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SHIFT IN THE NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SOUTHCOM AOR

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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## ABSTRACT

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The present Administration is in the midst of formulating a comprehensive drug strategy vowing renewed efforts and resources directed toward demand reduction. Commitment to Latin American (LA) source and transit nations, demonstrated by the recently announced FY-94 DOD counterdrug (CD) budget, is significantly reduced. This study reviews the national strategy under the Bush Administration, the emerging national strategy under President Clinton and DOD's implementation in the Latin American region. A discussion of the impact on Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) follows with regard to budget, affected programs and theater strategic objectives. Possible implications for the future of this region and the impact on U.S. national security interests are addressed. The study suggests that the drug problem is a long term commitment requiring U.S. support throughout the source-transit-demand spectrum. The U.S. must continue to provide the necessary resources through a multi-lateral approach because the trafficker has no regard for international borders. Finally and perhaps the key to the significant reduction of illicit drug flow is to continue support for nation-building by the U.S. military.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The United States is in the midst of a significant turning point in the 'war on drugs'. Initiated by the Bush Administration in 1989, funding for domestic and international counterdrug programs increased 80% through 1992. The Clinton Administration has made deep cuts on the International side citing a lack of adequate progress in stemming the flow of drugs and vows a renewed effort in domestic demand. We will examine what our national and military strategy has been and how that strategy is being refocused. In particular, this study seeks to understand what influence this evolving strategy is having on SOUTHCOM's AOR. Finally, some implications for the future of the Latin American region and U.S. national security interests are discussed.

#### BACKGROUND: SHIFTING NATIONAL STRATEGY

In his national security strategy statement issued just prior to leaving office in January 1993, then President George Bush made the following statement:

"We are indeed moving into a new era. It is an era that holds great opportunities- but also great dangers. America has a fateful choice to make. We can choose to lead the world into this most historic of transformation, or we can choose, as we have earlier in this century, to turn inward, abandon our leadership role, and accept whatever results may follow. If we choose leadership, America can seize the opportunities that will be offered, and reduce the

dangers that will surely confront us."1

Mr. Bush focused this quote on the promotion of freedom and peace abroad, a term he called "The Age of Democratic Peace". It is evident from his Defense Agenda outlined in the '93 National Security Strategy that the intent of America's leadership would be to stay the course in challenging international narcotics trafficking threatening the peace and stability of all nations. The drug war was viewed as a regional challenge requiring collective engagement led by the United States. Focus was clearly on the supply and demand side, a balanced effort to stem the flow and use of illicit drugs. On the supply side the principal goal was to identify and destroy trafficking organizations and mobilize international law enforcement (LE) within the LA source and transit nations. Demand reduction called for a national partnership of domestic LE agencies and resources for prevention, education and treatment. It also called for the American people to assist the government in nurturing critical human values. Finally it directed that the military's role in Latin America would be "continuing to undertake major counterdrug, counter-terrorism and nation assistance missions in the region".2

It should be noted here that the national security strategy produced prior to the incoming Clinton Administration remains the current U.S. strategy. The interim national drug strategy of September '93 provides us a glimpse of the shifting focus of the drug war. First, a review of the national military strategy and

the status of the progress on the war on drugs.

### NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY

The strategy was prepared in January '92 and presently lags the national security strategy. It is under revision with a draft only very recently in circulation under limited distribution. With respect to the CD effort, the author anticipates that the new strategy will incorporate the objectives of the more recent security strategy and interim drug strategy. As the strategy is presently written, drug trafficking and its associated problems are considered significant in impacting the strategic military environment. It sets forth DOD's broad and high priority mission: detection and significant reduction in the production and trafficking of illegal drugs. The mission is seen as requiring a sustained employment of military forces for the foreseeable future in assisting other nations develop the aggressive ability to stem the drug flow.<sup>3</sup>

The use of the military in supporting international CD efforts is not expected to change in the near future. The level and focus of the effort will certainly change but the broad mission remains. Thus the revised national military strategy with respect to the CD mission will probably not change significantly. DOD implementation will act on this broad mission and receive specific guidance through the national drug strategy.

