



NEWSLETTER



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Stability Ops in the Western Hemisphere

Observations, Insights, and Lessons

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Introduction

This newsletter is a collection of articles focused on stability operations in the Western Hemisphere, specifically in Central and South America. Today, stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq rightfully receive the lion's share of our attention, priority, and media coverage. However, there are challenges, potential dangers, and future threats immediately south of our country that merit our attention and continuous observation and evaluation. Also, there are observations, insights, and lessons from the United States Southern Command area of responsibility that are directly applicable to all combatant commands, including our two current combat theaters.

The countries in Central and South America present unique challenges for policymakers and military leaders in terms of cultural, economic, geographic, historic, political, and security dimensions. The articles in this newsletter cover a range of issues with a specific intent on establishing best practices and lessons learned. The articles should not be considered all-inclusive. The newsletter is an effort to capture relevant articles published in recent professional journals and from Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) and other joint archives to inform Soldiers on relevant issues, successes, and failures and to provide a historical document for future reference.

In many instances, the ideas presented in these articles are personal opinion and in some cases not approved Army doctrine. The recommendations in these articles should always be validated with the latest approved Army and joint doctrine.

CALL acknowledges and thanks the professional journals and the authors who permitted the reprinting of these articles and who were, in some instances, personally involved in assisting CALL in the formatting process.

(CALL editor's note: Minor modifications to format were made to support the CALL newsletter format. In some instances, pictures not referenced in the narrative were deleted to save space. Additionally, biographies were eliminated to avoid release of personal information.)

Time to Improve U.S. Defense Structure for the Western Hemisphere

Dr. Craig A. Deare

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As the Nation adjusts to the reality of the Obama administration, the time is ripe for a fundamental improvement in the Pentagon's relationship with its counterparts in the Western Hemisphere. It should be acknowledged that U.S. foreign policy in general, and defense policy in particular, is not routinely engaged in matters of importance to the nations of the hemisphere. Given the nature of a globalized world, and the fact that the United States is no longer the only security option available to the region's actors, American policymakers must work to remain relevant and engaged with those open to being our partners.

This article runs the risk of being a bit "inside baseball" regarding U.S. defense policy toward the region as it seeks to explain the primary structural shortcomings associated with both the formulation and execution of policy. It does not recommend specific policies for particular countries or concerns; rather, it is intended to address matters of structure and process. There are a number of reasons why the quality and level of Department of Defense (DOD) engagement with the nations of this hemisphere have been suboptimal. Among these, the current organizational structure within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Unified Command Plan (UCP) for this hemisphere is the result (not the cause) of key factors responsible for our traditional inattention. At the end of the day, however, key structural changes within OSD and in the current UCP are required to significantly improve the quality of DOD policy formulation and security cooperation with the partner nations of the Western Hemisphere. This is not to suggest that structural changes alone are necessary; clearly, sound policy requires informed analysis and wise decision making. As Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson stated, "Good national security policy requires both good policymakers and good policy machinery."¹ Indeed, one cannot be divorced from the other, but the focus here is on the machinery.

It is important to understand the context in which this effect has occurred to make the decisions necessary to correct the structural shortcomings. For reasons that will be addressed briefly, the geopolitical realities at play in this part of the world are serious and troublesome. They will not disappear in the short term, but they will require the dedication of time and attention by senior defense decision makers sooner rather than later.

A Current Snapshot of Defense Concerns

Prior to delving into DOD structural shortcomings, we must address why it is more important than ever to have a more effective configuration of assets to engage the region. Space limitations preclude addressing all 35 countries of the hemisphere, but make no mistake—the security issues at play in this part of the world represent real and present dangers, and DOD has an important role to play. This is particularly true given the department's recent policy of elevating stability operations to the same priority level as those related to combat, and the reality that the region presents a target-rich environment for the entire range of tasks involved in those operations.

The notion of threats, challenges, and other concerns represents the consensus language that emerged from the Conference on Hemispheric Security in Mexico City in October 2003. The consensus was required to bridge the wide gaps in regional views among countries as diverse as the United States, Bolivia, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. Classical military threats that characterized

the bipolar world do not represent the perceived threats dominating the security thinkers of most countries in the Western Hemisphere. As U.S. security elites think about the region, they must recognize that nontraditional, transnational, and other than state-on-state aggression is the most pressing danger their counterparts there see.

Transnational Threats

Trafficking of Drugs, Small Arms/Weapons, and Contraband. Although these items are linked, the menace of drug smuggling is perhaps the most pernicious and troubling. The effects of the transshipments of drugs, and increasingly their consumption in the countries of production and the transit zone, are wreaking havoc throughout the hemisphere. The monies derived from these illicit activities are funding the acquisition of greater firepower than is available to local and national police forces, requiring the militaries of many countries to play a direct role. These trafficking routes are also available to terrorist organizations.

Terrorism/Insurgency. Most U.S. policymakers equate terrorism with al Qaeda and its derivatives, but the region has its own homegrown varieties. The best known are the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) in Colombia and *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru. Although Colombia's President Álvaro Uribe has led a successful effort to combat the FARC, that endeavor is not yet concluded. For its part, *Sendero Luminoso*, believed to have been defeated and eradicated in the 1990s, is making a comeback. And while Islamic radical terrorist cells are not known to be operational in the region (yet), there are groups present within the hemisphere, some in urban areas. It is widely believed that Islamic groups raise funds legally and illegally to finance operations around the world. The Venezuela-Iran linkage is particularly troublesome. As well, there *are* small groups of insurgents in Mexico and other countries that merit close monitoring.

Organized Crime. Listed as a separate entity from the trafficking trio, this term refers to the large number of active criminal networks and their role in undermining societies and governments. In the majority of countries in the hemisphere, organized criminal networks play a debilitating role over the viability of the state. Included in this category are the *Maras*, or gangs, that operate in a transnational fashion as well, generating greater levels of violence and insecurity throughout Central America, Mexico, and beyond.

Priority Countries

Mexico. Although many things are going right in this key neighbor's territory, its security situation is bad and getting worse. There are seven major narcotics trafficking cartels operating throughout the country, generating violence and challenging the very authority of the state. According to the private intelligence agency STRATFOR (Strategic Forecasting, Incorporated), "the 2008 death toll related to drug trafficking reached 4,325 on November 3, far exceeding the total of nearly 2,500 for all of 2007."² President Felipe Calderón has given the mission to the armed forces, due to the combination of factors related to Mexican law enforcement (corruption, ineffectiveness, and no national police force). The watered down Mérida Initiative represents a tepid attempt to address this serious situation; much bolder thinking and far more resources will be required.

Venezuela. Despite protestations to the contrary and words about democracy, this country is a de facto military dictatorship. Hugo Chavez has essentially dismantled any semblance of democratic

institutions, and threatens the military balance of South America with planned acquisitions of 4.5 generation aircraft, submarines, tanks, and anti-aircraft capabilities. His active pursuit of relationships with Russia, China, Iran, Cuba, Belarus, and North Korea is anything but benign. Matters will get considerably worse before they improve.

Brazil. The country of the future is arriving. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has taken on the role of regional leader, moving beyond the potential to the real. Beyond mere economic and political influence, defense minister Nelson Jobim has bold and grand designs for a much more robust and energetic military role, in terms of both new capabilities and leadership. Jobim has created the *Consejo de Defensa Sudamericano* (South American Defense Council), a regional defense entity that excludes the United States. A new defense strategy is in the offing, seeking strategic relationships with France, Russia, and other extra-regional actors. The United States needs to consider its national security interests as it ponders whether to deepen or reduce its defense relationship with this key player.

Bolivia. Internal political strife is running high, and although the likelihood of the country splitting in two is not great, it is nonetheless a possibility that bears monitoring. The fact that Hugo Chavez has promised to intervene militarily in the event of civil infighting presents a challenge to the countries of the region. How will DOD react to such an eventuality?

Cuba. The question of what happens when the Castro brothers disappear from the scene remains open. This land, the size of Pennsylvania and with 11 million people, is at what the National Security Strategy would describe as a “strategic crossroads.” DOD’s stability operations mission has serious implications when matters begin to unravel. Conversely, should the Obama administration decide to engage the government of Cuba, and understanding the preeminent role of the Cuban armed forces, the policy implications for DOD could be significant.

Colombia. This country comes closest to acting as an ally in the region. The Ministry of Defense and the armed forces have transformed significantly during the tenure of President Uribe, although many observers will continue to emphasize the human rights shortcomings of the government far more than those of the insurgents. To its misfortune, Colombia is located in a less than desirable neighborhood, bordered to the east by Venezuela and to the south by Ecuador. How will DOD engage the Colombian military in the future?

The above limited sample does not fully capture the wide range of challenges that confront the region; there are myriad other vital issues meriting attention. It does underscore that there are many matters of substance calling for improving the structure to ensure they are properly served.

Factors Contributing to Inattention

A number of specific factors are responsible—in large part—for the relatively consistent (save periodic crises) lack of DOD attention in matters related to the Western Hemisphere.

A Dangerous World. National security challenges in East Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Horn of Africa in general, as well as Pakistan, North Korea, Iran, China, Russia, and other locales, demand the attention of the Secretary of Defense on an almost daily basis. Very infrequently do issues in this hemisphere call for his immediate attention, and in many important ways, this is a very good thing.

A (Relatively) Peaceful Region. The risks represented by national security challenges in this hemisphere seem to pale in comparison with those elsewhere. Canada is a strong and dependable ally; Mexico is an increasingly capable partner; our “third border,” the Caribbean, is relatively stable (though currently facing important internal concerns). The average level of defense spending (approximately 1.5 percent) of the nations of this hemisphere is the lowest in the world, which is fortunate in broad terms. This reflects the reality that the likelihood of state-on-state conflict is low though not impossible, particularly if we are inattentive, as evidenced by the Colombia-Ecuador-Venezuela “crisis” in March 2008. Despite the unlikely event of state-on-state violence, the number of both transnational and internal threats and challenges related to violence and crime warrants increasing attention.

It's the Economy. The principal U.S. interest in this hemisphere has long been, in general terms, economic. Washington's foreign policy has emphasized democracy, market economics, and stability, dating from the Monroe Doctrine in the 19th century and the Roosevelt Corollary in the early 20th century. However, more recently it has been formed in response to crises. Examples beyond Colombia where U.S. administrations paid significant attention to the security situation include Haiti (1994/2004), Panama (1990), Central America in general (Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala in particular in the 1980s), Grenada (1983), and the Dominican Republic (1965). The recent level of U.S. commitment to Bogota is an exception to this general trend, and was due initially more to an effective Colombian diplomatic campaign with the Department of State and Congress than to a DOD-led effort.

Developmental Challenges. The primary challenges confronting the majority of nations of the hemisphere are developmental in nature. The institutional frailty of many of the democracies, the myriad challenges confronting the societies (from poor educational systems to struggling health care delivery), the uneven character of the economic programs, and the predicament of the justice systems and the rule of law are the fundamental issues that confront the region. These challenges, and the regional governments' deficiencies in addressing them, have led to the aforementioned internal—and increasingly transnational—security threats. Organized crime, gang violence, and trafficking of drugs, persons, and small arms are the effect. These issues are not resolved with military means, although the armed forces can and do play an important role in dealing with the associated security effects of the developmental problems. In fact, because of the institutional weaknesses of many governments, the military is all too often called on to perform missions not traditionally within the scope of the armed forces.

Heterogeneity. Yet another complicating factor is heterogeneity. Non specialists tend to think of the hemisphere—to the extent they think of it at all—as Latin America, or perhaps Latin America and the Caribbean. And it is true that both of those “areas” share a number of culturally similar characteristics. But the fact is that there are 19 different “Latin American” countries and 13 different “Caribbean” countries, as well as 14 U.S. and European territories and dependencies. This reality makes the notion of crafting a “defense policy for Latin America” or a “defense policy for the Caribbean” exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, in practical terms.

Divergent Conceptions of Security and Defense. A subset of the great heterogeneity is that each country has a different understanding of the role of the armed forces in its security and defense equation. As mentioned previously, some armed forces are required by constitution to be involved in the internal security matters of the state (for example, Guatemala), while others have been limited to reacting exclusively to external military threats of state actors, greatly reducing their roles (for example, Argentina). Because of these distinctions, the interaction between DOD and the militaries of other countries may be quite different, as in Chile, Argentina, Colombia, and

Mexico. This reality exacerbates the general lack of understanding of the region, making the task of crafting coherent and nuanced policy more difficult.

Having reviewed the reasons for the relative neglect by DOD, the hemisphere is distinct in one critical variable: it is our hemisphere in the sense that this is where we live. It is worth repeating—those who pay attention to the region know this intuitively—that this hemisphere in general, and Latin America in particular, is thus the area of the world that most directly affects our citizens' daily lives.

To highlight just one of many examples of the region's impact, U.S. trade with countries in this hemisphere in 2007 was 29.16 percent of the Nation's total, essentially double that with the European Union (15.22 percent), and more than triple that with China (9.77 percent).³ The importance of stable economic markets, and the role of security and defense toward achieving that stability, is self-evident. As Senator John McCain said to an audience of broadcasters during his Presidential campaign, "To all of the people and governments of our shared hemisphere: No portion of this earth is more important to the United States. My administration will work relentlessly to build a future with liberty and justice for ALL."⁴ Although President Obama may not have shared the same view, he now needs to get up to speed quickly.

Addressing the Challenges

These realities did not come about overnight; they are the cumulative effect of many years of inattention and/or disinterest by U.S. administrations of both parties as well as the inexperience, inconsistency, and incompetence of many regional governments. Clearly, the resolution will also take considerable time and will depend on both U.S. and regional efforts. A major challenge regional governments must overcome is a history of authoritarian and military rule, a reality not shared by the United States. Many countries continue to work their way through relatively fresh civil-military wounds, with some efforts actually exacerbating rather than healing those wounds. That said, there are two comparatively simple structural changes that DOD can adopt to fundamentally improve the nature of the defense relationship between the United States and the countries of the region.

First, DOD should create the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD) for Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA). In essence, this calls for exchanging the configuration of one ASD office with a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) office within the same directorate.

This upgrade of the DASD WHA to ASD WHA employs similar logic to that used to create the office of the ASD for Asian Affairs. Prior to the latest OSD reorganization in 2006, Asian affairs were the domain of the DASD for Asia-Pacific Affairs, situated within the ASD for International Security Affairs (ISA) (as were the DASDs for Inter-American Affairs, African Affairs, and Near East-South Asian Affairs). Given the scale of the region and the influence of Asian affairs in general—the cases of China, North Korea, Japan, South Korea, and India, among others—it made good sense to carve out the Asian affairs portfolio and create a separate ASD office. Robert Kaplan argues that a confluence of the experience of three key individuals—Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Richard Myers—was a key factor in this shift.⁵ For reasons listed previously, a similar organizational rearrangement is called for in the Western Hemisphere.

A separate but also key issue of this "elevation" is that it more appropriately balances the relationship between the policy-maker's position and that of the combatant commander. Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense are many levels removed from the Secretary of Defense, having

to route their recommendations through multiple levels of bureaucrats, most of whom know little and care even less about the region.⁶ In hierarchical terms, a DASD is roughly equivalent to a major general, while geographic combatant command commanders are among the most powerful four-star general/flag officers in the system. Over the years, combatant commands from this hemisphere have routinely bypassed the DASD, consulting directly with the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy or the Secretary, effectively relegating the DASD to a senior staff officer within the bureaucracy. On the other hand, Assistant Secretaries of Defense are four-star equivalents, requiring confirmation by the Senate (DASDs do not require confirmation). An individual sufficiently senior and experienced to receive Senate confirmation as the ASD WHA, would be able to establish and maintain clear lines of policy supremacy vis-à-vis the combatant commander.

As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is the principal military advisor to the Secretary and the President, a combatant commander should be the principal military advisor for issues in the Western Hemisphere to the OSD leadership. An ASD WHA should be the individual responsible for providing advice on defense issues and defense policy—a more strategic and broader perspective than purely operational military matters, which are the purview of combatant commanders. As when the Chairman accompanies the Secretary to Capitol Hill, the combatant commander should accompany the Assistant Secretary, clearly reinforcing the hierarchy of the civilian policymaker for the region over the subordinate military operational commander.

