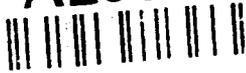


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**NARCOTERRORISM — A THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES?**

BY

Lieutenant Colonel Patrick F. Webb  
United States Army

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NARCOTERRORISM - A THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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## ABSTRACT

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Today, we see the demise of communism, the hope for a "new world order," and the realization of peace in the world. A dark cloud pervades this state of euphoria. It is the result of the War On Drugs. The purpose of this paper is to show that narcoterrorism is a threat to the United States. Colombia is used as a focal point for the study due the significant role it plays in the American drug war. The paper considers the supply and demand side of the drug problem. It looks at the relationship between terrorism and insurgency. The paper defines narcoterrorism to be the use of terror by narcotraffickers to coerce or intimidate a sovereign government to obtain an objective or end result. It examines the interests of the U.S. at stake in the drug war as well as those Colombian interests that the drug war threatens. A part of this examination is to determine which are a vital interest to us and which are threatened.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, we see the demise of communism, the hope for a "new world order," and the realization of peace in the world. The United States has recently won the longest war in its history, the Cold War. With the demise of the Soviet Union, hopes are high that there will be a peace dividend. Some people see a financial return, a return from the end of this war. Still others see a hope for a new world order. An order where we all live in harmony and peace. They see a world where people sit down to discuss and resolve their differences. This euphoria is somewhat diminished by another ongoing, non-traditional war. It is the result of the war on drugs.

According to the Colombian drug trafficker, Carlos Lehder Rivas: "[C]oca has been transformed into a revolutionary weapon for the struggle against American imperialism."<sup>1</sup> Another observer states: "Illicit trafficking is a greater threat to national security, economic well-being and social order than the threat posed by any international terrorists or any armed conflict short of war with a major power."<sup>2</sup> We confront a conflict that is not necessarily new. It is a conflict that has taken on the proportions of a war.

As in all wars there are many facets. This war is no different. A phenomenon that has evolved from drug marketing and abuse is narcoterrorism. Many claim that narcoterrorism is a serious threat to many governments in the world. They say that

narcoterrorism "is the use of drug trafficking to advance the aim of certain governments and terrorist organizations."<sup>3</sup> In the drug war there is a natural concern about whether narcoterrorism is a threat to the United States. The purpose of this paper is to define narcoterrorism and determine the threat to the United States.

This paper will show that narcoterrorism is a threat. Narcotrafficking and subsequent drug use is a problem that eats at our very social foundations. Terrorism used to achieve a political goal is a threat to the sovereignty of any nation. It challenges the efforts of the United States to, as the President says: "...promote the growth of free, democratic, political institutions as the surest guarantors of both human rights and economic and social progress."<sup>4</sup> An equally serious threat to the U.S. lies in the misguided response taken to deal with the sometimes ill-defined phenomenon called narcoterrorism.

To say whether or not narcoterrorism is a threat to the United States, we must examine the issue objectively. We must define the problem as a whole and describe the challenge facing our nation. The drug problem has two facets, a supply side and a demand side. Both sides apply to the United States. To understand the supply side, we should also view the problem from the perspective of a nation that is a source, a supply of drugs. In this paper Colombia will be that case in point.

Colombia was chosen since it plays a significant role in the drug scene for the U.S. It is the major source of cocaine for

the United States. Of the major drug producing nations of the Andes, Colombia is an excellent example of both effectiveness and failure in political leadership, military and police involvement. It is one of the few nations in the Andean region that has taken decisive steps to deal with the narcotics and insurgent challenge. These efforts provide a wealth of lessons and data to review and study.

The paper will correspondingly review the relationship between an insurgency, terrorism, and narcoterrorism. To assess whether or not there is a relationship between narcotraffickers and terrorism it is important to understand the nature of the terrorism. Is terrorism driven by the traffickers or the insurgents? The paper will develop the issue of narcoterrorism and try to clarify whether or not a relationship exists between narcotic trafficking and terrorism.

#### COLOMBIA - A FOCAL POINT

To consider the problem of drugs and terrorism, we must examine both from a philosophical as well as a real life perspective. Failure to do so can result in a misrepresentation of the relationship existing between the two and the corresponding impact on society. Colombia will serve as a case in point for understanding the supply side of the drug problem for the U.S. and the problem narcoterrorism presents to a sovereign government.

