

Paint by Numbers

Trends in U.S. military programs with Latin America & challenges to oversight

Since September 11th, the Bush Administration has moved forcefully to eliminate and scale back the reports required by Congress regarding military programs. Particularly alarming for public and congressional oversight of foreign policy are efforts to curtail reporting on training for foreign militaries. Behind-the-scenes attempts to remove public reports from law are increasing and threatening to reduce transparency over some of the U.S. government's riskiest and most controversial overseas activities.

The administration's version of the National Defense Authorization bill for FY2004, for example, contained a lengthy section entitled "Repeal of Various Reports Required of the Department of Defense." Over the years, Congress established these reports, which cover a wide range of topics, when members believed they needed more information to exercise oversight. The Defense Department justified repeal of these reports with terse explanations that producing a particular report was "overly burdensome" or of "minimal utility." While Congress did not approve the wholesale elimination of reports, these administration approaches forced members of Congress to proactively and in a piecemeal manner defend the informational requirements they still wished to see in place.

The following picture of trends in U.S. military training in Latin America is based primarily upon these congressionally mandated reports, including the annual Foreign Military

Training Report, one of the documents scheduled for the axe but rescued by Congress.¹ The numbers tell an important story.

1. U.S. military and police assistance nearly equals U.S. economic and social assistance to Latin America.

The Bush Administration requested from Congress for FY 2004 a total of \$874 million in military and police assistance to Latin America. For the same year, the administration requested \$946 million in aid for economic and social programs for the region. During the cold war and as late as 1998, military and police aid

Military & Police Aid Nearly Equals Economic & Social Aid

U.S. AID TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, 1997-2004



totals were usually less than half as great as economic and social aid levels; today, the two are nearly equal and in 2000 – the year the “Plan Colombia” aid package was approved – military aid actually exceeded economic aid. While military aid to the region has roughly tripled since the late 1990s, economic aid has grown much more slowly. In fact, the Bush administration’s 2004 request foresees a 5 percent decrease in economic aid from 2003 levels.

Yet the region’s economic realities should not lead to less attention to social aid. The region’s poverty rate, which fell during the 1990s, has begun to rise again, reaching 43% in 2001.² In 2002, per capita income was less than it was five years earlier,³ while the region maintains the highest levels of inequality in the world. Moreover, in some parts of Latin America, people are questioning the benefits of democracy because democratic governments have been unable to deliver a better standard of living for the majority of the population.

While the enormous quantity of military aid to Colombia skews the regional balance between military and social aid, and some Central American nations continue to receive primarily economic aid, a number of other countries receive more security assistance than social aid. Even

peaceful Costa Rica receives slightly more security assistance than social aid, while Argentina, in its deepest recession, received over \$3 million per year in security assistance in 2002, 2003 and the 2004 request, and no bilateral economic aid.