On another note, from a reciprocity and protocol perspective, one should not underestimate the impact of the level of the official charged with defense policy for the hemisphere. Most countries were offended when they were informed of (but never consulted about) the moving of the office responsible for regional policy development from the ASD ISA to the newly created ASD for Homeland Defense (HD). Many senior regional officials questioned whether the United States considered their countries as subordinate to the defense of the American homeland, and why regions such as Africa and the Middle East were still within ISA, while Inter-American Affairs migrated to a newly created office responsible for internal defense of the United States. Upgrading the office responsible for regional policy formulation would go a long way toward reassuring the region that DOD assesses it as important. Moreover, this bureaucratic upgrade would enable the Assistant Secretary to interact on par with the other ASDs within the policy office.

An ancillary advantage of the ASD WHA upgrade is the associated level of congressional (specifically Senate) involvement in Western Hemisphere matters. Senate Armed Services confirmation hearings will require much greater attention than currently exists. Aside from U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) annual testimony, scant attention is paid to the region for reasons already listed. It is also safe to assume that a nominee for ASD WHA would have to be a senior individual with a demonstrated record of experience related to the region. No longer would the office responsible for DOD policy in the area be filled by relatively junior political appointees with limited regional defense experience or expertise.⁷

The “exchange” of an ASD WHA for the ASD HD is warranted. The creation of the ASD HD office in the post-9/11 environment was an effort to adjust to serious internal threats to U.S. security. The reality, however, was that in broad terms, there was little substantive change in DOD policy. Defense Support to Civil Authorities (or Military Support to Civil Authorities, as it was known previously) is longstanding in U.S. military tradition. DOD’s relationship with the Department of Homeland Security, as well as other relevant actors within the interagency community, does not require this level of organizational interface, particularly in terms of policy.

DOD's role remains what it has long been: to respond to requests from other lead agencies when military capabilities are required to support domestic law enforcement or other agencies. The important civilian policy matters related to Homeland Defense will continue to be performed, but under ASD WHA oversight. Nonetheless, DOD's primary focus remains external threats and challenges.

This new configuration would be as follows:

ASD WHA. This official now receives the same level of support as his counterparts. He is assigned two military assistants (colonel/captain), a confidential assistant, an executive assistant, and so forth. The ASD would move about the Pentagon, as well as the interagency community and abroad, with much greater prestige, credibility, and authority. The ASD would be supported by a principal deputy and three DASDs.

Principal DASD WHA. Among the perks of being an ASD is the advantage of having a deputy to assist in running the office, typically focusing on the Pentagon, leaving the ASD to work externally. In many cases, the Principal DASD is a career member of the Senior Executive Service (SES), not a political appointee. Ideally, this position would be filled with a career civil servant with 20 years or more of defense experience with Latin American and/or Caribbean issues.

DASD for North American and Caribbean Affairs. This DASD would have responsibility for two of the most important U.S. partners in the world: Canada and Mexico. Despite attempts to shoehorn issues into the Security Prosperity Partnership, the fact is that Canada and Mexico have different security and defense challenges, and require distinct policy management. The Caribbean, for its part, has perhaps the least heterogeneous binding among the sub-regions, with 15 Caribbean Community members of British Commonwealth and Anglophone influence. Nonetheless, the cases of Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic are major exceptions to this commonality. Moreover, the countries of Central America cannot be arbitrarily separated from Mexico, as in the artificial separation resulting from a U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM)/USSOUTHCOM boundary. Policies and operational relationships for Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Belize, Costa Rica, and Panama must be made in a coherent and consistent fashion.

DASD for South American Affairs. The major actor of this continent, Brazil, demands much greater time and focus than it has received in recent history, not simply because of its physical size, but because of the combination of its geopolitical weight, its growing economic and energy importance, the sophistication of its armament industry, and its ability to change hearts and minds in the region. Many other countries also require attention in their own right, and for diverging reasons: Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Argentina to name a few. And a key country of significant current concern is Venezuela.

DASD for Homeland Defense and Defense Support to Civil Authorities. The office retains its principal functions as it did under the ASD HD. The DASD and his subordinates continue to interface with Homeland Security and other key interagency actors to ensure effective Defense Support to Civil Authority policies.

DASD Crisis Management and Mission Assurance. This office, too, remains organized as it was under the ASD HD, performing Defense Critical Infrastructure Program activities as well as conducting the DOD Protected Critical Infrastructure Information Program.

Key functions conducted within the DASD for Homeland Security Integration are melded into the other two DASDs responsible for homeland defense matters, and this “DASD-ship” is disestablished.

A final issue is the quality and the quantity of the individuals assigned to the organization. Over the years, both of these variables have tended to decline. The high-water mark was probably during the 1980s, when a confluence of factors (events in Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and elsewhere) focused Presidential-level attention on the region. Nestor Sanchez—a well-known interagency player with years of experience—was the DASD, and he remained for many years. Since that time, the office’s principal director shifted from a general/flag officer to a career (typically junior) SES,⁸ and the country directors shifted from the colonel/General Schedule (GS)-15 level down to major/ lieutenant colonel/GS-13, -14, -15 levels.⁹ Equally important, the number of personnel assigned to the office declined, routinely totaling fewer than 10 individuals. Moreover, although the military personnel tended to be Army Foreign Area Officers with genuine regional experience, many (if not most) of the civilian personnel had little to none. To be truly effective, the upgrades suggested must include significantly increased numbers of experienced individuals to pay sufficient attention to the region.

The second structural change DOD can make to change the nature of the defense relationship between the United States and the countries of the hemisphere is to establish U.S. Americas Command (USAMCOM). This action is not a replica of the newly created U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), which was essentially carved out of U.S. European Command (USEUCOM); rather, it merges the Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) functions of USNORTHCOM—essentially those related to the external relationship with Mexico, as well as those non-North American Aerospace Defense Command issues specifically related to Canada—with those of the long-standing USSOUTHCOM. The fundamental reason underpinning this UCP change is simple and profound: unity of command. This UCP change eliminates an unnecessary and counterproductive seam between the two existing combatant commands in the hemisphere and places all counterdrug/counter narco-terrorism, disaster relief/ humanitarian assistance, and operational and TSC responsibilities for the hemisphere under a single unified commander. While not an original proposal—this idea has been debated for years¹⁰—it is an important complement to the establishment of the ASD WHA office. For the first time, responsibility for defense policy for the entire hemisphere would be consolidated under an Assistant Secretary of Defense, supported operationally by a single combatant commander.

For its part, USNORTHCOM is disestablished as a geographic combatant command, but its homeland defense operational responsibilities remain in its new designation as a sub-unified command of USAMCOM. A major advantage is the removal of TSC responsibilities, which are largely a digression from the internal missions of the command, the most important of which is the defense of the homeland. The command has been distracted by trying to perform its core mission of anticipating and conducting homeland defense and civil support operations to defend, protect, and secure the United States and its interests.

One of the arguments against creating an inclusive USAMCOM is that it would be “unmanageable,” with a span of control too large to be effective. Consider the following facts related to other geographic commands: U.S. Pacific Command’s span of control includes 39 countries, 60 percent of the world’s population, and 50 percent of the world’s surface; USEUCOM’s span was 92 countries and now is 40 (including Russia); USAFRICOM’s span is 53 countries. In contrast, USAMCOM’s span of control would be 35 countries, an expansion of

just three countries to USSOUTHCOM's current area of focus. The argument that a USAMCOM span of control would be too unwieldy simply does not withstand scrutiny.

The consolidation affirms the principle of unity of command, a longstanding U.S. military principle of war. Current joint doctrine clearly states that "unity of effort, centralized planning and direction, and decentralized execution are key considerations when considering organization of forces."¹¹ This principle should apply when conceptualizing how to organize the Nation's military forces to engage with the militaries of the hemisphere. As one example clearly illustrates, drawing an arbitrary boundary in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico—as well as between Mexico and Guatemala—exacerbates significant challenges already present for conducting counternarcotics operations in this area. Consider the following: the newly established 4th Fleet, the naval component commander for USSOUTHCOM, has no responsibilities for Mexico, *yet USNORTHCOM has no naval component*.

If USAMCOM is such a good idea and has been around for years, why has the UCP not been amended to fix these issues? The reasons have varied, but in essence they have all revolved around a similar reality: four-star equities. Despite divergent views from certain offices in the Pentagon, the Joint Staff continues to support having two separate geographic combatant commanders and indeed to expand USNORTHCOM's area. This is in no small part due to the excellent personal relationship between the commanders of both U.S. Southern Command and U.S. Northern Command. Left to their own devices, it is highly unlikely that either the Joint Staff or the Chairman would recommend against the desires of two combatant commanders. Clearly, senior leader attention will be required for this UCP change to occur.

Regional realities have evolved over the years; consequently, resolving this challenge will take significant time and effort by both the United States and all the governments of the hemisphere. Among the main challenges for the hemisphere's governments is to overcome similar histories of authoritarian and military governments. Despite encouraging trends in the 1990s toward democratically elected governments and away from authoritarian regimes, the realities of 2008 caused concern because of a resurgence of militarization across the region.

The matter of the relationship of the U.S. Government with the region is far broader than just DOD. The general lack of U.S. foreign policy attention to the region is due to causes similar to those listed above, and it too requires attention. Although this analysis clearly advocates improved U.S. defense policy and interaction, this must be done as a subset of larger U.S. foreign policy interests in the hemisphere. Absent that, the United States runs the risk of exacerbating the perception of a military-focused approach. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates apparently agrees: "This has led to concern among many organizations . . . about what's seen as a creeping 'militarization' of some aspects of America's foreign policy."¹² Getting the U.S. Government to exert greater effort and then obtaining positive results from regional governments will be difficult, but the matter at hand is important, so the effort must be made. Secretary Gates continued:

Broadly speaking, when it comes to America's engagement with the rest of the world, it is important that the military is—and is clearly seen to be—in a supporting role to civilian agencies. Our diplomatic leaders—be they in ambassadors' suites or on the seventh floor of the State Department—must have the resources and political support needed to fully exercise their statutory responsibilities in leading American foreign policy. A steep increase of these capabilities is well within reach, as long as there is the political will and the wisdom to do it.¹³

The ongoing Project on National Security Reform, led by executive director James Locher, is one ongoing effort to restructure the 20th-century national security system to one capable of dealing with 21st-century threats and challenges. The Obama administration should recognize the strategic importance of the region and act accordingly to persuade Congress to provide funding for needed programs. As Admiral James Stavridis noted in his 2008 posture statement, “The U.S., in general, needs to be capable of assisting our partners in addressing underlying conditions of poverty and inequality.”¹⁴ Those conditions are shaped by political, economic, and social factors and require greater civilian-led interagency efforts, with the military in support.

For defense issues, however, the two previously identified structural changes—simple to articulate but difficult to implement due to a variety of political and bureaucratic obstacles—would give the Secretary of Defense a more robust, authoritative, and effective organizational staff element, coupled with a more coherently organized combatant command/military capability. But these steps in and of themselves do not guarantee success. Well-conceived, -coordinated, and -articulated defense policies for the region still must be crafted, and that is done by experienced specialists. As Senator “Scoop” Jackson sagely concluded during his examination of the national security machinery, “The heart problem of national security is not reorganization—it is getting our best people into key foreign policy and defense posts.”¹⁵ But getting the individuals with the right background and experience will call for a stronger and more effective organizational structure. Finally, sound policies require a well-resourced and culturally aware combatant command to execute them.

In January 2009, the Obama administration assumed the high responsibility of formulating U.S. foreign, national security, and defense policy. The risks confronting the administration as it attempts to understand and adapt to the myriad challenges of this globalized world will test its wisdom, experience, and judgment. The Western Hemisphere is deserving of attention as the new administration seeks to reestablish U.S. credibility abroad.

Endnotes

1. Final Statement of Senator Henry M. Jackson, Chairman, Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, November 15, 1961, 4.
2. See <www.stratfor.com/analysis/20081110_mexico_security_memo_nov_10_2008>.
3. U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Division, Washington, DC, February 14, 2008.
4. “McCain’s June 20, 2007, address on Latin America,” Miami, FL, June 20, 2007, available at <www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/12/21/mccain.trans.latinamerica>. Capitalized ALL in the original transcript.
5. Robert D. Kaplan, “What Rumsfeld Got Right,” *The Atlantic* (July-August 2008), 64–74.
6. There are five distinct levels to negotiate before reaching the Secretary: the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD); the Assistant Secretary of Defense; the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; and the Deputy Secretary of Defense.
7. The DASD as of this writing, Steve Johnson, is a notable exception to the recent rule. He is a mature individual with an established record of policy attention to the region. The previous three—Roger Pardo-Maurer (2001–2006), Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (1998–2000), and Maria Fernandez-Greczmiel (1996–1998)—were political appointees as well, all relatively young (late 30s to early 40s) and inexperienced in the ways of OSD. Taking nothing away from their individual qualifications, the message received by many regional counterparts was that the Pentagon had relegated the regional portfolio to a junior partner.
8. Most of who have arrived with scant regional knowledge.
9. With the advent of the new National Security Personnel System, the GS-13, -14, -15 grade levels no longer apply, of course, but their use here emphasizes the point.

10. The first formal proposal of which the author is aware was in 1990, presented to then-Chairman General Colin Powell. A more recent proposal was made in the Report of the National Defense Panel of December 1997. See also the recommendations of Lieutenant Colonel John E. Angevine, USA, "Americas Command: Promoting Regional Stability in the Western Hemisphere," U.S. Army War College Strategy Research Project, 2005.
11. Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, September 10, 2001), II-12.
12. Robert M. Gates, Pentagon press conference, July 16, 2008.
13. Ibid.
14. Admiral James G. Stavridis, USN, *U.S. Southern Command 2008 Posture Statement*, 20, available at <www.southcom.mil/AppsSC/files/0UI0I1204838891.pdf>.
15. Jackson, 4.

**Extract from the 2010 United States Joint Forces Command
Joint Operating Environment**

Central and South America

Military challenges in South America and Central America will likely arise from within states, rather than between them. Many internal stresses will continue to challenge the continent, particularly drug cartels and criminal gangs, while terrorist organizations will continue to find a home in some of the continent's lawless border regions. The power of criminal gangs fueled by drug money may be the primary impediment to economic growth, social progress, and perhaps even political stability and legitimacy in portions of Latin America. The cartels work to undermine and corrupt the state, bending security and legal structures to their will, while distorting and damaging the overall economic potential of the region. That criminal organizations and cartels are capable of leveraging expensive technologies to smuggle illicit drugs across national borders serves to illustrate the formidable resources that these groups can bring to bear. Taking advantage of open trade and finance regimes and global communications technologies, these groups attempt to carve out spaces free from government control and present a real threat to the national security interests of our friends and allies in the Western Hemisphere.

Colombia's success against the FARC [Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia], drug cartels, and paramilitary death squads is notable. The assault by the drug cartels on the Mexican government and its authority over the past several years has also recently come into focus, and reminds one how critical stability in Mexico is for the security of the United States and indeed the entire region. Mexico has the 14th largest economy on Earth, significant natural resources, a growing industrial base, and nearly free access to the biggest export market in the world immediately to its north.

The U.S. and Mexico must continue to cooperate to cut off the shipment of drugs into the United States and the flow of weapons and bulk cash into Mexico. In addition to conventional bank transfers, syndicates import between \$8 billion and \$10 billion in bulk cash each year. As traditional land routes for smuggling drugs into the US have been shut down, in most of the US there has been an increase in drug price and a decrease in drug purity but as in any conflict, the enemy has adapted, and now the maritime routes have become critical to smugglers. For Mexico the end game is based on:

- Mitigating the violence.
- Changing the problem back from a national security problem to public security, law and order problem.
- Raising the opportunity costs of doing drug business in Mexico.

As Mexico becomes successful, the drug problem will expand into a greater regional problem, so a holistic approach is needed. The economics are shifting as well, with the United Kingdom and Spain now the most lucrative markets and the problem spilling into Japan, Russia, and China. The Mexican government will remain severely challenged as its primary focus is its fight against these formidable non-state groups. A continuous cooperative effort by the U.S. to both minimize demand for illicit drugs and to defeat criminal elements involved within its borders will be pivotal to Mexico's success in confronting lawlessness and corruption.

South America's improving economic situation suggests that the region could be in a better position to deal with these problems. Brazil, in particular, appears set on a course that could make it a major player among the great powers by the 2030s. Visionary investments in bio-fuels as well as the discovery of massive oil deposits off the Brazilian coast will increase its energy independence, while a growing industrial and service-based economy mean that the next several decades will see Brazil's economic and political power grow. Chile, Argentina, Peru and possibly Colombia will also most likely see sustained growth, if they can continue prudent economic policies in the face of the difficult economic headwinds of the global financial crisis.

