

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE NEED FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES INVOLVEMENT IN THE ANDEAN
REGION'S COUNTER DRUG EFFORTS**

by

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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ABSTRACT

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Department of Defense officials have identified the need to redirect resources to the War on terrorism while scaling back its efforts to fight the international drug problems across the globe. The National Defense Authorization Act of 1989 designated the Department of Defense as the "single lead agency" for detection and monitoring of illegal drug shipments into the United States. Since that time, the Department of Defense has acted in concert with the Office of National Drug Control Policy by providing Special Operations Forces to assist the governments of the Andean Region with their counter drug efforts. The illegal drug problem impacts the region's stability and security, and poses a threat to the interests of the United States in the Western Hemisphere. The elimination of Special Operations Forces and the reduction of the military assistance to the counter drug efforts in Colombia and other Andean Region countries reduces their ability to counter the threats caused by illegal drug production in the region. Department of Defense involvement is critical for successful counter drug efforts in a region of vital interest to the United States.

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THE NEED FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES INVOLVEMENT IN THE ANDEAN REGION'S COUNTERDRUG EFFORTS

Even before the attacks of 11 September 2001, senior Department of Defense (DOD) officials, including Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, voiced their lack of enthusiasm for the anti-drug mission, which they believe is better handled by civilian agencies. Before becoming secretary, Rumsfeld described military efforts to stop drugs as “nonsense” and stated during his Senate confirmation hearing in January 2001, that drugs were a demand problem which can be solved only when Americans quit using them.¹ Citing the need to redirect resources to the war on terrorism, DOD has decided to scale back its effort to combat international drug trafficking. Andre Hollis, Deputy Assistant Defense Secretary for Counter-Narcotics, stated that the Defense Department wants to reduce deployments of special operations troops on counter-narcotics missions so they can be utilized in terrorism-related missions. Mr. Hollis also states that DOD wants to double up on the use of the intelligence gathering equipment so it can be used against the narco-traffickers and international terrorists in the War on Terrorism (WOT).²

The US cannot divert Special Operations Forces (SOFs) and other military assets assisting Latin American governments to combat the illegal drug problem to the WOT, without risking the status of fledgling democracies in Latin America. One of the gravest threats to the US strategic objectives in the Western Hemisphere is the illegal drug problem of the region. This problem is associated with threats to democracy, terrorism, and international crime throughout Latin America. These problems impose security problems not only on nearly every country from Mexico south to Bolivia, but on the United States as well. These threats are found in close proximity to the US and are included in “our own backyard”, the Western Hemisphere. The Unified Command responsible for Homeland Defense, United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), is faced with serious threats to the security of the US, and these threats originate on the southern flank of USNORTHCOM.

Today, Cuba is the only communist-ruled country in the region, but the region is saturated with countries supporting young democracies, which can be influenced by the forces acting within the region. Colombia's situation is the most dangerous because their democracy is under direct attack. Leftist guerilla groups and right-wing paramilitary forces challenge the democratically elected government. Both groups support themselves largely through income received by illegal drug trafficking. All countries bordering Colombia suffer from the threats of narco-traffickers, guerrillas, and paramilitaries and the spread of their violence. These countries

currently do not have the capability to stop the flow of violence traveling across their borders from Colombia. Only with US provided training can the countries of the region defend against this spread of violence. Without US assistance, these threats have the potential to threaten the governments of the surrounding countries, creating destabilization across the region.

The countries of the region are all impacted by the struggle ongoing in Colombia today. With US assistance, they must work together to defeat the threats acting in the region today. Venezuela is opposed to US domination in the region. Venezuela's president, Hugo Chavez, has made high profile visits to Cuba and Iraq and has been accused of providing support to the leftist guerrillas in Colombia. Throughout the 1990s, Peru made exceptional progress in combating terrorism and reducing the production of coca. The US must continue to strengthen Peru's fragile democracy. The overriding US national interest in Peru is to promote genuine democracy and to maintain Peruvian cooperation in combating narcotics trafficking. In Ecuador, corruption and rising crime continue to erode Ecuadorian confidence in a fragile democratic system of government. Situated in the middle of Latin America's most turbulent region, Ecuador plays a key role to US interests in the region. A democratic and secure Ecuador can assist in stabilizing the Andean Region, curbing the spread of narcotrafficking, terrorism and violence. In Brazil, US foreign policy priorities must support democracy and counter-narcotics efforts. A stable democracy is a necessary condition for continued success in combating narcotics production and trafficking. Key US interests in Panama include regional cooperation on drug trafficking, supporting democracy, and increasing security in the country. The scaling back of U.S military assistance in the Andean Region will increase instability in the region and heighten the risk to the US caused by the influx of illegal drugs into the US.

The Secretary of Defense should not decrease efforts to counter the illegal drug trade in the Andean Region. More specifically, the Secretary of Defense should continue to provide the required US military assistance to the Government of Colombia (GOC) to help Colombia not only defeat the drug traffickers, but also to defeat the insurgency threats in order to preserve its democratic government. The stability of the Andean Region hinges on controlling the spread of violence caused by the narcotraffickers, guerrillas, and paramilitaries working within Colombia and bordering countries. The US must continue to provide the necessary assistance to countries of the Andean Region, or run the risk of facing a larger threat in the future.

US military assistance provided by SOFs would allow Latin American governments to gain the upper hand against the spread of violence caused by illegal drug trafficking. Actions taken now, through Plan Colombia and the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI), will help prevent far greater and more costly problems in the future. Cooperation to reduce the impact of illegal drug

production is important for US homeland security and long-term US interests in the region. Neglecting this region today and its impact upon US strategic interests will create a situation similar to the one the US experienced in Latin America in the 1980s when El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru were involved in fending off anti-government insurgencies; Nicaragua and Cuba were run by communist rulers; Chile and Argentina were ruled by military dictators; and Haiti was ruled by a repressive dictator.

