Last October, in a joint U.S.-Colombian operation, over 30 major traffickers were arrested on the same day.

America's apparently insatiable demand for narcotics has, undeniably, helped fuel the drug trade in Colombia. Colombia seeks significant U.S. assistance to help confront this trade—and is pledging substantial funds and action by its government. Colombia has a highly professional police force dedicated to counter-narcotics, and now requests U.S. assistance to train and professionalize military units that will be used against narcotics traffickers. I believe the United States should answer Colombia's call for help.

There is, to be sure, no guarantee that this plan will work in significantly reducing narcotics trafficking. Anybody who says they are certain that it will succeed is either lying or is a fool. But in my 28 years in the Senate, I have been deeply involved in studying and debating narcotics policy. I strongly believe that at this moment, with this president in Bogota, we have a real opportunity to make a significant difference against the drug trade in Colombia. That opportunity could slip away unless we seize this rare enforcement moment.

BACKGROUND ON COLOMBIA AND PLAN COLOMBIA

A. OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION IN COLOMBIA

Colombia is the third most populous country in Latin America, with just under 40 million people. It is the second oldest democracy in the Western Hemisphere, after the United States. Unlike many countries in Latin America, it has rarely been subject to military dictatorship. Military rulers have governed Colombia for only three brief periods since the formation of the republic in the early 19th century; the last time was over forty years ago. Today, as democracies across the Andes are threatened by renewed rumblings from military barracks, or authoritarian tendencies by incumbent leaders, Colombia remains squarely and unalterably in the camp of democratic nations.

Although civilian rule has been the norm, it has not spared Colombia from instability. Rather, Colombian history has long been marked by internal conflict. During the late 1940s and 1950s, for example, Colombia went through a civil conflict referred to as "La Violencia," during which over 200,000 people were killed. The violence ended when the two major parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, agreed on a 16-year period of "National Front" government during which the two parties rotated the presidency and had parity in other elected offices.

It might be said that Colombia is going through a second—or perhaps extension of—"La Violencia." Colombia today is wracked by violence. It faces a three-front war: with drug traffickers, with left-wing guerrillas, and with right-wing paramilitaries. These fronts are often intertwined; for example, guerrillas and paramilitaries both cooperate with drug traffickers, and the paramilitaries cooperate with the armed forces. None of these groups are monoliths; there are numerous drug trafficking organizations, two guerrilla groups, and numerous right-wing paramilitary groups. The Colombian Government actively fights on two of these fronts: against the drug traffickers and the guerrillas, and occasionally fights, but occasionally cooperates with, the right-wing paramilitaries. At the same time, the government is engaged in peace negotiations with both guerrilla groups, and has agreed to "demilitarized zones" for both of them.

The violence associated with the civil conflict and drug trafficking has been accompanied by an erosion of the rule of law. Last year, for example, there were some 25,000 murders in Colombia (this far exceeds the murder rate in the United States—a country with more than six times the population of Colombia—where there were about 17,000 murders in 1998). Of these, about 2,000-3,000 were considered to be "political" crimes, that is, crimes related to the civil conflict. The rest were common criminal murders. Kidnaping is also widespread: there were over 2,500 last year, which is one out of every three kidnapings in the world. Justice is often denied. A recent judicial report in Colombia found that 63 percent of crimes go unreported, and that 40 percent of all reported crimes go unpunished. Because of the violence, particularly the risk of kidnaping, the State Department currently warns U.S. citizens against traveling to Colombia, and states that "there is a greater

risk of being kidnaped in Colombia than in any other country in the world."

Colombia is, as it has long been, the source of up to 75 percent of the world's processed cocaine (cocaine HCL). It now also holds the dubious distinction of being the world's leading producer of cocaine base (the intermediate step prior to cocaine HCL), as reductions in cultivation in Bolivia and Peru have pushed cultivation into Colombia. Colombia is also the leading supplier of heroin to the United States.

Colombia is currently suffering through a recession. Its gross domestic product fell by 3.5 percent in 1999, the first time the Colombian economy suffered negative growth in three decades. Unemployment at the end of 1999 was around 20 percent; inflation was over 9 percent. And approximately one million people (out of a total population of about 40 million) have been internally displaced in the last several years because of the civil conflict.

B. U.S.-COLOMBIAN RELATIONS AND THE BACKGROUND TO PLAN COLOMBIA

U.S.-Colombian relations have historically been strong. Under the previous Colombian president, however, the relationship soured because of credible allegations that he received financial contributions for his 1994 presidential campaign from drug traffickers. This led President Clinton to twice "decertify" Colombia under the Foreign Assistance Act. A general reduction in the level of cooperation between the United States and Colombia also resulted.

The inauguration of President Andres Pastrana in August 1998 changed the atmosphere in the U.S.-Colombian relationship. President Pastrana made restoration of strong relations with the United States a high priority, and he has succeeded in that objective.

Undoubtedly, President Pastrana has demonstrated his commitment to a key issue for the United States—the fight against narcotics trafficking. Among other things, Pastrana has released a first-ever national drug strategy, and renewed extradition of criminals to the United States, as authorized by a December 1997 constitutional amendment. He has also formulated a plan to combat drug trafficking and revive the economy, which he has called "Plan Colombia". Announced in September 1999, the plan calls for a $7.5 billion investment over three years (2000–2002); of this, the Colombian Government would provide $4 billion, and would seek the remaining $3.5 billion from the international community. As articulated by the Colombian Government, Plan Colombia focuses on five areas:

1. The peace process (i.e., negotiations with the guerrillas);
2. The economy;
3. The counter-drug strategy;
4. Reform of the justice system and protection of human rights;
5. Democratization and social development.

In January 2000, President Clinton announced his proposal for U.S. support of Plan Colombia: a two year, $1.6 billion contribution. Of this amount, approximately $150 million is the base Colombia program for Fiscal 2000 and 2001. The enhanced funding would include $954 million in supplemental appropriations in Fis-

cal 2000, and an additional $318 million in Fiscal 2001. The supplemental request was approved by the House of Representatives on March 30, and is currently pending before the Senate.

NARCOTICS ISSUES

A. BACKGROUND ON THE CURRENT NARCOTICS SITUATION

1. Trafficking Organizations

Organizationally, the drug trade in Colombia is no longer dominated by major cartels based in Medellin and Cali, as it was a decade ago. Because of law enforcement pressure by the U.S. and Colombian Governments in the early and mid-1990s, these cartels have been largely dismantled, and their leaders killed or imprisoned. The result has been what the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) aptly terms the "decentralization" of the trade, with numerous smaller trafficking organizations emerging, the rise of independent traffickers in Bolivia and Peru producing their own cocaine HCL, and changes in the distribution networks such that Mexican organizations are not merely middlemen for the Colombians, they now have their own distribution networks in the United States.

2. Production and cultivation

The organizational changes described above have not affected Colombia's role as the source of the large majority of processed cocaine, or cocaine HCL (up to 75 percent of the world's cocaine HCL comes from Colombia). Because of enforcement pressure in Bolivia and Peru, much cultivation has shifted to Colombia. As recently as 1995, Colombia only produced about 25 percent of the world's cocaine base; it is now the world's leading producer, at about 68 percent. Coca cultivation is literally exploding in Colombia: in the last four years, net coca cultivation has more than doubled in terms of area, from 51,000 hectares in 1995 to 122,500 hectares in 1999. Moreover, a recent U.S. intelligence study determined that Colombian leaf produced a higher yield than previously thought, and that Colombian labs were more efficient than previously thought. Colombia's estimated potential cocaine production in 1999 was 520 metric tons; this compares to 70 metric tons in Bolivia, and 175 metric tons in Peru.

Much of this new cultivation is in southern Colombia, primarily in two departments (or provinces), Putumayo and Caqueta. The government does not have much of an institutional presence in this region—that is, there are few roads, schools, or hospitals—and has not for most of the history of the republic. It is remote and much of it is jungle. There is also significant cultivation in two northern departments, Norte de Santander and Bolivar.

Nearly half of the coca in the country—about 56,000 hectares—is cultivated in Putumayo Department. Although I did not visit southern Colombia, in March two members of the Committee staff visited three forward Army and Police bases in Putumayo and Caqueta Departments, and rode on Colombian National Police helicopters to witness an eradication operation (i.e., fumigation of coca leaves) in Caqueta. They also flew by plane over portions of Putumayo Department where significant cultivation occurs. In

Caqueta, much of the cultivation the staff saw was somewhat hidden, at least on the ground, within wooded areas. That is, the peasants clear-cut several acres of jungle to grow a plot of coca, but attempted to keep the presence of the field hidden on the ground (though it obviously cannot be hidden from aerial view). In Putumayo, there was no such effort to hide the plots of coca: it was out in the open, and went on and on for hundreds of acres.

In addition to coca cultivation, Colombia is now the leading source of heroin sold in the United States. Starting from almost nothing a decade ago, the opium and heroin trade has expanded significantly: by 1993, Colombian heroin accounted for 15 percent of the U.S. supply, and by 1998 it accounted for 65 percent. In 1999, Colombia produced an estimated 8 metric tons of heroin, more than Mexico. Though it amounts to only a small percentage of the world's heroin supply, Colombian heroin dominates the trade in New York and other East Coast cities; it is high quality and of high purity, allowing it to be smoked rather than injected.

3. Involvement of guerrillas and paramilitaries in narcotics trafficking

In addition to the drug trafficking organizations, both left-wing guerrillas and right-wing paramilitaries are involved in the Colombian drug trade.

The two major guerrilla groups in Colombia are the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (commonly referred to by its Spanish-language acronym of "FARC"), and the National Liberation Army (or ELN). The FARC is the larger of the two—it is believed to have about 10,000-14,000 personnel, and is better trained and equipped. It operates primarily in the south and eastern lowlands, though it has some urban cells. The ELN has about 3,000-6,000 personnel and operates primarily in the north and the center of the country.

It would be "misleading," says an unclassified portion of an otherwise classified DEA report, to characterize the FARC or ELN as drug cartels per se. Rather, they assist traffickers by providing security for drug operations and assisting in transportation of narcotics. They also impose taxes, not only on the drug trade but all economic activity in areas they control. In some areas, they allegedly establish the price paid to peasants for coca leaf. Estimates of the profits the guerrillas derive from this activity vary significantly, from a few hundred million dollars to nearly $2 billion per year (this higher end estimate was provided by a Colombian Army official, and it appears to be greatly inflated).

Right-wing paramilitary groups are also involved in the drug trade, and some of them are considered to be traffickers. The paramilitaries were originally formed in the 1980s as a response to guerrilla violence, and several of these were originally authorized by the government to protect rural areas. These groups are now illegal. The leader of the largest umbrella group of paramilitaries is Carlos Castano, the leader of the "Peasant Self-Defense Groups of Cordoba and Uraba (ACCU)." Most paramilitary operations are in the north, though they do have a presence in the south. Like the guerrillas, most of the paramilitary groups do not appear to be directly involved in any significant drug cultivation, but instead levy

taxes and protect the traffickers. The DEA recently testified, however, that Castano's organization, and possibly other paramilitary groups, "appear to be directly involved in processing cocaine," and that "at least one of these paramilitary groups appears to be involved in exporting cocaine from Colombia."

B. KEY ISSUES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN COLOMBIA

During my visit, I focused on several key issues related to the implementation of Plan Colombia by the Colombian Government and the U.S. Government.

1. The military component of U.S. assistance for Plan Colombia—and the need for it

A key component of the U.S. contribution to Plan Colombia is military assistance, specifically, the training and equipping of three Colombian Army counter-narcotics battalions. One battalion of about 950 men was trained last year by U.S. forces, and is now in place at the Tres Esquinas base in southern Caqueta Department. Together the three battalions will form a brigade, just under 3,000 strong.

The basic argument for training and equipping the Colombian Army—rather than the Colombian National Police (CNP), the primary counter-narcotics agency in Colombia—is that the CNP lacks the muscle to take on the guerrillas and paramilitaries that are involved in drug trafficking in southern Colombia. In other words, because the guerrillas and paramilitaries often protect traffickers and their operations, the police cannot go after the traffickers without also risking encounters with well-armed irregular forces. And, because the police are primarily a law enforcement agency, it lacks the military power and training to confront the well-trained and well-equipped FARC fronts and paramilitary units.

It bears emphasis that the United States is hardly neglecting the CNP with this plan. It has provided over $775 million in support for the CNP since the mid-1980s, and the Administration proposal provides roughly $100 million in additional equipment and training for the CNP.

The security threat in Colombia warrants increased U.S. counter-narcotics assistance. Numerous FARC fronts (the estimate of how many is classified), as well as paramilitary units operate in the south. Nearly half of the coca leaf grown in Colombia is located in Putumayo Department. There is a continuous security threat to the current U.S.-Colombian eradication operations. In March, the State Department temporarily suspended day-time coca spraying operations because of the security situation. During the past four years (including the first three months of this year), U.S.-CNP spray planes in Colombia were hit over 100 times by groundfire, including 21 times in the last six months alone. Because of the threat from groundfire, two helicopter gunships and a search and rescue helicopter continually accompany the spray planes.