## STATUS OF THE NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY PROGRAM, '89 - '92

A comprehensive strategy was followed to provide for a long-term solution through prevention and a short term solution through treatment and restricted availability. The strategy was to maintain pressure on all fronts of supply, demand and transit with no single tactic the answer. Funding in all areas dramatically increased during this period: demand programs nearly doubled to \$4.1B with domestic LE increasing 90% to \$5.4B and international support up 38% to \$2.8B.<sup>4</sup> Though demand programs saw the greatest increase, education and prevention lagged treatment (\$1.7B compared to \$2.4B).<sup>5</sup> It is expected that the Clinton Administration will attempt to place more fiscal emphasis on the 'prevention through education' side of the domestic demand agenda. The statistics for illicit drug use saw a decline from 12.1 to 6.3% of the U.S. population, and the drug of choice (cocaine) declined from 2.9 to 0.9%.<sup>6</sup> The rub emphasized by the Clinton Administration is that hard-core drug abuse persisted at high levels. This sector accounts for about 20% of all users but is responsible for two-thirds of the consumption (roughly 300 MT for '92).<sup>7</sup>

## INTERIM NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL STRATEGY - '93

Reports on the shifting U.S. strategy began roughly a year ago. The Clinton Administration reversed the Bush CD initiative



by cutting deeply into the military and economic aid provided to the Andean Region (Colombia, Peru and Bolivia). This region is considered to produce the world's supply of cocaine. Deeper cuts are now being implemented in DOD's international source and transit nation programs. "The expected additional cutbacks would represent a substantial step away from the Bush strategy...which focused on halting cocaine trafficking at its source."<sup>8</sup> The Bush Administration never missed an opportunity to make speeches about the drug problem yet President Clinton has said very little; that apparent indifference is certain to be noted in Latin America.<sup>9</sup>

The interim strategy calls for a new sense of direction by placing increased emphasis on demand-oriented programs: treatment, prevention, education, research and domestic LE. It states that international commitment will be continued but with those nations demonstrating the political will. The remarks on international leadership underscored earlier by former President Bush appear to be supported by President Clinton. Actions or sometimes inaction, however, speak louder than words when viewed by our allies. Though it is not the intent of this paper to criticize efforts directed toward demand reduction, the signals sent to our LA neighbors could have far-reaching consequences as discussed in Chapter III.

The foundations of the new strategy include demand and violence reduction, streamlining domestic LE efforts and finally, international leadership. The shifting focus in the national drug strategy may at first seem a minor change in policy. A look

beyond the rhetoric at the multitude of new and planned domestic programs coupled with the major reductions in international financial support to DOD programs tells a clearer story. Recent domestic programs include: Health Care Reform Plan (drug treatment included in basic coverage), increased criminal justice treatment/health care, National Service Plan, drug-free workplace programs, increased police presence, Brady Bill, Safe Schools Act and the Community Enterprise Board. No new international leadership programs are contemplated and to carry out the new strategy DOD will experience an almost 50% reduction in CD funding for '94.<sup>10</sup> In the international arena, the U.S. will continue to work with and offer support to other nations, especially the source and transit nations demonstrating the political will. The strategy's intent is a controlled shift of emphasis away from the source and transit zones. Concentration on cooperative nations, continued diplomatic efforts with those nations of weak will, increased involvement with multi-national development banks and assistance to existing CD consultive institutions (UN/OAS) are the CD program priorities.<sup>11</sup>

President Clinton's position was further delineated in Presidential Decision Directive NR. 14 of 3 November 93 which specifically focuses DOD attention on the three cocaine source nations of the Andean region. The final, comprehensive national drug strategy is expected to be submitted to Congress on or about 1 February 1994.