Why is Colombia useful in a study of the possible threat posed by narcoterrorism? It is the major supplier of cocaine to the U.S. Colombia is a nation fighting a drug war and an insurgency, simultaneously. It is a nation that must deal with terrorist acts perpetrated by its narcotraffickers.

The nation is one of three specified in the Andean Strategy that came out of the summit held at Cartagena, Colombia in February of 1990. Colombia is the most aggressive of the Andean nations in dealing with the drug situation it faces. It is receptive to accepting aid from the government of the United States.

Colombia is a large nation with varied terrain that includes coastal areas, central highlands, mountains and woodland savannahs. The diversity and expanse of the nation creates a major challenge to dealing with a drug and insurgent problem. The two problems sometimes exist together or are separated by the expanse of the nation.

It shares borders with five other nations including Peru, the world's largest producer of the coca leaf. This situation forces the police and the military to spread their forces thin to defend against the shipment of cocaine paste and base into the country. This applies as well to the export of the completed product, cocaine/hydrochloride (HCL).

The capital of the nation is Bogota. There are five major cities in the country. Two of them, Medellin and Cali, are narcotrafficker headquarters. In fact the traffickers take the

name of their respective organizations from these two towns.

The nation's gross national product for 1988 was \$39 billion. This figure demonstrated an increase of 3.7 percent annual real growth.<sup>5</sup> The estimated Gross National Product (GNP) growth rate for 1990 was 3.2 percent.<sup>6</sup> This results in per capita GNP of approximately \$1,280 which is one tenth of the U.S. rate. This, combined with 35 percent of the population being below the poverty line,<sup>7</sup> is a reason for many citizens of Colombia to look for alternative sources of income. The narcotics industry serves as a means to alleviating this problem. There are many jobs relating to the drug trade for the man in the streets in Colombia. The economic situation, likewise, enhances the insurgent's efforts to discredit the government.

The nation is the largest producer and exporter of cocaine. It accounts for anywhere from 65 to 85 percent of all cocaine shipped to the U.S.<sup>8</sup> This reflects the production of no less than 65 metric tons of base/HCL, cocaine, in 1990.<sup>9</sup> This level of production reflects an extremely large industry devoted to the production of cocaine.

The Cali Cartel currently heads the industry which has served as a safety net for the people in economic hard times. It serves as an alternate means for making a living when other sectors decrease or jobs become difficult to find. The drug trade has been a part of the history of Colombia for many years. To stop it abruptly requires more than simply a police action. It requires a change in focus. This change is the issue that

shows the problem faced throughout the Andean nations by the U.S.

In 1989 the leaders of the Medellin organization (cartel), called the Extraditables, were responsible for the shooting death of Luis Carlos Galan, the front runner for the presidential election. In fact, two other candidates were assassinated. The killing of Galan became "the straw that broke the camel's back." The people of Colombia demanded an end to the violence. It had been going on as a result of the terror campaign of the traffickers, who were waging the campaign to stall the government's efforts to extradite arrested narcotraffickers. This caused a shift in policy by the government. An all out offensive against the drug trade in Colombia began. This effort came on the heels of the President of the United States' visit and subsequent promulgation of "The Andean Strategy To Control Cocaine." The incident became a springboard for even closer attention and support to Colombia.

#### THE DRUG PROBLEM - A STUDY IN SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Today in the United States, we live in a society that believes in "I deserve to have it all." It is a society that for the past 20 years has grown with the drug culture. We see it on television, in the movies, and most of all on the streets where we live. As time passes, this attitude is changing. The death of an individual such as Len Bias emphasizes that drugs are harmful.

The problem with drugs is that many are addictive. Many people across the U.S. have been using drugs for years and cannot stop. Some drugs that are not as addictive as others, initially. These, many people feel, can be started and stopped at will. They can use them as an experiment or use them casually or recreationally. The use and purchase of these substances for other than therapeutic reasons by such people is the basis of the drug problem.