The National Defense Authorization Act of 1989 designated DOD as the “single lead agency” for the detection and monitoring of illicit drug shipments into the United States³. Since that time, DOD has acted in concert with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) by providing US military assistance to both foreign and US police forces and foreign armed forces to assist in their fight against the international drug problem. The United States is faced with dual challenges in the Andean Region, see FIGURE 1,



FIGURE 1. MAP OF THE ANDEAN REGION

the first being the illegal drug trade in Colombia and the adverse impact illegal drugs have upon both the United States and the region. Impacts on the US include: costs of drug related violence, increased crime rate, economic costs of the illegal drug problem including health care costs and loss in productivity caused by illegal drugs, and the threat to the US caused by the

instability in the region. The impact the illegal drug trade has upon the region involves the internal struggles in Colombia between illegal drug traffickers and insurgents against the government, posing a serious threat to the democratic state of Colombia and to neighboring countries. The illegal drug production in the Andean Region has a significant impact upon the security of the US and the Andean Region. The potential for this unrest to spill over into countries bordering Colombia is real and must be eliminated. Due to these threats posed by the illegal drug traffickers and insurgents, the benefit of keeping US SOFs involved in the counter drug fight outweighs the risk of allowing this problem to go unchecked.

US DRUG PROBLEM

Today the US faces an alarming illegal drug problem that requires the government to expend a significant amount of resources to combat this problem. According to the ONDCP, more than 14 million Americans buy illegal drugs and use them at least monthly while spending over \$60 billion annually.⁴ Drug-related violence causes an increase in the crime rate across the country and leads to the decay of many major metropolitan areas in the US. There are more than one million drug arrests in the US each year, and over half of all individuals arrested in the US test positive for drug use. In 2001, the ONDCP produced a report entitled, "The Economic Costs of Drug Abuse in America, 1992-1998", which outlines the economic costs incurred by the US due to illegal drugs. Table 1 displays the data presented in the report, and shows the economic costs associated with offsetting the effects of the illegal drug problem in the US during the years 1992-1998. The resultant health care costs caused by illegal drugs rose 2.9 percent annually from 1992 to 1998.⁵ The productivity loss due to illegal drugs from 1992 to 1998 amounted to a 6.0 percent annual increase in cost.⁶ The resultant crime-related costs caused by illegal drugs rose at an annual increase of 6.5 percent from 1992 to 1998. In addition, there are other related costs which include the costs of the criminal justice system, costs of reducing the supply of drugs, and the social welfare costs. As depicted in Table 2, these other related costs rose at a 6.6 percent annual increase from 1992 to 1998. In 1998, \$232,400 billion was spent to combat the effects of illegal drugs in the US.

Cost Category	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Health Care Costs	\$10,800	\$11,100	\$11,300	\$11,300	\$11,400	\$12,100	\$12,900
Productivity Losses	\$69,400	\$78,100	\$82,700	\$88,100	\$92,400	\$94,500	\$98,500
Other Related Costs	\$21,900	\$22,400	\$24,400	\$27,100	\$27,400	\$30,500	\$32,100
Crime Related Costs	\$60,800	\$63,800	\$67,500	\$72,400	\$78,100	\$86,500	\$88,900
Total	\$162,900	\$175,400	\$185,900	\$133,900	\$209,300	\$223,600	\$232,400

TABLE 1: OVERALL COSTS OF DRUG ABUSE, 1992-1998 (IN BILLIONS OF DOLLARS)

In 1998, the DOD budget was \$250,700 billion, and the economic cost of drug abuse was equivalent to 93 percent of the DOD budget for the year.⁷ This money spent on dealing with the effects of illegal drug use in the US would otherwise support legitimate spending, savings, or investment in the US economy.⁸ The total amount of the 1998 DOD Budget allocated for US military support to shield the US from the influx of illegal drugs and to assist source nations in their fight against illegal drug traffickers amounted to \$637 million dollars.⁹ This computes to a mere 0.3 percent of the total 1998 DOD Budget. The effort to reduce the impact of illegal drugs upon the United States should be spared no resources, and the allocation of such a small percentage of the total budget would be an investment worth making in an effort to reduce the impact of narcotraffickers upon the US and the region. DOD's efforts in Latin America must focus on assisting host nations reduce the production and trafficking of illegal drugs.

According to ONDCP, in the year 2000, Americans consumed over 259 metric tons of cocaine and 13 metric tons of heroin, valued at over \$45 billion.¹⁰ The illegal drug market generates huge profits, which enables the growth of international criminal organizations. The profits raised by these illegal organizations enable them to extend their reach into local neighborhoods, legitimate businesses, and even national governments.¹¹ The money obtained

through the production of illegal drugs allows the illegal drug traffickers to successfully evade and compete with legitimate law enforcement agencies and even to challenge the authority of national governments.¹² The illegal drug business has a negative impact on the US and has the potential to threaten the governments of other countries if left unchecked.

US NATIONAL COUNTER DRUG STRATEGY

An important goal of the US government's drug control strategy is to reduce the flow of illegal drugs into the US. The problems experienced in the US as a result of the influx of illegal drugs pose a threat to the well-being and the moral fiber of the country. The 2002 National Counter Drug Strategy is built upon three distinct principles designed to reduce the impact of illegal drugs upon the United States. The first principle focuses on efforts to stop drug use before it starts and involves education and community action to make people aware of the dangers of drug use. In the 2002 National Drug Control Strategy, the United States Government (USG) budgeted for \$892 million to be spent promoting efforts to stop drug use before it starts.¹³ The second principle concerns healing America's drug users and involves strategically locating treatment resources where they are needed. The USG budgeted for \$236 million to be spent to heal America's drug users.¹⁴ The third principle of the 2002 National Drug Control Strategy involves DOD and other governmental agencies and their efforts to disrupt the flow and reduce the impact of illegal drugs upon the US.¹⁵ This third principle is accomplished through cooperative efforts with friendly governments targeting the source of illegal drugs. Coca, the raw material used to make cocaine, is produced in large quantities in the Andean Region of South America. Much of the heroin which arrives in the US is also produced in this same region. The coca industry flourishes in areas lacking adequate law enforcement. With the assistance of the US, source countries can make an impact on the production of illegal drugs by regaining control of the drug producing areas through a governmental presence providing security for the local populace and an effective law enforcement branch willing to fight the corrupt and powerful narcotraffickers. In 2002, The USG budgeted for over one billion dollars to be spent reducing the supply of illegal drugs entering the US.¹⁶ As illustrated above, the majority of the efforts outlined in the 2002 National Counter Drug Strategy focus on the problems within the US, but the strategy also outlines specific efforts the US will undertake while working with participating nations to attack the illegal drug traffickers in source countries. Two major efforts, Plan Colombia and the Andean Counterdrug Initiative, are key aspects of the triad and are directed against the illegal drug production and trafficking in the Andean Region. The initial

focus of both programs is Colombia, with the Andean Counterdrug Initiative also involving countries surrounding Columbia.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INVOLVEMENT

US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) controls the US military's relationship with the countries of the Andean Region. The mission of USSOUTHCOM is:

To shape the environment within its area of responsibility by conducting theater engagement and counterdrug activities in order to promote democracy, stability, and collective approaches to threats to regional security; when required responds unilaterally or multilaterally to crises that threaten regional stability or national interests, and prepares to meet future hemispheric challenges.¹⁷

USSOUTHCOM's role in the US counterdrug strategy supports operations in both the source zone and the transit zone. The source zone includes the Andean Region focusing primarily on the countries of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia as the largest drug producing countries. The transit zone includes the transit routes from the source countries to the US and includes the areas of Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. The type of military support USSOUTHCOM provides to the countries of the region includes: detection and monitoring, information sharing, logistics support, communications, planning assistance, and training and equipping.¹⁸ US action does not include assistance in direct action against narcotraffickers or insurgents.

The USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan consists of three phases. Phase I occurred during the years 2000 through 2002 and assisted the participating nations of the region to enhance their capabilities to fight illegal drug production and trafficking in the source zone. US contributions during Phase I assisted participating nations enhance their capabilities by building interdiction capabilities, establishing operational and tactical lift, and building and improving infrastructure. Phase II runs from 2002 through 2007 and supports decisive regional operations countering the illegal drug trafficking. This is accomplished through the destruction of drug labs, interdiction of drug traffickers, destruction of drug trafficking rings, and the seizure of illegal drugs. Phase III occurs during the years 2007 through 2010 and involves sustainment of the accomplishments of counterdrug operations to date. This includes upgrading equipment used in operations, continuing interdiction operations, and continuing the training of participating nation forces involved in counterdrug operations.¹⁹ The USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan

recognizes the importance of US involvement and is committed to supporting the counterdrug efforts in the Andean Region through 2010.

DOD is committed to supporting air, ground, and riverine counterdrug operations conducted by participating nation forces. US assistance is required to effectively counter the well-financed narcotraffickers in source country and transit zone operations. SOFs are used to train participating nations' police forces and armed forces in the region. US soldiers are also used to operate ground based radar, fly monitoring aircraft, and provide intelligence support assisting participating countries of the region in their counterdrug efforts. The air surveillance capability provided by DOD uses the Hemispheric Radar System (HRS) and Relocatable Over-the Horizon Radar (ROTHR), as well as surveillance aircraft operating from Forward Operating Locations (FOLs).²⁰ The majority of aerial interdiction missions are planned, coordinated, and supervised by USSOUTHCOM's Joint interagency Task Force East located in Key West, Florida.

Since 1993, the US interdiction efforts focused on attacking the problem in the source countries of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. During the years 1994 to 1998, the focus of US support was to assist Colombia to modernize its Armed Forces and the Colombian National Police (CNP). Once initiated, these efforts expanded to assist Colombia with efforts to close the air bridge between the drug producers in Peru and Bolivia and the drug processors in Colombia. The plan achieved some tactical success by reducing production in Peru and Bolivia, but this success shifted the growing of illegal drugs into southern Colombia.²¹

This crisis places Colombia as a top priority for assistance in the Andean Region. Colombia is currently involved in an internal struggle, fighting narcotraffickers, guerrillas, and paramilitaries, while trying to preserve democracy in the country. This struggle involves the GOC, the left-wing insurgents, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Army of National Liberation (ELN), and the right-wing paramilitary United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). The FARC and ELN are not only fighting the GOC, but they are also active in the illegal drug trade present across Colombia today. If Colombia is not capable of defeating current threats, the US may face an anti-western government in the future, providing a safe haven for drug dealers and terrorists.

The number of US personnel authorized in Colombia to work counter narcotics efforts is limited by the US Congress to 800: 400 military and 400 civilian personnel. At no time are US forces authorized to engage in direct action against the FARC, ELN, or the AUC. The US assistance involves training or support operations and falls into the following categories: training and equipping of special Colombian counter narcotics battalions; crop eradication and police

aid; intelligence gathering; and air, riverine, and ground interdiction. The personnel responsible for providing this training are predominantly special operations forces consisting of Army Special Forces teams, Navy SEAL teams, and 6th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) instructor pilots, flight engineers, and gunners. The forces required to augment the Colombian Joint Intelligence Center in southern Colombia requires a large number of US intelligence analysts and linguists. The exact number of US analysts and linguists is unknown, but it is estimated to include portions of a military intelligence battalion, totaling approximately 100 personnel.²²

In Colombia, US military aid is substantially greater than the other countries in the region. More specifically, DOD will provide material support and technical assistance to aid in the training of counterdrug units in the Colombian Army. This includes the utilization of US military advisors to train the elite units of the Colombian Army and funding to outfit and arm these units. In addition, the US will provide helicopters, spare parts, and maintenance services to Colombian Armed Forces. DOD agencies will provide communications and intelligence training, and equipment for the Armed Forces of Colombia to fight the drug production and trafficking in the region.²³

In 1999, the US trained more than 13,000 Latin American military personnel. Over the next two years, that figure increased significantly due to the fact that the US trained numerous counter narcotics battalions in Colombia.²⁴ US military assistance, specifically training conducted by US SOFs, was designed to modernize and expand the capabilities of the Armed Forces and the National Police. One specific example included the train-up of 2,800 soldiers of a Colombian Army Brigade designed especially for counterdrug operations. The use of helicopters provided by the US gives this brigade airmobile capability and it is now better prepared and equipped to impact the battle against the illegal drug traffickers. The illegal drug production occurs predominantly in the sparsely populated Province of Putumayo, in southern Colombia. The ability to rapidly deploy forces into the area is critical to the success of any counter narcotics operation. The success of this unit included the destruction of hundreds of cocaine base laboratories, seizures of thousands of gallons of chemicals essential for processing coca paste into cocaine, and the destruction of a 40 kilometer jungle road used for trafficking illegal drugs and chemicals.²⁵ Plans for the creation of a second brigade are ongoing and will allow the Colombian Army (COLAR) to conduct simultaneous counterdrug operations in two different locations.²⁶

The Colombian National Police (CNP) Anti-narcotics Directorate (DIRAN), with US support provided by Plan Colombia, conducted aerial coca eradication in the Putumayo Province, the largest area of coca cultivation in Colombia. The success of this eradication

resulted in the reduction of coca cultivation in Putumayo Province from 66,022 hectares in 2000, down to 47,120 hectares in 2001. This represents a 29 percent decrease in coca cultivation in the largest coca-producing province in Colombia.²⁷ The success of the countrywide eradication program reflected similar results. The United Nations' Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP) produced a report that showed a decline in the Colombian coca cultivation from 163,000 hectares in August 2000 to 145,000 hectares in November 2001. This decline of 18,000 hectares equates to an 11 percent reduction in coca cultivation in Colombia in 2001.²⁸