## CHAPTER II

### DOD'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION

#### DOD'S IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

DOD announced its guidance to the CINCs in a memorandum from the Deputy Secretary of Defense last October. Within the new policy five strategic elements are emphasized to support the Administration's new direction:

- \*Source Nation Support. Training and operational support to the host nation (HN) police and military organizations through SAO and CD funding. Focus is on Colombia, Peru and Bolivia.
- \*Dismantling Cartels. Intelligence analyst and linguistic support to the DEA's kingpin strategy.
- \*Detection and Monitoring (D&M). Shift of D&M resources toward the Andean source nations, streamline activities in the transit zone (Central America and Caribbean) and refocus domestic activities at critical border areas.
- \*Direct Support to Domestic Drug LE Agencies (DLEAs). Equipment, personnel support (including National Guard) and improved C3I connectivity with federal, state and local LE agencies in furthering their CD programs.
- \*Demand Reduction. Expanding community outreach programs and continuing/consolidating DOD drug testing programs.<sup>12</sup>

#### USSOUTHCOM AOR IMPACT

SOUTHCOM has been responsible for supporting the Ambassador's Country Team, LE agencies and host nations in CD operations in Latin America. Under the J-3, the Deputy Director for Counterdrugs (DDD) coordinates all CD efforts. SOUTHCOM's

principal focus has always been on the Andean ridge nations. Secondary focus was on the Central American transit zone with tertiary focus on the potential source and transit zone of the southern cone (remaining South American nations).<sup>13</sup> As such, SOUTHCOM believes that its previous and current efforts in the Andean ridge are consistent with President Clinton's strategic guidance.<sup>14</sup> In executing its Peacetime Engagement Plan and FY94 'Steady State' CD operation, SOUTHCOM receives financial support for 3 of the 5 DOD strategic elements: Host Nation Support, Dismantling Cartels and D&M. As previously stated, a significant reduction in these programs is currently underway. This indicator reflects the President's shifting strategic focus.

In 1993, DOD received about \$1.15B in its CD budget which had followed a general increase since previous years. Congress reduced the President's '94 budget to about \$868M or roughly a 25% decrease. In yet deeper cuts only last month, operational tempo (OPTEMPO) funds previously earmarked for CD programs within the DOD budget were returned to the respective military services. The resulting impact is a '94 DOD budget reduced to about \$660M or a roughly 44% decrease from '93. Consequently the CINC is no longer able to rely fully on D&M support from previously 'owed' service-supported resources (ship days, flying hours, battalion training days, etc). SOUTHCOM is expected to receive about \$140M, compared to \$270M (which included OPTEMPO funds) in '93.<sup>15</sup>

This translates to about a 52% decrease in DOD funding available to support the CINC's ongoing Latin American CD

programs. The bulk of the funding, about \$120M, will be directed toward the HN support element with the remaining split between the other two elements. To support the shift away from the transit zone, deeper cuts were made in D&M than in the other elements.

The loss in OPTEMPO funds means that previously dedicated AWACS support for D&M is now under only a 'gentleman's agreement' even though the aircraft remain based locally at Howard AFB. Additionally, U-2 support has been virtually eliminated since the \$24M program was cut. The Caribbean Basin Radar Network (CBRN) engulfing the Caribbean transit zone will lose about 17% of its funding in '94. Although this maintenance-intensive system remains operational, diminished logistics support may impact its effectiveness.<sup>16</sup>

Last month the U.S. Coast Guard announced deep cuts in drug interdiction activities as a result of a Congressionally-directed \$9M reduction in its FY94 Appropriations Bill. Specifically, both selected air and sea assets, as well as certain command staff functions will be eliminated:

- \*Laying up 5 HU-25 drug interdiction aircraft.
- \*Decommissioning one WMEC and all 3 WSES vessels.
- \*Discontinuing participation in C3I West and deleting 43 billets at C3I East.
- \*Discontinuing JTF4's Caribbean Squadron Staff (Maritime Drug Interdiction Coordinator).<sup>17</sup>

In a briefing to the Strategic Studies Group of the U.S. Naval War College in December, the Seventh Coast Guard District

Miami briefer indicated that the (Appropriations) cuts were made without field input and with little coordination at the Administration and ONDCP level.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, one SOUTHCOM briefer indicated that the Administration's policy could not be implemented due to severe gaps between policy and resources (IMET, FMFP and other security assistance programs); as an example, Foreign Military Financing Program (FMFP) funds available for '91 were about \$213M but reduced to about \$15M for '93.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, there may be other Congressionally-mandated reductions affecting the international CD effort. These include the potential cancellation of the Customs airwing and reductions in State Department funding.