U.S. assistance to the battalions will be in two basic forms: training by U.S. military forces, and equipment, particularly helicopters. Most of the training will be conducted in Colombia by U.S. Special Forces on temporary duty. Some of the training, particularly for the brigade headquarters staff, will be conducted in the United

States. Anywhere from 20 to 160 U.S. personnel will be involved in training at any one time. Some training missions will be conducted at forward operating bases in Colombia.

The training will be just that: training. Pursuant to a Department of Defense memorandum issued by Secretary of Defense Cohen in October 1998, Defense Department personnel are prohibited from accompanying foreign law enforcement and military forces on actual counterdrug field operations or "participating in any activity in which counterdrug-related hostilities are imminent." Moreover, they are prohibited by the same directive from accompanying such law enforcement forces outside a secure base or area. Secretary Cohen reemphasized these points in a memorandum to Joint Chiefs Chairman Shelton in March 2000.

In addition to training the battalions, the United States will fill a key shortfall in the Colombian military arsenal: tactical mobility. Under the U.S. contribution to the Plan, the United States will provide 30 UH–60 helicopters (Blackhawks) to the Colombian Army. The Blackhawks will be newly procured from the contractor, Sikorsky Helicopters. Delivery of the helicopters will be at a rate of two per month, and is projected to begin in early 2001. In the interim, 15 additional UH–1Ns (Hueys) will be provided to Colombia, which will add to the 18 already in country. Up to six of these Hueys, however, will likely be diverted from Colombian counter-narcotics operations for use in training additional Colombian pilots.

2. The costs of delaying the supplemental

There are considerable costs associated with Congress' delay in passing the supplemental appropriations that would provide nearly $1 billion in assistance for Colombia in Fiscal 2000.

First, delay exacerbates the lag time for procurement of the Blackhawks, the training of the pilots and the building of the infrastructure to house and maintain them. Even if the supplemental were enacted today, the first Blackhawks could not be delivered until next year due to production schedules.

Second, the training for the second and third counter-narcotics battalions has been delayed because of uncertainties about the funding for Colombia. Training of the second battalion was scheduled to begin in early April. Because the entire training schedule was due to occur in sequence—that is, training of the second battalion followed by training of the third—the entire training schedule will now likely be pushed back.

Third, because of the delay in the supplemental, the Huey helicopters that are currently in Colombia and designated for the counter-narcotics battalions are not yet forward deployed—for the simple reason that funds are not available, because they were to be provided by the United States under the supplemental. Consequently, the initial counter-narcotics battalion at Tres Esquinas is greatly hampered in its range of operation. To date, it has conducted operations only on foot.

Fourth, the State Department has forward-funded some eradication operations in Colombia because it expected the supplemental to pass by now. The Department increased the operating tempo of eradication, in effect gambling that the money from Congress would soon arrive. It was a reasonable gamble given the original

reception to President Clinton's proposal and the recent successes in eradication. But the gamble has not worked. The State Department just laid off 40 contract employees, severely reducing spraying operations in Guaviare Department, where there has been significant success in spraying in recent years.

Fifth, the delay in approving the supplemental undermines Colombia's efforts to raise funds from Europe and Japan. In April, President Pastrana met with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and in March his foreign minister traveled to Tokyo to seek help from Japan. This summer, Spain will host a conference of donor countries to garner more international support. But, in the face of inaction on our part, all those efforts may be a waste of time. I do not expect Europe and Japan to contribute to Plan Colombia unless the U.S. Congress takes the first step.

Finally, and most important, we need to move now because we have a limited window. President Pastrana is an ally of the United States. But he is only going to be president for two and one-half more years. The hesitation of the United States has a negative psychological effect in Colombia and Pastrana's effort to push forward his strategy. Every day we wait to pass the spending bill means one less day that Pastrana will have to implement Plan Colombia. And every day that we delay, more coca seeds are planted, more coca leaf is processed, and more cocaine is shipped to this country.

3. What does the Plan do to counter trafficking by paramilitaries?

The debate in the U.S. Congress to date has focused in part on suggestions that the "push into southern Colombia" may be a counter-insurgency in disguise—in that the south is also the area where the stronger of the two guerrilla groups, the FARC, predominates.

During my visit to Colombia, I impressed upon Colombian and U.S. Embassy officials about the importance of taking actions against paramilitary trafficking in the north of the country simultaneously with the push into the south—not only to demonstrate that no trafficking organization is immune from attack, but also to contain the further spread of narcotics trafficking in the north.

The push into southern Colombian will in fact engage paramilitaries. Although it is not well known in this country, hundreds of paramilitaries are struggling with the FARC for control of the drug trade in Putumayo province. Operations against drug trafficking in Putumayo will not be targeted against organizations because of their political views, they will be targeted against drug traffickers.

In addition, the plan contemplates operations against drug trafficking elsewhere in the country during the second phase, beginning during the second year. Finally, senior Embassy personnel indicated that it was an achievable objective to undertake operations against coca cultivation in the north of the country—where paramilitary organization predominate—simultaneous with the "push into southern Colombia."

4. Concerns about coordination between the CNP and the Armed Forces

The military assistance component of Plan Colombia is predicated on the need for the Colombian Army to secure portions of southern Colombia so that police operations, and ultimately alternative development programs, can occur. The Colombian Army counter-narcotics battalions will not operate alone, because, as is the case with the U.S. military, there are legal restrictions on its ability to conduct law enforcement operations. Rather, they must coordinate their operations with the CNP, which has the law enforcement authority and expertise to make arrests and take down laboratories.

The CNP is formally part of the Ministry of National Defense, but, as with any military establishment, there are institutional rivalries between the CNP and the other services. The rivalry between the CNP and the Army goes back at least half a century, when the two services backed different political parties during "La Violencia."

The U.S. Government recognizes the importance of improving the joint efforts of the two services. During an appearance before the Committee on Foreign Relations on February 25, Brian Sheridan, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, testified that the Colombian military needs to "better coordinate operations between the services and with the CNP." There are indications that the police are unreceptive to working closely with the Army. Similarly, the Army counter-narcotics battalion based at Tres Esquinas has undertaken several operations on foot unilaterally. These were not mere training missions: there was a counter-narcotics objective to each operation (typically a cocaine laboratory). The Army has failed to properly coordinate these operations in advance with the CNP, but instead gave the police only a few hours' notice that the operation was imminent—leaving the CNP inadequate time to prepare for the mission.

Coordination between the two services will be essential to the success of the "push into southern Colombia." The United States must make it a high priority to foster and encourage coordination between the two services. Embassy officials are aware of this objective, and appear to be taking steps to promote it. So, too, are Colombian Government officials. I spoke at length about this issue with the President and the Minister of Defense, and impressed upon them the urgent need to improve coordination. The message should be constantly emphasized by the United States.

5. Security at forward operating bases

In March, the Committee staff took a day-long trip to southern Colombia, namely Caqueta and Putumayo Departments. They visited the Larandia base in northwest Caqueta, the Army base at Tres Esquinas (on the Caqueta-Putumayo border in the western portion of Caqueta), and the CNP base at Villa Garzon in Putumayo Department.

Because of time constraints and the Easter holiday period, I was unable to visit southern Colombia. I did, however, discuss the security issue with the U.S. Ambassador and the head of the U.S. Mili-

tary Group at the Embassy. I impressed upon them the need to do everything possible to strengthen security at the forward bases.

The key question for the United States is whether there is adequate security at the bases where U.S. trainers will be located during the training of the Colombian counter-narcotics battalions. It is currently anticipated that some training of the counter-narcotics battalions will be held at Larandia and Tres Esquinas, which are in southern Colombia in areas where FARC fronts operate.

There is no such thing as perfect security, and it is unlikely that Colombian bases will ever meet standards of U.S. military bases. But U.S. forces should not be exposed to undue risk. Assistant Secretary of Defense Brian Sheridan stated in response to a question for the record after a February 2000 hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations that "force protection measures in place are adequate for the deployment of U.S. personnel to train Colombian forces who conduct counterdrug operations." U.S. personnel in Colombia echoed this view, though they underscored that they are continually working with the Colombian military to improve security.

6. Selection and operation of the Blackhawks

One question before Congress is whether the tactical mobility requirement of the Colombian Army can be adequately met with a cheaper option than the Blackhawks, namely Hueys. The option was rejected by the Administration for three reasons: the Blackhawk has a greater range, speed, and can carry more troops than the Huey. The following table demonstrates the differences:

	UH–60 (Blackhawk)	UH–1N (Huey)
Maximum range (nautical miles)	306	230
Cruising speed (knots)	150	110
Troop-carrying capacity	11 to 20	8 to 12

To be sure, the costs of the Blackhawks are substantial: the initial investment under the supplemental is $385 million to fund the procurement, operations and maintenance, and pilot training. There will be associated costs for infrastructure at Colombian bases: at least $13 million in Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001. But the payoff is a far more capable helicopter to provide the critical requirement of the Colombian Army. The advantage of buying a new helicopter—as opposed to a upgraded, but decades-old helicopter—should be self-evident.

Questions have been raised whether the Colombian military can adequately manage sophisticated helicopters such as the Blackhawk. The Colombian Army and Air Force, collectively, already possess 20 Blackhawk helicopters. The Air Force helicopters are operational 80 percent of time, the Army helicopters 50 percent. The latter is skewed by the inclusion in the calculations of one Blackhawk with 73 bullet holes that has been inoperational for 18 months. If this single helicopter is not included in the data, the operational rate is 70 percent. These data compare favorably to the current CNP aircraft inventory, which is operational at a 65 per-

cent rate. Perhaps more important, the operational rate of the Colombian military is comparable to the U.S. military, in which the operational rates of the Blackhawk average around 80 percent. So this data suggest that the Colombian Armed Forces have adequately learned how to operate and maintain the Blackhawks in their inventory, though additional pilots, maintenance crews, and infrastrucure will be needed for the new helicopters.

7. Alternative development and assistance for the internally displaced

Two important components of Plan Colombia are providing alternative development opportunities to peasants now growing coca and poppy, and assisting those that are internally displaced by the Plan and Colombia's conflicts.

The U.S. portion of plan provides for $115 million for alternative development efforts in Colombia. This is clearly insufficient given the substantial need to persuade thousands of small farmers to switch from illegal activities. Colombia needs more; it is planning to contribute several hundred million dollars of its own funds, and is seeking funds for the effort from Europe—which has been asked to provide up to $1 billion for alternative development—as well as Japan.

The key issue is one of timing: coordinating alternative development programs with enforcement measures, so the peasants have real economic alternatives at the moment their livelihood (albeit illicit) is being reduced. This has historically been a difficult challenge in the Andean region, because development programs often take longer to develop than enforcement programs. An added difficulty is that the Colombian Government agency responsible for alternative development, known as "PLANTE", is relatively new and is relatively small. Similarly, the Agency for International Development mission must build its capacity, as its program in Colombia in recent years has been negligible. The United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP), which has been operating in Colombia since 1985, has extensive experience in the Andes, and should be utilized in this effort.

The Colombian Government plans to begin alternative development programs in Putumayo Department on a pilot basis (there are already programs underway in opium growing areas). Initial programs will be conducted, in coordination with eradication operations, in an area along the main highway south of the provincial capital. Unlike many areas in the rest of the province, the soil there is suitable for agriculture. The programs there will be an important test of whether real alternatives can work in that region.

It should be recognized that even the best alternative development programs cannot work unless the area is secure. Put another way, we cannot expect the Agency for International Development and PLANTE to work in areas effectively controlled by guerrillas or paramilitaries.

Plan Colombia also provides for assistance to the internally displaced. The battle between Colombia's armed actors—the military, the guerillas, and the paramilitaries—has had a tremendous impact on the Colombian people. Kidnapings, massacres, battles, and threats force tens of thousands of Colombian families to flee their

homes each year and move elsewhere in the country. Squatter settlements of displaced people have sprung up around Bogota and other cities. These internally displaced persons need food, clothing, shelter (temporary and permanent), health care, counseling, job training and employment. (In international law, these are not "refugees"; refugees must cross an international border. Those displaced by crises, but still within their own borders, are referred to as "internally displaced persons," or "IDPs").

Estimates of the number of IDPs vary considerably: ranging from several hundred thousand to 2 million. The State Department estimates that at least 800,000 people, primarily women and children, have been displaced since 1996—a level similar to those displaced in Kosovo in 1999. The "Red de Solidaridad Social" (RSS), Colombia's government agency which coordinates relief services, numbers the displaced at 400,000. The reason for the disparity turns on definitional disputes regarding precisely who is displaced. I am not in a position to settle this dispute, but it is clear that the government has a serious problem on its hands.