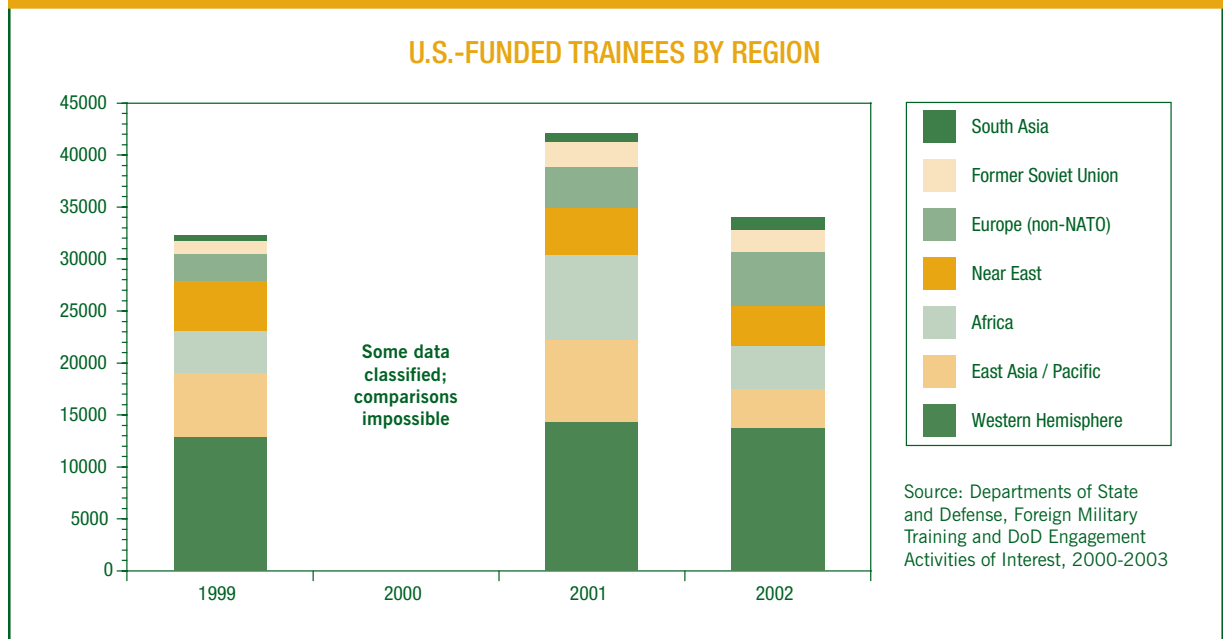
2. The United States trained more soldiers in Latin America than in any other part of the developing world.

The United States funded the training of 13,076 Latin American military personnel in 2002 of a total of 34,013 soldiers worldwide (excluding NATO countries and some training that recipient countries buy themselves).⁴ About 40% of U.S.-funded foreign military training to non-NATO countries goes to Latin America. Colombia was the world’s largest recipient of U.S. training in 2001 and 2002.

3. Over half of all U.S. military training in Latin America is counternarcotics related—but that distinction is increasingly unimportant.

Counternarcotics is still the primary rationale for U.S.-sponsored foreign military training in Latin America. However, the counternarcotics

Latin America Accounts for 40 Percent of U.S.-Funded Trainees





law from funding foreign military training until 1991, when Congress clarified the department’s “primary responsibility” for detecting and monitoring drugs coming into the United States. Foreign military training programs had traditionally been funded only through State Department-managed appropriations governed by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

In theory and in practice, this allowed for State Department oversight of training programs, which are an important element of foreign policy. For specific foreign policy reasons, over the years, extensive restrictions were placed on

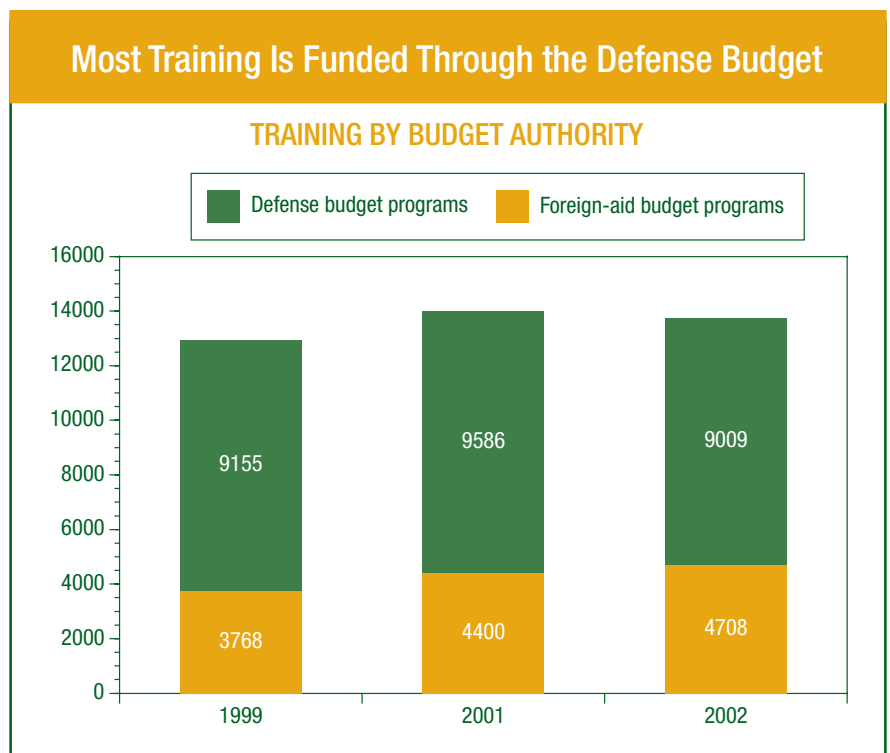
category is less meaningful given the “mission expansion” included in law in 2002, which permits U.S. counternarcotics aid for Colombia to be used for counterterrorism purposes.⁵ In addition, courses paid for by counternarcotics accounts frequently teach skills that are not specific to counternarcotics operations. For example, many of the courses for Peru and Bolivia involve aircraft, helicopter, and patrol boat skills.