This problem becomes somewhat amplified when we consider the facts. The National Institute on Drug Abuse states, "In 1991, 75.4 million Americans age 12 and older (37% of the population) had tried marijuana, cocaine, or other illicit drugs at least once in their lifetime."<sup>10</sup> This is further amplified by the 26 million Americans that used marijuana, cocaine, or other illicit drugs at least once during the past year.

The drug abuse problem is not only in our homes and neighborhoods. It is a problem of equal magnitude at the workplace. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse and Employee Assistance Professionals Association, the incidence of employees who use illicit drugs versus drinking heavily are:

Occupation	Illicit Drugs	Drinking <sup>11</sup>
Construction	21.6%	17.0%
Professionals	18.5%	6.7%
Manufacturing	11.1%	6.7%
Transportation	10.3%	3.3%
Finance	9.3%	3.8%

The problem here is not that employees use drugs. It is the financial cost. The costs generated by on the job or job related

treatment for drug abuse is the problem. Even more dramatically, the cost of accidents or lost productivity is a part of the problem. Several firms quantify this aspect. Roger Smith, the former chief executive officer of General Motors, said that drug abuse adds no less than \$400 to the sticker price of an automobile. This is due to lost productivity, industrial accidents, absenteeism, tardiness and inflated health care costs. The U.S. Postal Service says that drug abusers have a 41 percent higher absentee rate. The Pinkerton Security Company states that 80 percent of the corporate theft investigated was drug related.<sup>12</sup>

The symptoms (and impact) of drug abuse are clear. What causes it and what are the aspects that go into its make-up? The causes are many. They range from simple experimenting, to peer pressure, to physical need. In the Andean nations, particularly Bolivia and Peru, the use of coca is traditional. It is driven partially by poverty and as a natural reaction to the environmental conditions. Coca leaves are chewed to alleviate hunger and to help ward off the cold. It also had some religious significance under the Incas.<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly enough, the classes of people that use drugs are not as one would expect. It is not restricted to the poor who use drugs to escape the drudgery of their situation. The wealthy also use drugs as a means to escape the perceived "boredom" of their existence. Both levels of the consuming society use it for entertainment.

Knowing why people use drugs is essential in dealing with the problem. To develop programs to resolve the problem, we must have a more in depth understanding of the issue.

As the President's 1989 National Drug Control Strategy says: "It is commonly and correctly assumed that the extent of our problem with drug use can be described in terms borrowed from classical economics; that is, as a largely market function influenced by the variable 'supply' of drug sellers and the variable 'demand' of drug buyers."<sup>14</sup> In very simple terms drug abuse has a supply side and a demand side.

The demand side is the market, need or expressed desire or requirement for drugs. The demand side can be broken down many ways for analysis. The government classifies the use of drugs into three classes: the one time use, the regular or frequent use, and addictive use.<sup>15</sup> The demand for drugs normally starts early in life with encouragement from people that the potential drug user is friendly with. Studies have shown that adolescents do not pay for their first opportunity to use drugs. It is given to them by a friend or person of trust (from the individual's perspective).

The use of drugs is similar to a continuum. It starts with the first trial driven by peer pressure or simply the desire to experiment. Then it moves from casual to regular use. Finally, it proceeds to uninterrupted drug use called addiction. The casual user and addict bring unique issues to the problem of drug abuse. The casual user is somewhat like a carrier of disease.

He is infected. He passes it on to others without showing the complete picture of the effects of the disease which he has. The addict becomes a conduit for the supplier. He must have his drugs to survive and will do what he must to get those drugs. This may involve theft or even marketing the product. He or she is in a predicament.

What is being done to deal with demand? Currently, there are programs that deal with the problem by way of treatment, education, and community action to help users and prevent the use among the general population. There are programs in the workplace to deal with and prevent the use of drugs. Since the mid to late 1980's, the use of drugs has gone down.<sup>16</sup> Older Americans (as opposed to adolescents or teenagers) continue to use drugs at high rates. They are either hard core users whose tolerance to drugs borders on addiction or individuals that are clearly addicted to their drug of choice. The area of major concern is the increased use of cocaine. The 31 percent rise from 19,381 cocaine related emergencies in the fourth quarter of 1990 to 25,370 in the second quarter of 1991 bespeaks of this rise.<sup>17</sup>