Prior to receiving US training, the Colombian Army was poorly trained, poorly equipped, and an ineffective fighting force. US military advisors trained the COLAR's elite counterdrug units and have made specific units better trained and equipped to fight the narcotraffickers. Military aid and assistance provided by the US has enabled the COLAR to become more efficient in the areas of tactical and operational effectiveness, increased professionalism, and human rights awareness.²⁹ US training led to the development of Colombia's military into a professional organization operating under the control of a civilian government. U.S involvement with the Colombian armed forces continues to build upon the principles of democracy while simultaneously discouraging the Colombian Armed Forces from cooperating with the paramilitaries to counter the FARC and the ELN. Successful operations conducted by the government of Colombia against the narcotraffickers will impact the amount of drugs reaching the United States. The US objective is to enhance the capabilities of Colombia and other participating nations to reduce the impact and threats of the narcotraffickers, guerrilla forces, and paramilitaries that operate freely in the region. By accomplishing this objective, US assistance will reduce the flow of illegal drugs into the US and protect democracies throughout the region.

Due to the amount of drug production and trafficking in Colombia, the aid provided through the Andean Counterdrug Initiative provides countries bordering Colombia resources to assist in their efforts to secure the common borders with Colombia. The violence associated with groups involved with illegal drug trafficking such as narcotraffickers, guerrillas and paramilitaries all pose a threat to the surrounding countries. Securing the borders will assist the countries bordering Colombia to reduce the ability of these groups to transit freely across borders, thus limiting the spread of violence and illicit drugs throughout the region. US efforts in the source zone of the Andean Region and the transit zones have had an impact upon the amount of drugs entering the US. The US seized a record 132,480 pounds of cocaine during fiscal year 2000. The estimated street value of these seizures is more than \$4.4 billion. Final fiscal year 2000 seizure and cocaine shipment data show a seizure rate of 10.6 percent. During

fiscal year 2001, the US seized 138,334 pounds of cocaine surpassing the previous year's record.³⁰ The US continues to be faced with a large amount of smuggled illegal cocaine entering the country, but the actions of the DOD and other governmental agencies contribute to the seizing of a large amount, which never enters into the United States.

Peru's military received US funding for training in riverine operations for their navy, aircraft sensor packages, engine upgrades, aircrew training for their Air Force, and upgrades to 14 UH-1 Huey helicopters for the Peruvian Police. Military assistance to Ecuador focuses on securing their border with Colombia and includes training, logistical support, communications gear, and helicopter maintenance support.³¹ The US is also engaged in a \$61 million dollar upgrade of an airfield in Manta, Ecuador to be used by US aircraft as a FOL to conduct surveillance flights over drug producing countries.³² There are three additional FOLs in operation in Aruba, Curacao, and El Salvador. The FOL is utilized for basing US personnel and equipment to allow for aerial tracking and interdiction of drugs transiting the region to the US.³³ The FOLs are an essential element in the DOD's detecting and monitoring mission in support of host-nation efforts to curb the flow of illegal drugs into the United States. Once full operational capability is established at all FOLs, which is projected for 2004, there will be greater coverage of the source and transit zones than previously existed when operations were flown out of Howard Air Force Base in Panama.³⁴ According to the US Government's 2002 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), US assisted eradication efforts have achieved success. Peru's illegal coca cultivation was measured at only 34,000 hectares in 2001, this number equates to more than a 70 percent decrease in coca cultivation during the last six years.³⁵

The US support to Bolivia includes building barracks in the coca-growing region to house the counter narcotics forces stationed along the Colombia-Bolivia border. Additional US assistance includes equipment, weapons, and training for air, ground, and water interdiction forces, which includes all branches of Bolivia's armed forces and police.³⁶ The eradication efforts in Bolivia experienced the same success as Peru over the last six years, and currently there are only 19,900 hectares utilized for coca cultivation.³⁷

Brazil and Panama will both receive US military aid to train all elements of their forces. Brazil will receive significant counter narcotics assistance to support Operation Cobra to secure their border with Colombia. The priority in Panama will also focus on securing their border with Colombia. This aid will include training for ground, air, and maritime interdiction efforts.³⁸

COLOMBIA

Today, Colombia is the primary source of illegal drugs in the Western Hemisphere. Between 1995 and 1998, annual cocaine production in Colombia increased from 230 to 250 metric tons, which equates to 80 percent of the world's total cocaine production. Close to 90 percent of the cocaine and nearly half of the heroin smuggled into the US originates in Colombia.³⁹ The influx of illegal drugs into the US from Colombia presents a threat to the security and well-being of the citizens of the US. Colombia faces a significant challenge in its attempt to eliminate the illegal drug problem within its borders due to the internal struggle ongoing in Colombia. This struggle involves the GOC, and its efforts against the FARC, ELN, and the AUC. The FARC's strength consists of 17,000-armed combatants, the ELN consists of 4000 members, and the AUC's membership consists of more than 8000 members.⁴⁰ Coupled with their anti-government military objectives and political ideology, the FARC and ELN are both guilty of vicious attacks on police and army units, civilians, and public infrastructure. The AUC also poses a threat to Colombian democracy by taking action against Colombian leaders and their support of democratic principles and human rights. They have been known to protect drug traffickers and to attack FARC and ELN sympathizers across the country. The FARC and ELN may be categorized as anti-government, and the AUC as anti-guerilla, but over the last decade they stepped over the line and ventured into the criminal activity of narco-trafficking. Table 2 is based on data presented in a Colombian Armed Forces briefing and shows that over 50 percent of the FARC units, 17 percent of the ELN units, and 42 percent of the AUC units are linked to the drug trade.⁴¹

UNITS	FARC	ELN	AUC
TOTAL	61	41	19
LINKED TO DRUG TRADE	32	7	8

TABLE 2. LINKS OF ILLEGAL ARMED GROUPS TO THE ILLICIT DRUG TRADE

Over the past several years, these groups have increased their involvement in illegal drug activities. The revenues received from their involvement in the illegal drug production and trafficking has funded their anti-government activities further threatening Colombia's democratic government. These three organizations have all demonstrated the ability to raise money to sustain their operations through the illicit drug trade. According to Colombian Government

figures, in 1998, these organizations derived \$551 million from illegal drug traffic.⁴² The AUC derives as much as 70 percent of its income from the illegal drug trade, ranging from protection money paid by coca leaf growers to direct involvement in cultivation and sales.⁴³ This extensive base of revenue has widened the range of options available to these organizations in their internal struggle within Colombia. The merger of the drug traffickers and insurgents who have both set their sights on the overthrow of the oldest democracy in Latin America presents one of the most serious security challenges in the Western Hemisphere.⁴⁴ The problems associated with narcotrafficking and guerrilla operations are clearly inter-mixed. If the production and exportation of illegal drugs is reduced, the vast amounts of money, providing the financial backing for the anti-government forces, will also be reduced.