The problem is widespread in the country. According to the Colombian Government, the internal displacement problem involves 139 of the country's 180 municipalities. Forty-four percent of IDP families are headed by a female, 23 percent of IDPs are less than seven years old, and nearly 17 percent are ethnic minorities. Most are poor families from rural areas with an agricultural background.

The cause of displacement varies. The Council for Human Rights and the Displaced, a respected non-governmental organization in Colombia, estimates that 45 percent of IDPs are displaced by the paramilitaries; 30-32 percent by the guerrillas; and 8 percent by the armed forces.

The push into southern Colombia is expected to displace 30,000 to 40,000 of the estimated 300,000 residents of the Putumayo Department. Many of those expected to be displaced are migrant farmers who have moved to the region to grow or pick coca. Because the displacements in Putumayo will be the result of U.S.-assisted enforcement measures under Plan Colombia, the United States will have a special responsibility to assist those displaced from that region. The Clinton Administration proposal requests $12 million in 2000 and $19 million in 2001 for resettlement assistance. Given the large number of people already displaced and the additional people who will be displaced as a result of the "push into southern Colombia," this amount is probably insufficient, and additional resources should be considered during debate on the supplemental or in the regular FY 2001 budget.

8. Embassy staffing requirements for Plan Colombia

The Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) in the U.S. Embassy is understaffed. In September 1999, with the approval of the Ambassador, the Section applied to Washington for 31 new positions to help manage the counter-narcotics program, which has grown significantly in the past few years—from about $20 million in Fiscal 1996 to some $235 million in Fiscal 1999—without a corresponding increase in staff to manage the program. Senior State Department officials have assured the Committee that these positions will be approved; to date, 18 of them have been. These staff are needed

now. It bears emphasis that these additional 30 positions were requested before submittal of Plan Colombia. The Section estimates that it may need up to 20 additional positions in order to support the increase of U.S. assistance under Plan Colombia.

The importance of the State Department providing adequate staffing to this mission cannot be overemphasized. If the U.S. Government is going to devote substantial resources to fighting narcotics in Colombia, it must provide adequate staff to help ensure that these resources are spent properly.

C. COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT AND PLAN COLOMBIA

1. Securing assistance from other international sources

Plan Colombia is predicated on international assistance. The United States has pledged, but not yet provided, over $1 billion in new assistance. International financial institutions have committed nearly $1 billion. The Colombian Government is making serious efforts to raise additional funds from Europe and Japan. A donors conference, sponsored by Spain, will be convened in Madrid in July for this purpose.

The Colombian government is working hard to solicit other international assistance. The week before my visit, President Pastrana traveled to the United Kingdom for meetings with Prime Minister Blair and Foreign Secretary Cook. In March, Colombian Foreign Minister Fernandez traveled to Tokyo to discuss a possible Japanese contribution.

Should they be provided, contributions from other international donors are designed to complement the Colombian and U.S. portions of Plan Colombia. Europe is being asked to provide up to $1 billion for alternative development. The Japanese Government has expressed an interest in helping with reforestation and programs for the internally displaced.

There are reasons to be skeptical that European states will provide assistance—Europe has been slow to provide assistance for Kosovo reconstruction—but one thing seems clear: neither Europe nor Japan is likely to provide assistance unless the United States does. In short, the failure of the United States to approve the supplemental has delayed commitments by other foreign donors.

2. Peace process

Another key component of Plan Colombia, from the perspective of the Colombian Government, is a peace process underway with the two main guerrilla movements. President Pastrana was elected in 1998 with a strong mandate to end the civil conflicts, and a sizable civic movement called "No Mas" has marched in the streets of Colombian cities in the last two years demanding an end to violence.

The talks with the FARC are further along than the negotiations with the ELN. Through negotiations with the FARC, last year the government agreed to a demilitarized zone in south-central Colombia, in Meta and Caqueta Departments (the zone, which is about the size of Switzerland, consists of about 4 percent of the country's land mass; 100,000 of Colombia's roughly 40 million people live there). While the negotiations continue, the conflict goes on outside

the zone. There has been no formal cessation of hostilities, and there are frequent military encounters between government forces and the FARC around the country.

There are reasons to be cautiously optimistic that President Pastrana will make progress in these negotiations. Last winter, FARC leaders went on a three-week tour of European capitals. In part, the trip was designed to show FARC leaders, many of whom have been living in the jungle for decades, how the world has changed. It also exposed them to criticism from left-of-center politicians in Europe, who used the opportunity, I was told, to press the FARC leadership on its own violations of human rights and involvement in drug trafficking. Colombian officials believe the European tour will have a positive effect in the long run on the FARC position. While I was in the country, the FARC announced the formation of new political party—perhaps an indication that the guerrillas recognize the domestic political need to begin operating within the framework of normal politics.

Just after my visit, the Colombian Government agreed to a demilitarized zone with the ELN, though the exact parameters of the zone, and the terms and conditions, have not been finalized.

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

1. Background and Colombian Government actions

The dire human rights situation in Colombia has been well documented in the annual State Department human rights report, in reports by the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights office in Colombia, and reports by respected non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. I do not attempt to repeat their findings or analysis here. It is enough to say that there is a crisis in the country: massive human rights violations are committed by the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, and to a lesser extent the Colombian Armed Forces.

In recent years, there has been a measurable decline in the number of human rights violations directly attributable to the military. At the same time, violations by right-wing paramilitaries have increased, leading to the widespread belief in Colombia that the military collaborates with the paramilitaries—and lets them do their dirty work. In February, a Human Rights Watch report linked "half of Colombia's eighteen brigade-level army units (excluding military schools) to paramilitary activities." Their report concludes that "military support for paramilitary activity remains national in scope and includes areas where units receiving or scheduled to receive U.S. military aid operate."

I discussed the human rights situation with the President, the Minister of Defense, and the U.S. Ambassador. I impressed upon them the importance of human rights issues in the Congress, and urged them to keep making efforts to improve the record of the Colombian Armed Forces. I emphasized to them the need to end impunity in the Armed Forces—that is, to prosecute all violators of human rights.

The Colombian Government, at high levels, concedes that there is a human rights problem in the country, and has taken certain efforts to address it. These actions by the government are com-

mendable, but it must do more. It must continue to make human rights a priority. It must continue to send a message throughout the armed forces that institutional tolerance of paramilitary activity must cease. The actions take to date by the Government include:

Firing of high-level officials: President Pastrana fired four Army generals in 1999 for collaboration with or failure to take action against paramilitaries. Despite those dismissals, many military officials who are under investigation for links to the paramilitaries—and some who have been found guilty by the civilian courts for violating human rights—continue to serve in the military, and some have even been promoted. A number of investigators working on cases linking the Army and the paramilitaries have been threatened and either forced to resign from their posts or to leave the country.

According to Colombian officials, within the next six months, the head of the Armed Forces, General Tapias, will be given the authority to dismiss any officer tied to paramilitary groups without going through lengthy dismissal proceedings. This would give Tapias the same power that enabled General Serrano, the head of the Colombian National Police, to purge the police of human rights violators. This authority to clean house is often credited with professionalizing the police force and it is hoped that it will do the same for the military.

New military penal code: The Colombian Government passed a new military penal code in August 1999, but it has yet to be implemented. This new code includes protections for soldiers who refuse to follow orders which would involve violations of human rights. It also creates an independent body, similar to the judge advocate general corps in the U.S. military, so that unit commanders will no longer be judging their own troops. The new code gives civilian courts jurisdiction over all "crimes against humanity" including genocide, forced disappearance and torture. Notably absent from this list of offenses, however, is murder.

Law on forced disappearances: The new military code requires that forced disappearances be tried in civilian courts, but the law to implement it has been stalled. Though President Pastrana initially supported this policy change, in December 1999 he vetoed the necessary legislation due to his objections over certain provisions in the bill. As a result, forced disappearance continues to go unpunished in Colombia: very few of the more than 3,000 cases reported to authorities since 1977 have been resolved. The government has promised that the bill will move quickly during the current session of Congress.

Recent decree on human rights: In March, President Pastrana signed a decree to create an inter-agency mechanism designed to provide "early warning" of potential massacres—so the government forces can act to prevent them. This mechanism will be coordinated by the Ministers of Defense and Interior, with the cooperation of Colombian law enforcement agencies and the Prosecutor General. The Minister of Defense will be charged with dispatching the mili-

tary to secure areas where massacres are believed to be imminent. It is too soon to say whether this mechanism will be effective.

2. Discussions with human rights and UN representatives

While in Bogota, I met jointly with three representatives of non-governmental organizations working on human rights issues, and representatives of two U.N. bodies—the High Commissioner for Refugees and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

All five individuals expressed concern about various aspects of Plan Colombia. They emphasized different points: that the Colombian Government had not demonstrated enough of a commitment to the internally displaced, that increased military assistance could lead to increased displacements, that there was a great need to reform the military and improve its human rights record, that the plan could undermine the peace process, and that the plan did not place enough emphasis on alternative development.

I assured the group that the United States was firmly committed to human rights, and would continue to press the Colombian Government on these issues. I also pointed out, however, that the human rights situation in the country was unlikely to improve unless the United States was fully engaged with Colombia. In other words, U.S. engagement and assistance to Colombia would inevitably (because of U.S. emphasis on human rights) have a positive effect on human rights in Colombia, and the converse—U.S. disengagement—would not be helpful to the cause of human rights. One individual present responded by saying "I essentially agree with what you have said."

3. Need for additional political officers in the Embassy

Currently, just one officer at the U.S. Embassy in Bogota is designated to monitor human rights on a full time basis. While others in the political section also have responsibility for monitoring human rights, I believe more officers may be needed to focus exclusively on this matter.

Under the "Leahy Amendment" to the Foreign Operations and Defense Appropriations Act, all members of Colombian military units receiving U.S. training must be vetted to assure that they have not been involved in gross human rights violations. Embassy staff must review available records on each and every individual to receive U.S. training. This is a painstaking and time-consuming task. Moreover, the scope of the human rights violations in Colombia requires constant monitoring and reporting.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Wednesday, April 19

Arrive Bogota; travel to U.S. Embassy

Meeting with Jaime Ruiz, Chief of Staff to the President

Meeting with representatives of U.N. offices and non-governmental organizations: Michael Hurtado, UNHCR; Javier Hernandez, UNHCHR; Marco Romero, CODHES; Rev. Fernando Gonzales, CINEP; Andres Sanchez, Colombian Commission of Jurists

Travel to Cartagena aboard presidential aircraft; discussions with President Pastrana and U.S. Ambassador aboard plane

Dinner with President Pastrana, Minister of Defense Ramirez, U.S. Ambassador, and senior U.S. Embassy staff

Thursday, April 20

Breakfast briefing by U.S. Ambassador, Head of Narcotics Affairs Section, and Commander of U.S. Military Group, U.S. Embassy

Meeting with Minister of Defense Ramirez; briefing by Rear Admiral Cubillos, Commander, Cartagena Naval Base

Meeting with President Pastrana and U.S. Ambassador

Dinner with President Pastrana

APPENDIX

STATEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary,
(Grand Canyon, Arizona),
For Immediate Release January 11, 2000.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Today I am announcing an urgently needed, two-year funding package to assist Colombia in vital counter-drug efforts aimed at keeping illegal drugs off our shores. It will also help Colombia promote peace and prosperity and deepen its democracy. Building on our current efforts, over this year and next our resulting support would total over $1.6 billion.

President Pastrana's inauguration in August 1998 brought to Colombia a new spirit of hope—for deeper democracy, for broader prosperity, for an end to that country's long civil conflict. But, increased drug production and trafficking, coupled with a serious economic recession and sustained violence, have put that progress in peril.

President Pastrana has responded with a bold agenda—Plan Colombia. It provides a solid, multifaceted strategy that the United States should support with substantial assistance. We have a compelling national interest in reducing the flow of cocaine and heroin to our shores, and in promoting peace, democracy and economic growth in Colombia and the region. Given the magnitude of the drug trafficking problem and their current economic difficulties, neither the Government of Colombia nor its neighbors can carry the full burden alone.

In Fiscal Year 2000, much of our support will be focused on a one-time infusion of funds to help boost Colombia's interdiction and eradication capabilities, particularly in the south.

The package will also include assistance for economic development, protection of human rights, and judicial reform.

Our bilateral aid to Colombia will be supplemented by multilateral agencies. The World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank are considering hundreds of millions of dollars in loans for Colombia next year. The IMF has already pledged a $2.7 billion Extended Fund facility to help jumpstart the economy. And we will also continue to encourage our allies to assist Colombia.

The obstacles to a better future for Colombia are substantial. We expect it will require years before the full benefits of Plan Colombia are felt. But I believe that with our support and that of other donors, Plan Colombia can soon accelerate Colombia's nascent eco-

nomic recovery. Over the longer haul, we can expect to see. more effective drug eradication and increased interdiction of illicit drug shipments.