What is the future for the demand side of the drug war? According to Dr. Frederick K. Goodwin, the administrator for the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration: "First is the incontrovertible evidence that prevention works and is particularly effective for young 'novice' drug users."<sup>18</sup> The use of drugs, per the statistics found in the National Household

Survey on Drug Abuse, is down. According to the 1992 National Drug Control Strategy:

the number of current (past month) users of drugs has dropped from 23 million in 1985 to about 13 million in 1991 and the attitude of our young people toward drugs has changed dramatically. In fact, the percentage of high school seniors who perceive a "great risk" in using cocaine remains at an all-time high while the percentage acknowledging cocaine use in the last year is at an all-time low.<sup>19</sup>

It is, however, still at levels that are reason for concern.

The focus on the demand side is shifting from the national perspective to the grass roots. Many communities and states across the country are rising to meet their responsibilities for preventing drug use. The effort to prevent drug abuse is spreading to the business community as well. Many firms contribute to educational programs in the public schools, not to mention their own internal prevention efforts.

The war on drugs can truly be won here. If the hearts and minds of the younger generation can be won, the problem can be solved over time as these youngsters grow older and say no to the use of drugs. In our "now generation" this concept of dealing with the problem or looking to overcome the problem over time may not be particularly palatable. It is however realistic.

To support the focus on the demand side of the war, the federal budget has increased for Fiscal Year (FY) 93 by almost one half a billion dollars.<sup>20</sup> Though not a direct recipient, the efforts at dealing with the demand side of the drug war benefit indirectly from the success of the criminal justice system and its impact on the drug user. The efforts of the criminal justice

system are a deterrent to many users or potential users of drugs. They serve as a positive influence on the effort to reduce the demand for drugs.<sup>21</sup>

The problems that must be confronted and overcome on the demand side of the drug war are difficult. They are within, for the most part, our national boundaries. The problems impact on people from our own culture. The actions we take to deal with the demand side are done essentially within our own boundaries and legal jurisdictions.

We do not have to impose our point of view on another nation or culture to deal with the demand as we do with the supply. We do not have to work through any other government to address the problem. The problems are not clear and simple to solve, but they belong to our society. Unlike the supply side, the activities required to solve the problem are, potentially, within our power as nation to affect and correct.

The supply side of drugs deals with the cultivation, production, transportation, and marketing of the drugs. It also includes the laundering of money obtained from drug trafficking and sales. Some say that the supply side ends on the street where the drugs are sold. This is not necessarily accurate. The demand side involves the stateside drug dealer who is buying from the cartel representative. Supply does not stop with the trafficker who is carrying or contracting for the delivery of his product. It also includes the "hood" on the corner who is trying to sell drugs to children on "the block" and the supply and

marketing network needed to support him.

In looking at ways to affect the drug war, we should consider the concept of the center of gravity. According to Clausewitz, the center of gravity is the hub from which power or effect radiates.<sup>22</sup> For demand, the center of gravity is the purchaser. In the production and trafficking of cocaine, there are five centers of gravity:

1. The Precursor Chemical Node
2. The Cocaine/HCL Laboratory/Manufacturing Facility
3. Money Laundering
4. Wholesale Distribution
5. The Command and Control Node<sup>23</sup>

The precursor chemicals are those chemicals essential to the production of cocaine. They include: kerosene, ether and acetone. The kerosene converts the coca leaf into paste. The other two are for the actual production of cocaine/HCL. At the next node, the production and transportation functions meet to convert and move the resulting cocaine to market. The wholesale distributors -- operating in the high trafficking areas of New York City, Los Angeles, Houston, Miami, and the Southwest Border -- sell in bulk to the remainder of the country.

In 1986 figures, a Colombian drug cartel could expect to receive \$7,050,000 for the sale of 300 kg of cocaine.<sup>24</sup> The cash proceeds must be processed somehow. The cash must be laundered/processed through a bank or some other legitimate means to yield a value from the sale. The final node is the leadership or command node.

