

Testimony of Major General Gary D. Speer, Acting Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command, Senate Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, April 24, 2002

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL GARY D. SPEER, UNITED STATES ARMY, ACTING COMMANDER IN CHIEF UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND BEFORE THE 107TH CONGRESS SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, PEACE CORPS AND NARCOTICS AFFAIRS
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Mr. Chairman, Senator Chafee, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you to discuss United States Southern Command's role in assisting Colombia. The men and women of United States Southern Command deeply appreciate the hard work by the Members of this Committee and we thank you, and your colleagues in Congress, for your commitment and steadfast support.

I have served as the Acting Commander in Chief of United States Southern Command since October 1, 2001, when General Pace assumed the position of Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In the past ten months, I have traveled to Colombia eight times. I have met key leaders in Colombia and here in the United States, both military and civilian. I appreciate their challenges and am convinced that the Colombian military is led by experienced and principled officers. I have seen first hand the commitment of the Colombian military's leadership towards professionalizing their force, to include respect for human rights and the rule of law.

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide an overview of the problems facing Colombia and its neighbors, and what we have done to date to address these threats and enhance security and stability, which are the underpinnings of economic growth and legitimate governance.

Security Environment

During the past 25 years, nations of our hemisphere have made substantial progress toward achieving peace through democratically elected governments, economic development, and the subordination of the military to civilian authority. All countries, except for Cuba, have democratically elected governments. Without a clear or imminent external threat, Latin American and Caribbean nations essentially appear to be at peace with their neighbors. Underlying this perception of tranquility are the multiple transnational threats of terrorism, drug and arms trafficking, illegal migration, and organized crime, all of which threaten the security and stability of the region. Some of our hemispheric neighbors are suffering from the effects of political instability, faltering economic growth, and institutional weakness. High unemployment, endemic poverty, corruption, and crime combined with the effects of terrorism, drug trafficking, and other illicit transnational activities challenge and threaten the legitimacy of many of these governments and consequently threaten U.S. hemispheric interests. Governments are feeling the strain of weak economies, rampant corruption, ineffective judicial systems, and growing discontent of the people as democratic and economic reforms fall short of expectations.

Transnational threats in the region are increasingly linked as they share common infrastructure, transit patterns, corrupting means, and illicit mechanisms. These threats transcend borders and seriously affect the security interests of the United States.

Terrorism

Southern Command recognized a viable terrorist threat in Latin America long before September 11. If not further exposed and removed, that threat potentially poses a serious threat to both our national security and that of our neighbors. We in Southern Command have monitored terrorist activities for years with such incidents as the bombing of the Israeli Embassy and Jewish-Argentine Cultural Center in Argentina in 1992 and 1994 attributed to Hizballah. Recently, international terrorist groups have turned to some Latin American countries as safe havens from which they sustain worldwide operations. As an example, the tri-border area of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay serves as a base of support for Islamic Radical Groups, such as Hizballah, HAMAS, and Al Gama'at al-Islamiyya. These organizations generate revenue through illicit activities that include drug and arms trafficking, counterfeiting, money laundering, forged travel documents, and even software and music piracy. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN) and the United Self Defense Group of Colombia (AUC) are all on the State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. The FARC has been implicated in kidnappings and attacks against United States citizens and interests, including the murder of three U.S. citizens in 1999. According to the Department of State's most recent "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report, 86 percent of all terrorist acts against U.S. interests throughout the world in 2000 occurred in Latin America, predominately in Colombia. The recent bombing outside the U.S Embassy in Peru preceding President Bush's visit is indicative that other domestic terrorist groups pose threats to the United States elsewhere in the hemisphere. These include, but are not limited to, the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) in Peru and the Jama'at al Muslimeen (JAM) in Trinidad and Tobago.

Drug Trafficking

Illegal drugs inflict an enormous toll on the people and economy of the United States and our hemispheric neighbors, and appropriately, have often been characterized as a weapon of mass destruction. According to the latest Office of National Drug Control Policy figures, Americans spend more than \$64 billion on illegal drugs while drug abuse killed more than 19,000 Americans and accounted for \$160 billion in expenses and lost revenue. Most of the world's cocaine and a significant portion of the heroin entering the United States are produced in the Andean Region.