foreign assistance and military training programs, including human rights restrictions, prohibitions on aid to governments resulting from military coups, bans on military assistance to specific countries with poor human rights records, and restrictions on police training, among others. Programs funded through the

Traditional military training programs, such as the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, are still significant. Of the 15,039 trained, 22% participated in the IMET program, which allows U.S. military engagement with almost every country in the hemisphere.

4. Two thirds—66%—of all U.S. military training for Latin America is paid for through the defense budget, which results in less oversight.

This is a significant shift in how military training programs are funded. With the exception of Special Forces training, the Defense Department was prohibited by



Defense Department are not subject to the human rights and democracy conditions in the Foreign Assistance Act or similar provisions in the foreign aid appropriations bill, although some more limited restrictions do apply.

This may seem like a legalistic distinction, but the congressional committees overseeing the State Department's budget have been more attuned to human rights, country issues and other specific foreign policy considerations than the defense committees. This shift in funding gives U.S. diplomats and congressional committees responsible for overseeing foreign aid less control and influence over U.S. military training in this hemisphere. And it does so as these programs are increasing in scope.

5. Colombia was the top recipient of U.S. military training in the world, with 6,477 soldiers trained in 2002.

Colombia was by far the top recipient of U.S.-funded military training in 2002, with 3.6 times the number of soldiers trained with U.S. funding than the second-ranking country, Thailand. Japan purchased considerable quantities of training.

Training given to Colombian soldiers covered a range of topics, from helicopter maintenance to light infantry training to physical training. While some rule of law/human rights courses were offered and some courses specifically

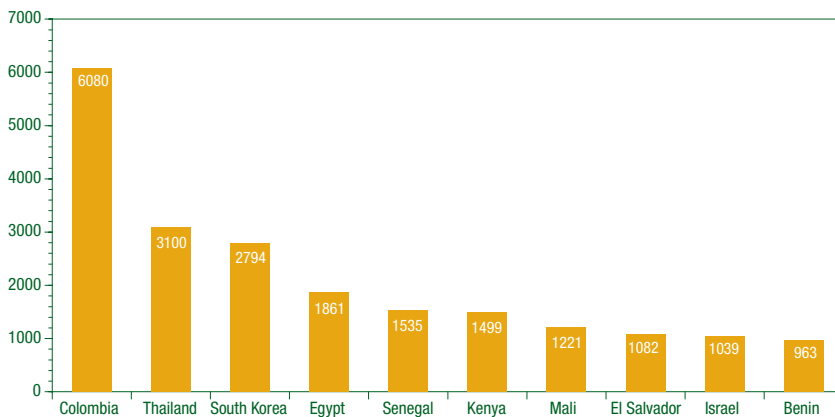
focused on counternarcotics, by far the majority of courses were standard military training. While 13 students took a course entitled "Human Rights Instructor," 17 enrolled in "Rule of Law and Military Discipline," and 15 enrolled in "Counterdrug Operations," 2,700 students received Light Infantry training.