If the goal of an activity is to stop or hinder another

system, the most effective technique is to attack the center of gravity. The drug war is no different. To adversely impact on the supply side of the cocaine industry, the nodes where the greatest number of players meet should be the center of gravity to focus on. This is the cocaine/HCL - manufacturing facility. At this juncture the grower, producer, and trafficker meet. The best chance for crippling an organization is here.

The drug problem is complex and tragic. There are many opinions on how to deal with it. To find a solution to the problem, it is essential to understand the relationship between the cartel and the insurgencies. The key is understanding, the sixth center of gravity for the drug problem and narcoterrorism.

#### "INSURGENCY OR TERRORISM?

#### THAT IS THE QUESTION, WATSON."

In looking at the problem of narcoterrorism, many assume that the terrorism refers to insurgency. They do not understand that there is difference. An insurgency is a form of warfare and therefore a military problem. Terrorism can be both a criminal activity as well as an insurgent tool. Which is it? What is it?

An insurgency, according to the U.S. Army, is: "an organized, armed political struggle whose goal may be the seizure of power through revolutionary takeover and replacement of the existing government."<sup>25</sup> The Army defines terrorism as: "the unlawful use of - or threatened use of - force or violence

against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives."<sup>26</sup>

An insurgency can develop along a three phase model. The first is a latent operation where an organization will try to infiltrate into the government to set itself up. Their goal is to gain influence and challenge the government's authority. This phase of an insurgency is best dealt with by the government's efforts to show and maintain its credibility and legitimacy.

The second phase of an insurgency is that of guerrilla warfare. The insurgent organization's goal is to foment discord and prove a case for the credibility of its organization over that of the government. The response here is a tactical operation.

The final phase of the insurgency is full scale war with a goal of overthrowing the government and establishing a new order. There is only one alternative for a government faced by this situation and that is full scale military action. In all phases of an insurgency, there is a role for the military to play.

Terrorism on the other hand can stand alone or be a subset of an insurgency. In all cases it is a criminal act. At times it is handled by police forces. The terrorist is trying to either gain recognition or coerce the established government to act in a manner favorable to the terrorist organization. He may endeavor to provoke a reaction in order to sustain an insurgency. The government can deal with the terrorist through an

intelligence program that targets the organization and allows for an effective security program to function. Throughout the operation, the government must maintain an effort to keep the populace informed.

What is the relationship of this to the drug war? Very simply, the drug war that is going on outside of this country is often a challenge to national sovereignty. In some cases the narcotraffickers who are involved in the war are using terrorism to influence the government. They hope to gain an advantage over anti-drug forces. They may seek favorable terms in negotiations to stop the drug trade.

There are other situations, as in Peru with the Sendero Luminoso, where the insurgent is decisively involved in the drug trade in a complicated and complex web of conflictive and cooperative relationships. They can be expected to use terrorism to gain an advantage and to overpower or at a minimum influence the overthrow of the government. Understanding who is behind the terrorism should clarify the nature of the threat and what influence a response should have. The reaction to trafficker driven terrorism may be different from that taken against an insurgent. Above all, any threat that exists will depend on the source of the terrorism. Understanding this will help determine whether a threat to U.S. interests exists or not.

Colombia is a good example of this situation. The government declared an all out war against the drug cartels in 1989 following the assassination of the popular senator and

presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan. In addition to declaring war on the drug cartel, the government signed an agreement with the U.S. to extradite selected traffickers for trial. This resulted in an extended period of terrorist actions on the part of the drug cartels. They sought to sway the government away from the position of extradition. The Colombian government responded immediately. It devoted both its military and police forces to the effort to control the drug cartels. Violence still persists in Colombia but at a much reduced level of intensity. In fact, the military has been given guidelines to shift its focus back to the insurgent threat.<sup>27</sup>

Hence, we see a clear cut example of the use of terrorism by a drug organization to influence a political outcome but not take control of the government. We correspondingly see the response by the state in dealing with this challenge. The government had the latitude to deal with the specific group's actions rather than trying to deal with a broader and more difficult threat of political disruption. In nations where the insurgent plays the more active role, the government must work with a different goal in mind. It is dealing with a political, a military threat rather than a police action.