Strengthening stability and democracy in Colombia, and fighting the drug trade there, is in our fundamental national interest. So, with President Pastrana and with our Congress, we must and we will intensify this vital work.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary,
(Grand Canyon, Arizona),
For Immediate Release January 11, 2000.

FACT SHEET

COLOMBIA ASSISTANCE PACKAGE

Colombia and its democratically elected government are facing an urgent crisis that has narcotics, military and economic dimensions. Narco traffickers in Colombia now supply about 80 percent of the cocaine used in the United States.

Colombian President Andres Pastrana, who took office in August 1998, has developed a comprehensive, integrated approach to addressing Colombia's problems. Plan Colombia would strengthen the Colombian economy and democracy, and fight narcotics trafficking. The Colombian government estimates that Plan Colombia will cost $7.5 billion and is dedicating $4 billion of its own resources. It has also asked for the participation and help of the United States and other nations.

The United States has a vital interest in the success of this plan. For this reason, the President is proposing an expanded comprehensive program; as a result, US support over this year and next will total more than $1.6 billion.

The five major components of U.S. assistance are:

- Helping the Colombian Government push into the coca-growing regions of southern Colombia, which are now dominated by insurgent guerillas. Funds will help train special counter-narcotics battalions, purchase 30 Blackhawk and 33 Huey helicopters, and provide other support.
- Upgrading Colombian capability to aggressively interdict cocaine and cocaine traffickers. Funds will be used for radar, aircraft and airfield upgrades, and improved anti-narcotics intelligence gathering.
- Increasing coca crop eradication. The Administration will propose $96 million to purchase equipment that will enable the Colombian National Police to eradicate more coca and poppy fields.
- Promoting alternative crops and jobs. The Administration will propose $145 million over the next two years to provide economic alternatives for Colombian farmers who now grow coca and poppy plants.

- Increasing protection of human rights, expanding the rule of law, and promoting the peace process. The Administration will propose $93 million for new programs that will help the judicial system, and crack down on money laundering.
- This initiative will be submitted as part of the President's Budget. It will add to our current support of more than $150 million each year a $954 million emergency supplemental request for FY 2000, as well as an increase of in FY 2001 of $318 million.

The Administration looks forward to working with Congress to help Colombia confront it current problems, while reducing the supply of drugs coming to the United States—to help both their national interest and our own.

SOURCE: CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, COLOMBIA: FACT SHEET ON U.S. ASSISTANCE AND LEGISLATION, RS20451 (FEB. 1, 2000)

TABLE OF U.S. ASSISTANCE TO COLOMBIA, FY 1995–2000

U.S. Assistance to Colombia, FY 1995–2000

(Obligations and authorizations, $ millions)

Category of Foreign Aid or Other Assistance	FY 1995	FY1996	FY 1997	FY 1998	FY 1999	[1] FY 2000
State Dept./International Narcotics and Law (INL)	16.4	16.3	38.2	43.0	32.7	50.0
INL Air Wing	2.5	5.9	19.0	24.0	30.0	35.0
INL Huey Upgrades	0	0	3.2	14.0	[2]40.0	—
Other[2]						
UH–60 Helicopters					96.0	
Other police aid					23.2	
A–37 upgrades and radar					14.0	
Agency for International Development (AID)[3]	0.1	0.12	0.05	0.02	—	—
International Military Education and Training (IMET)	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.9	0.9
Foreign Military Financing[3]	10.0	0	—	—	—	—
Administration of Justice (AOJ)	0	0	1.8	2.0	1.8	—
Department of Defense (DOD) Sec. 1004/124	NA	NA	42.8	39.7	51.8	60.9
DOD Sec. 1033	NA	NA	NA	2.0	13.3	17.2
DOD Sec. 506 Drawdown	0	40.0	14.2	41.2	[4]58.1	—
Totals:	29.6	62.42	119.35	166.62	360.9	164.0

[1] These allocations are from funds appropriated during 1999. The DOD Section 1004/124 and Section 1033 amounts are expected to change, the INL Air Wing figure may change.

[2] From FY 1999 Supplemental Appropriations funding.

[3] AID pipline funding of $5.0 million authorized in previous years was expended in FY 1999; AID also provided some earthquake disaster relief in FY 1999. FMF pipeline funding of $13 million authorized prior to FY 1995 and funding available from the FY 1995 FMF authorization was intended to be expended from mid-FY 1997 through FY 1999.

[4] In FY 1999, small amounts of Section 506 drawdown authority aid were also authorized from other agencies.

SOURCES: Department of State (December 14, 1999 of FY 1999, January 27 for FY 2000); Department of Defense, January 5, 2000 for revised 1999 and FY 2000, DEA, Sept. 14, 1999. This chart includes direct U.S. foreign assistance (i.e., the categories usually counted as U.S. foreign aid, which are in italics) plus the costs of goods and services provided to Colombia from other U.S. government programs supporting counternarcotics efforts in Colombia. The United States also provides a small amount of DOD Excess Defense Articles (EDA) to Colombia. Other funds are spent in Colombia on counternarcotics and other activities that are considered part of U.S. programs: for instance, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) spends its own funds on joint operations in Colombia, and U.S. special forces train Colombian military personnel under the Joint Combined Exercise Training (JCET) program whose primary prupose is to train U.S. troops.

DETAILED BUDGET REQUEST SUBMITTED BY CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

U.S. SUPPORT FOR PLAN Colombia

FY2000–FY2001 (dollars in millions)

	FY00	FY01		Adminstering Agency
Counter-Narcotics Battalion (CNBN) Support	$512	$88		
Train and Equip CNBNs	33	15	Funds 2 CNBN (fully vetted for human rights as per the Leahy Amendment) by end of CY 00, and then trains troops that are not counternarcotics-dedicated for support of CNBNs.	
Train and Equip CNBNs	22	3	Funds creation and training of 2nd and 3rd Colombian Army CNBNs.	DOS/DOD
Build CN BRGD HQ	1	0	Funds construction of and training of personnel for Counter-Narcotics Brigade Headquarters.	DOD
Sustain CNBNs	3	3	Funds supply and ongoing equipment needs for CNBNs operating in the field.	DOS
Joint Ops Training for Sr Commanders.	0.6	0.5	Funds training senior commanders from CNBNs and Colombian National Police (CNP) in conducting joint counter-narcotics operations.	DOS
Secure Field/HQ Communications	3	5	Funds acquisition of secure communications system for CNBN units in the field to communicate with their Brigade headquarters.	DOS
Military Reform	3	3	Funds ongoing program to eliminate corruption and human rights violations in the Colombian military.	DOD
CNBN Air Capability	439	13	Provides funding to refurbish 15 UH-1N Huey helicopters and to procure 30 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters in FY 00. Funds operations, maintenance and pilot training upon delivery in Colombia.	
UH-1N Huey	54	10	Refurbishes 15 additional Huey helicopters to raise the CNBN operational total to 33. Supports operations and maintenance of all 33 helicopters.	DOS
UH-60 BlackHawk	385	3	Funds procurement, operations, and maintenance of 30 Blackhawk helicopters. Also funds pilot training. (Delivery expected to begin in late CY 2001.).	DOS

DETAILED BUDGET REQUEST SUBMITTED BY CLINTON ADMINISTRATION—Continued

U.S. SUPPORT FOR PLAN Colombia

FY2000–FY2001 (dollars in millions)

	FY00	FY01		Adminstering Agency
Infrastructure	15	20	Enhances Colombian Army bases and outfits Colombian Army aviation facilities with the capacity to handle new aircraft during FY00 and FY01.	
Army Aviation Infrastructure	8.2	5	Funds enhancements to Colombian Army air bases to accommodate Hueys and Blackhawks.	DOD
Begin forward infrastructure devel	3	8	Funds development of bases for CNBN operations in the Coca growing region.	DOS
Enhance force protection	4	7	Enhances security of existing Colombian Army facilities that will be used for counter narcotics efforts.	DOS
Logistics	6	9	Funds training and equipping logistics personnel. Also provides basic equipment support to CNBNs.	
Improve Logistical Support	4.4	4	Funds training logistics personnel and equipping them with computers, ground handling equipment, etc.	DOS
Other Infrastructure and Sustainment.	1.5	5	Funds basic equipment support to CNBNs, i.e. vehicles, night vision goggles, etc.	DOS
Intelligence	7	12	Funds Intelligence support to the Colombian Army and CNBNs	
CNBN Organic Intel	7	7	Funds the purchase in FY 00 and O&M in FY 01 of one long-duration reconnaissance aircraft (e.g. Schweizer, RG-8A) with forward-looking Infrared (FLIR) used to spot runways, labs, troop movements, etc. at night.	DOS/DOD
Senior Scout	0	5	Classified	DOD
Resettlement Assistance	12	19	Provides assistance to civilians displaced by the push into southern Colombia.	
Alternative development	5	11	Funds medium-term assistance to help IDPs move into licit farming and other legal economic activity.	DOS/AID
Resettlement and Employment	7	8	Funds emergency assistance to IDPs, providing short-term shelter and employment.	AID

Interdiction	238	102		
Air Interdiction in Colombia				
Aircraft	16	6		
Upgrade OV-10s	15	0	Funds upgrades to 11 OV-10 airplanes now used for ground support to enable them to carry out air intercept missions.	DOS
AC-47 FLIR	1	6.4	Funds equipping one AC-47 with FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared) for night ops against airborne drug trafficking.	DOD
Radar	25	12		
Airborne Tracker Platforms	7	3	Funds purchase and installation of sensor suites in 2 C-26 aircraft to track drug trafficking aircraft for Interdiction.	DOD
Ground Based Radar	13	7	Moves ground based radar (GBR) to Tres Esqulnas, Colombia (in Coca growing region). In FY01, moves and installs a second GBR in Leticia, Colombia (near the Amazon where Peru, Brazil, and Colombia meet).	DOD
Radar Command and Control	5	0	Funds construction of a radar command center in Tres Esquinas, Colombia (in Coca growing region) in FY00.	DOD
Civil Aircraft Beacons	0	2	Purchases and installs beacons in civil aircraft to facilitate tracking and intercepting aircraft that are involved in illicit activity.	DOS
Infrastructure	47	5		
Manta FOL Upgrade	38.6	0	Funds construction and upgrades for US Forward Operating Location (FOL) at Manta, Ecuador in FY00.	DOD
Airfield Upgrades	8	5	Funds Colombian Air Force airfield upgrades to accommodate a greater number of more advanced aircraft.	DOS
Intelligence	37	25		
Andean Ridge Intel	3	4	Funds Andean Ridge signal intelligence collection and translation program to track movement from Peru, Ecuador, and Brazil into Colombia.	DOD
Classified Program	34	21	Classified	DOS
Treasury	70	0		
Customs	68	0	Funds radar upgrades to 4 US Customs Airborne Early Warning Radar equipped P-3 aircraft for Intelligence operations.	Customs
OFAC	2.1	0	Funds Drug Kingpin legislation implementation for Treasury, establishing an office to track narco-traffickers' accounts.	Treasury
Operations Support	10	10	Funds numerous small-ticket items to support interdiction efforts, such as fuel, parts, cockpit re-configuration, etc.	DOS

DETAILED BUDGET REQUEST SUBMITTED BY CLINTON ADMINISTRATION—Continued

U.S. SUPPORT FOR PLAN Colombia

FY2000–FY2001 (dollars in millions)

	FY00	FY01		Adminstering Agency
Water and Ground Interdiction in Colombia.	14	17	Funds support of and enhancements to Colombian river and road interdiction efforts.	
Sustain Ops	6	6	Funds fuel, parts, etc. for Colombian river interdiction programs	DOS
Ammunition	2	3	Funds purchase of ammunition for river-borne Interdiction operations.	DOS
Upgrade Aircraft	0	3	Funds upgrading aircraft for night surveillance operations spotting river-based trafficking.	DOS
Secure Communications	0	3	Funds acquisition of secure communications system for river operations.	DOS
Go-fast Boat Support	0	2	Funds repair and upgrades for captured drug-trafficking go-fast boats which will then be used for interdiction.	DOS
Infrastructure for Patrol Boats	1	0	Funds facility upgrades to accommodate more advanced boats for interdiction.	DOS
Road Interdiction Operations	5	0	Funds purchase of equipment and construction of two sites for inspection of vehicles, aiding interception of over-the-road drug traffickers.	DOD
Regional Interdiction	20	27		
Peru	10	12	Funds upgrade to A-37 aircraft and airfields, and support for helicopters, riverine interdiciton, and road interdiction.	DOS
Bolivia	2	4	Funds C-130 support, helicopter support, and eradication in Yungas and Chapare.	DOS
Eucador	2	4	Support for A-37, C-130, radar, and units along the Putumayo river (Colombian border).	DOS
Other Countries	5	7	Funds cooperative air interdiction efforts involving other Andean countries.	DOS
Regional Intelligence Fusion	1	0	Funds establishment of US office for interagency international narcotics intelligence sharing.	ONDCP
Colombia Nat'l Police (CNP) Support.	68	28	Funds increased eradication by CNP	