Drug trafficking persists as a corrosive threat to the democracy, stability, and prosperity of nations within the region, especially in the Andean Ridge, adversely affecting societies and economies as scarce resources are diverted to rehabilitation, interdiction, and crime prevention efforts. Drug trafficking generates violence, fosters crime, and corrupts public institutions. Increasingly, terrorist organizations support themselves through drug trafficking. This trend is particularly troubling in Colombia where we find clear connections between drug trafficking, guerrillas, and terrorist activities. It is not only the drug producing countries that suffer. No country in this hemisphere through which drugs transit escapes the violence and corrupting

influences of drug trafficking. Additionally, as traffickers exchange drugs for arms and services in the transit countries, transit nations are now becoming drug consumers as well.

Arms Trafficking

Although Latin America and the Caribbean spend less than any other region on legal arms purchases, illegal arms sales pose a significant threat to the stability of the region. Of particular concern is the rising trend in which Drug Trafficking Organizations exchange drugs for arms, which are then provided to terrorist organizations such as the FARC, ELN, and AUC in Colombia. Illegal arms originate from throughout the world and transit through the porous borders of Colombia's neighbors. Arms traffickers use a variety of land, maritime, and air routes that often mirror drug and human trafficking networks.

Illegal Migration

Latin America and the Caribbean are major avenues for worldwide illegal migration. Although not a problem directly tied to Colombia, illegal migration and human smuggling operations are linked to drugs and arms trafficking, corruption, organized crime, and the possibility for the movement of members of terrorist organizations.

According to the Census Bureau's latest figures, more than eight million illegal immigrants reside in the United States; nearly two million of them are from the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility. The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service estimates more than 300,000 illegal immigrants annually originate in, or transit through, Central American countries destined for the United States. Also, many Chinese illegal immigrants destined for the U.S. transit through Suriname, Ecuador and other countries in the hemisphere. Human trafficking is highly profitable, providing revenue of more than \$1 billion annually to smuggling organizations within the region. Moreover, human trafficking provides the potential means of entry into the U.S. for criminals and terrorists.

Colombia

No other region is suffering the destabilizing effects of transnational threats more than the Andean Ridge countries. In Colombia, the FARC, ELN, and AUC have created an environment of instability in which the Government of Colombia does not control portions of the country. In the areas where military and police are not present and do not have control, there is lack of a safe and secure environment, which undermines the ability to govern and permits terrorism and crime to flourish. The violence in Colombia remains a significant threat to the region as the combination and links among guerrillas, terrorists, drug-traffickers, and illegal self-defense forces have severely stressed the government's ability to exercise sovereignty and maintain security. The FARC and other illegal groups cross into neighboring countries at will. In addition, neighboring countries remain transshipment points for arms and drugs entering and exiting Colombia. Colombia is critically important to the United States. With over 40 million people, it is the second oldest democracy in the hemisphere, and it is an important trading partner, notably for oil. More importantly, it is the linchpin of the Andean Region; as such, it is critical for the United States that Colombia re-establish a safe and secure environment within its borders and survive as an effective democracy. Venezuela, Panama, and Ecuador are certainly at risk to