#### **NARCOTERRORISM - A DEFINITION**

In addressing the problem of narcoterrorism, it is essential that we avoid the American propensity for jingoism. We must be

specific and not blur distinctions, inflate threats, or propose unrealistic solutions. As the terrorist consultant, Grant Wardlaw, states: "By treating this disparate group...as a coherent entity, we have failed adequately to define the nature of the threat posed by the drug/political violence linkages and have often descended merely into motive name calling."<sup>28</sup>

Why is it so important to have a definition of narcoterrorism? It is necessary to have a mutually agreed upon explanation of narcoterrorism to foster understanding of the problem and its possible solutions. Such an interpretation serves as a basis for describing the problem, developing strategies, and establishing appropriate responsibilities. In Colombia for example, this is particularly significant since the policies and programs developed in conjunction with the U.S. and independently for that matter, are contingent on the definition. The definition from a planning perspective serves as the basis for establishing the threat.

So what is narcoterrorism? There are two definitions. The first addresses the marriage of the insurgent with the drug trafficker. The second refers to the use of terrorism on the part of the narcotrafficker to achieve a political objective. The second is the most useful for our purposes.

As previously stated, terrorism is the use of force or violence to coerce or intimidate the government to achieve an objective. This definition is not meant to imply that a relationship from time to time has not existed between the

trafficker and the insurgent. It is simply essential to have a definition that is specific and upon which a coherent strategy as well as operational plan can be based.

From the perspective of Colombia, does the proposed definition accurately describe what for the most part is occurring? It does. In Colombia today there are two major drug cartels, the Medellin and Cali organizations. The Medellin has over the past year become less effective since the majority of its leadership has been arrested and jailed. The Cali Cartel is the central source of cocaine to the U.S., accounting for about 75 percent.

These trafficking organizations are not natural revolutionaries. They do believe in the use of terror to obtain an objective. The relationship they have had with the insurgent groups in the country has been for the most part characterized by both hostility and limited cooperation.<sup>29</sup>

The traffickers have consistently used terror as a means to an end. The objective may have been support for the local farmers or to intimidate the police, the military, or the central government to leave them alone.

To this end, the cartels have been responsible for the killing of in excess of 4,000 citizens of Colombia. They have been responsible for the deaths of up to 50 journalists, numerous judges, police, other officials, and above all, several political leaders, the most significant being Luis Carlos Galan.<sup>30</sup>

The stronger the trafficker, the less willing he is to

cooperate with the insurgent. There are cases, however, where the trafficker will ally himself with an insurgent. This is done for several reasons. The insurgent group may control a productively rich area, and it is to the traffickers' advantage to cooperate with the insurgent group. These situations, however, are not common.<sup>31</sup>

The trafficker may find that it is a matter of political expediency to work with the insurgent. A good example of this was the attack on the Palace of Justice in 1985. The Medellin Cartel paid the M-19 insurgent group to occupy the Palace of Justice. As a result, 12 Supreme Court Justices were killed along with the destruction of the files pertaining to the extradition of members of the cartel to the U.S.<sup>32</sup>

In any case, the ties between the trafficker and the insurgent, for the most part, have been at the lower levels of organizational authority or have been opportunistic and intermittent at best. There appears to be no pattern of strategic cooperation.<sup>33</sup>

What about the issue of involvement in the drug trade by the insurgent groups themselves? Though some cells of the insurgent groups in Colombia finance their activities through drug trafficking, the preponderance of market activity lies with the drug cartels. The cartels are the major sources of the cocaine production.<sup>34</sup>

The limited relationship between the narco-trafficker and the insurgent alone does not support a concern for a joint effort

between the two. The definition of narcoterrorism should be the use of terror by the trafficker to obtain an objective. This is key to determining whether or not a threat to the U.S exists or not.

### NARCOTERRORISM AND OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS

To say that narcoterrorism is a threat to the U.S., we must be able to say which of our national interests are at stake and how are they being threatened. Our interests revolve around the four elements of national power: political, economic, socio-psychological, and military. The Weinberger Doctrine states as the first principle: "The United States should not commit forces to combat overseas unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to our national interest or that of our allies." So what are the interests at risk for the United States and Colombia in the drug war.