The potential major challenges to the status quo at present are Cuba and Venezuela. The demise of the Castros will create the possibility of major changes in Cuba's politics. The future of Venezuela is harder to read. The Chavez regime is diverting substantial amounts of its oil revenues to further its anti-American "Bolivarian Revolution," while at the same time consolidating his regime's hold on power by distributing oil wealth to his supporters. By trying to do both, it is shortchanging investments in its oil infrastructure which have serious implications for the future. Unless Venezuela's current regime changes direction, it could use its oil wealth to subvert its neighbors for an extended period while pursuing anti-American activities on a global scale with the likes of Iran, Russia, and China, in effect creating opportunities to form anti-American coalitions in the region.

“What are the Persians Doing Over Here?”

**Norman A. Bailey, Adjunct Professor, The Institute of World Politics,
President, Institute for Global Economic Growth**

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This paper expands upon remarks delivered at the second session of the Challenges to Security in the Hemisphere Task Force.

Introduction

The media and the U.S. government have been repeating for years that Hugo Chávez' Venezuela, however annoying, poses no threat to the national security of the United States. This paper disputes that contention. Venezuela under Chávez has systematically opposed everything the United States supports in the Western Hemisphere and in the world in general. It has tried to influence political events and has supported guerrilla movements and terrorist organizations in other countries. It has also bought huge quantities of military equipment, mostly from Russia. Nevertheless, the most dangerous threat to the United States from Venezuela emerges from its facilitation and encouragement of the penetration of the Western Hemisphere by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Since 2004, Iran has created an extensive network of military installations of various kinds in Venezuela, as well as in other Latin America countries, and has engaged vigorously in activities covering the areas of diplomacy, commerce, finance, industry and energy. The total of Iran's announced investments in the region exceeds twenty billion dollars, at a time when Iran's own economy is in poor condition.

The curious thing is that this interest in the Hemisphere represents the first time in the 5000-year history of Persia as a sovereign entity that such interest has been demonstrated. There is no affinity whatsoever between monarchic or Islamic Iran and the countries on this side of the Atlantic—historical, cultural, political, economic or otherwise. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the last few years have seen a totally-unprecedented level of interest by Iran in the region.

Iran's activities in Latin America and the Caribbean are, as noted, varied and extensive. The following is a summary of the country's hemispheric involvement.

Iranian Activities in the Region

Financial

The Venezuelan government created a binational Iranian-Venezuelan development bank, an alliance between the Banco Industrial de Venezuela and Iran's Development and Export Bank. It also facilitated the formation of an entirely Iranian-owned bank, the Banco Internacional de Desarrollo, and a bi-national investment and development fund, as well as the opening in Caracas of offices of Iranian commercial banks. All of this activity is designed to facilitate the funding of terrorist organizations and guerrilla movements and to circumvent financial sanctions imposed by the United States, the European Union and the United Nations through the use of the Venezuelan financial system. The U.S. Treasury Department has placed sanctions against the Iranian banks and various individuals, but so far has not sanctioned any Venezuelan banks.

Industrial and Mining

The Iranians have acquired “industrial” installations throughout Venezuelan territory, including a “tractor” factory in Bolívar State, a “cement” plant in Monagas State, a car-assembly plant in Aragua State and a bicycle factory in Cojedes State. Some of these installations are used primarily as warehouses for the storage of illegal drugs, weapons and other items useful to the Iranians and to their organizational clients. In addition, the Islamic Republic bought control of a gold mine in Bolívar State that is reported to produce uranium. Extensive tuna-processing facilities, corn-processing plants and a dairy-products plant have been purchased by Iran in the states of Sucre, Barinas, Yaracuy, Guárico and Zulia. A private-sector group, which worked closely with the Venezuelan government until its head was arrested and recently imprisoned without trial, supplied the products sold in the Mercal popular markets. The group also purchased six ocean-going, tuna fishing boats in Ecuador and a shipyard in Panama, where the boats were modified before being deployed in the Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean. All the assets of this group were seized by the Venezuelan government.

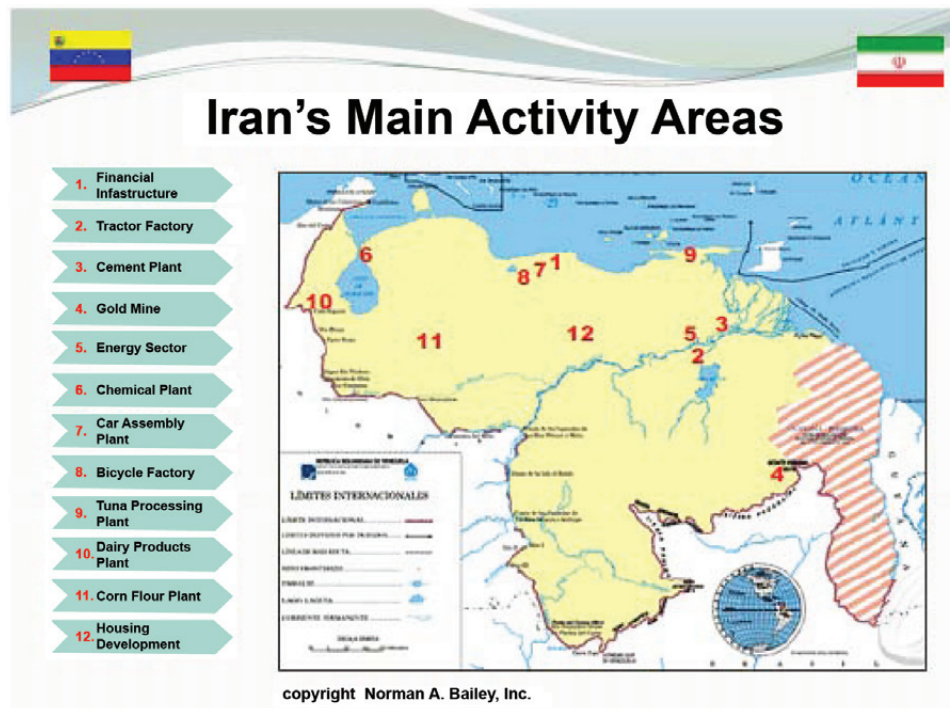


Figure 3-1

Transportation

Since the Venezuelan government now controls all airports and ports, there is no way of knowing what is entering or leaving the country, other than what the government wants the public to know.

Weekly flights connect Caracas and Tehran, stopping in Damascus. These flights, which are alternately Venezuela’s Conviasa and IranAir flights, although ostensibly commercial, accept no commercial passengers or freight and land and unload official passengers and cargo without any immigration or customs controls.

Additionally, Iran and Venezuela have formed a joint shipping line, the IRISL Group. On December 30, 2008, Turkish authorities intercepted 22 containers marked “tractor parts” in the port of Mersin that, in fact, contained materials for making bombs and other weapons. The containers were bound from Iran to Venezuela. IRISL was blacklisted by the U.S. government, which caused its owners to form a new company to circumvent sanctions.

Energy

The Venezuelan state oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA)*, and the Iranian state oil company, *PetroPars*, have formed a joint venture for the exploration of a block in Anzoátegui State. In addition, the Venezuelan petrochemical company *PEQUIVEN* and the National Petrochemical Company of Iran have formed a joint venture to manufacture plastics in Zulia State.

Technical Assistance

Iranian technical assistance has been provided to Venezuela in the areas of defense, intelligence, security, energy and industry. Iran has agreed to build an explosives plant in Carabobo State and produces weapons in the “tractor” factory in Bolívar State. Technical assistance, as we have seen, will now be provided to Venezuela in the area of nuclear power. Note that Iran actually has limited experience in the area of the peaceful use of nuclear energy and, in any case, it is a well-known and mature technology applied in many countries and by numerous companies around the world. It is therefore obvious that the “technical assistance” being provided by Iran (and Russia) to Venezuela (and Bolivia) is for the purpose of finding and exploiting uranium deposits. It has been revealed that Iran is developing a very advanced nuclear warhead design which, if successful, will make transfer of weapons to other countries and/or terrorist groups much simpler, according to an International Atomic Energy Agency report.

Drug Trafficking

Iranian participation in drug trafficking through Venezuela to Central America, Mexico, the United States, the Caribbean and to Europe through West Africa is extensive. The proceeds are used to finance further penetration of Iranian interests in the region, as well as to partially fund, along with extortion and kidnapping, the terrorist organizations mentioned previously.

The ocean-going tuna boats already mentioned load cocaine from Iranian installations in the delta of the Orinoco River, which is navigable for a substantial distance upriver. The cocaine is stored in the so-called “cement” plant and transshipped to West Africa and Europe. A “cement” plant is perfect for this purpose since its supposed product is shipped in bags and because some the chemicals used in cocaine production are also used in cement production. In similar fashion, tuna boats are perfect for transporting cocaine because in the upper hold there may actually be tuna, the odor of which masks the cocaine. Other routes through Venezuela channel cocaine through Haiti and the Dominican Republic to the Gulf Coast of the United States and the west coast of Florida. Cocaine is also flown or shipped in boats through Central America, particularly Honduras and Guatemala, into Mexico and the United States. Protection of the drug trade by the Venezuelan National Guard is so notorious that the Guard is sometimes referred to as an additional drug cartel.

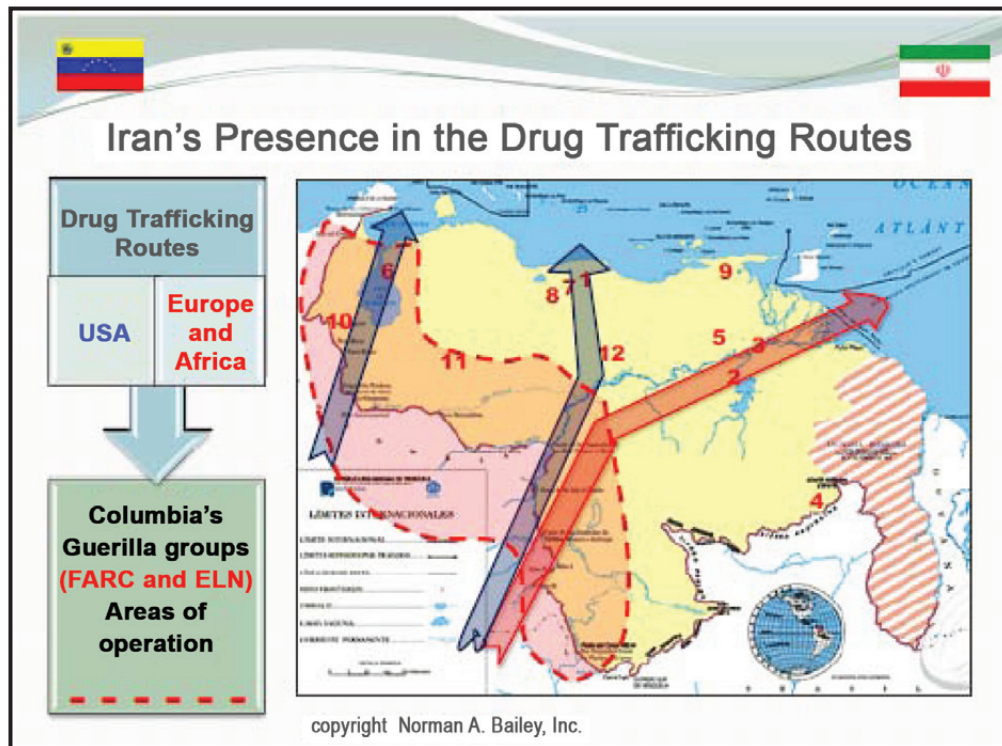


Figure 3-2

Elsewhere in the Region

The Iranian Development and Export Bank has opened a branch in Quito, Ecuador. It has also opened embassies in Nicaragua, Ecuador and Bolivia. The Nicaraguan embassy serves as the base for activities in the rest of Central America and Panama, its “diplomats” being primarily intelligence agents and agents of influence operating in the subregion. Warehouses for drugs, disguised as being for tractor parts, are located in Central America. In addition, there are Iranian projects for ports in Nicaragua, petrochemical facilities in Ecuador, and a cement plant and uranium exploration and mining in Bolivia. The Iranian regime also recently signed a uranium-exploration agreement with the government of Guyana. Finally, in November 2009, an Iranian delegation visited Brazil, to “strengthen economic and cultural ties” with that country. Several economic agreements were signed, some of which would appear to violate international sanctions imposed on Iran.

Conclusion

In summary, Iran over the past several years has built up an extensive network of facilities in Latin America and the Caribbean, concentrated particularly in Venezuela, but also in Ecuador, Bolivia, Central America and Panama and involved with the financing of terrorist organizations, drug trafficking, weapons smuggling and manufacture, money laundering, the provision of chemical precursors to Colombian drug cartels and diamond smuggling. (Venezuela has been expelled from the international agency charged with regulating the diamond trade.)

It is becoming increasingly clear that one of the principal motivations of all this activity is to be able to retaliate against the United States if attacked, particularly by damaging the Venezuelan

oil facilities and the Panama Canal. In short, Iranian penetration into the Western Hemisphere is indeed a security threat to the United States and the rest of the hemisphere.

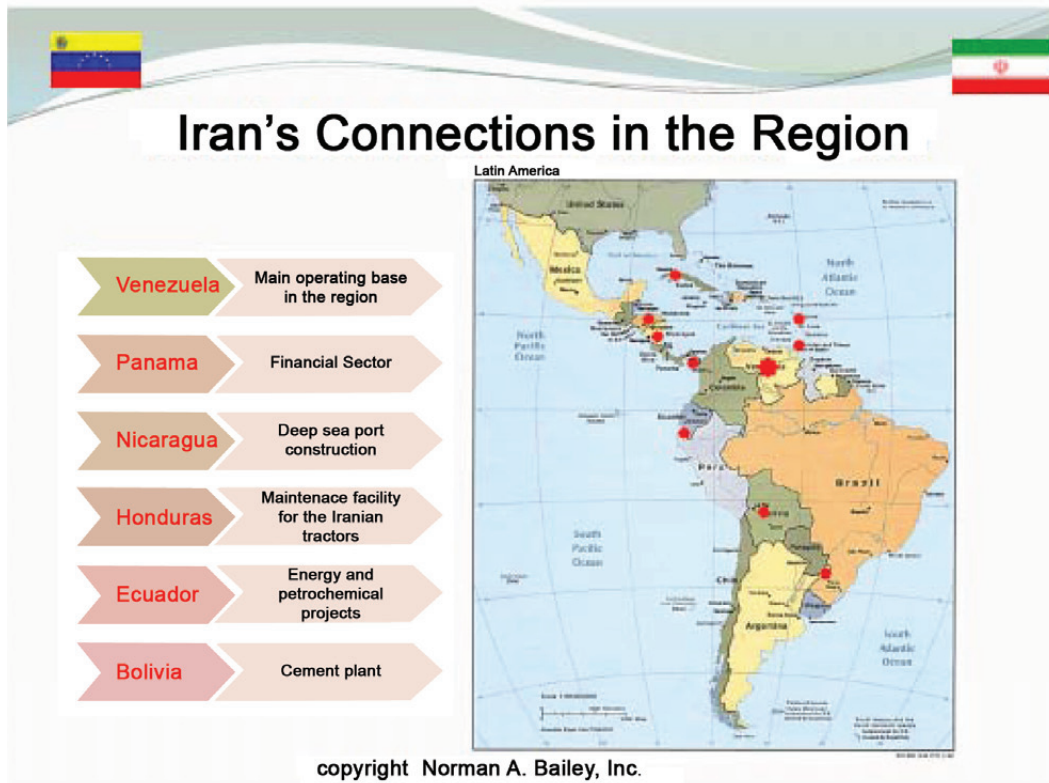


Figure 3-3

Recommendations

The United States and other governments should implement immediate actions to confront this threat, including:

- Putting certain Venezuelan banks and some of their affiliates on the sanctions list.
- Declaring Venezuela a state sponsor of terrorism, so that certain actions can be taken, particularly boycotting Venezuelan oil exports to the United States. Simultaneously with this action, it should be announced that an equivalent amount of crude oil will be released from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) for the time necessary for the market to adjust to the measure. The oil in the SPR is, in any case, of superior quality and, at this point, Venezuelan shipments to the United States are only about 850,000 barrels per day.
- Patrolling the mouth of the Orinoco River.
- Monitoring much more closely Iranian activities in all the areas outlined above, as well as in other parts of the continent, particularly Panama.