These dwindling resources in the source and transit zones translates to potentially severe difficulties for SOUTHCOM in implementing the national strategy.

This is the emerging scenario in Latin America which the new CINC, General McCaffrey, must assess and bring limited resources to bear. The drug threat in the SOUTHCOM AOR is certainly not the only focus but it is a threat that can seriously undermine the political, military, economic and social structure of nation states. As such, it is often a root cause to the instability of this region. It is this fact that placed "support to the war on drugs" as SOUTHCOM's number one priority.<sup>20</sup> It has been the mission of SOUTHCOM to promote U.S. national interests by strengthening the institutional structure of these nations threatened by non-traditional forces (eg- narcotics,

insurgencies). A review of SOUTHCOM's theater strategic objectives, which have remained unchanged since at least '92, bear this truth:

- \*Strengthen host nation democratic institutions.
- \*Assist host nations in eliminating regional security threats.
- \*Support continued economic and social progress.
- \*Assist host nations in defeating host nation drug production and trafficking.
- \*Ensure an open and neutral Panama Canal.<sup>21</sup>

Progress has been made since SOUTHCOM implemented the national drug strategy four years ago beginning with Operation Support Justice I. Many Latin American nations now regard the demand for drugs an internal as well as "Gringo" problem, at least partly due to sustained U.S. training and presence. Increased regional and interagency cooperation has disrupted cartels which operate without regard to international borders. Peru and Ecuador are one example of cooperation despite long-standing border disputes. The sharing of liaison officers among the Andean nations and aboard U.S. military aircraft has also fostered the idea of international teamwork in a common cause. In a U.S. Presidential determination in March '93, the following nations achieved full compliance with the goals and objectives of the 1988 U.N. Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances: Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela. The objectives of the Convention include establishing

legal measures to punish drug trafficking/production and money-laundering, to control legal chemicals used to process illegal drugs and cooperate in international efforts.<sup>22</sup>

In Colombia, the Gaviria government challenged the violence of the Medellin Cartel capturing key leadership and removing Escobar from power. Colombia also led an aggressive effort addressing most aspects of the February '92 San Antonio Summit. In Bolivia, operations Ghost Zone and Golden Bear were significant in disrupting cartels and forcing a move away from the coca-rich Chapare region. Although there were setbacks to the military assistance program in Peru following President Fujimori's suspension of Congress and the Constitution, persistence has led to improved cooperation between Peru's military and police, and renewed efforts and resources brought to bear on the Shining Path insurgency and traffickers in the Hualaga region. In mid-'92, Mexico stated that it would assume the remaining costs of the CD program previously supported by the U.S., recognizing the impact on its own economy. Brazil's new President announced that 1993 would be the year to combat drug trafficking.

There are numerous other examples of positive trends in the recognition of the drug problem and the increased willingness to establish and coordinate LE resources in Latin America. However, many of these nations continue to be threatened by corruption, insurgent forces and economic troubles. These positive trends have been nurtured by the training and assistance teams provided



by SOUTHCOM and the U.S. agencies which the CINC supports. These successes and challenges require long term commitment not unlike the strategy employed in low-intensity conflict (LIC) scenarios. The LIC strategy includes patient, long-term, sustained and legitimate action on the part of the policy maker. An article written at the Army Staff College for MILITARY REVIEW in November '92 stated:

"We can promote these positive trends and achieve our theater strategic objectives if our national policies and sufficient resources to give meaning to those policies, are constant and consistent. Conversely, if our national policies toward the region change every two to four years, and resources wax and wane, then we put our interests and our ability to achieve our strategic objectives at risk."23