The Foreign Military Training Report, which includes information on the names of foreign military units trained, also provides part of the information necessary to track compliance with U.S. laws such as the Leahy Law, which forbids funding for units of foreign militaries implicated in serious human rights violations. This is particularly important in the Colombian case, where the State Department, the United Nations and international human rights organizations have documented serious abuses by the Colombian military, particularly collusion with paramilitary forces engaged in grave violations.

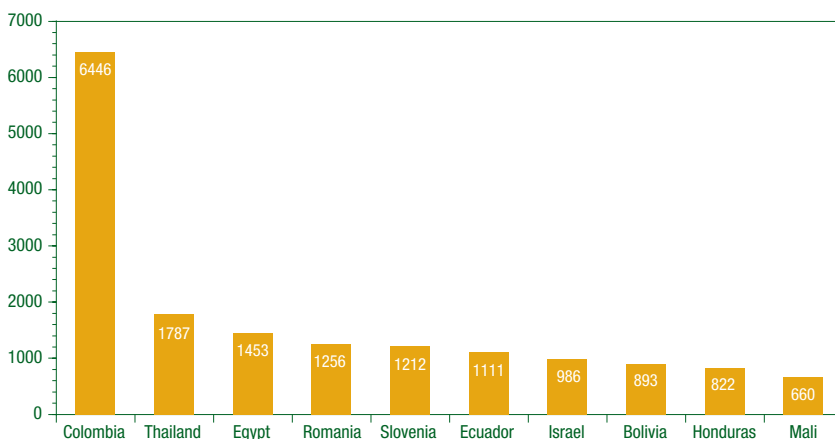
The definition of "unit" is a noteworthy issue where training is concerned, and Colombia is a critical case. While the State

Colombia Is the World's Largest Grant Training Recipient

TOP TEN TRAINEES, 2001



TOP TEN TRAINEES, 2002



Department subjects entire brigades to scrutiny when considering Colombian military units' eligibility for arms transfers, the "unit" whose human rights record is considered for potential training is nothing more than the individual to be trained. As a result – and as the FMTR reveals – the United States routinely trains "clean" individuals from Colombian Army units with long records of human rights abuse. (Though the FMTR too often lists Colombian recipient units simply as "Army," a few examples from 2002 of units that face serious human rights allegations are the 3rd Brigade based in Cali, the 7th Brigade based in Meta, and the Bogotá-based Intelligence Directorate.)

6. Over half of Humanitarian and Civic Assistance spending is directed towards Latin America.

The Humanitarian and Civic Assistance program trains U.S. reserve and other U.S. military personnel by constructing schools, digging wells and providing medical clinics. Latin America accounted for 58% of the overseas spending worldwide on these programs, with 31% spent in Central America alone.

While HCA helps to meet local needs, it provides services more appropriately carried out by civilian agencies. In post-conflict societies