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Islamic Terrorist Activities in Latin America: Why the Region and the US Should be Concerned

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While the world is focused on the war in the Middle East and countering Islamic terrorist group activities there and in South Asia and to a lesser extent the US and Europe, there is only periodic focus on other regions vulnerable to Islamic terrorist activity; Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. This article focuses on the first two areas and describes a consistent pattern of Islamic extremist activity over the past twenty years that ranges from revenue generation and logistic support to more sinister activities. This paper makes the case for why US, Latin American, and Caribbean leaders need to be diligent in halting the ongoing terrorist-related activity in those regions.

There are many myths about Islamic terrorist activities in Latin America and the Caribbean. Most literature on the subject paints a dire threat, stating that attacks are imminent either in the region or from the region. Just as much literature downplays the threat, stating that the over 3 million Muslims or about 1% of the population in the region are peaceful and just trying to make a living. As is usually the case, the truth is somewhere in the middle. In the Triborder Area (TBA) of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay alone, counter-terrorism organizations have uncovered over 50 people suspected of sympathizing with extremism and of financing Islamic terrorism over the past 10 years, according to local media.²

Undoubtedly the vast majority of the individuals living in the vibrant muslim communities scattered throughout the region have no ties to terrorism and even abhor terrorism. Evidence from multiple sources in several different countries also shows that there are individuals in the region who are affiliated with terrorist groups and use the region as a cooling off area, a revenue generation area, or as a recruiting pool. Senator Richard Lugar issued a report in 2007 that stated that while there are no operational cells in Latin America or the Caribbean that pose a direct threat to the continental United States, pockets of people in the TBA, Venezuela, and Guyana are ideological, financial, and logistical supporters of terrorist groups in the Middle East.³ In fact, Islamic radicals in the TBA, Guyana, and Trinidad have launched multiple operations in and from the region over the last 20 years.

Attempted Islamic Coup in the Western Hemisphere

The Jammāt al Muslimeen (JAM), a Sunni organization, is Trinidad and Tobago's most notorious Muslim organization and the only organization in the region to attempt a coup to install a sharia-based government. The group leader, Abu Bakr, instigated a bloody coup in 1990. With over 100 JAM members, Bakr led attacks against the parliament building and took over Trinidad and Tobago's television network. The standoff between the JAM and the government lasted 5 days while rioting and looting gripped Trinidad's capital. Many people were killed. Bakr finally surrendered to authorities, but was only jailed temporarily as part of negotiations.⁴ Officials released Bakr from jail in 1992. He continues to lead the JAM and the Trinidadian authorities have re-arrested him on several occasions over the years. Most recently, he faces charges of sedition, promoting a terrorist act, and inciting others to breach the peace. He currently remains free.

Abu Bakr maintains ties to questionable individuals and organizations. He considers Libya's Muammar Qadhafi a friend.⁵ Bakr is also well regarded in Sudan where he is considered one of the most significant Muslims in the west.⁶ In 2004, the JAM website had links to a Hamas website.⁷ The website had several other links to jihadist websites and rhetoric.⁸ According to a US undercover agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, Bakr's group maintained ties with Afghanistan as they were shipping heroin from Afghanistan to the US via Trinidad.⁹ JAM members are implicated in at least talking to members of the 2007 plot to blow up John F. Kennedy airport¹⁰ and Abu Bakr studied at university with one of the operation's plotters.¹¹ As of 2005, JAM members were still being charged with weapons possessions; two members had 569 rounds of ammunition, a hand grenade, and a rifle during a local sting operation against them.¹² In 2004, another JAM member was tried in US court for possession of 60 AK-47 rifles, 10 MAC-10 machine guns, and 10 silencers.¹³

Hizballah Attacks in Latin America

According to Israeli terrorism expert Ely Karmon,¹⁴ Hizballah has had a presence in Latin America since the late 1980s. It is present in the TBA, Colombia, and Venezuela. Hizballah members use free trade areas for legal trade and illegal smuggling activities. A Sao Paulo newspaper reported that it is common to find young men on the streets of Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil one of the two major cities that make up the TBA, with Hizballah tee-shirts.¹⁵

Hizballah has an operational presence in the region. According to the Argentine government, Hizballah supporters and Iran were responsible for the bombings of the 1992 Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association in 1994. Argentina recently successfully lobbied Interpol to release international warrants for several Iranians it has charged with the bombings.¹⁶ Islamic terrorists operating out of the Triborder Region leveled the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires with a powerful bomb on 17 March 1992, killing 29 people and wounding 252. The bombing was allegedly carried out by Hizballah and coordinated by terrorist mastermind Imad Mugniyah, the official in charge of Hizballah foreign operations.¹⁷ The 1994 bombing of the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AIMA) was the stronger of the two bombs and resulted in 82 deaths. Argentine officials claim a white Renault van holding a 600 pound bomb was driven into the seven story building where the explosion sheared off the front of the building.¹⁸

In another incident which has gone unclaimed, on 19 July 1992, a suicide bomber said to be Lebanese and unable to speak Spanish or English boarded a commuter flight in Colón, Panama, and detonated a bomb, killing all 21 people aboard, including 12 Jewish and Israeli businessmen, and three US citizens. The bomber was said to have a poorly forged US passport and to have not been in Panama very long.¹⁹

Since then, several additional planned acts of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism have been thwarted. For example, the arrest in 1998 of a senior Abu Nidal Organization leader in Lima, Peru, thwarted a reported plan to blow up the Israeli Embassy and a synagogue there.²⁰ According to O Globo's US sources, an Islamic extremist group supposedly planned an attack against the US Embassy in Montevideo, Uruguay, in April 2001, at the same time as a planned attack against the US Embassy in Quito, Ecuador. The discovery of the plot (and the consequent reinforcement of security) thwarted the attacks.²¹

Al-Qaida and Other Sunni Links to Latin America

Over the years there have been several disturbing links from Latin America and the Caribbean to militant Sunni individuals and terrorist groups. A Brazilian magazine admits that Usama bin Ladin operative and 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammad (KSM) spent nearly 20 days in Brazil in 1995 to visit members of the muslim community there.²² While he was there, the magazine claims KSM founded a charity to help finance Usama bin Ladin. Khalid Shaikh Mohammad reportedly was hosted by Khaled Rezk El Sayed Take El Din, who is considered the mentor of the Holy Land Foundation in the TBA.²³ He remains in the region. US Treasury officials have designated The Holy Land Foundation as a terrorist supporter, frozen its assets, and said the Foundation was sending funds to Hamas.

In 1996, the Brazilian police reportedly discovered that Marwan al Safadi, an explosives expert accused of having participated in the first attack on the US World Trade Center in 1993, was living in the TBA.²⁴ In November 1996, Paraguayan authorities learned that Islamic groups in the Triborder region were planning to blow up the US Embassy in Paraguay to coincide with the first anniversary of the bombing of the Saudi National Guard headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Police who raided Safadi's apartment in Ciudad del Este found it filled with explosives, pistols equipped with silencers, double-barreled rifles, false Canadian and US passports, and a large amount of cash.²⁵

Eventually, Brazilian authorities captured Safadi and extradited him to the United States.²⁶ Although sentenced to 18 months in US prison, US authorities eventually extradited Safadi to Canada, where he received a 9-year prison sentence for drug trafficking. However, al-Safadi escaped from Canada's prisons 3 times, finally succeeding in escaping from prison in Montreal and fleeing back to South America with a false passport.²⁷

Marwan Safadi's case was not the first instance of Islamic Jihad terrorist activities in Latin America. In 1992, Interpol agents arrested seven alleged members of the Islamic Jihad in Quito, Ecuador. The agents claimed that they planned attacks on the Israeli ambassador in Bogotá, Colombia.²⁸

In Brazil, an al-Gama' at Islamiyya cell had been operating in Foz do Iguacu since 1995.²⁹ Mohammed Ali Hassan Mokhles had left Egypt in 1993 and established residency in Foz do Iguacu, Brazil.³⁰ Latin American press claimed that Mokhles was sent to the TBA to collect funds for the Middle East and to conduct logistic support activities such as forging passports or other documents meant for Islamic jihadists.³¹ Press reports claim he was a member or even local leader of al-Gama' at Islamiyya, a group linked to al-Qaida.³² Mokhles reportedly attended a training camp in Khost, Afghanistan where he received combat training prior to the Luxor assault.³³ An investigative expose on Mokhles claims that US and Egyptian information says Mokhles may have been involved in the first World Trade Center explosion in New York.³⁴ Uruguayan officials arrested Mokhles in 1999 while he was trying to cross the border from Brazil with false documents. Mokhles was so desperate to have his pending extradition to Egypt overturned that while in jail awaiting travel to Egypt he attacked two inmates, hoping that he would be tried for those assaults in Uruguay and be able to stay. In 2003, Mohammed Ali Hassan Mokhles was extradited from Uruguay to Egypt.³⁵ Egyptian officials had successfully argued that he was involved in planning a terrorist attack which killed at least 58 tourists in Luxor Egypt in 1997.

Colombian officials arrested Mohamed Abed Abdel Aal, another leader of the al Qaida-affiliated al Gama' at Islamiyya in October 1998.³⁶ He had been in Italy under "surveillance," according to Colonel Germán Jaramillo Piedrahita, the head of Colombia's intelligence police, who was interviewed by Colombia's Radio Caracol on 21 October 1998.³⁷ Abdel Aal was wanted by Egyptian authorities for his involvement in two terrorist massacres: the attack in Luxor, Egypt; and an incident in which terrorists killed 20 Greek tourists by raking them with gunfire outside their Cairo hotel on 18 April 1996.³⁸ Jaramillo explained that sometime in 1998 Abdel Aal boarded a plane in Amsterdam bound for Ecuador because the Colombian consulate in Italy denied him a visa to travel directly to Bogotá. Sometime during 1998, Abdel Aal reportedly participated in transactions with Colombian narcotraffickers that involved arms, drugs, and money, and may have been returning to raise money.³⁹ Colombian police arrested Mohamed Abed Abdel Aal on 19 October 1998, two days after he arrived in Bogotá by bus from Quito.⁴⁰ He was subsequently deported to Ecuador. Abel Aal was later reportedly turned over to Egyptian authorities.⁴¹

US and Panamanian officials reported that Adnan el Shukrijumah, currently on the US Federal Bureau of Investigation BOLO (Be on the Look Out For) list as an al Qaida operative, was in Panama in April 2001, possibly surveying the Panama Canal.⁴² When Khalid Shaik Mohammed was captured by US forces in March 2003, he claimed Shukrijuma was in charge of a new attack. Shukrijuma holds US, Guyanese, and Trinidadian passports.⁴³ US officials claim he was trained by al Qaida to operate as a terrorist organizer and to lead or coordinate a terrorist assault.⁴⁴ In June 2004, the Honduran Security Ministry announced that Shukrijuma had plotted to attack the Panama Canal.⁴⁵

The press also claims that Brazilian authorities broke up an al-Gama' at al Islammiyya cell in April 2002 with the detention of a Sunni extremist, Mohammed Ali Soliman, also wanted by Egypt for involvement in the Luxor attacks.⁴⁶ Another source claims Soliman was involved in other unspecified attacks in Egypt in 1994.⁴⁷ According to Brazilian press reports, he too allegedly was trained in camps in Afghanistan and is associated with Mokhles.⁴⁸ Brazilian officials released Soliman in September 2002 claiming that Egyptian officials failed to give Brazil sufficient evidence of Soliman's involvement in the Luxor attacks. He lives in Brazil.

Another group, Hizballah Latin America, has two cells. One is in Venezuela and the other in Argentina. It is unclear what the connection is between this group and Hizballah, but the group claims solidarity with Hizballah, Iran, and the Islamist revolution. In Venezuela, the group took on the name, Venezuela Hezbollah apparently sometime in 2005. The majority of its members are from the Wayuu tribe, a small indigenous group in Venezuela which converted to Islam a few years ago under their leader Teodoro Darnott.⁴⁹ In 2006, Venezuelan officials found two explosive devises in Caracas, one near the US Embassy. The devises did not detonate, but contained pro-Hizballah pamphlets. Venezuela Hezbollah took responsibility for the bombs and threatened further attacks.⁵⁰ Venezuelan authorities subsequently arrested and convicted Darnott. In Argentina, the Hizballah Latin America group has direct ties to Iran through the Arab Argentine Home and the Argentine-Islamic Association-ASAI de La Plata which are financed by and cooperate with the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires.⁵¹ It also has ties to more radical Muslims in Argentina and its website has extremely anti-Semitic and anti-Israel propaganda.⁵²

Triborder Area: Local Investigators Crack Down on Terrorist Suspects

The Triborder Area of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay is one of the most notorious in Latin America as an area where all types of criminality takes place, including harboring of Islamic

terrorist facilitators. It is widely accepted among terrorism specialists that individuals associated with Hizballah and to a lesser extent associated with Sunni groups, live and work in this region. Many articles and news stories have been written about the area in the US and regional press. The US Treasury Department has frozen the assets of a number of individuals who live in this area, claiming they are associated with terrorist groups. The Islamic terrorist group affiliation, coupled with the illegal commerce that takes place in the region, create a concerning mix. As early as 1995, Ambassador Philip Wilcox, former State Department Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, testified before the International Relations Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives that Hizballah activities in the Triborder region involved narcotics, smuggling, and terrorism. He further asserted that Hizballah also had cells in Colombia and Venezuela, was engaging in fund-raising and recruitment, and was receiving guidance and logistical support from Iranian intelligence officers assigned to Iranian embassies in the region.⁵³

A strong TBA Hizballah leadership exists. Paraguayan officials first attempted to arrest Assad Ahmad Barakat in 2002. He is currently in jail in Paraguay for tax evasion. He lived and worked in the TBA area with his brother Hattem. He also had businesses in Iquique, Chile. Local US officials, and the press have alternately called him the Hizballah leader in the TBA, the Hizballah finance chief, and one of the Hizballah clan leaders. His brother reportedly took over the daily activities of the clan until he too was arrested by the Paraguayans, for document fraud. Assad Barakat has another brother who is a sheikh at a Hizballah mosque in Lebanon. Assad's exact title within Hizballah may not be known, but it is clear that he has strong connections to Hizballah. Paraguayan police found several documents in his office and computer when they arrested him. The documents were from Hizballah leaders thanking Assad for his support. One letter was from Hizballah leader Shaik Hassan Nasrallah, thanking Assad for money for the martyrs program. Meanwhile, Paraguayan reporters have also linked Assad Barakat to al Qaida by claiming he owned the Mondial Engineering and Construction Company which is suspected of having made contributions to al Qaida.⁵⁴

Also in 2002, the Paraguayan police arrested Ali Nizar Darhough, nephew of Mohammad Dahrough who was a well known Sunni leader in the TBA.⁵⁵ Paraguayan officials told New Yorker reporter Jeffrey Goldberg that Ali Nizar and his uncle were the al Qaida point men for the TBA.⁵⁶ Mohammad Dahrough's name was reportedly found in an address book belonging to Abu Zubaydah, a high ranking al-Qaida official captured by the US.⁵⁷ Mohammad escaped the TBA in September 1998 when Paraguayan officials went out to arrest him for making statements in support of terrorism and for planning possible attacks against US, British, and Israeli facilities in the TBA.⁵⁸ Mohammad is last reported to be in Dubai.⁵⁹ Press reports claim he left TBA to join al-Qaida.⁶⁰ Ali Nizar was sending as much as \$80,000 a month to banks in the US, the Middle East, and Europe.⁶¹ Other reports claim that Ali Nizar sent \$10 million in 2000-2001 from the TBA to US dummy corporations that al-Qaida and HAMAS used as fronts.⁶² Most of the money went into an account under Mohammad's name in Dallas, Texas which is a key site for the Holy Land Foundation which the US Treasury says helped to fund HAMAS.⁶³ When arrested, Ali Nizar had large quantities of Iraqi, Jordanian, and Slovenian bank notes.⁶⁴ Ali Nizar was convicted in Paraguay in 2003 of tax evasion and he received a 5-year sentence.⁶⁵

US Treasury Department Freezes Hizballah Assets in TBA

Most of the activity the individuals associated with Islamic terrorists are involved with are revenue generation and logistics such as document fraud and money laundering. The Paraguayan media reported in April 2006 that millions of dollars were being funneled from the TBA to the Middle East. Several governments in Latin America and the Caribbean take exception to US

allegations that local supporters of Islamic terrorist groups raise funds for the terrorist groups in their countries. In December 2006, the US Treasury Department announced that 9 individuals in Brazil and Paraguay were financing Islamic terrorism, several of whom the Argentine government charged, were involved in logistics support for the 1994 AMIA bombing. Ali Muhammad Kazan is on that list. As a manager of a Lebanese school in the TBA, he allegedly collected \$500,000 for Hizballah. Another alleged Hizballah associate, Sobhi Mahmoud Fayad, sent over \$3 million to the Hizballah Martyrs Foundation in 2000 alone, according to documents the Paraguayan police found when they arrested him. Yet another individual, Mohamed Tarabain Chamas, is the manager of a five-story commercial building in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay (part of the TBA). The Treasury Department says he is responsible for counter-intelligence for Hizballah in the TBA.⁶⁶