some degree based on what happens in Colombia. The current political and security situation in Colombia is at a critical juncture. Notwithstanding the Government of Colombia's eleventh hour extension of the despeje, the FARC's "safe haven," on January 20 of this year, the FARC initiated a countrywide terror campaign with more than 120 attacks against the nation's infrastructure and cities. These attacks ultimately prompted President Pastrana to eliminate the despeje on February 20, and initiate operations to occupy the area. From a military perspective, it was the right move. The FARC used the despeje as a sanctuary to support their drug trafficking operations, launch terrorist attacks, and recruit and train their forces. Simply put, the FARC is a terrorist organization that conducts violent terrorist attacks to undermine the security and stability of Colombia, financed by its involvement in every aspect of drug cultivation, production and transportation, as well as by kidnapping and extortion. The Colombian military immediately initiated operations to reoccupy the despeje, focusing on occupying population centers with deliberate operations to prevent civilian casualties. This strategy averted significant displacement of the population. In response, the FARC avoided confronting the military and has broken down into small elements, retreated into the jungle and rural areas, and concentrated its actions on terrorist attacks against the country's infrastructure. While the March 10 congressional elections were executed relatively problem-free, the weeks leading to the upcoming Presidential elections on May 26 will be particularly critical as the Colombian Military dedicates significant resources to ensure the security of the electoral process. U.S. Southern Command's Support to Plan Colombia

We continue to execute the Department of Defense's counterdrug support to Plan Colombia, Colombia's national security plan. Colombia is just beginning the second year of this six-year plan. The initial phase of operations focused in the Putumayo and Caqueta Departments of Southern Colombia where approximately half of Colombia's coca cultivation takes place. In implementing U.S. Support to Plan Colombia initiated by the FY 2000 Emergency Supplemental, Southern Command has been responsible for training and equipping a Counter Narcotics Brigade, riverine units, fielding Blackhawk and Huey II helicopters, training pilots and crews, infrastructure upgrades, and providing counterdrug intelligence support. We are seeing positive results from our support. Although our focus has been support to counterdrug operations, the increased professionalism of the Colombian military, significant progress in respect for human rights and the rule of law, and improved operational planning and execution are all directly linked to our support.

Counter Narcotics Brigade

The Counter Narcotics Brigade (CN Brigade) headquarters and its three battalions are now fully trained and equipped. United States trainers performed staff and light infantry training for almost 2,300 troops. The brigade headquarters and the second battalion of the brigade completed training and began operations in December 2000; we completed training of the third battalion last May. We continue to provide sustainment training to the CN Brigade. The CN Brigade is the best-trained and equipped unit in the Colombian Army. It has impressive results during drug interdiction operations by destroying coca processing labs, providing security to eradication operations, and seizing chemical precursors and coca leaf in Southern Colombia. Since operations began in December 2000, over 890 drug labs have been destroyed and 119 people detained for judicial processing. The CN Brigade has also provided the ground security for the spraying of 59,000 hectares of coca in the

Putumayo and Caqueta regions. Colombia's spraying effort in Putumayo last year would not have been possible without the CN Brigade's aggressive ground support to spray aircraft. There have been no allegations of human rights abuses against the CN Brigade. In addition, indications are that the Colombian military's concerted interdiction efforts combined with aerial spraying are having an effect on the narcotraffickers. Cocaine labs are being established away from the Putumayo and Caqueta cultivation areas; in fact, large scale, industrial size labs were discovered in the former despeje. With the training and capabilities of the CN Brigade, no longer does the FARC own the military initiative in Putumayo and Caqueta Departments, but avoids head-on engagements against the Colombian military. This increased security in the coca growing areas affords a better environment for interdiction efforts by the CN Brigade and the Colombian National Police.

Helicopters

Since December 2000, the United States has provided air mobility to the first CN Brigade using 33 UH-1Ns with a combination of Colombian and Department of State contracted pilots. The UH1N aircraft are based in Tolomaida with the Colombian Army Aviation Battalion and are forward deployed to Larandia for operations. Last year, the UH-1Ns flew over 10,000 flight hours in direct support of Joint Task Force South CN operations, moving over 26,700 soldiers and 261 tons of cargo. The current operational focus remains providing air mobility support for Joint Task Force South counterdrug missions in Colombia. Our training and logistics programs are on track to provide greatly enhanced air mobility capability to the Colombian Army. All fourteen UH-60L Blackhawk helicopters procured under Plan Colombia for the Colombian military were delivered by December 2001. The first 6 of the 25 Plan Colombia Huey II aircraft arrived in March 2002. Under the current delivery schedule, we expect the remaining 19 Huey II helicopters to be delivered by the end of September 2002.