The FARC poses the greatest threat to the GOC due to the number of members and the depth of their financial backing. Over the last 17 years the FARC has increased its span of influence greatly, posing a serious threat to the GOC. In 1985, the FARC existed in 173 municipalities, 437 municipalities in 1991, and 622 municipalities in 1995. The FARC's growth in Colombia's "agricultural bread basket", the coffee growing areas of central Colombia, and the densely populated commercial agricultural areas expanded at an equally alarming rate. Their presence in the coffee growing region expanded from 2 percent of the municipalities in 1985 to 53 percent in 1995. In the commercial agricultural areas, the growth went from 13 percent of the municipalities in 1985 to 71 percent in 1995.⁴⁵ Over 50 percent of the ELN forces focus their efforts in the northeastern part of Colombia near the Venezuelan border. Although their main efforts against the GOC concern the oil industry, they too derive a significant portion of their income from the illegal drug business. After their leader, Father Manuel Perez, died in 1998, those who supported utilizing the drug industry for financial backing gained a stronger voice.⁴⁶

The AUC competes with the FARC and ELN to challenge the GOC's authority. The AUC emerged in areas controlled by the FARC and ELN where the GOC was unable to provide security to the population. The government's inability to provide security forces many citizens to support the AUC, who effectively provide security against the guerrilla forces even though it serves to satisfy their own motives. The main objective of the AUC is to contest the control of the drug producing areas where the FARC derives a major portion of their income. The AUC works to extend their control and exercise their political influence through control or intimidation of the local officials. Their intimidation of the local populace includes waging major attacks on villages suspected of aiding the FARC and ELN. Through the execution of these operations, the AUC attempts to instill fear and gain support from the local population.⁴⁷ There have been claims that the AUC is working in collusion with the COLAR, but it is very hard to prove such a

relationship exists. The fact that the COLAR cannot provide security from all three anti-government groups contributes to the unrest and fear across Colombia today.

The US has designated the FARC, the ELN, and the AUC as terrorist organizations, and together they are responsible for over 90 percent of the terrorist acts in the Western Hemisphere.⁴⁸ Currently, these terrorist acts occur predominantly in Colombia, and therefore, do not have a significant global impact. Their involvement in international drug trafficking has a global impact and has heightened the concerns of the USG. Trying to separate the terrorist threat from the drug threat is unrealistic and nearly impossible, they are indisputably connected and any effort to combat one equates to an equal effort against the other. Today, the FARC, ELN, and the AUC control over 40 percent of Colombia, and their terrorism and drug trafficking continues to flourish in the areas they control.⁴⁹ The illegal drug trade increases the threats to the GOC by providing financial support for the forces aligned against the government. Without the military aid and assistance provided by the US, Colombia will fail to gain the upper hand against the threats imposed by these groups. If the GOC fails to establish a safe and secure Colombia, the FARC, ELN, and AUC will be able to threaten and influence the population to gain their support and the GOC will lose credibility with the citizens of Colombia and their neighboring countries. Colombia's inability to control the struggles within the country threatens the international order of the region and the stability of many neighboring countries. In order to preserve democracy in Colombia, the US must continue to assist the GOC with financial and military assistance in their efforts to defeat the forces involved in the illegal drug trade. Currently, these forces threaten democracy only in Colombia, but if left unchecked, these threats could expand across the region. If not careful, the US may find itself faced by growing instability in the region gaining enough momentum to necessitate US involvement to stabilize the region.

SPILLOVER TO BORDER COUNTRIES

Colombia is a democratic government fighting the FARC, ELN, and the AUC in an attempt to counter the illegal drug trade and the threats against the GOC. The illegal drug trade and the internal struggle in Colombia have far reaching effects, and the violence associated with these problems has spread into other countries of the region. The military and political strength of the FARC, ELN, and the AUC presents a significant threat not only to Colombia, but also to the other countries of the region. Millions of refugees displaced by the violence in Colombia are straining the social and economic resources of the country. Many of the refugees and much of the violence caused by the escalated conflict in Colombia have crossed the borders into

neighboring countries. The inability of Colombia to secure their borders and prevent this violence from spreading into the neighboring countries has strained relations and solidarity throughout the region. The US has recognized this threat and, in response, has increased assistance to Colombia's neighbors through funding provided in the Andean Counterdrug Initiative.

The border shared by Colombia and Venezuela experienced a major military buildup in the 1990s, which included numerous clashes between the FARC, ELN and Venezuelan military units. The situation became more volatile due to cross-border drug trafficking and numerous Colombian refugees fleeing the violence of the FARC and the ELN. About one third of the Venezuelan military is deployed along the border in an attempt to reduce the influx of drug traffickers and refugees coming from Colombia.⁵⁰ In 1998, nearly three million Colombian refugees were living in Venezuela and many Venezuelans equated their presence to the rising national crime rate.⁵¹ With the inauguration of Colonel Hugo Chavez as president of Venezuela in 1999, the Venezuelan involvement in the Colombian conflict started to change. President Chavez's sympathetic feelings towards the FARC and ELN generated great controversy. In 2001, the relations between Colombia and Venezuela continued to deteriorate and Colombian leaders accused Venezuela of providing arms and sanctuary to elements of the FARC and the ELN.⁵² Since the FARC and ELN were able to cross into Venezuela unrestricted, Colombian paramilitaries began to pursue them across the border, threatening to extend Colombia's internal conflict across international borders.⁵³ This situation continues today.