Obviously the new Administration believes that the progress in this region has been ineffective in causing a decrease in the percentage of hard-core drug users. This appears to be the emerging focus on the measure of effectiveness (MOE) undertaken to judge the success of our CD effort. However, this MOE could theoretically point to the ineffectiveness of our border, transit or domestic LE efforts as well. The national and military strategies have been to 'stem' not stop the flow of drugs, as well as to develop HN programs in this effort. In this regard SOUTHCOM has been relatively successful employing a strategy whose real success may not be fully realized (as former SOUTHCOM CINC, GEN. JOULWAN said) for a decade or more. I believe that it will take more time than the Clinton Administration is willing to provide before we see our efforts impact on the slowly-changing attitude and underlying problems of the hard-core user.

It is not enough that SOUTHCOM and the DLEA's continue to build a regional CD structure in Latin America. There must be renewed coordination at the U.S. national level within the Office of the National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). President Clinton has made it known that he would elevate the ONDCP Director's position to Cabinet level. The only real action so far has been deep staff cuts within ONDCP in the Administration's program to streamline government. Political leadership through ONDCP can do much to support HN resolve from the national level while complimenting SOUTHCOM's efforts at the operational and tactical levels.

## CHAPTER III

### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The SOUTHCOM AOR has been referred to as an 'Economy of Force' theater since the traditional military threat is considered likely to occur in other unified command AOR's. As a result, there have been suggested Unified Command Plans (UCP) eliminating SOUTHCOM and incorporating Latin America within LANTCOM. With the apparent reduction in CD commitment to this region and the requirement for SOUTHCOM to relocate by '99 (Panama Canal Treaty requirement), this proposal could potentially re-emerge. At least for the near term this seems unlikely with the incoming CINC scheduled to assume command in February '94. Former SOUTHCOM Chief of Staff, Prof. Chandler (presently on the faculty of the Naval War College Joint Military Operations Dept) believes the present Clinton Administration will most likely not disestablish SOUTHCOM because of the signal it would send.<sup>24</sup> The 19 Latin American countries could potentially view the action as a blow to international relations and thus threaten existing CD and other agreements. In the long term it is difficult to assess the future for SOUTHCOM as U.S. administrations come and go. Regardless of relocation or disestablishment, the narcotics threat will most likely remain beyond the short term and therefore sustained commitment to a comprehensive strategy will best demonstrate U.S. resolve. The

real issue, then, is what implications will the new U.S. drug strategy have on U.S. interests and the future of this region?

In a hearing before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations in February '92, then SOUTHCOM CINC General Joulwan provided an experienced perspective following 15 months in command. Some key points of his testimony on the Andean drug initiative are summarized:

- \*The narcotrafficker has no respect for the sovereignty of countries boundaries; intell capabilities must look at the theater-wide threat.
- \*Our CD program requires long-term commitment; it will be a long difficult fight and we must be in it for the long haul.
- \*We need to encourage regional cooperation and promote confidence-building measures.
- \*If we are serious about the drug war and our commitment to the Latin American nations, then we must demonstrate that resolve and provide focus and leadership.
- \*To truly stem the flow of drugs, it is necessary to threaten production and attack traffickers in transit.
- \*We must conduct the fight as the drug trafficker does without regard for national boundaries; capabilities must be applied theater-wide.<sup>25</sup>

Although the new national strategy appears to support continued international commitment, severe cutbacks to DOD's support mission essentially limits any significant assistance to the 3 Andean source nations with minimal assistance to the transit and potential source nations. As previously stated, SOUTHCOM has always focused its primary efforts in the Andean region. Continuing the Andean drug strategy could severely limit support to the agencies and host nations requiring continued progress in a long war.