Department of Defense training programs specifically designed to fulfill the requirement for trained Colombian Army pilots, crew chiefs, and maintenance personnel for the Blackhawk and Huey II helicopters are currently underway and progressing well in Colombia and in the United States. In addition to training pilots, crew chiefs and maintenance personnel will also be trained. This has been a real success story: Colombian Air Force Instructor Pilots under the quality control of an U.S. Army Technical Assistance Field Team are training Colombian Army pilots in the Blackhawk transition and the Initial Entry Rotary Wing (IERW) courses. The night vision training, advanced or readiness level progression training, and the Huey II transition are being executed through a DOD contract in Colombia. Crew chiefs are being trained in Spanish, both in the United States and Colombia. The various special aviation and avionics maintenance training is conducted in Army schools in the United States. The Plan Colombia Blackhawk pilot and crew training will be complete in July. The first IERW course is in progress and Huey II transition will commence this month with a projected completion of Colombian Army pilots and crews for the 25 Huey IIs by mid 2004. The long pole in the aviation training is the CONUS specialized maintenance training, which will last through 2003 due to the extensive technical courses and the limited throughput possible. As such, contractor logistics support will be required throughout this entire period.

Riverine Capability

For much of Colombia, the rivers are the highways. Consequently, the rivers are the only means of transportation and commercial communication. As a result, an integral part of our support to Colombia has been the training and equipping of the Colombian Riverine forces. The goal of the Riverine Forces is to permit the Colombian government to exercise sovereignty throughout the vast regions where other governmental entities are otherwise absent. Colombia's plan is to establish controls at critical river junctures along its borders and throughout the heartland of the country. The plan includes establishment of 58 riverine combat elements, with support structures, at these critical river nodes. The operational objective of the Riverine Forces is to establish control over the riverine transportation network and interdict illicit trafficking of precursor chemicals used in the production of cocaine.

To date five riverine battalions, composed of thirty riverine combat elements, have been deployed and are operating throughout Colombia. These riverine combat elements have successfully supported the operations of the first CN brigade in destroying riverside labs and by providing convoy security for building material used to construct the Tres Esquinas airbase. Furthermore, these riverine units have established the first continuous presence of the Colombian government in areas previously abandoned to control of narco-terrorists organizations. Continued support to complete the fielding of the remaining riverine combat elements and establishment of a self-sustaining training capability are high priorities in our strategy for the future.

Engineer Projects

Extensive projects are underway in Larandia to support the CN Brigade and associated helicopters. They include helicopter pads, a fueling system, maintenance hangar and storage warehouse, operations building, control tower, and an ammo storage facility with arm/disarm pads. The first helicopter projects will be completed later this year, with the overall construction complete in 2003. Other projects at Larandia include additional barracks for both counter narcotics and aviation brigade personnel, a counter narcotics brigade headquarters facility, and a supply warehouse. These support projects will be complete later this year also. At Tres Esquinas (a forward operating site in Southern Colombia), construction was recently completed on the riverine facilities, an A-37 ramp, and taxiway. The remaining projects at Tres Esquinas (runway extension and Schweizer hanger) are in progress with completions also scheduled for later this year. The riverine base at El Encanto (forward base in Southern Colombia) and the riverine maintenance facility at Nueva Antioquia are complete. However, the airfield runway improvements at Marandua remain unfunded; this airfield will be critical to supporting operations in Eastern Colombia. The military base and improvement projects, which we have funded and overseen, have effectively enabled the Colombian military to expand its influence over the coca growing areas of Putumayo and Caqueta. Additionally, we continue to improve our infrastructure at the Forward Operating Location (FOL) in Manta, Ecuador. Last year, operations at the FOL ceased for six months while we made runway improvements. The current construction for living quarters and maintenance facilities will be completed in June 2002. The infrastructure upgrades for the FOL at Curacao are in progress, but Aruba remains unfunded. The FOLS are critical to our source zone counterdrug operations and provides coverage in the transit zone Pacific where we have seen the greatest increase in drug smuggling activity. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is assisting the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in providing employment for the alternative