Peru's involvement in Colombia's situation also has the potential to grow into a major problem crossing international borders. The government of Peru condemned the link between narcotraffickers and insurgents and strengthened their forces along the border with Colombia. Although not wanting to become directly involved in Colombia's internal struggle, Peru chose to work closely with Colombia to secure the border areas. The presence of guerrilla activity along the border concerns Peru greatly, while the GOC is focused more on the shipments of illegal drugs from Peru to Colombia.⁵⁴ Due to successful coca eradication campaigns in Peru and Bolivia, drug production moved into Colombia, reducing the flow of illegal drugs from Peru. Once the effects of the US supported eradication campaign is felt in Colombia, there exists the potential for the coca production to return to Peru. Solving the illegal drug problem in the Andean Region requires a focus on the region as a whole and not on just one country. If the focus is small in nature, the problem will encounter the "balloon effect" allowing the same problem to bulge out elsewhere outside the limits of the focus.⁵⁵ Eradication effects must be widespread across the region.

Ecuador initially experienced very little fallout from the internal struggles ongoing in neighboring Colombia. But in 1999, Ecuador became involved when Colombian insurgents started crossing the border to set up rest and relaxation camps away from the threats of the COLAR and the paramilitaries. Reports of cross border narco trafficking created a fear in Ecuador that Colombian insurgents and narco traffickers would band together with local dissidents and take action against local government in towns along the border. Pro-FARC mayors have already taken office in some of Ecuador's northern cities.⁵⁶ These events prompted Ecuadorian forces to increase patrols in border areas to reduce the impact of the insurgents and the narco traffickers operating in Ecuador. At the same time, Ecuador began building the first of twelve US-financed counter-narcotics police outposts along the Colombian border.⁵⁷ Ecuador's armed forces clashed on many occasions with suspected Colombian insurgents and narco traffickers, well within Ecuador's border.⁵⁸ It did not take long for Ecuador to realize they were about to be drawn into a conflict over which they had very little control. By 2001, FARC and AUC units were openly conducting operations against each other inside Ecuador. The situation became worse and in the summer of 2002, many Ecuadorians fled the region while Colombian refugees came across the border into Ecuador. The Ecuadorian armed forces reported that the FARC and AUC continued to operate freely in the area and estimated that over 3000 members of Colombia's armed groups were operating in the area.⁵⁹ Ecuador supports Plan Colombia, and has been successful in obtaining international aid to strengthen efforts to control the international border between Ecuador and Colombia. In an attempt to strengthen their efforts to control the spread of illegal drugs across their border, Ecuador granted US aircraft permission to utilize the Ecuadorian Airbase at Manta to conduct counter-narcotic surveillance and intelligence missions.⁶⁰ This operation conducted by US personnel in coordination with the Ecuadorian military demonstrates strong US commitment to the efforts to counter illicit drugs in the region.

Brazil, like other countries sharing a border with Colombia, also shares a desire to control the activities of the guerrillas and the narco traffickers operating freely across the Colombia-Brazil border in the Amazon River Basin. Due to the size of the shared border and the lack of population and infrastructure, narco traffickers and guerrillas have free access to the border in the unsecure Amazon River Basin. In 1996, the COLAR crossed the border into Brazil and conducted military operations against the FARC causing a strain in diplomatic relations between Colombia and Brazil.⁶¹ In attempt to prevent drug traffickers from freely crossing into Brazil, the President of Brazil enacted Operation Cobra, a three-year plan initiated in September 2000 to secure the border with Colombia. The intent of the plan was to provide border security through

an increase in police presence and to move a helicopter-supported Brazilian Army unit into the area. The effectiveness of this plan was demonstrated in March 2002 when Brazilian Army units moved against a FARC camp located in Brazil and completely wiped out the FARC forces.⁶² In 2001, it was discovered that Brazilian narcotraffickers were selling weapons to the FARC and transporting them through the Amazon River Basin.⁶³ Again, the spillover of the illegal drug trade and other illegal activities managed to reach another country sharing a border with Colombia. The governments of Colombia and Brazil have cooperated in their efforts to defeat the illegal drug trafficking in the region, but they do not share the same views on Plan Colombia. Brazil has mixed feelings regarding their support of Plan Colombia. On one hand, the threat to the democracy of Colombia also threatens the security of Brazil and because of this, they support Plan Colombia. On the other hand, the effect of successful counter-narcotic operations in Colombia would create instability in Brazil due to the influx of refugees, drug traffickers, and guerrillas forced out of Colombia.⁶⁴ This reinforces the concept that success against the threats in the region requires a wide focus on the region and not just on one country. The potential for success in fighting the war on illegal drugs is greatly reduced when the effort is small in focus.

Colombian narcotraffickers and guerrillas have the potential to create the most instability in Panama than any other nation of the region. Richard L. Millet sums it up in the following manner.

“Of all the bordering nations, Panama is the most vulnerable, having neither regular armed forces nor direct land connections with the border region, a long history of the usage of Panamanian territory by Colombian narcotraffickers, and a lack of any real capacity to control its land, sea, or air.”⁶⁵

Panama experiences the same threats as the other countries bordering Colombia. These threats include: FARC, ELN, and AUC members freely crossing the border and operating in Panama; the unopposed travel of Colombian narcotraffickers across the borders; and the refugee problem caused by Colombians fleeing the violence and settling in the remote areas of Panama's Darien Province. Panama's inability to counter these threats due to the lack of a reputable defense force exacerbates the problem. Instead of attempting to secure their border, the Panamanians actually displaced 15 kilometers from the border in an attempt to avoid any contact with the guerrillas and the paramilitaries. The peaceful coexistence was ended when the paramilitaries threatened to kill any Panamanians providing supplies to the guerrillas in the

Darien.⁶⁶ Panamanians conceded to the narcotraffickers the ability to freely traffic illegal drugs out of Colombia through Panama to the United States and Europe.⁶⁷ With the increase in fighting along the border between the FARC and the AUC, the influx of refugees into Panama became a significant problem. In December 1999, over 300 refugees entered Panama's Darien Province. In March of 2000, the number had increased to 500.⁶⁸ Without significant change, the situation in Panama is not expected to improve and the Panamanian people can expect to live with the current situation in the Darien. Without an effective national defense force, Panama might be faced with threats similar to those working within Colombia in the near future.

If the GOC launches an effective campaign against the narcotraffickers and the guerrillas, they might be forced to displace into the surrounding countries, which will spread the threats and violence found in Colombia. To effectively counter these forces, all countries of the region must coordinate their actions in response to these threats. If this coordination is not achieved or if certain countries, like Venezuela, decline to fully participate, the region runs the risk of having the problem surface without resistance, outside the specific limits of action. The GOC, working within Colombia and with the international community, developed a strategy to address the challenges facing Colombia today. The GOC developed Plan Colombia as an integrated strategy to meet the most pressing challenges confronting Colombia today: promoting the peace process, combating the illegal narcotics industry, reviving the Colombian economy, and strengthening the democratic pillars of Colombian society. As violence and drug production spread across Colombia's borders, the US recognized the threats to regional stability and decided to broaden Plan Colombia through the Andean Counterdrug Initiative. The US recognized the importance of curtailing the spread of violence in the region and through the Andean Counterdrug Initiative they have allocated assistance to the countries of the region to counter narcotrafficking and the spread of the associated threats to their countries.