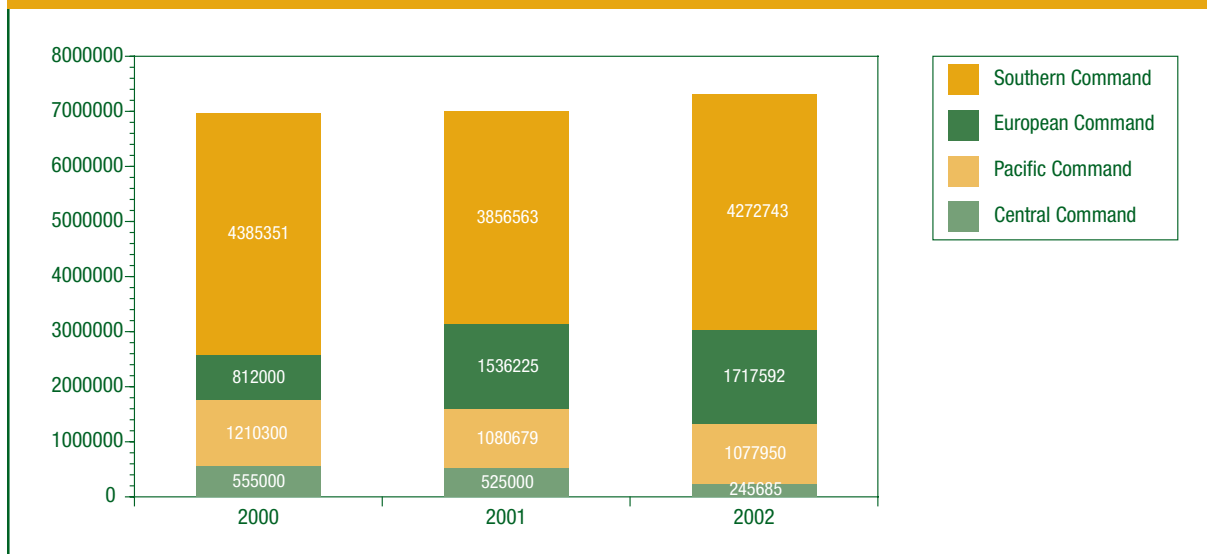
like Central America, HCA programs send an inappropriate message that turning to the military is the best way to "get things done" in your community. With minimal U.S. funding through development agencies, these same services could be provided through host country civilian agencies and nongovernmental organizations, at the same time strengthening local civilian capacity.

7. The U.S. military trains civilian police forces in Latin America.

The U.S. military trains considerable numbers of police in Latin America. Over half of the recipients of U.S. military training in 2002 in Peru were police. The U.S. military also provides training to police forces in countries without militaries, such as Panama and Costa Rica.

Police and military roles are carefully distinguished in the United States. The police protect and serve the civilian population using minimal force, with careful regulations, and with attention to civil liberties. The military, of course, is trained to defeat an external enemy with overwhelming force, and is governed by the more limited laws of war. The U.S. military should not promote roles or functions for foreign militaries that are prohibited in the United

Latin America Accounts for the Bulk of HCA Programs



Important Reports to Congress on U.S. Military Assistance

- **Foreign Military Training and DoD Engagement Activities of Interest:** Details funding for training in each country, as well as the numbers of military personnel trained, the courses given, and the foreign policy justification for carrying out the training. (<http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rpt/fmtrpt/>)
- **Congressional Budget Justifications for Foreign Operations:** The annual aid request, includes general information about most military aid and sales programs. (<http://www.state.gov/m/rm/rls/cbj/>)
- **Congressional Budget Justifications for the State Department Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs:** A more detailed description of the program that is the largest single source of security assistance to the Americas. (<http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/rpt/cbj/>)
- **U.S. State Department International Narcotics Control Strategy Report:** More information about U.S. anti-narcotics programs worldwide. (<http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/nrcrpt/>)
- **“Section 655” arms transfers report:** Details the contents of arms sales worldwide. (<http://www.pmdtc.org/>)
- **“Section 2011” report on Special Operations Forces training deployments:** Usually classified; covers the controversial Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program.
- **Report on past year’s activities of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation:** Covers the former School of the Americas.
- **Report on the Humanitarian and Civic Assistance program:** Issued by March 1 of each year, listing the countries in which these activities take place, types of activities, and amount spent.

States, as is the case with both humanitarian and civic assistance and police training.

Transparency Matters

If current reports on U.S. military programs with the hemisphere are eliminated, the public’s ability to understand the U.S. military relationship with the hemisphere will be curtailed and civilian oversight over important programs will be weakened.

The picture painted by these numbers is not available without reports required by the Congress like the Foreign Military Training Report. Without such reports, the Congress and the public would not know even the most basic facts about U.S. military programs, such as how many soldiers are being trained in a given

country, with which funding source, and in which courses.