development program in Colombia. Due to the long process for crop substitution to develop into major income producing industries, USAID determined that a large-scale jobs-via-infrastructure program is needed to provide short-term income to individuals shifting from coca production as well as eliminating the competitive disadvantages resulting from the lack of infrastructure where crop substitution will take place. The USACE is currently analyzing and evaluating infrastructure works in Putumayo and Caqueta. One project already approved for development includes the repair and widening of a road connecting the Putumayo and Caqueta river systems. This project will reduce the time required to move products through Putumayo and Caqueta while providing employment to those individuals shifting from coca production. Additionally, it will enhance the mutual support of Colombian military units operating along the rivers.

Professionalism and Human Rights We have witnessed a steady improvement in the professionalism and respect for human rights and the rule of law by the Colombian military, accompanied by increased effectiveness in counterdrug operations. The increase in professionalism starts with the continued professional military education, the confidence gained by technical proficiency, and resources available for operations. Our legal assistance projects in Colombia, which include developing a Judge Advocate General (JAG) school as well as legal and human rights reform, continue on track. We have worked closely with the Colombian military to establish and build a Military Penal Justice Corps that has made significant strides in a short period of time. The initial JAG school courses began in February 2002 for 60 judge advocates and clerks in temporary facilities. The Department of State recently approved funding for construction of a permanent JAG facility, and we expect completion in July 2003. In the area of human rights, United States Southern Command has supported Colombian efforts to extend human rights training throughout its ranks. Additionally, we sponsor opportunities for the continued exchange of information on human rights issues, such as: a recent Human Rights Seminar with 60 Colombian media and international representatives, bimonthly human rights roundtables involving representatives from various sectors of Colombian society, incorporating human rights in every training initiative, and advanced education programs. This summer, twenty students from the Armed Forces, National Police, Ministry of Defense, and Commanding General's office will receive specialty degrees in International Humanitarian Law. I am convinced the military leadership in Colombia is firmly committed to human rights and is taking action on any new reports of wrongdoing that come to their attention, to include any reports of collusion with illegal self defense forces. They have suspended officers and noncommissioned officers for acts of wrongdoing and have stepped up their operations against illegal defense forces. Colombian military combat operations increased against illegal self-defense groups in 2001. With increased operations against these groups, the Colombian military captured or killed approximately 700 illegal defense force individuals in 2001, compared to 239 in 2000. During this period there has been positive institutional response with prosecutions of military members with credible allegations of ties to illegal self-defense forces rising and improved cooperation with civilian legal authorities.

In fact, in a short period of time, the Colombian military has emerged as one of the most respected and trusted organizations in Colombian society. Fewer than three percent of complaints of human rights abuses last year were attributed to the Colombian Security Forces, down from a high of 60 percent just a few years ago. There have been zero allegations of human rights abuses against the U.S. trained counter narcotics drug brigade. This is a success story that often gets overlooked.

Colombia should publicize what the military is doing and take credit for the accomplishments they have attained. This progress reflects a strong and principled leadership and the genuine desire of the Colombian military to honor and promote democratic principles in their country.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 Andean Counterdrug Initiative

The Department of State's Andean Counterdrug Initiative is designed to sustain and expand programs funded by the FY 2000 emergency supplemental. It addresses potential production, processing, and distribution spillover due to successful Plan Colombia execution. Since the beginning of 2001, we have been working with the Department of State to help develop, prioritize, and validate requirements for partner nation militaries. In each case, although still counterdrug focused, we are seeking to sustain the military contacts focused on professionalization of the armed forces and the specific challenges and security needs within available resources.

Approximately \$100 million of the Andean Counterdrug Initiative will be allocated to support the Colombian military. This funding will be used to sustain the capabilities initiated under the FY 2000 supplemental appropriation, particularly in the areas of training and aviation support for the first CN Brigade, riverine programs, and the Colombia military legal reform program.