Secure communications	3	0	Funds acquisition of secure communications system for CNP operations.	DOS
Weapons & Ammo	3	2	Funds purchase of light weapons and ammunition for CNP operations.	DOS
Enhance Log Support	2	0	Funds training and enhancements to CNP logistical capabilities	DOS
Enhance CNP Forward Op Capability.	5	0	Funds enhancements to secunty at CNP field bases	DOS
Build CNP border bases	0	5	Funds construction of CNP bases on Peruvian and Ecuadoran borders.	DOS
One Additional Air Unit	2	0	Funds one additional CNP air-mobile eradication unit	DOS
Upgrade CNP Air Facilities	3	5	Funds upgrades to CNP air facilities to accommodate new and improved aircraft.	DOS
Provide Spray Aircraft	15	5	Funds the purchase of 15 aircraft for aerial eradication	DOS
Upgrade CNP Airplanes	5	0	Funds upgrades to existing CNP aircraft	DOS
Sustain Ops	2	3	Funds basic supplies and fuel for CNP operations	DOS
Upgrade UH-1Hs	18	0	Funds upgrading 10 CNP UH-1N helicopters to Super Hueys	DOS
Train	0.5	1	Funds pilot training for CNP aircraft	DOS
Airfield Security	1	1	Funds enhancements to CNP aircraft to protect personnel, aircraft, and other assets.	DOS
DEA Programs	3	3.7	Funds Operation Copperhead (Signal Intelligence) and Operation Breakthrough (Human Intelligence) for Colombian Interdiction efforts.	DEA
Enhanced Eradication	4	0	Funds various costs associated with enhanced eradication efforts such as herbicides, etc.	DOS
Spare Parts	1	2	Funds spare parts for CNP aircraft and equipment	DOS
Development	92	53		
Alternative Development in Colombia.			Funds alternative development (A.D.) in Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, and high levels of social investment and local government strengthening.	
Protracted areas, watersheds, etc.	0	5	Offsets ecological damage of coca and poppy production in southern Colombia, funds sustainable forestry programs and improved management of protected areas.	AID
Social Investment,IDP	16.5	8	Funds reinsertion of displaced families into the economy through job training, and grants to municipalities to establish basic education, health/reproductive units, and child-care facilities.	AID

DETAILED BUDGET REQUEST SUBMITTED BY CLINTON ADMINISTRATION—Continued

U.S. SUPPORT FOR PLAN Colombia

FY2000–FY2001 (dollars in millions)

	FY00	FY01		Adminstering Agency
Vol. eradication/social investment.	41	40	Funds alternative development (assistance in establishing and marketing licit crips, improved community services, and improved productive infrastructure). Also funds technical assistance to municipalities in budgeting, transparent governance, and revenue generation.	AID
Program mgmt.	4.5	0	Funds operating costs for USAID Colombia mission for 2 years	AID
Regional Alternative Development	30	0	Funds assistance tailored to the needs of specific zones Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador in return for defined net coca reduction targets. Includes infrastructure improvement, maintenance to roads and electricity, and technical support to expand licit agriculture, production, marketing and packing facilities.	DOS/AID
Boost Gov. Capacity	45	48		
Human Rights			Funds human rights (HR) strengthening, judicial policy reform, and training of judges, prosecutors, and public defenders. Also funds rule-of-law strengthening, security for witnesses and judges, and financial-crime enforcement.	
Protection of HR workers	3	1	Funds enhanced protection of human rights workers (strengthening of organizations' premises).	AID
Strengthen HR Institutions	5	2	Funds strengthened capacity of State Prosecutor's Office (improved investigative techniques forensic equipment). Also supports local NGOs' human rights information and education projects.	AID
Establish CNP/Fiscalia HR units.	2	2	Funds the creation and training of a special unit of prosecutors and judicial police to investigate egregious cases against civil government officials where human rightsabuse is alleged.	DOS/DOJ
Administration of Justice Policy Reform	2.5	2.5	Funds assistance to Superior Judicial Council to develop procedures for open public trials, conferences to consolidate expert legal opinions, and the court costs of model courtrooms to test oral trials.	AID/DOJ

Prosecutor training	2	2	Funds training of prosecutors in trying cases in open courts	AID/DOJ
Judges training	2	2	Funds training of judges in open court procedures	AID/DOJ
Casas de Justicia	3	3	Funds establishment of local "houses of justice" that house public defenders in regions that are not well-served. Services include alternative dispute resolution, access to legal counseling, and crime prevention activities.	AID
Public Defenders	1	1	Funds training of lawyers in the Public Defenders office of the Attorney General. Public defenders perform day-to-day human rights work for Indigent accused.	AID
Strenghtening the Rule of Law				
Money Laundering Task Force	2	2	Funds training and support for law enforcement task force of investigators and prosecutors to pursue money launderers and seize illicit gains of narcotics traffickers.	DOS/DOJ
CN Investigative Units	2	2	Funds training and support for law enforcement task force of prosecutors and investigators to pursue significant narcotics traffickers.	DOS/DOJ
Anti-corruption program	3	3	Funds program of prevention and enforcement to fight corruption, including anti-corruption law enforcement task force and prevention and detection programs, including background checks and financial disclosure programs.	AID/DOJ
Asset Management Assistance	0	1	Funds training and support for efforts by GOC to manage seized and forfeited assets from narcotics traffickers, similar to what US Marshalls undertake in the US.	DOS/DOJ
Anti-kidnapping strategy	0	2	Funds program to investigate and prosecute kidnapping including development of law enforcement task force and command center for communication and information sharing.	DOS/DOJ
Attacking financial crime	0	3	Funds program to attack narcotics related financial crimes, including the Black Market Peso Exchange, which narco-traffickers use to launder money throught the illicit importation of consumer goods.	DOS/DOJ
Judicial Police Training	2	2	Funds the development of a unified law enforcement training academy in order to implement a standard curriculum and practices for all police investigators.	DOS/DOJ
Witness and Judicial Security	2	3	Funds training and support to develop an effective program to provide security to witnesses and justice officials.	DOS/DOJ
Train Custom Police	3	3	Funds training and support for Colombian Customs police affiliated with the Colombian Customs Service (DIAN).	DOS/DOJ
Maritime Enforcement/Port Security.	2	2	Funds training and support for a maritime and port security program, including law enforcement task force and monitoring and detection of illicit goods in cargo.	DOS/DOJ

DETAILED BUDGET REQUEST SUBMITTED BY CLINTON ADMINISTRATION—Continued

U.S. SUPPORT FOR PLAN Colombia
FY2000–FY2001 (dollars in millions)

	FY00	FY01		Adminstering Agency
Operations for multilateral case initiative.	1.5	3	Funds US/Colombian initiative to investigate, prosecute, and arrest transnational narcotics traffickers and money launderers, including work with other Caribbean and Latin American countries.	DOS/DOJ
Prison security upgrades	4	4	Funds enhanced training of corrections staff, implementation of proper procedures, and effective security in Colombia's prisons.	DOS/DOJ
Econ/Peace/Trade	3	2	Funds economic and banking training, and training for customs officials to track flows of money into and out of Colombia training. Also funds conflict management/negotiation seminars for government representatives at peace talks.	DOS/AID
Total	954	318		

EXCERPT FROM: INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, MARCH 2000

Colombia

I. SUMMARY

Colombia produces and distributes more cocaine than any other country in the world and is also an important supplier of heroin. Colombia bolstered its counternarcotics efforts in 1999 by extraditing a Colombian citizen to the United States on narcotics charges for the first time in nine years. The Colombian armed forces activated its elite, U.S.-trained, 931-man strong counternarcotics battalion. Additionally, the Colombian anti-narcotics police (DIRAN) formed an air-mobile interdiction unit, which received United States training, to conduct operations with the Colombian military.

After over a year in office, the Pastrana Administration remains committed to its peace dialogue with the largest insurgent group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The government's talks with the FARC, which earns substantial funds from the drug trade, particularly from protection and taxation, have shown few gains thus far. Like the guerrillas, the paramilitaries are involved in the drug trade and are competing for an ever-greater share.

The combined U.S./GOC aerial eradication program had a successful year in 1999. The program sprayed over 42,000 hectares of coca and more than 8,000 hectares of opium poppy in 1999.

The "Antinarcotics Directorate" (DIRAN) of the Colombian National Police has continued its record of investigations and operations against narcotics trafficking. A cooperative effort between the Colombian National Police, the Prosecutor General's office (Fiscalia) and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) led to the arrest of 30 significant Colombian drug traffickers in "Operation Millennium." The United States requested the extradition of all 30 suspects and awaits the GOC's decision on those requests.

As in 1998, guerrillas protecting the drug trade ratcheted up their attacks on Colombian security forces, and hampered counternarcotics operations, particularly in the coca growing regions of southern and southeastern Colombia. As Colombia struggles to climb out of its worst economic crisis since the 1930s, the GOC is hard pressed to commit the resources necessary to combat the powerful combined threat of drug traffickers and guerrilla elements involved in the drug trade.

Colombia is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

II. STATUS OF COUNTRY

Colombia remains the world's largest cocaine producer: up to three-quarters of the world's cocaine hydrochloride (HCl) is processed in Colombia from cocaine base imported from Peru and Bolivia and, increasingly, from locally grown coca. Coca cultivation in Colombia increased by 20 percent in 1999. Most of the increase occurred outside of the eradication areas. Although opinions differ over statistical baselines, it is generally agreed that despite efforts

by the Government of Colombia to limit increases, cultivation expanded dramatically over the past three years. Estimated coca cultivation increased 36 percent in 1996, 18 percent in 1997 and 28 percent in 1998. Colombia is also a significant supplier of heroin to the United States, producing, according to U.S. estimates, six metric tons (mt) yearly, virtually all of which is destined for the U.S. market.

III. COUNTRY ACTIONS AGAINST DRUGS IN 1999

Policy Initiatives. In November 1999, Colombia extradited a Colombian citizen to the United States for the first time in nine years, fulfilling one of the USG's most sought-after, but elusive, counternarcotics goals with the GOC. Despite narcotics traffickers' attempts to throw up legal roadblocks, and bombings possibly linked to the extraditions, the Colombian Supreme Court and Pastrana Administration demonstrated their willingness to send narcotics traffickers to justice in the United States regardless of citizenship.

In a cooperative anti-narcotics operation with the USG, the GOC arrested 30 suspected narcotics traffickers in October 1999 as a result of "Operation Millennium." This joint operation, involved the Colombian National Police, the Colombian prosecutor general's office and the DEA. The United States requested the extradition of all 30 suspects.

The GOC succeeded in preserving some, but not all, key elements of its "faceless" justice system when congress approved the new "specialized" justice system in June 1999. The specialized system no longer protects the identity of judges, leading some judges to feel exposed to attempts at intimidation. However, the system still protects the identity of witnesses and prosecutors in a limited set of crimes such as narcotics trafficking, kidnapping and terrorism.

The asset forfeiture process in Colombia remains stalled. Although the GOC has seized millions of dollars worth of narcotics trafficker assets, including land, homes, automobiles and airplanes, the government has been unable to conclude the process and take legal ownership of or auction-off the assets.

The Colombian Air Force (FAC) is improving its monitoring and interdiction abilities. Over the last three years the percentage of successful FAC interdiction attempts has increased from 25 percent in 1997 to nearly 40 percent in 1999. At the same time, the number of suspicious aircraft which radar has detected flying to or from Colombia has fallen dramatically, from 231 in 1997 to less than 100 in 1999.

The Colombian National Police successfully implemented a civil aviation registration program to curb the use of aircraft for drug trafficking. This program inspected 343 aircraft in 1999, seizing 50 of these for violation of ptotective seals that prevent tampering with cargoes.

In mid-1999, for the first time, the GOC permitted its eradication campaign to begin edging into coca-rich Putumayo department. The GOC had previously prohibited eradication in Putumayo; the mere threat of spraying there in 1996 ignited vehement public demonstrations against the government by residents of the coca growing areas. The eradication program has been careful to enter

Putumayo slowly and without fanfare to avoid causing a backlash by farmers dependent on the coca trade. By November 1999, planes were eradicating fields 20 miles into the department, allowing them to reach approximately 30,000 hectares of coca. This has permitted the eradication program to enter the fastest growing coca cultivation area in the country.

The eradication program was hindered in 1999 by the diversion of escort helicopters for interdiction missions, civic unrest in poppy-growing areas that forced the evacuation of spray teams, and frequent ground-fire attacks on spray planes (resulting, in part, from too few escort aircraft). In 1999 spray planes suffered 67 hits from ground fire. Nonetheless, the program still managed to eradicate more than 50,000 hectares in 1999.