First, let us look at those national interests that are involved in the war on drugs. In a sense all are involved, but the two that are of predominant concern are the economic and the socio-psychological elements. In 1987, the estimates were that cocaine traffickers earned \$6 billion from total sales. These traffickers earned almost \$4 billion dollars from their sale of approximately 200 tons to the U.S.<sup>35</sup> This was \$4 billion dollars that could have been spent otherwise in the economy to increase the gross national product (GNP) of the United States.

The socio-psychological costs of drugs can be seen in the loss of energy and productivity of the 1.9 million people who used cocaine in 1991.<sup>36</sup> This loss is reflected in the time lost to treatment or the impact on the personnel or family lives by the people who were either temporarily or permanently affected by the use of cocaine. Also the crime and violence that harms society. See the problem of crack babies for instance!

We have three major interests in Colombia: the strength of their economy (and their ability to manage their foreign debt), the strength of their democracy, and most important of all, the cocaine traffic into the U.S. Colombia is a country that has considerable potential but is suffering through economic hard times. Its growth rate has been on the decline since 1986. The rate of growth of the gross domestic product was 6.1 percent in 1986. It was 5.4 percent in 1987, 3.6 percent in 1988, 3.3 percent in 1989, and 3.5 percent in 1990.<sup>37</sup> The current rate is 2.2 percent. Its inflation rate is 27 percent and the unemployment rate is put at 16.7 percent.<sup>38</sup>

This situation is not entirely a function of the drug situation. The fall of the coffee market in 1989 led to slower growth rates in the economy. Likewise, the growth of investment in the nation has not been strong. In 1989, when the Virgilio Barco "war on drugs" began, growth fell by 1.5 percent.<sup>39</sup>

The drug trade in Colombia is a side to the economy that is as much an "albatross" as it is a distractor. Carlos Caballero, president of the Banking Association of Colombia, estimated that

drugs resulted in almost \$3 billion worth of trade but only returned \$1 billion to Colombia.<sup>40</sup>

The democratic political system in Colombia appears to be strong and resilient. The election of Cesar Gaviria Trujillo by a 48.1% majority of the vote in 1990 (Note: The opposition party ran two candidates.)<sup>41</sup> is evidence of this.

The election of Gaviria is important. The fact that the election occurred is what is vital. The previous administration of Virgilio Barco placed considerable emphasis on the extradition of traffickers to the U.S. In response, the narcotraffickers began a campaign of violence. The reign of terror resulted in considerable loss of life with the effort to intimidate the public and their leadership. In spite of these efforts, free elections were held. The people made their major concern known, end the violence.<sup>42</sup> The election of Gaviria reflected the people's faith that he could do the job. The election itself showed that a fundamental aspect of democracy continues to function in Colombia.

This is a matter of importance to the U.S. As a nation we pride ourselves on being the "point of light" for all freedom loving people in the world. The strength of a democracy in our own backyard is a central concern to the leaders of our nation. (Or at least should be.)

The final interest that is vital to the U.S. and Colombia is the production and trafficking of cocaine. Colombia is the source of almost 80-85 percent of all cocaine coming into the

U.S. The use of cocaine is also becoming a problem of internal concern to Colombia. The numbers of citizens using basuco, a crude residue of cocaine production, is on the rise.

Of the three Colombian interests: the economy, the democracy and the production and trafficking of cocaine -- the production and trafficking is a vital interest to the United States. Why? It is the stated policy position of our President.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the cocaine issue is the only issue that truly passes the "so what" test of direct concern and impact on our nation as a whole. The other Colombian interests are important but not vital today. Today, the drug issue is the only one that comes close to fitting the parameters as inferred in the Weinberger Doctrine.

#### **THE THREAT OF NARCOTERRORISM**

At this point it should be self-evident that narcoterrorism is a threat. We should not rush to conclusions about how to deal with it. All that appears so is not necessarily so.

To say whether narcoterrorism is a threat to the United States or not we must review our progress to this point. With Colombia as the focal point for understanding the supply side of the drug problem, we looked at the complex issue of illicit drugs, covering both the supply and demand sides. Our focus here, as throughout the paper, was on cocaine. This was key to appreciating the efforts of the narco-traffickers.