Second Counter Narcotics Brigade

Based on the success of the first CN Brigade, the U.S. government is supporting Colombia's request to train and equip a second CN Brigade in FY 2003 for employment elsewhere within the country. The existing CN Brigade has been successful in forcing the drug traffickers to move their operations outside of the Putumayo and Caqueta departments. A second CD Brigade will enable the Colombians to attack the other main coca growing areas to the east of the Andean Ridge or elsewhere in the country.

Using the first CN Brigade as a baseline, we will profit from our experience in training and equipping the second CN Brigade. The second CN Brigade will be made up of approximately 1,700 troops. If approved, using U.S. Special Operations Forces, we could train one battalion per quarter, commencing with the second CN Brigade Staff. This training will continue to emphasize professionalism and human rights requirements. The equipment will include weapons, ammunition, and communications equipment. Additionally, the Department of State's FY 2003 request includes funding to continue sustainment training of the existing CN Brigade.

Infrastructure Security Strategy

In addition to counterdrug assistance, the Administration has proposed to Congress \$98 million, for FY 2003, to help Colombia to enhance the training and equipping of units to protect the Caño Limon-Covenas oil pipeline, one of the most vulnerable elements of their economic infrastructure. The FARC and ELN are active in carrying out attacks against Colombia's energy infrastructure. Attacks on the Caño Limon-Covenas pipeline cost the Government of Colombia more than \$40 million per month in revenues when the pipeline is not operational. During the past year, the pipeline was offline for more than 266 days. In addition, the amount of oil spilled during these attacks is eleven times greater than the Exxon Valdez spill, creating significant

environmental damage. The Administration has included \$6 million in the FY 2002 Supplemental to begin the training. The first unit to be trained for this program will be the recently human rights vetted, Arauca-based Colombian Army 18th Brigade. Subsequent units to be trained for infrastructure security include the 5th Mobile Brigade, designated Colombian National Police units, and Colombian Marines. The Colombian units will also be equipped with weapons and ammunition, vehicles, night vision devices, and communications equipment, as well as a helicopter tactical lift capability for a company-sized quick reaction force. If approved, this training will assist the Colombians to exert effective sovereignty in the Arauca Department, where these attacks primarily occur. Through a comprehensive strategy of reconnaissance and surveillance, offensive and quick reaction operations, the Colombian military will be better able to mitigate the debilitating economic and financial effects of constant attacks on critical infrastructure.

Challenges

Despite extensive eradication in the source zone and successful interdiction in the transit zone, cocaine supply continues to exceed demand. Although Colombia and other partner nations are willing to work with us to counter the production and trafficking of illegal drugs, effective and sustainable counterdrug operations are beyond the capabilities of their thinly stretched security forces. United States counterdrug assistance to security forces helps Colombia and other nations in the region develop more effective counterdrug capabilities; however, drug trafficking organizations have shown considerable flexibility in adjusting their operations in reaction to counterdrug efforts. With Colombia's narcoterrorists increasingly supporting themselves through drug trafficking, it is increasingly difficult for the security forces to sustain a secure environment that allows democratic institutions to fully function, permits political, economic, and social reforms to take hold, and reduces the destabilizing spillover into neighboring countries.

In addition to combating the FARC and its current terror campaign, the Colombian Military must contend on a daily basis with the conventional and terrorist attacks by the ELN and AUC, as well as the drug trafficking organizations. This requires not only the continuous conduct of military and counterdrug operations, but the protection of population centers, critical infrastructure to include electrical towers and power grids, communication towers and facilities, the oil pipelines, dams, roads and bridges. Also, the Colombian military must devote significant resources and manpower to secure the Presidential election process.