Action Returns to the Caribbean Area

In May 2006, the Trinidad Express quotes Trinidadian National Security Minister Martin Joseph as confirming that 2 Trinidad and Tobago citizens who were jailed in Canada for involvement in acts of terrorism had been deported to Trinidad and Tobago. These were likely Barry Adams, alias Tyrone Cole and Wali Muhammad, Alias Robert Johnson, who are believed to be members of the Jammal al Fuqra, a militant Pakistan-based terrorist group. The men had been imprisoned in Canada in 1994 for conspiring to set off bombs in a Hindu temple and a cinema in Toronto. Prosecutors claimed that the men had lived in Texas under aliases for several years before attempting to carry out their plan.⁶⁷ They served their full sentences without parole and Canada deported them upon their release.⁶⁸

In June 2007, a joint Guyanese/Trinidadian/FBI investigation culminated in the arrest of 4 individuals who plotted to blow up gas lines leading to John F. Kennedy airport in New York.⁶⁹ The individuals were US, Guyanese, and Trinidadian.⁷⁰ The case remains pending in US courts. One of the alleged leaders of the plot, Abdul Kadir, is reportedly an acquaintance of JAM leader Abu Bakr in Trinidad.⁷¹ Members of the group allegedly met with JAM members to obtain support for their plot. Kadir is a former Guyanese parliament member.⁷²

In June 2007, Trinidad's Attorney General John Jeremie told the local press that he believed the country's most notorious group, the JAM, was under control, but that the "landscape had changed since 1990... the structure is different, there are a number of different splinter groups and they pose as much as a threat we think as the original group posed in 1990."⁷³ He went on to say these splinter groups are also involved with criminal activity.⁷⁴

Jamaica is another area of concern, especially now that Sheikh Abdullah el Faisal, the extremist cleric who was convicted in the Britain for soliciting murder and inciting racial violence has been deported back to Jamaica.⁷⁵ El-Faisal, a Jamaican-born Islamic cleric, was the first person in more than a century to be convicted under Britain's 1861 Offences Against the Person Act after he was found guilty of soliciting murder and fueling racial hatred in 2003.⁷⁶ During his trial, tapes of his sermons were played where he extolled his listeners to "kill Hindus and Jews and other non Muslims, like cockroaches."⁷⁷ During his four-week trial in 2003, followers watched as the court heard el-Faisal's voice exhorting young Muslims to accept the deaths of women and children as "collateral damage" and to "learn to fly planes, drive tanks... load your guns and to use missiles."⁷⁸ Following the completion of his sentence on those charges in Britain, authorities there deported him in May 2007.⁷⁹ Jermain Lindsay one of the 2005 London transport system bombers, was also born in Jamaica and connected to Faisal. Press reports claim that Shaikh

Faisal influenced Lindsay to partake in the UK bombing plot. He reportedly attended at least one of el Faisal's sermons and listened to his tapes.

What's Next?

The above list of suspicious and in some cases outright terrorist activities, shows there is reason for Latin American and Caribbean nations to be vigilant against Islamic terrorist group activity. The US also needs to continue to pay attention to possible inroads by these terrorist groups and by other Islamic extremists through Latin America and the Caribbean. The list of arrests and convictions also shows that many of the governments in the region are aware of the dangers associated with these terrorist groups.

Two equally likely possibilities exist for future Islamic extremist activity in Latin America and the Caribbean. One possibility will allow for some warning, the other will not without increased vigilance. Either course of action would result in the loss of innocent lives.

The first scenario, and the one that we might have some advance notice of, is an attack by Hizballah. If relations between Iran and the US or Israel deteriorate, it is possible Iran would use its well-organized Hizballah group in the region as a surrogate to launch attacks against either Israel or the US, much like it did in Buenos Aires in the 1990s. Under this scenario, an attack could happen using local Hizballah sympathizers for logistics and support and the attack would likely take place in the region. With this scenario, counter-terrorist specialists would have some warning that an attack could take place based on the deteriorating relations with Iran, but would likely have little warning of where it would take place.

Another, equally likely scenario, but one that is harder for counter-terrorism professionals to plan against, would be a group of homegrown extremists planning and launching an attack against US interests either in the region or from the region in the US. This would be much like the JFK airport plot scenario. Without vigilance by US officials and officials in the region, it would be difficult to halt this type of plot. Increased vigilance and support from the populaces in the Caribbean and Latin America to report unusual activity is needed to help mitigate this threat.

Clearly, Islamic terrorist groups in Latin America and the Caribbean pose threats to US interests. Ignoring these threats or explaining them away as US witch hunts gives those who would do harm to innocents more space to plot and plan.

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Salvadoran Reconciliation

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When the brutal 12-year civil war between the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the El Salvador Armed Forces (ESAF) finally ended in 1992, it had claimed more than 75,000 mostly innocent civilian lives and left another 8,000 missing.¹ In its later years, the fighting had bogged down. Neither the FMLN nor the ESAF could muster enough offensive strength to win decisively, so battles increasingly involved irregulars who demonstrated little regard for civilians. Eventually, a UN-sponsored negotiated peace process paved the way for amnesty, reintegration, and reconciliation (AR2).

At times the AR2 approach worked well and showed progress, but at other times it fell far short of potential—in part due to a poorly applied amnesty program. Ultimately, however, even though the process failed to mend the rift completely between the warring factions, an effective reintegration plan did achieve a measure of reconciliation between the two sides. This article examines the implementation of AR2 in El Salvador as a study of conflict resolution.

Interdependent societal dimensions discussed in previous *Military Review* articles about AR2 can serve as analytical reference points to explain El Salvador's partially successful process. These societal dimensions include a security aspect, a political aspect, and an economic aspect. As any review of El Salvadoran history will reveal, these dimensions directly influenced the conflict and the country's ultimately tentative post-conflict stability.

Background

Since El Salvador's inception as a Spanish colony, its demographics have reflected the legacy of European cultural domination over a dispossessed native population. The particular socioeconomic byproducts of cultural and racial chauvinism familiar to the hemisphere's history have complicated and retarded El Salvador's political and economic development. As with other nations in the Americas, a post-colonial oligarchic social structure constricted upward mobility for the poor and poorly served. El Salvador has thus suffered from a deep-rooted division between the economic and political elites of European extraction and the campesinos, the impoverished, mostly native working class.²

As is often the case, class division translated into oppression. Oppression was so much a way of life in El Salvador that it became an expectation. In 1985, Clifford Krauss claimed in *The Salvadoran Quagmire*, "El Salvador is today what it always has been: a nation of betrayal and terror, where military strongmen, wealthy oligarchs, and village thugs seek final solutions of one political extreme or another."³ The general tenor of Salvadoran society circa 2008 reflects the echoes of this dominion of thuggery. Thus, Salvadoran history serves as the lens through which this article attempts to analyze conflict resolution under the rubric of an imperfect AR2 process.

The Salvadoran Truth Commission and Amnesty

Given El Salvador's history, it is not surprising that the nation's efforts toward conflict resolution bore mixed results, even though the UN oversaw the process. In the security sphere,

all issues were resolved with relative success. Politically, reforms succeeded in creating institutions necessary for democracy, but the participants exploited the reforms to their own advantage. Economically, reforms substantively changed the Salvadoran domestic economy for the good, but an economic regression could play a key role in any future destabilization.

Analysis of AR2 effectiveness requires definition of the terms amnesty, reintegration, and reconciliation as they apply to El Salvador. Amnesty, in this case, follows the legal definition from the Oxford Essential Dictionary of the U.S. Military: “An official pardon for people who have been convicted of political offenses.” In the case of El Salvador, the amnesty was preemptive in nature. Reintegration includes the totality of institutional reforms aimed at incorporating the disenfranchised back into a healthier Salvadoran civil society. Reconciliation denotes the process of forgiveness, whereby aggrieved people voluntarily choose not to pursue remedies for perceived or actual offenses committed against them during the conflict.

Theoretically, achieving a full measure of reconciliation requires a pragmatic application of amnesty as a necessary precursor to reintegration. In El Salvador’s case, an inappropriately timed and too-generous amnesty denied the nation a proper closure. Even though truth commission trials put the country in position to achieve fuller reconciliation, hasty government action truncated the AR2 process prematurely, preventing it from realizing greater benefits.

The truth commission. The Chapultepec Peace accords of 1992 directed the creation of a truth commission under the oversight of the UN’s Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). This measure had the potential to serve as the foundation for real reconciliation. Unfortunately, the commission’s mission and scope were flawed from the start. As Judge Thomas Buergethal, one of the commission’s three members, pointed out, truth commissions themselves lack any true measure of judicial authority; most simply exist as fact-finding bodies, with some even lacking the authority to name names when appropriate (though the Salvadoran commission did retain this power).⁴ To achieve accountability, a court of law must act upon the commission’s findings and recommendations. In the Salvadoran case, the commission reported to ONUSAL and was not supplemented by any international or domestic court that could translate its results into punitive measures.⁵ Given the Salvadoran government’s later implication in upwards of 95 percent of extra-judicial killings, a specific requirement to address commission findings in the nation’s own judicial system would likely have doomed the peace accords.⁶

...truth commissions themselves lack any true measure of judicial authority; most simply exist as fact-finding bodies...

Nevertheless, the commission’s mandate stipulated that all major human rights violations be investigated. Deliverables included recommendations to help the country achieve reconciliation.⁷ While the commission’s findings did not claim to serve as a complete record of abuses that took place during the 12-year war, the group went so far as to identify, by name when evidence was sufficient, individuals responsible for particular human rights violations.

The amnesty. Any real impact the truth commission report could have had was superseded only days after its release when the legislature approved a sweeping amnesty law.⁸ That legislature was controlled by the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA), a right-wing party in power since 1989 whose founder, Roberto D’Aubisson, had been credibly linked to death squads.⁹ According to ONUSAL, the amnesty effectively preempted any practical attempt to identify and prosecute individuals associated with extra-judicial killings during the war.¹⁰

The amnesty law thus provided the Salvadoran government an expedient vehicle for distancing its criminal past while still fulfilling the accords' letter. The state avoided a long, drawn-out battle between factions looking to place blame, and it escaped having to challenge its heretofore protector, the army, over allegations of excessive violence. To be fair, rumored threats of a military takeover probably led the political establishment to approve the excessively generous amnesty as an act of self-preservation.¹¹

Furthermore, by foregoing justice in the name of reconciliation, the law denied the populace any deterrent to the commission of future violations.¹² It also demonstrated the vulnerabilities inherent in ONUSAL's oversight: its already weak authority could be circumvented by passage of a domestic law. In any event, the Salvadoran people felt the general amnesty's greatest impact, since it eliminated any recourse for civil war victims and drastically reduced the chances for a full national reconciliation.¹³

Limited success. Measures to establish official state recognition of accountability have not improved in the last decade, probably signaling a permanently truncated AR2 process. In fact, as late as 2003, government officials testified in front of the UN that the three most publicized killings (those of Archbishop Romero of San Salvador, six Jesuits priests, and the massacre at El Mozote) were still under investigation, even though the truth commission had effectively established accountability.¹⁴ According to the officials, only the investigation into the murder of Archbishop Romero had met with any success—and that marginal, with the murder attributed to the actions of one lone man. Given the killing's patently political motive, this was hardly a convincing conclusion.¹⁵

If these officials reflect the nation's unwillingness to adjudicate past crimes, it appears that progress in El Salvador is over. The state's power brokers feel no compelling need to reconcile their society's disparate segments. In short, by failing to provide even limited avenues of redress to the aggrieved, the government's hasty amnesty undercut reconciliation. Amnesty set the conditions under which the reintegration process could proceed, but it forestalled full reconciliation. The interconnecting influences across El Salvador's societal dimensions illuminate this partially successful but truncated AR2 process.

Security Dimension

The Chapultepec accords directed the FMLN to disarm and demobilize, a prerequisite for peaceful transition. Conducted in five stages, the process was declared complete by the UN in 1993.¹⁶ FMLN demilitarization ended the military standoff and ensured that the civil war did not resume. It also laid the foundation for transitioning guerrilla forces into society. In exchange, the ESAF relinquished its role as a domestic law enforcer and assumed a defensive stance against external threats.¹⁷

The accords also laid out a plan to reform the government's forces. First, the ESAF was directed to establish an ad hoc commission to purge its officer corps of members linked to extra-legal killings during the war.¹⁸ It was also directed to dismantle its covert intelligence service, the National Guard, and the Treasury Police while reducing the army's size by 50 percent. Finally, the military was placed under civilian control.

These measures met with varying degrees of success. The commission removed complicit officers from the command structure, the intelligence service was disbanded, and the army was reduced; however, the National Guard and Treasury Police were never dismantled—the ESAF

merely renamed them and transferred their entire structures into the regular army.¹⁹ Additionally, it took several years for the military to hand over control of intrinsically nonmilitary government institutions to civilian authorities.

The disparity between the letter and spirit of the accords and their results is attributable to the leverage the military continued to exercise over politics and the economy. Not only did the army retain great sponsorship in the legislature, but most of the ad hoc commission's members came from the military. Moreover, the commission exercised its responsibilities after the FMLN de-armed;²⁰ thus the ESAF, with its long-time enemy bereft of military strength, felt no immediate need to show good faith and air its dirty laundry. The reforms were meant to redefine and transform the military—they were vital for reconciling both the guerrillas and the ESAF with the rest of society. Piecemeal implementation by the government would set the conditions for an unenergetic reconciliation process.

The Chapultepec Accords also called for dissolution of the Policía Nacional (PN) and establishment of a new force, the Policía Nacional Civilista (PNC). The founding of the PNC marked the “first time that internal security was separated from the military.”²¹ Sixty percent of the new force was composed of civilians who were not associated with the conflict, while 20 percent came from the old PN and 20 percent from the FMLN.²² It was a creative way to develop a buffer between the people and the state while also limiting the economic impact of the expected influx of ex-FMLN fighters (many of whom lacked any basic skills beyond those required for waging war) into a state system that was experiencing a nearly one-in-five unemployment rate.²³ However, in keeping with its historical reluctance to change, the Salvadoran government delayed PNC activation, blaming a lack of funds to train and deploy the force.²⁴

At this juncture, ONUSAL—and the reform process—lost traction. Mandated to monitor and verify changes, not enforce them, ONUSAL could do little to keep the reform ball rolling. It also had to contend with a perception problem; for example, if it pushed for security changes to move forward, it ran the risk of seeming to favor the FMLN, a perception that could have undermined the mission's domestic and international credibility.²⁵ The government exploited the mission's vulnerability to perception and its lack of judicial teeth by using the amnesty law to shroud its degree of complicity in the killings from the international community. The government found it could declaw ONUSAL's security recommendations by delaying or relaxing standards as it saw fit. Caught between the Scylla of judicial impotence and the Charybdis of fragile credibility, ONUSAL could only stand silently by and watch the government procrastinate. It took obvious, direct violations of the accords to elicit a confident ONUSAL censure.

Over time, fears that the government's machinations would prevent full reintegration and reconciliation have given way to a sense that security concerns, at least, have been alleviated. Simultaneously, reformation of the ESAF has contributed to political reconciliation by halting the violence and by giving the populace an objective civilian law-enforcement unit that buffers them from military authority and allows for economic revitalization. The security dimension's primacy in the peace process, therefore, allowed political and economic reforms to develop, albeit at a laggard's pace.

...fears that the government's machinations would prevent full reintegration and reconciliation have given way to a sense that security concerns, at least, have been alleviated.

Political Dimension

Given El Salvador's oligarchic history, the FMLN probably chose its ideology, Marxism, because it was appropriate to the socioeconomic nature of the group's dissent. It was also convenient: Marxism was the *politic du jour* in the 1980s, and adopting it allowed the guerrillas to tap into a continuous flow of tangible support from ideological sympathizers, namely Cuba, Nicaragua, and the Soviet Union. Put simply, Marxism was an understandable, pragmatic response to an oppressive situation; it was the form the FMLN insurgency took, not the motivator of that insurgency. Under the Chapultepec Accords, the FMLN's transition from an outlaw organization to a legal political party has borne this out: Opposition to economic injustice has proven far more important than adherence to ideology.