A number of implications can potentially be drawn. The first is that, if threatened enough, the drug cartels will simply relocate their facilities across national boundaries if necessary. Brazil, as an example, has the extensive riverine network of the Amazon region capable of supporting clandestine coca production and already manufacturers the majority of essential chemicals required for full cocaine production.<sup>26</sup> A coca variant called 'epadu' already exists in Brazil and production could be stepped up. Should this shift in production occur as we have seen to a limited degree in the past, the U.S. government may be less prepared to deal with the problem as it emerges and grows in lesser supported nations. Diminished or discontinued programs supported by SOUTHCOM would be difficult to re-establish. More than anything else, traffickers fear concerted actions attacking the grower to user chain across government boundaries.<sup>27</sup>

A second implication is that withdrawing a level of support too quickly, as may be occurring in the non-Andean nations, may allow underlying insurgent forces to re-emerge. Mark Kleiman of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government stated, "(Most drug experts) think the political costs (of a cutback in U.S. efforts abroad) could be dangerously high. If what you're worried about is a lot more Americans snorting cocaine, it doesn't really matter. But if you're worried about Bolivia or Guatemala being taken over by a bunch of thugs, then the issue is a very serious one."<sup>28</sup> With continued U.S. support, Peru has taken positive

steps to put down the Shining Path movement but other countries such as El Salvador or Nicaragua may lack the political, economic or military capability. SOUTHCOM may thus find itself in a direct military role vice a support role in re-establishing a democratic institution.

A third implication relates to the first two. The so-called 'waxing and waning' of national policy puts U.S. interests at risk with regard to continued democratic reform, trade agreements, the strategic use of the Panama Canal as well as conventional military threats from a close neighbor not previously considered. Rather, there should be a more graduated approach toward HN assumption of the CD campaign with continued cooperation through international organizations to foster political will. Significant shifts only serve to demonstrate our lack of certainty regarding Latin American importance to U.S. national interests. Thus, SOUTHCOM's ability to rely on the military forces of a particular HN in future conflicts may be less predictable.

A fourth implication; our grip on the transit side of the drug problem is loosening up at a time when steady pressure should be continued. Decreased interdiction resources in the Caribbean and Central America will only serve to facilitate easier shipment and increase drug flow to U.S. borders. The recent approval of NAFTA could assist that border crossing. Although part of the new strategy is to improve detection and LE at critical border areas, decreased interdiction and D&M in

transit will only serve to move LE assets closer to the U.S. in their fight. Counterdrug agencies have viewed interdiction as a transitory phase, a delaying-action, until demand reduction through education takes place.<sup>29</sup> If so, detection, monitoring and interdiction resources will be hard pressed to continue this effort.

A final implication regards the domestic demand reduction program. A serious national effort to reduce demand, particularly in hard-core drug use, is certain to have widespread public support. If successful, it may effectively force the opening of new drug markets elsewhere. Europe and Canada are existing markets for Latin American traffickers which could potentially see new markets since the infrastructure already exists. If we believe that our national security is linked to the support of democracy and economic reform in Latin America, then the commitment must remain regardless of the success of our own demand reduction programs. We shouldn't forget that Latin America is now recognizing and attempting to deal with their own internal demand problems. The Administration has stated its plan to remain engaged with international organizations committed to the global drug problem. Though we can't be the 'world's policeman' we can provide the resources, steady commitment and leadership to strengthen these organizations.

## CONCLUSIONS

Under increasing fiscal constraints the new U.S. Administration is attempting to get serious on the demand side of the drug problem and move swiftly away from commitment at the source. To maintain our national security interests in the Western Hemisphere, we must continue to demonstrate a level of commitment and resources throughout the Latin American region. We must maintain the pressure on the narcotraffickers throughout the source-transit-demand spectrum and realize that the drug problem is a long term commitment. We must continue to pursue efficient programs which promote stability through moral, democratic and economic reform. We should provide focus and leadership at the national level within ONDCP and to international organizations committed to the global drug problem. Although we should continue to disrupt and dismantle drug cartels, HN institutional reform (nation building) is the key to significantly reducing the drug scourge and at the same time promote other U.S. security interests.



END NOTES

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