PLAN COLOMBIA

Plan Colombia is the Colombian Government's response to combat the country's drug, military, and economic problems. It is a six year plan consisting of three phases. Phase I includes years 1-2 and focuses in southern Colombia, Phase II includes years 2-3 and focus on the southeast and central area of Colombia, and Phase III includes years 4-6 and focuses on the National Territory of Colombia.⁶⁹ The GOC released Plan Colombia in 1999 and requested the US and the international community provide assistance to Colombian efforts to meet the most urgent challenge facing Colombia today, controlling the illegal drug production and trafficking within its borders. The GOC pledged \$4 billion out of the \$7.5 billion program and

asked the international community to assist with the remaining amount. The US, realizing Plan Colombia's importance to curb the illegal drug trafficking and protect Colombia's democracy, agreed to assist Colombia with \$1.3 billion spread over fiscal years 2000 and 2001. More than 74 percent of the US assistance provided to Plan Colombia supports counter narcotics efforts.⁷⁰ The majority of this funding will assist in eradication and interdiction of illegal drugs in Colombia. The other 26 percent of the US assistance supports alternative economic developments, aid to displaced persons, judicial reform, law enforcement, and promotion of human rights.⁷¹ The goal of the US is to reduce cultivation, processing, and distribution of illegal drugs by 50 percent.⁷² The specific details concerning the US military assistance provided by the proposal includes providing 16 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and 30 UH-1 Huey helicopters to Colombia. These assets will enable Colombia to deploy Colombian Army counter-narcotics battalions and national police into the coca production areas in southern Colombia. The proposal also strives to strengthen interdiction efforts by supporting local and regional radar systems. Additionally, the enhancement of coca eradication will be achieved by providing more spray planes and base facilities.⁷³

ANDEAN COUNTERDRUG INITIATIVE

The FY 2002 National Drug Control Strategy calls for the allocation of \$2.3 billion for drug interdiction and \$731 million to be applied throughout the Andean Region for the Andean Counterdrug initiative.⁷⁴ This assistance is an expansion of the Colombian counter narcotics programs initiated with Plan Colombia, and also increases aid to six of Colombia's neighboring countries to assist in their efforts to combat the spread of violence into their countries due to the illegal drug trade. Table 3 depicts the breakdown of the funding for all countries in the region receiving aid to prevent the spread of the violence caused by the illegal drug trafficking and production.⁷⁵ Without the assistance of the US in terms of funding and military training, most of which is provided by SOFs, the potential for the instability to spread across the region is a risk the US must not take.

COUNTRY	MILITARY AND POLICE AID (Millions of US Dollars)	SOCIAL and ECONOMIC AID (Millions of US Dollars)	TOTAL (Millions of US Dollars)
COLOMBIA	\$ 252.5	\$ 146.5	\$ 399
PERU	\$ 77	\$ 79	\$ 156
BOLIVIA	\$ 54	\$ 47	\$ 101
ECUADOR	\$ 19	\$ 20	\$ 39
BRAZIL	\$ 15	\$ 0 aid is primarily military	\$ 15
VENEZUELA	\$ 10	\$ 0 aid is primarily military	\$ 10
PANAMA	\$ 11	\$ 0 aid is primarily military	\$ 11
TOTAL (\$1,098.5)	\$ 438.5	\$ 292.5	\$ 731

TABLE 3. ANDEAN COUNTERDRUG INITIATIVE BUDGET BREAKDOWN

COST-BENEFIT OF US INVOLVEMENT

The US must continue to use SOFs to train participating nations to combat the illegal drug traffickers in the Andean Region and not reallocate these forces to the WOT. Although the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center was a heinous and violent event, it resulted in less than 3000 deaths. The number of drug-induced deaths in the US caused by illegal drugs in 1999 was 19,102 and the total for the twenty-year period from 1979 to 1999 was 244,904 drug-induced deaths.⁷⁶ The cost of committing SOFs to reduce the risks associated with the influx of illegal drugs into the US is worth the cost if reducing the influx of illegal drugs into the country can lower the number of drug-induced deaths in the US. Due to US training and assistance, the seizure rate of cocaine bound for the US set a record of 10.6 percent in 2000, and in 2001 that record was surpassed. The number of US military personnel authorized to work counter narcotics efforts in Colombia at one time is limited to 400, including both SOFs and conventional forces. Due to the small numbers of SOFs involved, the benefit of using SOFs to train the police forces and the armed forces of the region can make a larger impact in the region than including their efforts in the WOT. The benefit of utilizing the SOF to train host-nation

forces is illustrated by the success of Colombia's DIRAN. The SOF trained DIRAN, conducted coca eradication in the Putamayo Province, reducing the coca cultivation in the province by 29 percent in 2001, while Colombia's total coca cultivation was reduced by 11 percent during the same period. Additionally, specific language and jungle operations qualifications combined with expertise in the region makes SOFs the correct force to assist the countries in the region in their efforts to fight narcotrafficking. To divert their efforts to the WOT would reduce the capacity to train forces in the region and reduce the probability of achieving success in the Andean Region. While cocaine seizures and eradication effects were both increasing, the percent of the DOD budget allocated for the fight against illegal drugs in 2001 was only 0.4 percent. Additionally, over the last three years, the percent of the DOD budget allocated for the fight against illegal drugs averaged out to be only 0.33 percent.⁷⁷ If the US efforts assist in reducing the production of illegal drugs and the influx of illegal drugs into the US, it is money well spent. The direct involvement of SOF with Andean Region militaries and police forces enhances the capabilities of these nations, providing security and stability throughout the Andean Region. From a cost-benefit perspective, it would be more beneficial to keep these SOFs engaged in the Andean Region assisting participating nations to reduce the threats in the region caused by drug trafficking, guerrillas and paramilitaries while promoting regional stability, than to reallocate to the WOT.