Although we have seen great progress through the military portion of the first year of Plan Colombia, the Colombian military still lacks all of the essential resources to create a safe and secure environment in Colombia. As mentioned previously, fundamental security and stability are necessary for the Government of Colombia to remain a viable, legitimate government and for other supporting programs to succeed. U.S. support to the Colombian military is currently restricted to support for counterdrug operations. We are further limited by restrictions on sharing non-counterdrug information with the Colombians. The Colombians are also limited in their use of U.S. provided counterdrug-funded equipment, such as the Plan Colombia helicopters. If enacted, the Administration's FY 2002 supplemental request to expand our authorities in Colombia will provide some relief by lifting these restriction for United States funded equipment, assets, and programs for Colombia. Even, without any additional funding or resources, this authority would allow us to look at the

FARC, (AUC and ELN) not only as drug traffickers, but also as a narco-terrorist organization and to gather and share information on their activities across the board. Additionally, from an interdiction standpoint, again with the assets already provided, instead of attempting to interdict only drugs leaving Colombia, we would be able to look for the arms entering the country, which are fueling the FARC, ELN, and AUC. For Colombia, the expanded authority, if approved, would allow them to use the helicopters we provide and the CN Brigade for missions other than counterdrug.

We support reinstating the Air Bridge Denial Program in Colombia and Peru as an effective means to interdict the flow of drugs, arms and contraband. In the past, this program was very successful in breaking down a critical network of conveyance for the drug traffickers. Furthermore, we know that arms traffickers smuggle weapons to the FARC by air. By incorporating the recommendations of the Beers and Busby reports, we can safely resume U.S. support to the air bridge denial operations and reinforce our commitment to partner nations. As we look to the future, we need to ensure that our efforts are focused on fighting terrorism throughout this hemisphere and on preserving and stabilizing Colombia's democracy. The problem in Colombia is not just about drugs.

Professional Military Education

One of the cornerstones of our security cooperation strategy is to provide the opportunity for professional military education in the United States for students from Latin America and the Caribbean. Our professional military education institutions dedicated to the region provide those opportunities and serve as vital tools in achieving United States strategic objectives in Latin America and the Caribbean. Our professional military education program has been a significant factor in shaping the current leadership in Colombia. All of the members of the current high command in the Colombian military have received training and instruction at United States institutions. With over 2000 Colombian military students graduating from United States schools within the past three years, the Colombian military's receptivity to professionalizing the force and significant progress in respecting human rights and the rule of law is a by product of professional military education opportunities with us. The National Defense University's Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS) at Ft. McNair, Washington, D.C., supports the development of civilian specialists from Latin American and the Caribbean in defense and military matters by providing programs in defense policy planning, resource management, and political and civil-military relations. CHDS significantly enhances the concept of military subordination to civilian authority by training a core of civilian defense specialists who serve in the region's defense ministries and legislatures.

As an element of the Inter-American Defense Board and Organization of American States, the Inter-American Defense College (IADC) provides senior service level professional military education for senior officers, including officers from the United States. The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) at Ft. Benning, Georgia, offers instruction that promotes democratic values, respect for human rights, and regional cooperation. WHINSEC provides an opportunity for regional military and police leaders to receive, in Spanish or English, the same instruction we provide our own Armed Forces. The capstone course at WHINSEC is the yearlong resident Command and Staff Course, which includes approximately 40 per cent United States officers from all services. Concepts and values taught at WHINSEC are continually reaffirmed, as our hemisphere's militaries are increasingly

supportive of democratic values and the subordination of the military to civilian control. The Inter-American Air Force Academy (IAAFA) at Lackland AFB, Texas, and Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) at Stennis, Mississippi provide specialized technical and tactical training on aircraft maintenance and small boat operations to the region's militaries. This training enhances the interoperability and increases the life cycle of U.S. equipment used by countries in the region. For some of these courses and other military schooling, the International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program are critical. We appreciate the continued support of this valuable program. However, in order to reach the future military leaders for Guatemala, we need to remove the prohibitions on junior and field grade officer's attendance of the same professional military training as their U.S. counterparts such as command and staff college and advanced courses.

These and other United States schools produce graduates who make positive contributions to their countries through distinguished military and public service. In many cases, the interpersonal relationships forged during a common educational experience serve as valuable tools for security cooperation while promoting regional stability.