For military programs funded through the State Department and the Foreign Assistance Act, a certain degree of mandatory public reporting has been the norm. Some of the reporting is required by law, but there is also a strong tradition of reporting because foreign aid programs are controversial in Congress. Therefore, the State Department provides information about these programs to explain and defend them. The Defense Department’s budget and programs do not receive the same degree of scrutiny and thus the Department routinely does not provide the same level of information on its programs.

Oversight is essential to ensure an efficient and effective use of budget resources. It is also

U.S. Aid to Latin America and the Caribbean, 1996-2004 (Last updated 7/10/03)

	1996		1997		1998		1999		2000		2001		2002		2003, est.		2004, req.	
	Mil/Police	Econ/Soc	Mil/Police	Econ/Soc	Mil/Police	Econ/Soc	Mil/Police	Econ/Soc	Mil/Police	Econ/Soc	Mil/Police	Econ/Soc	Mil/Police	Econ/Soc	Mil/Police	Econ/Soc	Mil/Police	Econ/Soc
Argentina	9.50	0.00	1.62	0.00	6.06	0.00	7.78	0.00	1.42	0.00	2.11	0.00	3.01	0.00	3.56	0.00	3.16	0.00
Bahamas	0.53	0.15	1.10	0.19	0.90	0.06	1.28	0.30	2.44	0.20	2.92	0.06	2.86	0.06	2.69	0.05	2.57	0.05
Belize	0.33	1.02	0.39	0.98	0.70	1.02	0.54	1.23	0.40	1.28	0.82	1.40	0.68	1.46	0.74	1.56	0.67	1.68
Bolivia	13.27	64.93	17.95	76.89	33.81	65.85	41.93	75.82	48.98	159.77	35.12	73.33	51.89	105.67	52.98	108.96	54.82	81.01
Brazil	0.20	4.68	3.46	12.66	5.82	10.90	2.17	13.65	5.20	12.87	20.66	15.40	6.44	14.42	15.37	19.00	21.29	20.73
Chile	0.62	1.65	0.51	1.13	17.48	0.69	0.93	0.00	0.88	0.00	1.42	0.00	1.26	0.00	3.08	0.00	5.08	0.00
Colombia	54.15	0.62	88.56	0.00	112.44	0.52	308.81	8.75	765.32	214.31	224.68	5.65	371.74	120.30	605.25	137.70	552.59	135.70
Costa Rica	0.20	1.94	0.33	1.08	0.45	0.66	0.70	0.41	2.91	0.50	1.53	0.49	1.14	0.90	1.38	1.19	1.38	1.37
Dominican Republic	0.52	14.60	1.39	14.11	1.76	16.04	2.02	29.10	1.55	16.70	1.78	23.54	2.36	21.40	1.88	26.21	1.88	30.34
Eastern Caribbean	9.72	0.00	3.07	0.00	3.55	0.00	2.09	0.00	2.55	0.00	3.30	0.00	3.42	0.00	3.58	0.00	3.45	0.00
Ecuador	0.76	12.14	2.76	14.84	5.27	12.48	12.24	17.25	24.43	24.19	18.71	16.37	31.37	36.76	29.72	46.18	48.66	39.89
El Salvador	0.54	27.22	0.62	32.04	0.78	38.13	0.55	36.48	3.98	36.96	2.94	55.04	8.92	88.96	7.72	36.49	7.22	38.16
Guatemala	1.53	29.61	2.16	53.89	2.85	64.36	3.12	80.20	3.25	63.25	3.27	57.76	3.55	64.53	2.70	57.60	3.12	50.87
Guyana	0.29	2.99	0.30	3.46	0.31	4.02	0.32	3.71	0.32	4.20	0.53	5.37	0.53	5.18	0.81	4.45	0.51	6.16
Haiti	3.25	123.50	0.50	95.95	0.94	104.03	0.55	88.38	1.14	78.99	2.93	73.33	2.09	55.52	2.22	49.06	2.30	54.75
Honduras	0.50	27.37	0.72	28.14	2.92	25.77	0.90	85.92	0.87	33.45	1.17	35.82	1.08	40.12	1.07	44.60	1.07	45.76
Jamaica	1.35	13.44	1.49	13.23	2.60	13.29	2.48	12.42	1.97	14.86	1.62	15.56	2.78	16.67	2.58	19.52	2.77	19.57
Mexico	3.38	2.74	79.04	16.27	26.08	10.78	21.24	9.33	16.62	16.31	27.54	20.71	51.70	23.85	26.84	31.02	51.52	29.95
Nicaragua	0.00	22.08	0.06	27.30	0.07	31.92	0.20	54.40	0.20	31.49	0.39	35.03	0.96	45.65	0.99	40.57	0.99	44.81
Panama	0.00	4.98	2.38	4.09	2.59	4.70	3.60	6.37	5.61	6.30	2.04	6.92	11.35	11.14	8.64	13.01	13.85	12.88
Paraguay	0.19	4.15	1.23	8.11	0.74	9.25	0.51	7.88	0.39	9.10	0.54	12.97	0.60	12.85	0.54	13.54	0.54	13.34
Peru	27.85	80.88	34.18	93.34	38.32	106.53	39.62	115.75	57.63	107.08	25.47	108.63	78.25	160.67	64.58	147.17	71.27	115.08
Suriname	0.15	0.73	0.15	0.80	0.08	0.75	0.10	0.86	0.16	0.89	0.13	0.74	0.33	0.84	0.44	0.93	0.34	1.02
Trinidad and Tobago	0.36	0.00	0.57	0.00	2.63	0.00	0.37	0.00	0.89	0.00	0.95	0.00	0.84	0.00	1.07	0.00	0.97	0.00
Uruguay	1.38	1.20	0.35	0.68	1.20	0.00	1.60	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.64	0.00	1.59	0.00	1.57	0.00	1.57	0.00
Venezuela	13.01	0.10	5.76	0.05	7.18	0.41	4.01	0.08	6.48	0.58	3.18	0.20	5.50	2.12	3.80	0.92	4.85	2.75
Regional Programs	17.46	104.31	19.37	85.90	20.73	114.61	37.41	135.07	21.21	122.57	23.44	132.56	27.69	137.02	30.04	201.56	17.30	200.62
TOTAL	161.04	547.01	270.02	585.15	298.26	636.76	497.07	783.35	976.50	955.82	409.83	696.87	680.25	966.10	901.07	1,001.30	873.82	946.49