The February 1997 shipboarding agreement between the GOC and USG streamlined the process for approving the boarding of Colombian ships in international waters by U.S. officials and has enhanced cooperation with the Colombian Navy. Following talks between JIATF-East (USG inter-agency counternarcotics task force) and the Colombian Navy, a standing interdiction operations plan was signed in September 1999. This plan augments the maritime agreement and has led to three U.S.-Colombian combined maritime interdiction patrols since May 1999. The Colombian Navy's counternarcotics efforts however, are limited by a lack of adequate resources for patrolling, including fuel.

The USG and GOC have worked to resolve differences regarding evidence preparation and delivery in cases where the USG is the interdicting authority. In September 1999, U.S. and Colombian authorities reached an accommodation concerning the evidence required by Colombian prosecutors and other evidentiary questions.

Prison security remains a serious problem in Colombia. Overcrowding, lack of administrative acumen and corruption among guards plague the system. Almost two percent of inmates escape each year. There are 50,000 prisoners in a system with capacity for 30,000 and only 1 guard for every 10 prisoners (compared with 1 guard for 4 in the U.S.). Violence among prisoners is rampant. Due to lax security and permissive conditions for prisoners, many convicted traffickers remain directly involved in their operations from within prison.

The Minister of Justice and his director of prisons appear committed to reforms. But thus far, the GOC has been more inclined to build additional prisons rather than to reform prison administration.

The "carrot and stick" approach that couples alternative development with aerial eradication is key to Colombia's national drug control strategy and to "Plan Colombia," unveiled by the GOC in September 1999. The National Alternative Development Plan (PLANTE) is the agency charged with implementing the GOC's alternative development strategy. Targeting approximately 35,000 small farmers nationwide, who each produce less than three hectares of coca or opium poppy, PLANTE focused on linking illicit crop abandonment or substitution to markets for the resulting new products or services. PLANTE organized strategic alliances with the private sector, which provide farmer organizations with risk

capital and technical assistance in production, product processing and marketing.

As a matter of policy, the GOC does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. The Pastrana government has made clear, on many occasions, its opposition to official corruption.

Accomplishments. Law enforcement operations by the counternarcotics police and others continue to be the most successful element of the GOC counternarcotics program. According to the CNP, GOC counternarcotics operations in 1999 included the seizure of almost 30 metric tons (mt) of cocaine HCl and cocaine base; nearly 140 mt of coca leaves; 61 mt of marijuana; and 644 kilos of heroin, morphine and opium, the destruction of 96 cocaine base labs; 53 cocaine HCl labs and 10 heroin labs; the capture of over 760 mt of solid precursor chemicals and over 890,000 gallons of liquid precursors; the seizure of 540 vehicles, 189 boats, 51 aircraft and 422 weapons; the destruction of 44 clandestine airstrips, and the arrest of over 2,200 persons.

Elite investigative units within the CNP are developing long term investigations of trafficker organizations and are moving forward on asset forfeiture. The GOC heroin task force provided intelligence to effect drug seizures in Colombia and assist in U.S.-based investigations. Overall, GOC seizures of cocaine and heroin were higher in 1999 than in 1998.

The level of cooperation between the Colombian military and police, and between the services within the military, continued to improve in 1999. As in 1998, all of the armed forces conducted unilateral and joint counternarcotics operations with the police. Cooperation took the form of deployments in areas where police face a significant guerrilla threat. The air force, army, navy and marines coordinated with the CNP in multi-week, joint counternarcotics operations along the Pacific coast near the port of Buenaventura. These coordinated forces destroyed drug labs, confiscated narcotics and arrested individuals involved.

Furthermore, the Colombian police and army have participated in intensive joint training to prepare the army's new counternarcotics battalion, which is intended to assist the CNP during counternarcotics operations in the coca growing regions. The police and army have also agreed to work together on tactical operations that involve the new battalion. The co-located Joint Intelligence Center (JIC) includes personnel from the CNP.

CNP cooperation, including intelligence sharing with international law enforcement entities continued this year. The CNP also provided information that led directly to the seizure of 30 mt of cocaine HCl outside of Colombian territory in 1999.

Agreements and Treaties. Colombia ratified the 1988 UN Drug Convention in September 1994 and the GOC's National Anti-Narcotics Plan of 1998 meets the strategic plan requirements of the Convention. Recent reforms have generally brought the government into line with the requirements of the Convention.

In February 1997, the GOC signed a maritime shipboarding agreement with the United States. The agreement, which allows for faster approval for shipboardings in international waters and

sets guidelines for improved counternarcotics cooperation with the Colombian navy, has been credited with the seizure of 22 metric tons of cocaine since its signing. In February 1999, the Colombian justice system obtained the first convictions of individuals prosecuted for seizures related to the maritime agreement. However reduced budgets and demands on resources for riverine programs south of the Andes limited the navy's counternarcotics operations.

1999 saw substantial improvement in the maritime agreement's intelligence and communications exchange process. JIATF-East has established direct communication links with Colombian navy operations centers in Bogota and Cartagena to speed the transfer of tactical interdiction information. The navy has also, improved its own ship-to-shore communications. Unfortunately, implementation procedures for article 16 of the agreement have not been developed. Article 16 permits the prosecution of high-seas seizures by U.S. authorities without referral to Colombia's legal system and extradition process.

In September, U.S. and Colombian customs officials signed a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement (CMAA). The CMAA will enhance the countries' ability to share information and investigate cases jointly.

Cultivation and Production. Coca and opium poppy remain the principal illicit crops grown in Colombia. In 1998, these crops were estimated to be 101,800 hectares and 6,100 hectares respectively. In 1999 there were estimated to be 122,500 hectares of coca and 7,500 hectares of poppy.

Coca, the predominant illicit crop, is primarily grown in two regions on the eastern plains in Guaviare and neighboring departments, and along the Ecuadorian and Peruvian borders in the departments of Putumayo and Caqueta. Additionally, increasing amounts of coca are appearing in the northern departments of Bolivar and Norte de Santander. Most opium is grown on the eastern slopes of the Central Cordillera Mountains in Tolima, Huila and Cauca departments. Limited amounts are also found in Norte de Santander, southern Bolivar and Antioquia departments.

Larger and ever more complex cocaine HCl laboratories are replacing the less sophisticated labs previously encountered. HCl laboratories can be found in all regions of the country, but are primarily located in the plains and jungle regions, near the coca-growing zones under de facto guerrilla control. Numerous laboratories have been identified in extremely remote areas that are difficult to reach even by helicopter.

Most opiate laboratories are small, producing small quantities of drugs and using simple equipment and limited quantities of precursor chemicals. Colombia accounts for an estimated two percent of the world's opium poppy. Nearly all of the resulting heroin, however, is destined for the United States.

Marijuana cultivation remained active in 1999, but is not believed to have increased significantly. Colombian marijuana seizures in the United States are believed to be minimal.

Drug Flow/Transit. Colombia is the center of the international cocaine trade, with drugs flowing out of the country at a stable and constant rate. In addition to producing large quantities of cocaine base domestically, Colombian traffickers import cocaine base, by

air and by river, from Peru and, to a lesser extent, from Bolivia. The base is converted into cocaine HCl at clandestine laboratories in the Colombian source zone. Cocaine HCl shipments move out of Colombia primarily by commercial maritime vessels (multi-ton loads) and general aviation aircraft (400–800 kgs shipments) to Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, typically en route to the United States. Cocaine is also concealed in legitimate air and sea cargo destined for European ports.

Recent statistics indicate that approximatels 85 percent of the heroin seized by federal authorities in the northeastern United States is of Colombian origin. DEA believes that almost all of the heroin produced in Colombia goes to the United States and is generally smuggled by human couriers on commercial airline flights in quantities of one to five kilograms.

Domestic Programs (Demand Reduction). The National Directorate for Narcotics Control administers cost sharing drug abuse prevention and education projects with the UNDCP. The annual UNDCP budget for Colombia programs is USD five to seven million.

The DNE coordinates GOC demand reduction programs through governmental and non-governmental organizations. Demand reduction efforts in Colombia faced an uphill battle in 1999 as domestic drug consumption continued to rise. Increasing drug abuse by Colombians has spurred greater efforts by the DNE to publicize the dangers of drug abuse and convince the public that local consumption is a problem for Colombia now, not in the future. The U.S. Embassy hopes that one result of this active media campaign will be that counternarcotics programs in general will be more palatable to the Colombian public.

The priority target group for programs to prevent the use of psychoactive substances is male students, ages 12-17, with high school level education. New users are located in the geographic areas with the highest population densities and greater economic development, such as the coffee producing region and cities such as Bogota, Medellin and Cali.

IV. U.S. POLICY INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

Policy Initiatives. The USG continues to place its focus on institution building, especially within the law enforcement and judicial systems. The counternarcotics legislation passed in 1997 is an indirect result of advice and studies funded by the USG.

Bilateral Cooperation. Judicial reform in Colombia moves forward, albeit at an extremely slow pace. USAID coordinates the USG's justice sector reform program in cooperation with the Department of Justice (OPDAT and ICITAP). This long-term effort is aimed at strengthening the administration of justice in Colombia through support and training for judges, prosecutors, and investigators. Since 1991, several thousand law enforcement officials have received training in basic investigative techniques and planning. Recently, OPDAT and ICITAP have focused on the development of task force units (teams of prosecutors and police) that are charged with investigating money laundering, corruption, narcotics and human rights violations. Human rights training is an important element of the program and has been provided in the United

States to some program participants. USAID and OPDAT continue to support the judicial branch in a challenging effort to establish oral trials in a country that has traditionally relied on written evidence and the inquisitorial system to resolve cases.

To reduce the amount of cocaine HCl reaching the U.S., many USG programs focus on the Colombian source zone to stop air transportation and drug production in this targeted area. This focus aims at improving not only bilateral and joint CNP-military operations, but multilateral cooperation, as well.

USG entities, including DEA, FBI, USAID, and training elements of the Department of Justice (OPDAT and ICITAP), work with GOC law enforcement and judicial entities to increase the effectiveness of the Colombian judicial system, developing and refining law enforcement capabilities, training host nation counterparts, and improving access, fairness and public perceptions of the justice system. Thousands of judges, prosecutors and investigators have been trained since 1991.

The U.S. Embassy in Bogota provided the impetus to establish a port cargo security program that is now in place at all five of Colombia's seaports. The private ports agreed to provide $1.5 million per year for the foreseeable future to fund 100 specially trained narcotics police who carry out inspection and interdiction operations at the ports. This private funding complements nominal USG sponsorship. The USG monitors performance and provides U.S. Customs Service trainers. As a result of this program, the ports have seized more than 16 mt of cocaine and 40 mt of marijuana, all at very little cost to the USG. Additionally, Colombia is one of seven countries participating in the U.S. Customs' Americas Counter Smuggling Initiative (ACSI), a program designed to deter narcotics smuggling in commercial shipments by enhancing private sector security programs at manufacturing and export facilities while also seeking to assist law enforcement agencies to improve their counternarcotics effectiveness and develop private sector partnerships.

In 1999, the total operating budget for the Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Bogota was $38 million, with the largest sums going to support CNP air operations ($15.3 million) and the crop eradication program ($7.7 million). The CNP air wing consists of 47 helicopters and 20 fixed wing aircraft. The USG-funded private contractor that manages the CNP's eradication program operates an additional 12 helicopters, 9 spray planes, two intelligence-gathering planes and several transport planes. In addition to this assistance, the USG provided $96 million for the acquisition of six BlackHawk helicopters to enhance the CNP's counternarcotics capacity. The first three were delivered in November 1999 with the remaining three scheduled to arrive in the first quarter of 2000. The crews and technicians for these new helicopters were trained in the United States. The USG is also upgrading the CNP's Huey helicopter fleet. The first ten of 25 upgrades were performed in 1999 at a cost of $1.4 million each.

The CNP agreed to an audit of the CNP air services program, which receives substantial U.S. assistance. Unfortunately, in December 1999, the accounting firm contracted to perform the audit backed out, citing security concerns. Nonetheless, the CNP's agree-

ment to have the audit performed is a positive step and the USG is working to contract another accounting firm for the project.

The GOC also worked with the U.S. Embassy's consular section to deny U.S. visas to persons involved or suspected of trafficking in drugs or related activities such as money laundering.

In 1999, ICITAP assisted the GOC in developing a unified training curriculum for Colombian investigators. In August 1999 the National Judicial Police Council formally adopted the curriculum and made it mandatory for all Colombian investigators after January 2000. For the first time, all Colombian law enforcement investigators will receive the same training.

The Colombian army's new counternarcotics battalion became operational late in 1999. The United States provided training and equipment to the 931-man battalion and will assist the GOC with the costs of maintaining the elite unit. In 1999, total USG assistance relating to the battalion was approximately $7.5 million. The battalion is expected to commence field operations in early 2000.

The USG also provided 18 UH–1N helicopters to the Colombian army to support the new counternarcotics battalion. Helicopter operations should begin in early 2000 with full operational capability shortly thereafter.