Despite the peaceful political transition, however, El Salvador has yet to realize true political reintegration. By forming coalitions with tangential political entities, ARENA has dominated the legislature and the presidency and continues to maintain a steady grip on political leadership.²⁶ The party has been known to control its coalitions using patently corrupt measures.²⁷ The FMLN, which is excluded from these coalitions, lacks any true measure of power on the national level. Thus, while El Salvador maintains the trappings of democracy, real political competition at the national level has proven elusive.²⁸ Flawed implementation of the Chapultepec Accords has done virtually nothing to mend the economic fractures and political discontent that gave rise to the FMLN and the war; the process simply established structural avenues by which the FMLN could espouse and legally seek political support for its views. It legitimized the opposition, but could not empower it. As a result, political reconciliation in El Salvador has not led to the birth of any true spirit of democracy. This failure was apparent in 2004, when the FMLN boycotted President Antonio Saca's inauguration.²⁹

Such circumstances should come as no surprise to those familiar with El Salvador. The country's history resonates with examples of power brokers using the political process to defend their selfish interests at the expense of mutually beneficial policies issuing from a more enlightened self-interest. Their narrow agendas inevitably involve hoarding political power in order to accumulate wealth.

Economic Dimension

Economic exploitation lay at the root of the El Salvadoran conflict, and it continues to limit reconciliation. Historically, the country's rich elite manipulated the economic and political dimensions of society for their own benefit while using the army for protection. Elizabeth Wood described the pre-1992 Salvadoran government as "coalitions of economic elites and military hardliners [defending] labor-repressive institutions and practices until the civil war."³⁰ Moderating influences have been slow to gain traction in the Salvadoran government.

These conditions originated in the oligarchic politics of the colonial era, when a few Salvadorans were very rich, a multitude were very poor, and there was virtually no middle class.³¹ Although similar class strata had developed in other Latin American countries, El Salvador by the mid-80s became known as the region's poorest country. As late as 2002, 48 percent of the populace still lived in poverty.³² Economic improvement, like political progress, has been slow in coming.

Today, El Salvador has the second-highest GDP in Central America, but that testifies less to its economic health than to the moribund economic conditions of the region's other, similarly exploitative, economies.³³

Another failure of the Chapultepec Accords was land reform. In the 1930s, coffee became El Salvador's major export. Economic dependence on the crop created intense competition for land in a country with little arable turf. Consequently, the rich few—10 percent of the population—bought up or otherwise acquired all the land. Land-reform movements prior to the civil war sought to rectify this inequity with a constitutional amendment that limited private landowners to 245 hectares. Unfortunately, though predictably, government leaders ignored this provision, since enforcing it would have adversely affected their own wealth and power base.³⁴ After the Chapultepec Accords, land reformers (led primarily by FMLN leaders) sought to implement the constitutional restriction. Mass protests eventually forced the government to partially comply with the constitution, but movement leaders shifted emphasis: having obtained land for themselves in exchange for assuming debt, they dropped land redistribution as an issue in favor of debt relief. Land reform essentially halted.³⁵

The reform that did occur caused havoc with the fragile economy. In many cases, the new landowners became subsistence farmers, something for which the government had failed to plan. The economy's perpetual heavy reliance on coffee exports therefore compounded and encouraged continuing poverty, even after dilatory attempts at economic reform. From a macroeconomic standpoint, land that once contributed to the nation's overall wealth and indirectly fed many, now fed only those who farmed it. The percentage of agriculturally productive land dropped precipitously. Only then did the government modify its conservative economic policies to account for the new reality.³⁶

Fortunately, by the time these marginally progressive land reforms and overdue, relatively meager economic measures were enacted, the security and political dimensions had changed enough to ensure stability that could withstand prolonged economic recalcitrance. On the downside, there was little impetus from those dimensions to push through with timely and serious economic reform.

From the viewpoint of the AR2 framework, security assurances came first; the most visible political reforms then followed (at a leisurely pace). Political restructuring created just enough space for confrontation over pertinent economic issues. In lieu of effective economic reform, however, an unprogressive stagnation ensued. El Salvador still faces obstinate political and economic challenges, many of them due to the quick, immoderate amnesty that short-circuited the overall reconciliation effort. That all parties to the agreement were so quick to meet the letter of the law and then act so slowly in implementing meaningful change toward reconciliation reveals volumes about their self-interested, inherently flawed approach to AR2.

El Salvador still faces obstinate political and economic challenges . . .

Conclusion

Analysis of the AR2 process in El Salvador suggests that certain salient factors affected outcomes:

- The lack of a real mechanism to enforce the findings of a truth commission or other such investigative body derailed real reconciliation and reform. In El Salvador, ONUSAL was mandated only to oversee, not enforce, reforms—it was basically an impotent spectator whose recommendations were opposed by entrenched parties. ONUSAL's need to appear neutral further weakened its effectiveness. When the

mission confronted a societal context that actually favored a strong central government, its limitations became insurmountable. An armed reconciler is probably a necessity for effective AR2.

- The government's linear algebra of sustained selfishness consistently frustrated attempts at reform. AR2 is more art than science, and it requires an integrating calculus of enlightened self-interest, not the defense of entrenched interests. A government's performance in AR2 depends almost entirely upon its *raison d'être*. The Salvadoran case demonstrated a need not only for structural reformation of a narrowly self-interested government, but also for a shift in philosophy that would enable the intended spirit of the reform to be realized along with the letter. This moral epiphany did not occur in El Salvador.
- The government's quick amnesty put the AR2 process on a bad footing from the outset. Although this amnesty applied only to government misdeeds—the FMLM's misdeeds were never even brought to light—the inherent unfairness of this prospect still does not absolve the government from enacting amnesty in a socially conscious fashion. Amnesty cannot be viewed in isolation; it must be considered within the context of the overall AR2 objectives. Amnesty may be a prerequisite for reintegration, and both may be necessary to achieve genuine societal reconciliation, but a full and properly pragmatic consideration must be given to what each step entails. How amnesty is applied remains as important a decision to the end of the AR2 process as it is to its inception. In the Salvadoran example, blanket amnesty may have created the conditions for reintegration, but it covered guilty tracks and clouded the transparent process of reconciliation. In doing so, it adversely affected the degree to which real reconciliation was possible. Even wholesale reintegration could not overcome the lingering resentment born of an immoderately quick and pervasive amnesty.
- Placing the onus of change upon parties complicit in the original conflict—effectively leaving the former combatants to their own devices—is not the most efficacious way to proceed. The fact that there was no decisive winner in this conflict further highlights the issue. This point is a corollary of the need for a potent, armed reconciler.
- The heart of conflict resolution involves adequate redress of grievances. In this case, the driving grievances, or root causes, involved economic inequity. To the extent El Salvador does not maintain an economic balance, there exists a chance for resumption of violence. If nothing else, the Salvadoran case study shows that reconciliation is an ongoing process, dependent on the effective application of amnesty and reintegration across the security, political, and economic dimensions.

Endnotes

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12. Mike Kaye, "The Role of Truth Commissions in the Search for Justice, Reconciliation and Democratization: The Salvadoran and Honduran Cases," *Journal of Latin American Studies* (1997): 695.
13. The amnesty law covered only those offenses attributed to government action. The peace process was never designed to obtain redress for FMLN victims, making amnesty a moot issue. Email with Ambassador Passage.
14. United Nations Human Rights Committee.
15. Up until his death, Archbishop Romero was an outspoken defender of the poor and a vehement activist who publicly criticized the government's oppressive tactics. During a mass celebrating the life of a radical journalist's mother, an assassin stepped into the center aisle and shot him through the heart with a high-powered rifle. The assassin was never found, but later investigations attributed the murder to the activities of a right-wing element within the government. For more information regarding the government's role in the murder, see Krauss.
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17. *The United Nations and El Salvador (1990-1995)*, United Nations Blue Book Series (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1995).
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A Model Counterinsurgency: Uribe's Colombia (2002–2006) vs FARC

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Little is heard of U.S. involvement in counterinsurgency (COIN) in Colombia. That which does appear is often inaccurate and ideologically skewed. Yet progress in America's "number three war" has been significant and appears all the more impressive given the increasing difficulties experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan.

What is noteworthy is that the approach being used is "classic counterinsurgency." In this, there is considerable irony, because many of the significant aspects of the campaign were developed and implemented by American-educated leaders, assisted, both directly and indirectly, by Americans. That the Colombians have improved upon the original foundation makes examination of the case all the more compelling and urgent.

Background to Conflict

Upon taking office in August 2002, President Álvaro Uribe Vélez of Colombia was faced with a difficult strategic situation that required a fresh approach. This was forthcoming in a new document, the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, which radically reoriented the state's posture from negotiating with to confronting its principal security challenge, an insurgency inextricably linked to the narcotics trade and other criminal activity.

Although multifaceted in its dimensions, the new policy effectively assigned the cutting-edge role to the Colombian armed forces, most prominently the dominant service, the army. It required the forces to pursue COIN aggressively against a well-funded, entrenched adversary within a complex international environment decidedly unsympathetic to internal war campaigns. Regardless, the armed forces performed in impressive fashion.

These same armed forces had already set the stage for the shift in policy by pursuing a reform movement that had enabled them to conduct more aggressive operations even as Uribe's predecessor, President Andres Pastrana (1998-2002), had unsuccessfully sought a negotiated settlement with the main insurgent group, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, or FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), and to a lesser extent with the distant second group, *Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional*, or ELN (National Liberation Army). Continued combat was necessary because neither FARC nor ELN altered its military posture during negotiations. To the contrary, FARC used Bogota's provision of what was supposed to be demilitarized space, the *Zona de Despeje* (or *Area de Distension*), to facilitate an intensification of the conflict via main force warfare while it continued to conduct terror and guerrilla actions.

Thus, Colombia's COIN approach during the Pastrana years was not the result of deliberation and consultation within the government, but of an uneasy, unstated compromise, as Pastrana and his intimates negotiated with a duplicitous insurgent leadership on one hand, while on the other, they confronted the security force's growing unwillingness to accept the administration's increasingly discredited strategic calculus. When, in the face of all evidence to the contrary, Pastrana attempted to push through a second *Zona*, this one for the ELN, he faced a virtual

popular revolt in the designated area. Cutting his losses prior to the first round of that year’s presidential elections, Pastrana ordered the military in February 2002 to reoccupy the original *Zona*.



Figure 6-1

Situation Prior to Uribe’s Election

Lack of government leadership during the Pastrana years had left security matters to the army (*Ejército Nacional*, or COLAR); navy, of which the marines were a part; and air force. The state, in other words, did not engage in counterinsurgency. This meant that although annual military plans included a basic civic action component, they were necessarily incomplete. That this did not prove disastrous stemmed from the nature of the major security threat, FARC (ELN was essentially a law and order concern).

Committed ideologically to Marxism-Leninism, FARC had increasingly drifted to a vaguely defined “Bolivarian” populism that had little appeal in Colombia. Polls consistently found the movement with minimal popular support or even sympathy. Its efforts at armed propaganda had fallen off to nothing after a mid-1980s high, and it was increasingly corrupted by reliance for

funding upon criminal activity—drugs, kidnapping, and extortion (in that order, perhaps \$250 million total). Consequently, its approach to insurgency, modeled after “people’s war” doctrine of the Vietnamese variant filtered through, in particular, the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) of El Salvador, had become a perversion of the original and had more in common with the *focismo* of Che Guevara than Maoist armed political action built upon mass mobilization.

FARC’s reliance upon the normal apparatus necessary to support armed campaigning—base areas and mobility corridors—resulted in a dual center of gravity vulnerable to Colombian military attack: the insurgent units themselves and their sources of sustenance. Allowing for the low numbers organized in a nationwide support base (frequently inspired by terror), the armed units basically comprised the movement.

FARC’s vulnerabilities had been recognized by the new military leadership that emerged following Pastrana’s inauguration. They had crafted their approach to neutralize FARC’s strategy even as they instituted a far-reaching and comprehensive military reform process that affected everything from recruiting (a largely draftee COLAR became one-third volunteer, with key units essentially 100 percent “professionals”), to military schooling, to assignment policies, to structure, to operational art. The result was a reclaiming of the strategic initiative by the time of Uribe’s advent.

Military reform was central to all that occurred during the Pastrana years. A combination of internal dislocation caused by the growing drug trade, U.S. efforts to “punish” Colombia during the Samper administration (1994-98) for inadequate “cooperation” in counter-narcotics (CN) efforts, and mediocre senior military leadership had all combined to cripple a sound military. Reform, primarily a COLAR project, touched upon virtually every aspect of the institution, but focused mainly on revitalizing the military education system, turning lessons learned into operational and organizational modifications, and developing sound NCO leadership to enhance small unit performance. Simultaneously, greater attention was paid to human rights instruction, information warfare, and joint and special operations.

The profound institutional and strategic shifts outlined above occurred as the United States, in the aftermath of 9-11, altered the approach of the Clinton years (1992–2000) and dropped the artificial barrier that had separated counter-narcotics (CN) from COIN. This was critical because, during the Clinton administrations, the war had been artificially divided in accordance with the demands of American domestic politics. Washington was compelled to focus upon CN to the virtual exclusion of COIN. Only where COIN objectives could be subsumed within CN action was U.S. aid allowed to assist in the security campaign.

Consequently, the U.S. contribution to *Plan Colombia*, a multifaceted effort to identify Colombia’s critical areas for action to facilitate national revitalization, was structured wholly to support CN (for projects and allocations, see Table 1). Its centerpiece was an American-funded, -equipped, and -trained CN brigade manned by COLAR personnel but dedicated entirely, for legal reasons contained in the implementing legislation, to support of eradication. The brigade was severely limited in its operational and geographic scope, even though it had several times the number of helicopters in the entire COLAR aviation inventory.

		U.S. Contribution \$1,318.6 Billion	
Support for Efforts in Southern Columbia		\$416.9 M	
Support for Interdiction (includes FOL's*)		\$378.1 M	
Support for Columbia National Police		\$115.6 M	
Alternative/Economic Development		\$106.0 M	
Human Rights/Judicial Reform		\$122.0 M	
Regional Support		\$180.0 M	
*FOL: Forward Operating Location			
Table 1. U.S. Allocations for <i>Plan Columbia</i> (\$ figures derived from Columbia military briefing)			

Table 6-1

Of greater consequence than the lack of fully relevant support was the battlefield fragmentation and distortion—the disruption to unity of effort—that the U.S. strategy entailed. Committed to assistance in the only fashion politically viable, and in an America forced to focus upon the supply side of its own drug problem, U.S. officials, forces, and individuals tended to embrace the flawed logic that Colombia’s problem was narcotics, with the security battle merely a by-product. Insurgent reality was stood on its head.

American urgings that Colombian armed action focus upon a narcotics center of gravity were rejected by the military’s leaders (often in conflict with the Pastrana administration). As far as they were concerned, U.S. input during this period was appreciated, but tangential to the real issue, COIN.

Committed to area domination by regular (largely draftee) brigades and divisions, with strike forces organic to each of these units, COLAR would deploy but limited additional forces to augment the CN brigade. The focus of the internal war, in its estimation, had to be the population, 95 to 96 percent of which lived *outside* the drug-producing zones of the *llanos*, or eastern savannah.