To clarify the issue of narcoterrorism, we looked at insurgencies and terrorism to see what they were and what the relationship was between the two activities. Next we defined narcoterrorism to be the use of force by narcotraffickers to intimidate or coerce the society or government to achieve an objective. Finally, we identified the U.S. interests at stake in the drug war. In addition to looking at our own national interests, we looked at the interests of our ally and neighbor, Colombia.

This brings us to the question, is narcoterrorism a threat to the United States? To be a threat, it must have the ability to inflict serious damage on the interests of the U.S. The two national interests identified as being involved in the drug war were economic and socio-psychological. The U.S. interests in Colombia that were involved were: the economic growth of the nation, the strength of its democracy, and control of the production and trafficking of cocaine in and from the country.

Narcoterrorism impacts on our economic and socio-psychological interests but not to the point that they are in danger of serious damage. The economic impact of the drugs on the economy is clear, but drugs do not threaten to stop the free enterprise system. The size of this nation's economy is as such that it can absorb the losses to the GNP that result from the marketing of drugs.

The use of drugs, in particular cocaine, weakens the moral fiber, the soul of the nation. The raw numbers involved directly

may be decreasing, but they are sufficiently large enough to warrant our concern. The use of drugs is a threat to our good order and discipline as a nation.

There are three interests which we share with Colombia. Two of these interests are threatened by narcoterrorism in Colombia and the third is the product of the narcoterrorists efforts.

The spirit of democracy is strong in Colombia. It survived an onslaught of terror which took place to disrupt the most recent presidential election. If the narcoterrorists had been as successful in the attempts to intimidate President Gaviria as they were in their effort to assassinate Sr. Galan, democracy in Colombia might not have been so successful.

Narcoterrorism is a threat to the economy of Colombia. The capital flight and disincentive to invest in Colombia is a direct response to the violence. The preference for drug industry versus legitimate domestic production is an indirect result of the narcoterrorist. It is hard for the government to establish and follow through with stringent economic policies when the promise for success lies not in honest effort but in illegitimate labor. Both capital flight and reduced interest in legitimate industry combine to make servicing the national debt very difficult. This in turn hinders - threatens - economic growth.

The termination of production and trafficking of cocaine from Colombia is of vital interest to the U.S. This is threatened by narcoterrorism. The narcoterrorist uses violence to influence the government not to extradite the leaders of the

drug cartels. It uses terror to get the government to allow it to operate without fear of outside influence. If the narcoterrorist is successful in getting the government to focus its efforts in other directions or be tolerant, narcoterrorism will be a threat to the U.S. interest in getting Colombia to control the cocaine trade. Thus we see that narcoterrorism is a threat to two of three interests that the U.S. has in Colombia and one of our own, internal, national interests. There is little question; therefore, that narcoterrorism is a threat to the United States.

#### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to define narcoterrorism and explain the threat it presented, if any, to the United States. It would appear to be intuitively obvious what narcoterrorism is and what threat it presents to the U.S. That same philosophy applies to the approaches that should be taken to deal with the narcoterrorist threat.

There are those who question the definition of narcoterrorism and likewise debate the threat it is to the U.S. The results of this debate are viewed in the programs taken to deal with the supply and demand sides of the drug war. The value of these programs are equally debatable.

What is not debatable is the fact that the level of the cultivation of the coca plant (and leaves) and subsequent

production of cocaine is currently on a plateau. The budget in the United States for the drug war is threatened by the recession. The nations directly involved in the drug war are increasingly facing demands from other sectors of their economies. These are reasons for concern for the continued focus and overall effectiveness of counternarcotics programs throughout the world.

To get the most from the resources available, the anti-drug programs must be well thought out. They must be cost effective. The programs must address not only the immediate requirement but the long term, second and third level results. Above all, they must reflect a strategy and corresponding campaign plan that has an all encompassing, clearly defined end state.

The understanding of the threat, the narcotrafficker, is the basis of an effective campaign plan. Without a careful analysis of the problem and implementation of programs based on that analysis, future efforts are of little long term value. The failure to recognize this will result in narcoterrorism becoming an impact rather than a threat. That is, narcoterrorism will stop being a concern. It will be a success that is operating in spite of the good intentions of all people that are involved in the war on drugs.

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