Using $6 million in supplemental USG funding, the DIRAN, with U.S. Embassy assistance, embarked on an ambitious program to upgrade security at 16 base sites throughout Colombia. Following recommendations by USG security experts, the DIRAN enhanced security at all 16 bases. As the program continues, the DIRAN will install electronic sensor systems at a number of bases.

In 1999, NAS/INL provided substantial training for CNP personnel, including 12 pilots, 37 technicians, 57 ground troops and 95 agents of the CNP's new air-mobile unit.

T*he Road Ahead.* The GOC's "Plan Colombia" recognizes the interrelated nature of Colombia's counternarcotics efforts and its peace process. In 2000, the foremost obstacle to curbing narcotics trafficking in Colombia will still be guerrillas who depend heavily on the drug trade for their substantial annual income. These well-armed rebels violently oppose police eradication operations and CNP/military interdiction efforts. Some paramilitaries are also involved in the drug trade and likewise pose a threat to law enforcement efforts.

In the year 2000, PLANTE will fund many of these ongoing projects from the $15 million alternative development agreement signed with the USG in August 1999. Although the number of small farmers who have abandoned their illegal trade thus far is small, it is hoped that, as PLANTE's market-oriented projects take root and spray planes take to the air, an increasing number of farmers will see the benefit of getting out of coca or poppy cultivation.

USG programs will continue working with the GOC to solidify reforms in the DIRAN and support Colombia's efforts to sustain and improve the capability and efficiency of the judicial system, which remains one of the weakest links in the counternarcotics chain. The USG fully expects that the cooperation between U.S. and Colombian law enforcement agencies that produced Operation Millennium will continue to show results in 2000. The U.S. Embassy is

confident that after extraditing a Colombian citizen to the United States for the first time in 9 years, the GOC will respond favorably on the merits to U.S. extradition requests for Colombian nationals and others involved in narcotics trafficking. The Colombian military's counternarcotics role may broaden in 2000, as its first counternarcotics battalion comes on line and as the GOC implements plans for additional specialized battalions.

Resources will be devoted to firming up the Colombian armed forces' and police's ability to institutionalize and carry forward the training they have received from the United States. Priorities will include enhancing the armed forces' capacity to conduct field medic training, as well as ground and small units training in counternarcotics operations. As Colombia's first counternarcotics battalion commences operations, plans continue to train and equip additional battalions to strengthen the army's counternarcotics capability and expertise.

WORLDWIDE ILLICIT DRUG CULTIVATION

1991–1999 (All Figures in Hectares)

	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991
Opium:									
Afghanistan	51,500	41,720	39,150	37,950	38,740	29,180	21,080	19,470	17,190
India	50	.....	2,050	3,100	4,750	5,500	4,400	.....	.....
Iran [1]	200	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	
Pakistan	1,570	3,030	4,100	3,400	6,950	7,270	6,280	8,170	8,205
Total SW Asia	53,240	44,750	45,300	44,450	50,440	41,950	31,760	27,640	25,395
Burma	89,500	130,300	155,150	163,100	154,070	154,070	146,600	153,700	160,000
China	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,275	1,965	.....	.....	.....
Laos	21,800	26,100	28,150	25,250	19,650	19,650	18,520	25,610	29,625
Thailand	835	1,350	1,650	2,170	1,750	2,110	2,110	2,050	3,000
Total SE Asia	112,135	157,750	184,950	190,250	176,745	177,795	167,230	181,360	192,625
Colombia	7,500	6,100	6,600	6,300	6,540	20,000	20,000	20,000	1,160
Lebanon	.....	.....	.....	90	150	.....	440	na	3,400
Guatemala	.....	.....	.....	.....	39	50	438	730	1,145
Mexico	3,600	5,500	4,000	5,100	5,050	5,795	3,960	3,310	3,765
Vietnam	2,100	3,000	6,150	3,150	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Total Other	13,200	14,600	16,750	14,640	11,779	25,845	24,838	24,040	9,470
Total Opium	178,755	217,100	247,000	249,610	238,964	245,590	223,828	233,040	227,490
Coca:									
Bolivia	21,800	38,000	45,800	48,100	48,600	48,100	47,200	45,500	47,900
Colombia	122,500	101,800	79,500	67,200	50,900	45,000	39,700	37,100	37,500
Peru	38,700	51,000	68,800	94,400	115,300	108,600	108,800	129,100	120,800
Ecuador	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	40
Total Coca	183,000	190,800	194,100	209,700	214,800	201,700	195,700	211,700	206,240
Cannabis:									
Mexico	3,700	4,600	4,800	6,500	6,900	10,550	11,220	16,420	17,915
Colombia	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	4,986	5,000	2,000	2,000
Jamaica	.....	.....	317	527	305	308	744	389	950
Total Cannabis	8,700	9,600	10,117	12,027	12,205	15,844	16,964	18,809	20,865

Source: International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Department of State, March 2000.

[1] USG surveys in 1998 revealed no cultivation of opium in Iran's traditional growing areas.

WORLDWIDE ILLICIT DRUG PRODUCTION

1991–1999 (All Figures in Metric Tons)

	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991
Opium Gum:									
Afghanistan	1,670	1,350	1,265	1,230	1,250	950	685	640	570
India	.....	.....	30	47	77	90	.....	.....	.....
Iran	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Pakistan	37	65	85	75	155	160	140	175	180
Total SW Asia	1,707	1,415	1,380	1,352	1,482	1,200	825	815	750
Burma	1,090	1,750	2,365	2,560	2,340	2,030	2,575	2,280	2,350
China	.....	.....	.....	.....	19	25	.....	.....	.....
Laos	140	140	210	200	180	85	180	230	265
Thailand	16	25	30	25	17	42	24	35	
Total SE Asia	1,236	1,906	2,600	2,790	2,564	2,157	2,797	2,534	2,650
Colombia	75	61	66	63	65	.....	.....	.....	.....
Lebanon	.....	.....	.....	1	1	.....	4	.....	34
Guatemala	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	11
Mexico	43	60	46	54	53	60	49	40	41
Vietnam	11	20	45	25	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Total Other	129	141	157	143	119	60	53	40	86
Total Opium	3,072	3,462	4,137	4,285	4,165	3,417	3,675	3,389	3,486
Coca Leaf:									
Bolivia	22,800	52,900	70,100	75,100	85,000	89,800	84,400	80,300	78,000
Colombia [1]	521,400	437,600	347,000	302,900	229,300	35,800	31,700	29,600	30,000
Peru	69,200	95,600	130,200	174,700	183,600	165,300	155,500	223,900	222,700
Ecuador	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	100	100	40
Total Coca	613,400	586,100	547,300	552,700	497,900	290,900	271,700	333,900	330,740
Cannabis:									
Mexico [2]	3,700	8,300	8,600	11,700	12,400	5,540	6,280	7,795	7,775
Colombia	4,000	4,000	4,133	4,133	4,138	4,125	1,650	1,650	
Jamaica	.....	.....	214	356	206	208	502	263	641
Belize	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	49
Others	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500
Total Cannabis	11,200	15,800	16,447	19,689	20,239	13,386	14,407	13,208	13,615

SOURCE: International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Department of State, March 2000.

[1] Colombia's coca leaf production figures for 1995-98 were revised upward in 1999. See "Methodology for Estimating Illegal Production" in this section.

[2] Mexico's cannabis production figures for 1995-98 were revised upward in 1999.

REMARKS OF ANDRES PASTRANA ARANGO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA, AT THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS

WASHINGTON, DC, APRIL 12, 2000

My former colleagues in the media—ladies and gentlemen:

I am honored to be here today to address the American Society of Newspaper Editors at your annual convention. Let me thank your president, Christian Anderson, for this generous invitation, and all of you for making me feel at home, and for easing the anxiety every politician feels standing before a large room full of journalists.

Let me also express my admiration for this society's long commitment to upholding the First Amendment, promoting and protecting the free flow of information, and nurturing the great responsibility that comes with an open and independent press. And in this time of unparalleled prosperity and leadership for the United States, when our globalizing world grows constantly more interconnected, those everywhere who believe in freedom are grateful for your work with the Freedom Forum, and for your continuing self-examination of how your newspapers can better cover the international arena, and bring responsible and relevant news to your readers. In the Cold War, the United States was deeply concerned with the way it was seen by other nations. In the post-Cold War era, other nations are concerned about how we are viewed, politically and economically, in the United States. We Colombians welcome and invite increased interaction with the entire spectrum of your media—to exchange ideas, challenge misperceptions, and widen understanding.

The last President of Colombia to speak at your convention was Virgilio Barco in 1986. From this platform, President Barco made a strong plea for the United States and Latin America to do more together in the war on drugs. Here the first steps were taken that led to the landmark 1990 drug summit, attended by President Bush in Cartagena. The effort marked the beginning of the end of the Medellin drug cartel.

Today, I return here with a similar, urgent call for both our nations and the entire international community once again to do more in the fight against a new wave of drug trafficking and drug violence. I also come here to speak candidly about a dangerous problem of misinformation about Colombia. As you know better than anyone, in the era of instant information, it can be difficult to distinguish impression from truth, and the headline of one news cycle from the cycle of history. Today I ask you, in a decisive time for my country, to reflect with me on the real Colombia . . . our strengths, our problems, our resolve, and our prospects.

In recent months, Colombia has become what truly can be called "a hot topic" here in the United States. Mike Wallace, Dan Rather, Charlie Gibson and Tom Friedman have come to Bogota plainly expecting the worst, with a preconceived idea of what our country was all about—in a phrase, violence and cocaine. Yet they each left with a powerful sense of the character and values of the Colombian people, our commitment to peace and democracy, and our unbend-

ing determination to reforming and modernizing our society for the twenty first century.

What may sometimes be lost in the glare of the media moment is the historic truth that Colombia is South America's oldest, most resilient democracy, and that we Colombians share your long tradition of a free press and open access to information. Our newspapers are a powerful, independent influence—something we politicians learn again everyday. El Tiempo, the largest national daily and one of Latin America's most highly respected newspapers, has been at the center of Colombian life for almost a century, along with its main competitor, El Espectador. Our other major cities—and Colombia has five cities with over one million people—each have influential newspapers, and so do many smaller communities.

In reality, it is this regional diversity that defines us as a nation. I could also argue that Colombia stands as a microcosm for all of Latin America. Consider, just for a moment, our geography. Central America ends at our border with Panama. From there, to the east, stretch 1000 miles of Caribbean coastline, at its center the walled city of Cartagena, once the third most powerful city of the Spanish Empire, is today a magnet for tourists from around the world. To the south, 600 miles along the Pacific Ocean is an area still largely undeveloped, with extraordinary potential, especially as Asia looks more and more to Latin America. We share borders with Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela and with Brazil, at the very heart and soul of South America, the vast Amazon rainforest. Across our entire country, which is the size of Texas and California combined, 33 national parks shelter more plant and animal species per square mile than anywhere else on the planet.

Yet it is the Andes Mountains, more than anything else, that have shaped Colombia as it is today. Most of the Andes, like the Rockies or the Alps, are one massive chain, rising above a continent. But in Colombia—and only in Colombia—the Andes literally branch out into three distinct ranges, with altitudes that reach 15,000 feet. Crossing Colombia by car is no easy task, and can take many days. The distance traveled in a 35 minute flight can take an eight to ten hour drive. No wonder Colombia was the first country in all of the Americas with a national airline.

There is an old saying from your old West: "Give me men that match our mountains." Colombia has been blessed with a people of energy, faith, and enterprise. We have 67 years of uninterrupted economic growth, and a pantheon of Colombians who have made a difference in the wider world, like Manuel Patarroyo, the scientist who has done more than anyone to eradicate malaria, or Rodolfo Llinas a worldwide recognized neurologist. There is our Nobel Laureate, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, whose novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude" has sold more than 30 million copies in over 40 languages, Fernando Botero, whose sculptures have lined Park Avenue and the Champs Elysees, Juan Pablo Montoya, our Formula Cart world Champion, and Shakira, our amazing Spanish rock superstar.

I also take pride in reminding people that six out of every ten fresh-cut flowers imported to the United States come from Colombia, that we are your seventh largest source of crude petroleum, and will soon become the world's third largest exporter of coal.

Such is the Colombia of our history and our hopes, a Colombia which today also faces fateful choices.

The choices, and the crises, are, in my view, often misreported and misunderstood. I am regularly surprised and sometimes genuinely stunned by what I read in the foreign press. When you see your country's name continually misspelled, even in the most distinguished newspapers, you naturally worry about the rest of the reporting. And even when a wire service isn't saying that the United States is being drawn into a guerrilla war, some editorial board here is predicting my government's imminent collapse. A ripple can too easily be mistaken for a wave; the limelight on one event can obscure the complicated interplay of underlying events.