necessary to ensure that military programs meet foreign policy objectives. While the Defense Department seeks to cultivate strong relationships with foreign militaries through training and aid programs, it is essential to ensure that these programs do not undercut other vital foreign policy objectives. In Latin America, these objectives include strengthening human rights and the rule of law, and strengthening civilian control over militaries in a region in which weak civilian oversight has been endemic.

Endnotes

- ¹ Department of Defense and Department of State, *Foreign Military Training in Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003, Joint Report to Congress*, Vol. I, 31 January 2003. Training information in this paper is drawn from this report.
- ² Inter-American Development Bank, Annual Report 2002, Washington, DC, January 2003, p. 8.
- ³ Ibid, p. 1.
- ⁴ There is a classified volume of the Foreign Military Training Report, which might affect these numbers.
- ⁵ This was included first in the FY2002 supplemental appropriations bill and then in the FY03 foreign aid appropriations bill. The Bush Administration actually proposed allowing all counternarcotics aid to Latin America, not just to Colombia, to be used for counterterrorism in the FY04 National Defense Authorization bill, but this expansion was not accepted by Congress.

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For a comprehensive database of U.S. military programs with Latin America and the Caribbean, see "Just the Facts," a joint project of the Latin America Working Group Education Fund and the Center for International Policy, at www.ciponline.org/facts

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