Ironically, even the eventual drop in the bar between CN and what came to be labeled CT (for counterterrorism) assistance, did not change this situation. Although U.S. funding was impressive in raw figures (see Table 2), it was still overwhelmingly committed to a CN campaign driven by its own internal measures (most prominently, hectares of narcotics fields eliminated).¹ Controversial due to its reliance upon aerial spraying, the eradication effort incorporated a variety of other components, from air and riverine interdiction to alternative development, but its actual impact upon insurgent operational capabilities proved difficult to measure.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
INC/ACI*	57	200.1	686.4	48	243.5	412	313	313
INC/ACI†	0.5	5.75	208	0	134	168	150	150
FMF	0	0.44	0.02	4.49	0	93	98.45	99.2
IMET	0.863	0.92	0.9	1.04	1.165	1.676	1.7	1.7
ATA	0	0	0	0	25	3.28	0.2	3.92
506	41.1	58	0	0	0	0	0	0
1004	11.78	35.89	68.71	150	84.9	136	110.2	110.2
1003	2.17	13.45	7.23	22.3	4	13.2	13.2	13.2
TOTAL	113.4	314.6	971.3	225.8	492.6	827.2	686.8	691.2

Legend: ATA, Anti-Terrorism Assistance; FMF, Foreign Military Financing; IMET, International Military Education and Training; INC/ACI, Int'l Narcotic Control/Andean Counterdrug Initiative (*funding for counter-drug arms transfers, training, services; †funding for counter-drug economic and social aid); 506; Emergency Drawdowns; 1004, CN from Defense Budget; 1003, Riverine CN from Defense Budget; **Not included** -- ETA, Excessive Defense Articles (\$10.1 million total); ESF, Economic Support Funds (\$7.0 million total). (figures in millions of dollars)

Table 2. U.S. Assistance, 1997-2005. (as briefed by the U.S. State Department)

Table 6-2. U.S. Assistance, 1997–2005

Also clouding the picture were periodicals of record in the United States that tended to lump overall U.S. aid figures into “support for the Colombian military,” thus reviving a Vietnam-era stereotype of a hapless ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) held together by American money and “advisors.” Nothing could have been further from reality in Colombia. The bulk of U.S. funding to date has gone mainly to the CN effort (e.g., 85 percent of the 2005 figure above), with only incidental impact (from this source) upon the Colombian forces. The funding that has gone directly to the Colombian military has been important, especially as dispersed through the actions and programs of the highly regarded military assistance mission, but during the Pastrana years, Colombia’s armed forces were quite on their own in both their operations and their reforms.

Colombia’s basic military framework for waging counterinsurgency was created by the geographical assignment of the 5 COLAR divisions (18 brigades) and a joint task force, with a division-strength national reaction force.² Of its 145,000 troops, COLAR had some 20,000 in volunteer counterguerrilla units organic to its brigades and divisions. Altogether, the volunteer units amounted to 47 counterguerrilla battalions (*batallones contraiguerrillas*, or BCG) and 3 mobile brigades (*brigades moviles*, or BRIM), each comprised of 4 BCG, for a total of approximately 59 BCG (each with approximately 40 percent of the manning of a line battalion, but with additional machine guns and mortars).

The regular formations that comprised the rest of COLAR were overwhelmingly draftee. Domination of local areas was the linchpin of the counterinsurgent effort, and a variety of imaginative solutions were tried to maintain state presence in affected areas. Essentially, the draftee regular units were used in area domination and local operations, the BCG and BRIM to

strike at targets of opportunity. Specific missions that required specific skills, such as guarding critical infrastructure or operating in urban areas, were carried out by dedicated assets, as were special operations.

But in the absence of local forces, which had fallen afoul of constitutional court restrictions and thus were disbanded, it was difficult to consolidate gains. As areas were retaken, they could not be garrisoned with home guards. Instead, regular units rotated in and out in a perpetual shell game designed to keep FARC off balance (to a lesser extent ELN; only FARC operated with main forces).

Further complicating the situation, a legal framework that did not respond to the needs of internal war meant that all action was carried out under the provisions of peacetime civilian law. The Pastrana administration passed no emergency or anti/counter-terrorist legislation of any sort. This sometimes placed soldiers in absurd situations, particularly since the police were not available to accompany operations, being preoccupied with their own efforts to survive. Half a dozen times, for instance, towns and their police garrisons found themselves attacked by FARC forces using homemade but nonetheless potent armor.

Faced with such an array of challenges, it was a credit to the power of the military reform movement and the improvements made by its leadership that the strategic initiative had been regained by mid-2002. This occurred because the reform movement in the dominant service, COLAR, was driven by personalities who evinced an understanding of counterinsurgency and Colombia's unique circumstances. Thus they were able, despite the state's lack of strategic involvement, to arrest the negative trends that had emerged with growing force as early as the Samper administration.

Most importantly, the reform leadership defeated FARC's attempt to transition to main-force warfare (i.e., mobile or maneuver warfare, stage two in the people's war framework). Using the *Zona* as the staging ground for attacks by "strategic columns" comprised of multiple battalion-strength units, FARC found itself bested by the CG (Commanding General) IV Division, MG (Major General) Carlos Alberto Ospina Ovalle, who worked intimately with his superior, CG COLAR (*Comandante del Ejercito*), General Jorge Enrique Mora Rangel, and CG Joint Command (*Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares*), General Fernando Tapias Stahelin.³

This trio dominated operational planning throughout the Pastrana years, with Mora eventually taking Tapias' place (upon the latter's retirement). Ospina, after serving as CG IV Division, became COLAR Director of Operations, under Mora; then IG (Inspector General) Joint Command, under Tapias, who used the IG principally as a combat inspectorate; and, finally, CG COLAR (with full general rank) when Mora moved up upon Uribe's inauguration. When Mora himself retired in November 2003, Ospina became CG Joint Command.

What these officers shared was a correct understanding of Colombia's war and a well-developed approach to institutional transformation and strategy realized in operational art. Mora and Ospina were noted for their close working relationship and the general esteem they were held in throughout the armed forces. Both had proven themselves tactically time and again as they advanced through the junior ranks, then operationally and strategically as more senior commanders.

Ospina was apparently the most combat-decorated officer in COLAR at the time he became its CG, in addition to being universally regarded as COLAR's "brain trust" with a deep knowledge

of insurgency and counterinsurgency. Working together under Tapias, Mora and Ospina fashioned highly effective COLAR annual campaign plans that forced FARC onto the defensive. Their correct appreciation of the situation, though, could not be translated into a true national counterinsurgency until Uribe's election.

Uribe's Democratic Security and Defense Policy

A third-party candidate who won an unprecedented first-round victory in May 2002, Uribe introduced a dynamic style to security affairs that prominently included producing, early in his administration and with U.S. encouragement, the aforementioned *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* (officially released in June 2003). Unlike the *Plan Colombia* of the Pastrana-Clinton years (written with U.S. input), which had been a virtual catalog of national ills with proposed solutions beyond Bogota's ability to operationalize or fund, the new policy was intended to be a course of action. As such, it was built upon a fairly basic syllogism:

- A. Lack of personal security is at the root of Colombia's social, economic, and political ills.
- B. This lack of personal security stems from the state's absence from large swaths of the national territory.
- C. Therefore, all elements of national power need to be directed toward ending this lack of national integration.

Addressing this assessment was the policy itself, its thrust stated directly: "Security is not regarded primarily as the security of the State, nor as the security of the citizen without the assistance of the State. Rather, it is the protection of the citizen and democracy by the State with the solidarity and co-operation of the whole of society. . . . This is, in short, a policy for the protection of the population." According to the policy, citizens and the stability of the country were threatened by an explosive combination of "terrorism; the illegal drugs trade; illicit finance; traffic of arms, ammunition, and explosives; kidnapping and extortion; and homicide."⁴ The hitherto intractable nature of Colombia's security conundrum stemmed from the interlocking nature of these threats.

It was this dynamic at which Uribe's plan was aimed. If one course of action stands out as central to the whole, it is "consolidating control of national territory," the indispensable element of any counterinsurgency. The plan details a "cycle of recovery" that evokes images of the approach used in successful counterinsurgencies in Thailand, the Philippines, and Peru, and it outlines precisely the strategic approach to be used:

- "The Government will gradually restore state presence and the authority of state institutions, starting in strategically important areas.
- "Once the Armed Forces and the National Police have reestablished control over an area, units comprising professional soldiers, *campesino* soldiers [i.e., local forces] and National Police *Carabineros* [police field force] will maintain security and protect the civilian population. This will enable state organizations and criminal investigation authorities to work in the area.

- “Once a basic level of security has been established, the State will embark upon a policy of territorial consolidation, re-establishing the normal operation of the justice system, strengthening local democracy, meeting the most urgent needs of the population, broadening state services and initiating medium to long term projects aimed at creating sustainable development.”⁵

Necessarily, since Colombia’s plan calls for nothing less than waging internal war against a hydra-headed threat, the security forces undertake the most prominent and difficult tasks. Although responsibilities are outlined for all state bodies, it is the security forces that are to provide the shield behind which restoration of legitimate government writ takes place.

Under the Ministry of Defense (*Ministerio de Defensa Nacional*, or MDN) the security forces prepared their own plans to implement the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*.⁶ Both the military’s Joint Command and the national police (*Policia Nacional*, or CNP) were subordinate to MDN and used as their guide the strategic document drawn up by Defense Minister Marta Lucia Ramirez de Rincon and her staff after consideration of the Uribe policy. Their product was issued as a four-year vision applicable to the entire Uribe presidency. COLAR’s objectives were, for all practical purposes, those of the Joint Command.

The central elements remained “protection of the population” and “elimination of the illegal drugs trade in Colombia,” to be accomplished through the application of national will, resources, and power. As the premier element of national power in the internal war at hand, the military clarified its role further in a “general military strategy” issued by CG Joint Command, General Mora. This is still the key document regarding the application of military action to support the president’s “democratic security” counterinsurgency approach.

Implementing Uribe’s Plan

With the framework established, implementation followed. In this, the military was far ahead of other state elements, since it had already gone through dramatic change during the Pastrana years. So far-reaching were the military reforms that, in many respects, the armed forces presented Uribe with a new tool upon his taking office. The key had been a continuity of exceptional leadership able to reorient, under difficult operational and material conditions, the military’s warfighting posture.

Central to this reorientation was the inculcation in the officer corps of greater professional knowledge concerning not only the operational and tactical mechanics of internal war, but the strategic knowledge of insurgent approaches and aims. It was here that Mora’s faith in Ospina’s understanding of counterinsurgency paid off.

Ospina was adamant that seeing the insurgents as merely narcotics traffickers or criminals or terrorists obscured the deadly symbiosis that drove the conflict. Whatever it engaged in tactically, whether terror or the drug trade, FARC was a revolutionary movement that sought to implement people’s war as its operational form, to include focusing upon the rural areas to surround the urban areas.

Hence, as concerned the security forces, the strategic and operational threat had remained relatively constant in nature, regardless of increasing insurgent (especially FARC) involvement in the drug trade and other criminal activity. The insurgents sought to dominate local areas, eliminating through terror those who persisted in their opposition. Guerrilla action targeted

the police and smaller military units, with task-organized columns (*columnas*) appearing as main forces whenever a target invited. Other, nonviolent, elements of the FARC people's war approach—mass line, united front, political warfare, and international action—remained anemic to the point of irrelevance, leaving the “violence” line of operation the only real issue.

As noted previously, when Uribe took office, the military had already spent nearly four years developing an effective COIN approach specifically applicable to Colombia. The strategy recognized the need to dominate local areas by providing a security umbrella under which the normal functions of the state could be exercised. The operational vehicle for carrying out the effort was to place a “grid” over the target area, with specific forces carrying out specific missions, all coordinated in such manner as to stifle insurgent activity. The immediate problem was that there had not been enough units or enough funding.

Counterinsurgency is manpower and resource intensive. Uribe sought to provide both assets to a military leadership that was already out of the starting gate. Not only did he raise the military's general funding level, but, in a dramatic gesture of commitment, he also asked Congress to levy a one-time war tax for a substantial expansion of actual forces, primarily COLAR (which in mid-2004 reached a strength of some 202,000). The tax brought in approximately \$670 million, which was allocated to *Plan de Choque 2002–2006 (Plan Shock)*, a phased scheme to substantially increase the specialized COLAR forces needed to make the grid viable.

Units of all types were integrated into the force structure according to plans predating Uribe, but hitherto unfunded: new BCG and BRIM were added, with every division getting its own organic BRIM (IV Division received two; COLAR-wide, there are now at least 17 BRIM, up from the previous three) and others going to the general reserve (if all formations are considered, there are now roughly 100 BCG, up from the Pastrana total of 59); urban special forces (joining “rural” special forces, the traditional mode of operation); special transportation network protection units (*Plan Meteoro*, or *Plan Meteor*); high-mountain battalions specifically situated and equipped to block insurgent mobility corridors through hitherto inaccessible heights; strengthened infrastructure protection units (PEEV, from *Plan Energético y Vial*, or *Energy and Road Plan*); and local forces (*Soldados de mi Pueblo*, “Home Guards”) to provide security, particularly for rural urban centers.⁷

At the same time and from the same funding source, individual soldier effectiveness was to be improved by converting draftee slots to volunteers at the rate of 10,000 per year—an expensive undertaking, since it costs approximately ten times more to field a volunteer.

All components were related to each other. The standing up of local-forces platoons, for instance, although initially intended to enhance the population's security, was soon found to produce a much greater information flow to the forces, which enabled more accurate and intense employment of regular and strike units. Greater activity in an area forced the insurgents to move, especially the leaders, presenting targets for the upgraded special operations capability. Loss of leaders led to surrenders, which psychological warfare units exploited with a variety of innovative programs, from rallies to radio broadcasts. Fewer insurgents meant greater freedom of movement, and special units secured the transportation arteries, just as they did the critical infrastructure. Business picked up; the economy improved; kidnappings and murders dropped substantially.

If there was one element in the grid that provided the missing link, it was the deployment of local forces. These were indispensable to establishing state presence in affected areas and neatly side-stepped legal objections (and fierce opposition from international human rights organizations) by utilizing a forgotten law, discovered still on the books, that allowed a portion of the national draft levy to opt for service in hometown defense units.

These 40-man units were constituted as regular platoons assigned to complement regular battalions stationed nearby. They were trained, armed, and equipped as regular soldiers; officered by regulars; and fielded systematically according to *Plan de Choque* funding. Soon, they were present in more than 600 locations selected according to the Joint Command campaign plan. Most were COLAR assets, although a number were run by the marines, mainly in a special “mini-divisional zone” assigned to the marines, south of navy headquarters in Cartagena on the Caribbean coast.

Local forces had all the more impact because the police, responding to the same need for government presence if security was to be guaranteed, systematically established a presence in every *municipio* (county) in the country. Those areas from which they had been driven, or that historically had been considered too dangerous for police presence, were manned by police field forces, the Carabineros, under regular CNP jurisdiction. The Carabineros functioned in units of the same size and type as the COLAR local forces, but they were more mobile and often better armed. Where necessary, they constructed fort-like police stations to project state presence. Backing them up was a highly trained reaction force.

Incorporation of police involvement into the grid highlighted a further development: the increasingly joint and interagency nature of Colombian operations. Although the military services had always answered to CG Joint Command, they had previously functioned together more as a matter of courtesy than command. This had not posed any insuperable problems, particularly given COLAR’s dominance, but it was not the ideal way to conduct counterinsurgency, where unity of command is crucial. It was especially the case that the CNP, under Pastrana, was not integrated at the national level in any of the counterinsurgency planning. This ended under Uribe.

Within the military itself, a clear trend toward greater “jointness”—which had emerged under Tapias as CG Joint Command and matured under Mora (and Uribe)—blossomed under Ospina. Plans to implement “joint operational commands” in place of the exclusively COLAR divisional areas met with fierce resistance in parochial circles, but were being pushed through by late 2004.

This transformation alone would be enough to produce a measure of turmoil within the military. Even the existence of the integrated *Fuerza de Tarea Conjunta* (Joint Task Force), controlled by CG Joint Command and operating in FARC’s traditional base complexes in the east, generated disquiet in some circles—particularly as it became clear that it was a model of what is to come. If present plans are pushed through, the individual services will become more like “service providers” in the U.S. sense, while CG Joint Command will exercise operational control of joint forces that resemble U.S. combatant commands (e.g., Southern Command, which supports Colombia’s effort). Such a development will be entirely logical for waging counterinsurgency, but will represent a sea-change in the way Colombian services have historically functioned.

Integration extended beyond the military. Other government agencies were directed to participate. The state’s involvement brought a new closeness to integrated efforts that hitherto had normally depended upon interpersonal relations in areas of operation. In particular, law

enforcement and judicial authorities became an important part of operations. This provided government forces with enhanced flexibility, because the police and officials could engage in actions not legally devolved to the armed forces (e.g., the right to search).

Operationally, the guiding document was the Joint Command's multi-year *Plan Patriota* (Plan Patriot), which prioritized areas of insurgent activity according to FARC's dispositions and activities—and outlined sub-plans for the group's neutralization. FARC's demise was to be achieved via the tested technique of "holding" in "strategic maintenance areas," where the situation was already considered in hand, while concentrating forces in "strategic operational areas" where insurgents still operated freely. The first such operational area was Cundinamarca, the state surrounding Bogota, which throughout 2003 was systematically cleared of major insurgent presence. So complete was the effort that FARC assessments outlined a disaster of the first magnitude, even as the security forces "moved on" to the insurgent base complexes in the east, especially in the area of the former *Zona*.