Security Assistance

Security Assistance is an important element of the U.S. national security strategy that fosters and supports cooperative security arrangements. The International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program has been essential to the effort of professional military education and professionalization of the militaries of the region. We appreciate the continued congressional support of this valuable program. Although military expenditures in the region are the lowest in the world, Latin American and Caribbean militaries do have legitimate defense sustainment and modernization requirements. We need the assistance of partner nations in both regional cooperation and in protecting their own borders against terrorism and other transnational threats. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) is a critically important source of equipment and training for resource strapped countries. Against these requirements, Latin America and the Caribbean were allocated in 2002 less than one-tenth of one percent of the annual worldwide FMF program, which although an increase over previous years, was just \$8.7 million. This allocation does not take into account the need to sustain aircraft and other equipment previously provided to our regional partners, nor does it provide for modernization or new initiatives. In light of the security cooperation requirements that exist, the United States has not provided substantive security assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean over the past decade, and this is a region of vital significance to the United States in terms of demographics, trade, natural resources, and proximity.

There may be a perception that the FY 2000 Plan Colombia Emergency Supplemental and the FY 2002 Andean Counterdrug Initiative fully satisfies the requirements for Colombia and neighbor militaries. While these programs are essential, especially for Colombia, they are not concentrated on military assistance, and the assistance provided is counterdrug-related. Limited FMF resources constrain our ability to influence the direction and scope of regional military modernization and enlist the full cooperation of partner nations. Likewise, the capabilities of the militaries within the region could be increased to assume a more active role in security cooperation against transnational threats, disaster response, and peacekeeping.

Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)

Our global war on terrorism continues to reinforce the critical role that a comprehensive ISR posture plays in any operational environment, whether home-based or abroad. Secretary Rumsfeld noted in the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review that: "We cannot and will not know precisely where and when America's interests will be threatened ..." His observation is particularly applicable to the Southern Command area of responsibility, where threats take many forms and are often ambiguous. These threats present a range of intelligence challenges - from tracking terrorist groups and drug trafficking organizations in Colombia to monitoring international criminal and terrorist activities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. The restrictions placed on the use of certain collection assets exacerbate the constraints inherent to the limited availability of intelligence resources in our area of responsibility. Today, most intelligence assets allocated to Southern Command are funded from counterdrug appropriations. Therefore, the employment of these scarce assets is further restricted to supporting only counterdrug operations or force protection of those involved with counterdrug activities. Also, our access agreements on the Forward Operating Locations of Manta, Ecuador, Aruba and Curacao, and Comalapa, El Salvador restrict operations from the FOLs to counterdrug only.

Our ability to assist operations in Colombia is also limited by restrictions on sharing data. We are prohibited from providing intelligence that may be construed as counterinsurgency related. For the operator, it is very difficult to distinguish between the FARC as a drug trafficking organization and the FARC as a terrorist organization and the FARC as an insurgent organization. In my opinion, we have tried to impose artificial boundaries where one no longer exists.

Conclusion

In summary, the United States Southern Command remains committed to providing the assistance needed by Colombia and other partner nations in the region within Congressional authority. We continue to execute operations and activities to enhance the region's militaries, advance democracy, promote regional security, support hemispheric cooperation, foster economic opportunities, promote peace, sustain freedom, and encourage prosperity. Additionally, we will continue to prioritize these activities in areas that offer the greatest leverage for protecting and advancing United States regional and global interests. While Southern Command's priority since September 11 has been on the planning and coordination necessary to execute the global war on terrorism, everything we are doing in Colombia and in the region supports that end. Our efforts in Colombia are not only to fight drugs but also to save democracy in that country and promote security and stability in the Andean Region.

We are seeing progress in our efforts. Although in the past few years the Colombian military has emerged as a much more capable and professional force, they still lack the resources, manpower, airlift and mobility, to re-establish a safe and secure environment throughout the country. Your continued support will help to ensure the stability of Colombia and safeguard U.S. national security interests throughout Latin America and the Caribbean against the transnational threats that concern us all. Thank you for providing me this opportunity to discuss these issues with you today. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have at this time.

As of July 10, 2002, this document was also available online at <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ar/colombia/02042404.htm>