CONCLUSION

The illegal drug trade is a transnational business and stopping its growth will require efforts from all nations in the source zones and the transit zones. The US will seek international cooperation with trusted allies to combat illegal drug production and trafficking in the Andean region. The US assistance provided to Colombia and the other countries of the Andean Region establishes the baseline for multilateral efforts to control this problem in the region. This US assistance includes special operations soldiers, military equipment, and intelligence gathering assets to conduct counter narcotics training for participating nation militaries and their national police. This assistance enhances the capabilities of the participating nations to counter the efforts of the narcotraffickers operating throughout the region. Through this assistance, the US military has started the process to develop the armed forces and the police forces of the Andean Region into effective professional forces capable of countering the threats operating in the region today. It is imperative that the US military provides assistance to Colombia and the other countries in the region to enhance their capabilities to counter the threats in the region while strengthening their ability to enforce sovereignty. Without US assistance, including the use of

SOFs to conduct counterdrug training and unconventional warfare training, Colombia could not effectively combat narco trafficking, the FARC, ELN and AUC. If the instability in Colombia continues unopposed, it will expand across international borders, impacting the whole region. These efforts on the part of DOD and the armies of the region, will promote stability in the Andean Region while protecting democracy in the region today.

A reduction in US assistance to Colombia might force the union of the COLAR with the AUC to battle the FARC and ELN. The combined efforts of the COLAR and the AUC would offer the best chance of survival for Colombia. If the union of the COLAR and the AUC is established, the risk of the COLAR becoming involved in the illegal drug business becomes greater. This union would negate the actions already undertaken by the US DOD, posing a more serious threat to Colombia's existence as a democratic state, while contributing greatly to the volatility of the region. This action would not be in the best interest of either the GOC or the US, because it would defeat the intent of the US to transform the COLAR into a fighting force devoid of any involvement with forces not in alliance with the democratic government. The US must continue to assist the GOC in its efforts against all organizations involved with drug trafficking in Colombia.

The need for US military forces to stay engaged in the Andean Region to combat narco traffickers is critical. A reduction in US assistance would also reduce the capabilities of the countries in the region to control the spread of trafficking of illicit drugs. Without the US training, equipment, and funding, the countries of the Andean Region will have little success in countering the spread of violence associated with drug trafficking and the guerrilla groups operating within the region. If the US decides to divert the SOFs used for counter-narcotics training missions, reducing the military's training of anti-drug police and soldiers in the region, it might send the signal that the US does not care about the narco trafficking problem in the Andean Region. This reduction in US aid will fuel the escalating violence in Colombia and will contribute to the drug problem and the turbulence that threatens the region. The poor and struggling democracies in the source and transit zones of Central and South America and the Caribbean have committed substantial portions of their national resources to combat the flow of illegal drugs. This commitment was based on the promise of continued US support. The US must keep faith with these struggling democracies to help combat the threats to stability in the region.

The US military contact provided by SOFs with the Colombian Army is not the only important military relationship in the region. The interaction between US SOFs and other militaries of the region is equally essential to the security of the region. The training of these

armies increases their ability to defend their borders from the spread of violence in Colombia. It also encourages and trains officers of these Andean Region Armies to view their profession as one that advances democratic civil-military relations. The US military model enforces the role of the armed forces in a democratic society, which stresses a willingness to obey civil authorities and respect human rights and civil liberties. In the past, there have been instances where armies in this region violated human rights and operated outside the parameters set up by their democratic state. The Andean Region needs professional armed forces committed to working within a democratic system to defend democracy, and the US military has an excellent opportunity to teach and set the example as a role model.⁷⁸ These efforts on the part of DOD are critical to providing the training and resources to enable the countries of the region to survive the threats operating in the region today.

US assistance provided by DOD effectively contributes to US strategy to curb the illicit drug production and trafficking of the region. Successful operations conducted by the governments of Colombia and other Andean Region countries against illegal drug production and drug trafficking resulted in a decrease in the amount of drugs reaching the US. The US-assisted eradication efforts in Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia made an impact on the amount of drugs produced in all source countries. Although the US-assisted efforts have not achieved total elimination of drug crops, any reduction in the influx of illegal drugs into the US has the potential to save both lives of US citizens and money which is lost paying the large bill incurred due to the impact illegal drugs have upon the US.

The US strives to enhance the counterdrug capabilities of the region and to reduce the impact of the narcotraffickers and the guerrilla forces operating in the region. By working towards accomplishing these objectives and reducing the flow of illegal drugs into the US, the benefits of such a reduction can also be experienced within the borders of the US. It is undeniable that drug abuse and illegal drug trafficking are valid threats to the citizens of the US and have already imparted great damage upon the people and the social institutions of the country at a significant cost. The US incurs a large overall cost due to the country's drug problem, and the US can ill afford to reduce their efforts fighting the illicit drug traffickers. If efforts are reduced, the costs to the US due to the illegal drug problem can only be expected to increase. Given the magnitude of the cost and the drug threat to the US population, it would seem illogical for DOD to reduce their efforts. Any decrease in efforts would magnify the detrimental effects the influx of illegal drugs has upon the US.⁷⁹

In an analysis of the current National Drug Control Strategy and the requirements placed upon DOD, it is evident that these requirements were emplaced to protect the national interests

of the United States. The efforts of DOD, in coordination with fellow governments of the Andean Region, have reduced the influx of illegal drugs into the US. DOD has acted in concert with ONDCP by providing US military assistance to police and armed forces within the region. The initiatives cited in the 2002 National Counter Drug Strategy will assist the governments of the region by increasing the effectiveness of their counterdrug efforts, while simultaneously securing stability in the Andean Region and curbing the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.

The policy outlined in the National Drug Control Strategy requires the Department of Defense, along with other agencies, to reduce the amount of illegal drugs entering the country, thereby protecting the citizens of the United States. By controlling the flow of drugs into the country through interdiction efforts, DOD plays an active role in securing the borders of the United States. These actions, combined with the efforts to assist participating nations to reduce the production of illegal drugs in the source countries, clearly displays the efforts taken by DOD to reduce the impact of illegal drugs, both in the United States and in source countries of illegal drugs.

The involvement of the US is required to assist Colombia to preserve its existence as a democratic state. We cannot afford to sit back and allow Colombia to become the first “domino” leading to the destabilization of the whole region. We must stay engaged with the government of Colombia and other participating nations of the region and assist them as they fight against the subversive elements involved in the illegal drug business causing instability in the region. The reduction of these efforts through the Pentagon’s efforts to scale back its effort to combat international drug trafficking would reduce any chance of stabilizing the Andean Region.

WORD COUNT = 10,042

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