The problem is not one of intentions.I know the need to capture and convey drama in a headline or in a news story. Still, I ask you to imagine what it is like when El Tiempo or our evening TV news reports a standoff between a guerrilla unit and an army platoon several miles away from Bogota, and the headline in the United States reads: "Colombia's capital under siege." For us, every single casualty is cause for national concern, but it is not a signal of national collapse.

To understand modern day Colombia, we must look beyond the incidents and see the conditions for what they are—or in this case, as they are NOT. For starters, Colombia is not in the midst of a civil war, despite what is continually said in the international media. Colombians have never referred to this conflict as a civil war, for the simple reason that it isn't one.

A civil war occurs in a divided nation, torn apart into armed camps of more or less the same size. Ireland. the former Yugoslavia and the Congo—these are present day examples of civil wars. Colombia's case is dramatically different. There are approximately 35,000 well-armed and well-financed insurgents, both guerrilla and paramilitary, operating mainly in the remote countryside. They have inflicted enormous suffering, killing innocent civilians, driving others from their homes and villages, and blocking any chance for development and progress.

But the insurgents make up barely one tenth of one percent of the total population. Militarily, their tactics are classic guerrilla—hit and run, strike and retreat. Every time they have faced the Colombian Armed Forces out in the open, they have been soundly defeated. And unlike guerrilla movements in other places, they have completely failed to convince Colombians that they provide a legitimate alternative to our tested democracy.

The guerrilla's roots are in the 1940s and 50s, at the very height of the Cold War. In the decades that followed, however, their support steadily decreased until today, when the guerrillas can claim little more than three- or four-percent popular support. Even intellectuals and university students, once the bedrock of guerrilla sympathy, have turned against them as they wage continuous war on the civilian population.

The guerillas' loss of support reflects more than the end of Cold War confrontation. Colombia today is a much more modern, urban and just society than it was a half century ago. Ladies and gentlemen, this is not a civil war; and even though billions of dollars generated by drug-trafficking sustain the violence, the guerillas cannot

overthrow our democracy—and no one knows this better than they do.

Yet the talk, so common here in the United States of a Colombian government under siege, on the verge of collapse, has given rise to another false assumption—namely, that Colombia is somehow another Vietnam. A quarter century after the fall of Saigon, the shadow of Vietnam understandably continues to shape public opinion and influence policy makers.

But Colombia is no Vietnam, and for many reasons. While Vietnam was a divided country and an ideological battlefield—its borders imposed by the Geneva Accords of 1954—Colombia is a unified nation with a strong national identity, where 95 percent and more of our citizens believe in democracy, freedom of the press, and an open economy. While Vietnam had been a colony under foreign domination for over a century, Colombia has been a free and independent nation since defeating the Spanish empire in 1819. The Vietcong enjoyed significant support, while the Colombian insurgents are almost entirely without political support or sympathy. Equally important is the fact that while Vietnam was a distant Asian country, Colombia is an integral part of this hemisphere. Colombia is your neighbor, with Bogota roughly the same distance from New York as Los Angeles is.

What must be understood is how drug-trafficking and its obscene profits have changed the very nature of our conflict. My own opinion—one shared by most Colombians—is that we would already be a nation at peace, were it not for the violence and corruption fueled by the illegal drug trade. No nation has suffered as severely as Colombia from the boom in the demand for illegal drugs over the last generation. Rather than fall victim to this menace, we have systematically opposed it, taken on and destroyed ruthless cartels from Medellin and Cali.

The cost has been high. Imagine U.S. Supreme Court justices murdered in their chambers, or federal judges from Miami, Los Angeles or Chicago killed by the scores. Imagine one fifth of your FBI and local police forces wounded or killed with their wives and children also targeted. Imagine courageous public officials—Cabinet Ministers and Mayors, Senators, Governors and Presidential candidates—gunned down for giving voice to a society that refuses to back down. Imagine being given just ONE option, plata o bala—a bribe or a bullet.

And I ask all of you to imagine newspaper editors, publishers and reporters shot in cold blood, their offices bombed into rubble, or exiled because they would not be intimidated, because they held on to the conviction that was worth living for—and all too tragically, all too often worth dying for as well.

Imagine this, my friends, and you get a clear idea of what Colombia has endured in this generation. Heroic men and women have paid the ultimate price, earning the lasting admiration of all Colombians, and we will never forget their sacrifice.

So we fight on. We push back the forces of violence—and then we read that Colombia is on the verge of collapse, of becoming a narco-terrorist state. Nothing is further from the truth. Indeed, after the break up of the cartels, the nature of drug-trafficking has changed dramatically. Unlike the days of Pablo Escobar, the drug

war has shifted from the cities to the Amazon region, particularly the Putumayo. Today, a new breed of criminals operates in smaller organizations, underground, with closer ties to traffickers in other countries. Indeed, drug mafias, too, have become increasingly globalized.

There is a growing awareness in Colombia, the United States, and around the world, that the threat of drug trafficking is no longer a national or regional issue. For example, the precursor chemicals needed to process cocaine are smuggled into Colombia from abroad, while most of the tainted profits that drive the drug trade end up invested in financial markets abroad. As long as a demand exists, there will be suppliers somewhere to meet it. This is why we urgently need improvements in education and prevention, as well as more drug treatment facilities.

Colombia's resolve to combat production and distribution has not lessened, but intensified. Last October, after months of preparation and with the help of your drug enforcement agencies, we conducted the most important worldwide drug bust in over five years. In Operation Millennium, 30 of the most powerful of the new breed of drug traffickers were arrested across Colombia and elsewhere. And we have sent those still at large the strongest message, in the clearest possible terms: Drug-traffickers will never be tolerated in Colombia, and we are determined to destroy them and their empires.

But Colombia cannot and should not continue to bear the greatest weight of this global crisis. I have taken the message of greater burden sharing in the fight against drugs to the international community. President Clinton has committed the United States to do more in this crusade. We discussed this at our first meeting, in August of 1998, and since then we have worked closely to execute a bilateral strategy. Leaders on Capitol Hill, Republicans and Democrats alike, have been essential in this effort.

In some quarters, I know there is resistance to U.S. assistance for Colombia. The most common argument is that you could become, and I quote, "entangled in a Vietnam-like quagmire." I would like to make one more point about this—one that I cannot emphasize too strongly.

Implicit in the Vietnam analogy is the belief that the United States would end up committing troops to Colombia. But that is flat out impossible. Neither your public opinion nor ours would support or permit such a move—and neither your government nor ours has considered this in even the most extreme circumstances. It is simply not on the table, and as long as I am President this will not happen. You can quote me on that.

What Colombia has proposed, and your government endorsed, is giving us the resources, the hardware and the training needed to combat the changing nature of the drug trade. This means exposing and penetrating remote jungle areas once beyond the sustained reach of our security forces. Earlier on, I spoke of our unique geographic make-up and how this has influenced our development as a nation. Well, this unique geography also plays a critical part in the war against narcotics, where often inaccessible areas have become hot beds for cocaine production—areas we could not fully con-

trol in the past, but where our reach is now becoming increasingly stronger.

Our strategy here is twofold: in the end, we must negotiate a meaningful peace agreement with the guerrillas; but from the beginning, we must root out the drug-traffickers and the violence they cause our society and the damage they do to our economy. U.S. assistance is meant to support counter-narcotics operations, as well as alternative crop development, economic stimulation, and government reform.

Our strategy is called Plan Colombia, a comprehensive blueprint for our future. And while our goal is peace, our first order of business has to be the strengthening of our institutions, political, judicial and military. No peace process can succeed without the institutional strength to support it. Above all, our democratic institutions must serve the people, and this means guaranteeing their fundamental human rights.

Plan Colombia's cost is estimated at 7.5 billion dollars over three years. My government is pledged to providing 4 billion, while actively seeking additional support from the international community. In addition to the Clinton Administration's assistance package, we will be meeting with European leaders at a conference this July in Spain.

I have called our efforts "Diplomacy for Peace"—because if we have learned anything from the recent progress in Northern Ireland, Central America, and the Middle East, it is that the international community must be actively engaged in order for peace to prevail.

A Colombia at peace is in everyone's interest. Not only will it bring an end to the violence and human rights violations, so those displaced from their homes can return to them unafraid. A Colombia at peace also depends on more effective counter-narcotics operations, in terms of both interdiction and alternative crops for subsistence farmers. That means not only less violence on our streets, but less drug-trafficking on yours. Every shipment of drugs we stop in Colombia is a shipment that doesn't reach American neighborhoods, playgrounds, and schools.

In Colombia, the last year and a half has witnessed dramatic steps forward in the name of peace. Never in our history has there been such a commitment, from all sectors of our society, to bring a lasting end to the violence and an honorable end to the insurgency.

Only days after my election, I flew to the jungle to meet with the leaders of FARC, the oldest and largest guerrilla group. I was the first President to do so. Since then, we have agreed to a twelve point agenda for negotiations. And only last month, government and guerrilla delegations traveled in Europe together, in order to show the guerrillas, who have lived in almost total seclusion for decades, how the world has changed and the wide range of new social democratic models.

More recently, last weekend we started with the public hearings procedure, which will give citizens the chance to make their contributions to the peace process.

At the same time, Richard Grasso, Chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, Congressman Bill Delahunt of Massachusetts, Jim

Kimsey, founder of America Online, and Joe Robert are just a few of those who have met with the guerrilla leaders, carrying a realistic message of progress and development, of the shared prosperity that can come with peace. Such exchanges go a long way to remove outdated stereotypes and suspicions. They show the guerrillas the intentions of the international community, the opportunities available to a united, peaceful Colombia, and the potent fact that guerrilla warfare has no part in a modern nation.

Perhaps more important have been the strides on the domestic front. A little over a year ago, more than 10 million Colombians—almost one third of the entire country—marched peacefully through our streets, calling for a negotiated end to the insurgency. And just as Plan Colombia recognizes the need for strong, accountable institutions to sustain any peace agreement, we are convinced that only by engaging civil society as a whole—labor unions and business executives, teachers and health care workers, farmers and truck drivers—only then can we meet everyone's legitimate needs.

Equally important is the economy. Job creation, low inflation and interest rates, sustained GDP growth—all of this plays a decisive role in strengthening our society. So does expanding trade and attracting more foreign investment—another way the international community can help. The sheer size of our economy—around $86 billion dollars—makes Colombia one of the largest and most attractive markets for U.S. trade and investment in all the Americas. Bilateral trade with the U.S. exceeded $8 billion dollars last year. There are over 120 U.S. companies operating successfully in Colombia, most of them for many decades. Political strength and economic health are bound together. At the end of the day, Colombia cannot be a nation at peace if it is not a nation in prosperity.

Plan Colombia also includes the most ambitious and organized strategy of social reform that has ever been proposed in the country. The purpose of this reform is to create new and better opportunities for progress for the poorest Colombians.

This component of Plan Colombia includes on the one hand, the Social Emergency Fund made up of three basic programs: "Hands to work," "Subsidy for Poor Families," and "Training for the Unemployed Youth." All of these programs geared toward creating a better quality of life for the most needy through investment in health, education and job creation.

On the other hand, we will assign more than $2 billion dollars for Alternative Development and Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid programs. The first program seeks to go beyond crop substitution by promoting a comprehensive regional development strategy that will generate legal work alternatives for Colombian peasants. In matters of Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid, we intend to improve the mechanisms for the respect and protection of these rights and the attention of the victims of the armed conflict with special emphasis on displaced people.

One the main enemies we face to make Colombia a peaceful and prosper nation is corruption. This terrible cancer, on one hand, undermines the legitimacy of the Government and, on the other, subverts social ethics, creating a vicious cycle of mistrust and despair.

For instance, a large corruption scandal was recently uncovered in our Congress, thanks to my government's accusations. As a re-

sult, a very serious investigation is being carried out to uncover those responsible.

However, the magnitude of this case demands a more profound response, one that assures this will never happen again. It is necessary to make a radical reform of our political system, and especially of the legislative branch.

For that reason, last week, based on our Constitution and our laws, I proposed to the Colombian people a referendum, in which they will vote for a change for honesty and transparency in the way of doing politics. More than 90% of the Colombian people have expressed their support for this initiative, which I am sure will serve as the cornerstone of the transformation of our democratic system.

In closing, I would like to extend to all of you, as leaders in American journalism, an open invitation to visit Colombia. Talking about misperceptions will do little unless you are given first-hand access. Our problems are formidable, yet our nationwide determination to overcome them is making a difference. I want nothing more than to demonstrate that our resolve and our progress are much more than words delivered from a podium.

Behind my invitation stands a big, bold and beautiful land. It is a land full of people who would welcome you in their homes and neighborhoods, villages and schools, their soccer fields, offices and places of worship. You will hear stories of great success and serious struggle. You will witness sorrow mixed with joy. And only then will you understand the real Colombia.

By helping us, I believe that in the truest sense you also help your own country. Only provide us with the tools and we will do the job. I thank you for the opportunity to speak here today, and I hope for a new beginning in the way you see and report Colombia.