"Moved on," of course, has meant only a concentration of forces for the purpose of conducting the continuous operations, unlimited in time but directed at a particular space, that the Joint Command has termed *masa dispersa* (dispersed mass).⁸ These are conducted under tight operational security. Once Cundinamarca was cleared, Fuerza de Tarea Conjunta assumed priority of effort and systematically combed the "strategic rearguard," as FARC termed its decades-old base complexes, restoring government presence and popular freedom of movement and livelihood. A particular chore was to deal with the numerous and widespread unmarked minefields FARC had emplaced.

Challenge of Assessing COIN Progress

Uribe was able to deliver the state commitment, strategic framework, and enhanced resources that propelled take-off. While he provided the dynamic leadership, the Defense Ministry's job was to offer further guidance but, in particular, to engage in matters of policy that allowed the military forces to exist and operate. A confusion of roles—a desire to lead the military rather than manage it—led to the replacement of Defense Minister Ramirez in November 2003. Ramirez had clashed repeatedly with the military leadership. CG Joint Command Jorge Mora also stepped down.

The Minister and CG were replaced, respectively, by Jorge Alberto Uribe Echauarria and Carlos Ospina. Moving into the CG COLAR position was the COLAR Director of Operations, MG Martin Orlando Carreño Sandoval. Mora had planned to step down in December, in any case, so the transition was smooth. Minister Uribe adopted a more careful style than his predecessor, and there were no significant changes in the 2004 planning and policy guidance: the military was left to lead the implementation of the counterinsurgency. In this, however, Carreño did not inspire the support necessary to keep his position more than a year. He was replaced in November 2004 by the Fuerza de Tarea Conjunta commander, MG Reinaldo Castellanos Trujillo. Subsequently, Minister Uribe himself, weary of criticism in congress, stepped down and was replaced by Camilo Ospina Bernal. Castellanos, however, was himself replaced only a year later by MG Mario Montoya.⁹ Ultimately, in the second Uribe administration, both Carlos Ospina and Minister Ospina stepped down, and Ospina's deputy, LTG Freddy Padilla, became CG Joint Forces. Juan Manuel Santos became Minister of Defense.

Such personnel upheaval notwithstanding, military support for the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* proceeded in near textbook fashion. Politically, the danger was that Colombia would become distracted, as it was by the debate that surfaced about Uribe's then still low-key effort to be allowed to run for a second term, which required constitutional amendment. To oppose a second term for Uribe all but demanded that his first-term record be attacked. The attacks, however, did not involve direct assault on the security forces; rather, they argued that too much effort was being placed upon security, that "social matters" were just as important. The precise point of Uribe's approach, however, was that the second was not possible without the first.

Nevertheless, what emerged was a FARC response that sought to strike at the counterinsurgents' *will* to persevere. If Colombia's operational implementation of its plan had been successful just where the United States had stumbled in Iraq and Afghanistan—the Colombians successively dominating areas and restoring government writ—this did not prevent critics at home and abroad from attacking Bogota's approach. Their criticism allowed FARC to appear much stronger than it was. Insurgent tactical assaults were given strategic consequence with spin. This spin came not from FARC, but from the president's political enemies and from the media's often dubious reporting. The result was that FARC's minor tactics, inconsequential in and of themselves, stood a chance of generating strategic reversal for the state.

It could be argued that this is the very stuff of insurgency, where every action is intended to have a political consequence. True as far as it goes, the observation misses the point that, in today's international environment, what insurgents and terrorists do is in one sense irrelevant: few citizens accept their proffered agendas. But their actions provide ammunition for political attacks occasioned by the normal infighting inherent to democratic politics. Rather than targeting their intended mass base, the insurgents try to cut corners by attacking the will of their enemies. This is what happened in Colombia.

As it was, Uribe was able to adroitly fend off the attacks even while successfully overseeing and completing an arduous process of constitutional amendment and reelection that culminated in an unprecedented second term in office (beginning August 2006) after another first-round victory in the presidential vote. Uribe's win ensured that operational implementation of his strategic framework would continue. This was significant because the approach, as discussed above, was both correct and sustainable, thereby satisfying two of the three requirements of successful counterinsurgency.

What the political controversy highlighted was a little understood element in successful counterinsurgency. With a correct and sustainable approach in place, the counterinsurgent "plays for the breaks," those shifts in the internal or external situation that work against the insurgent and favor the state. Such play normally requires an extended period of time and leads to a "protracted war." This long time-frame makes it difficult for democracies to sustain counterinsurgency campaigns, particularly in the present world environment where there is little agreement upon strategic ends and means, much less operational and tactical concerns. Yet it does not in any way obviate the reality that there is no other option.

How then was the state to think about the tremendous progress it had made in Uribe's first term? What future steps would allow Colombia not only to assess sustainability but to continue its success?

What drives any assessment is the nature of the situation on the ground *as it can be measured*. Efforts to judge COIN progress in Colombia have produced a variety of statistics. These have been used to support both proponents of *Democratic Security's* efficacy and opponents who question, if not the approach as a whole, certain of its emphases and components.

Statistics, in other words, are a double-edged sword:

- First, there is the *political* reality: efforts to arrive at metrics for assessing the progress of an approach, although absolutely necessary, take on meaning only as they are interpreted by an audience. All parties to the present Colombian political debate, for example, agree that by any metric utilized (e.g., a decline in kidnapping and murder), there has been demonstrable (even stunning) progress towards normalcy. Yet there is little agreement as to what normalcy, as an end-state, should actually look like.
- Second, there is the *empirical* reality that the causes behind insurgency cannot be statistically explained. Hence, to measure COIN progress by gauging how much the country has moved toward a notional state of normalcy is like looking at annual percentage increases in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) without actually being able to measure the GDP itself. "Progress," then, ends up being a state of popular mind, a belief by the populace (and its leaders) that the situation is improving.

In the matter of statistics, a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators has given rise in Colombia to the judgment that progress is being made. This does not mean, however, that merely advocating "more of the same" is the prescription for further action so much as "staying the course."

Democratic Security has been built upon acceptance by the political authorities of the Uribe administration position that the Gordian knot in Colombia's security impasse is FARC. Only FARC continues to seek state power while simultaneously demonstrating the capacity to negate state armed capacity. ELN, the "other" insurgent group, is a nuisance, while the vigilante AUC (*Autodefensas Unida Colombia*, or United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia), the so-called paramilitaries, have historically been a consequence of lack of state presence. As the state has expanded its control, the AUC has been willing to strike demobilization deals. ELN has likewise indicated a desire to open a peace process. In contrast, negotiations with FARC have not proved successful, so only armed action by the state remains. The desired goal is reincorporation of FARC into the political process, but it is recognized that incentive must be created by armed action.

Compelling FARC to undertake a course of action necessarily involves neutralizing its ability to remain viable. Thus, the intent of the government's counterinsurgency grid is to attack FARC's ability to recruit, sustain itself, move, and initiate actions. Domination of populated areas such as Cundinamarca prepared the way for the present operations against FARC's "strategic rearguard" in the former *Zona* and other southern areas. These operations continue to this day due to the sheer size of the counter-state FARC constructed over four decades. The forces committed to these and other priority efforts have *not* been robbed from established counterinsurgency areas (effectively, the army's divisional zones), but deployed from new assets. Their actions are sustainable virtually indefinitely.

That the government's operations have made life more difficult for FARC is unquestionable. But just how difficult is the query that cannot be answered definitively. The least reliable way to judge results is to match FARC casualties with the organization's order of battle. The top figure of some 17,000 combatants (reached during the Pastrana administration) is now put at below 13,000, with most counts claiming that AUC combatants at the time of their demobilization actually outnumbered their FARC rivals (ELN was perhaps a fifth the size of FARC). It is not that these numbers are necessarily wrong; rather, it is unlikely that they mean much given the realities of an insurgent movement operating with a minimal but adequate support base and funding generated outside any popular base.

During the Mora and Ospina tenures, the need to count insurgent casualties was not driven by the Colombian military, which made a concerted effort to stay away from the "Vietnam body-count trap." Instead, the political authorities (many of whom have business backgrounds) and the press felt it necessary to give the public the numerical equivalent of sound bites that elevated quantitative measures to heights the military itself did not subscribe to. The military's approach was clear if one inspected its internal documents. These gave pride of place not to body count, but to measures of FARC's initiative and armed capacity (such as the ability to initiate major attacks).

Not only do the military's metrics contrast sharply with the indicators favored by the political authorities and the press, but they also serve to highlight the abuse of statistics that became a routine part of the present political debate surrounding President Uribe's desire to earn a second term. Critics of Uribe and the *Democratic Security* approach regularly claimed to possess data showing an explosion of FARC incidents and initiative, but their position was not backed by realities on the ground. What must ultimately drive any assessment is the *nature* of the incidents being counted. The military knows this and has incorporated such an approach into its own analysis. *Nature* can involve anything from size to context.

An insurgent group such as FARC, forced from mobile warfare back to guerrilla and terror actions, of necessity needs to up the ante. This FARC attempted to do by cultivating an association with the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), which sent some two dozen training teams into FARC areas before the pipeline was effectively shut down in 2001. FARC efforts to utilize a variety of PIRA terror techniques rarely or never seen in Colombia, ranging from the precise placement of bombs to inflict maximum structural damage, to the use of secondary explosions to wreak havoc upon crews responding to incidents, were all designed to inflict maximum casualties—and generate maximum terror. That they failed to do so left FARC with the one option it has now pursued: pinprick attacks that can produce tactical heat but lack strategic fire.

In only one way can FARC's tactical actions have strategic or even operational significance: if they can be parlayed into political consequence. Strategic, operational, and even tactical techniques for using violent action to effect political gain are a central element of the people's war approach used by FARC. They are recognized as such in FARC doctrine, and they were critical to the FMLN effort in El Salvador that was so important to FARC's doctrinal evolution. A key issue is whether FARC is attempting to use its tactical efforts to exploit rifts in the Colombian political spectrum. Captured documents and information gleaned from prisoner interrogations demonstrate that FARC is well aware that by inflicting casualties and appearing to be "alive" despite all that the security forces have done, it can provoke political problems of sufficient magnitude to damage or even end *Democratic Security*.

It is ironic that the strategic progress of *Democratic Security* is unlikely to negate completely FARC's tactical ability to initiate guerrilla and terror actions. But the group's "successes" in these low-level actions really count for little. For instance, there have been many mine casualties among the security forces, but that has little to do with anything save FARC's extensive use of the internationally banned weapons. Mines do not hold towns and villages, and they do not create sympathy for the insurgents; they are indiscriminate defensive weapons. Most COLAR casualties from mines, in fact, have been suffered as the army pushes ever deeper into insurgent base areas and dismantles the FARC counter-state.

Eliminating the "strategic rear guard" is crucial. There is a common misconception that "guerrillas" are self-sustaining, obtaining all they need either by generating it or capturing it from the government. In reality, insurgents can rarely if ever obtain crucial components of their war effort, notably arms and ammunition, from within the battlespace and thus must pursue outside acquisition. FARC indeed gets most of its weapons and ammunition from abroad. Even food, as demonstrated by massive caches uncovered in the strategic rearguard throughout 2004 and 2005, is stockpiled and pushed forward to combatants. Eliminating the base areas and their stockpiles therefore eliminates FARC's ability to mass and forces it to engage in terror and guerrilla warfare, which can be much more easily managed by the enhanced capabilities and presence of the state.

Faced with this profound threat to its viability as an insurgent movement, FARC must respond. As a consequence, there should be no doubt that "violence" in Colombia will continue indefinitely. Yet the state should continue to do precisely what it is already doing: meeting the insurgency in a "correct" and "sustainable" manner. The Uribe approach is certainly correct in the way it conceptualizes the problem and seeks to respond to it. The approach is also sustainable, in its present form, because it demands no unacceptable investments of human or material resources—or of will. It will face adjustments if the U.S. contribution ends, but it is unlikely this will happen for some time.

What has not registered fully on the Colombian political class is that a correct and sustainable approach is always put in place in order to play for the breaks. There is no formula for how long the process will take. In the Philippines, OPLAN *Lambat Betag* (Net Trap) took approximately six years to produce dramatic results; in Thailand, Prime Minister (PM) Order No. 66/23, "The Policy for the Fight to Defeat the Communists," required roughly half that after its implementation.

Still, if the spectacularly successful Peruvian approach against *Sendero Luminoso* took just somewhere in between the length of these two campaigns, normalcy in Ulster was achieved only through a grueling 25-year effort. And Ulster was but the size of the small American state of Connecticut, with just half its population. Colombia is the size of California, Nevada, Utah, and Idaho, with a population of 42 million. Hence, patience must be as much a part of the equation as a desire to create precisely the correct mix of techniques that will produce demonstrable results.

Lessons Learned

Formal announcements in the first quarter of the new Uribe administration seemed to portend a necessary shift in emphasis in *Democratic Security* implementation, from strike to consolidation. Yet the announcements occurred even as a string of distressing events shook public confidence in the administration. Particularly disturbing were several highly publicized episodes of institutional

corruption apparently driven by the need to produce quantifiable results in response to political demands, as well as evidence of political links between prominent backers of Uribe and the outlawed AUC. Nevertheless, the unease and its attendant debate served the useful purpose of highlighting two issues that emerge time and again in the assessment of any counterinsurgency:

Leadership matters. Uribe has proven to be the right man at the right time, as have figures in other places and times—one thinks of Magsaysay in the Philippines or Templer in Malaya. Four and a half years, which is all that Uribe has had so far, is not enough time to see through a counterinsurgency. Uribe is keenly aware that his success in winning a second term has brought with it the responsibility not merely to do more of the same, but to recalibrate success in such manner as to deliver “victory.” Defining victory in a counterinsurgency, as indicated above, is tricky, but clearly the metrics any political actor uses to measure his standing will be the benchmarks. Overall, Uribe has offered a model of skillful, dynamic leadership.

It is the armed forces that have been the key element, because they provide the security upon which all else that has happened depends. Can they continue to function in the manner of the past eight years? Have the myriad reforms been institutionalized? The answer would seem to be affirmative on both counts. It might especially be noted that institutionalization is as much a function of individuals as structure and procedures. Colombia’s military reformers have been followed by others who, in their career particulars, look much like Mora and Ospina.

Despite the optimistic assessment above, we should not underestimate the extent of the challenge facing the military, mainly COLAR, as a result of its expansion and increased operational tempo. COLAR was previously a draftee force of “in and out” enlisted ranks led by a professional officer corps. It now is one-third volunteer. These individuals expect to make the military a career. A host of issues, from family welfare to promotion requirements to NCO rank, must be codified and then allowed to mature.

Adding to the challenge is the continuous nature of the small-unit operations conducted to keep FARC on the run. Everything from block-leave procedures to family counseling (e.g., to cope with a rising level of turmoil within families in a force that historically has had relatively few disciplinary problems) has had to be instituted. Topping all this is the ever-present threat of corruption in an environment saturated with the easy money of the narcotics trade.

In the field, the strategic initiative has seen some tactical setbacks. This was predictable. The insurgents, after all, also have a learning curve. As FARC has been forced to break up into small units, the security forces have done likewise. This has created opportunities for FARC to surprise isolated or tactically sloppy government units with rapid, medium-sized concentrations that then disperse. The technique is not new, but recent actions have seen FARC grappling for a middle ground between “large” and “small” concentrations, so that it can attack platoon- or squad-size positions without exposing itself too much. Such measures, though seeking tactical initiative, are strategically and operationally defensive—and an indication of just how successful the government has been. Before the military reforms kicked in, in the Samper/early Pastrana years, FARC fielded large columns that would attack even reinforced companies.

Beginning in February 2005, FARC units, responding to instructions from the organization’s secretariat, began an effort to inflict maximum casualties. Their intent, obviously, was to exploit the pressure for “no bad news” placed upon the military by the political structure. They sought to spook at least a proportion of the Colombian “chattering classes” into viewing the normal give-and-take of tactical action as a sign of larger strategic defect. Although they could have a

strategic impact by manipulating perception and spurring on the debate about “sustainability,” in reality, FARC’s small, hard-to-prevent tactical successes have meant nothing to the strategic situation.

The current favorable strategic situation, some have argued, could be undone in a flash by follow-on personalities. Is this likely? No, for all of the reasons discussed above. In particular, both the reforms and the demands of internal war have accelerated change in military (particularly COLAR) leadership. Warfighters who would be as comfortable in the U.S. system as their own have begun to dominate promotion boards, with “service in the field” as the salient factor in selection. This is a critical element, since the military is the shield for all else that occurs in the counterinsurgency.

As combat-tested officers have begun to dominate the services, the question emerges as to what sort of men they are (there are no female general officers in Colombia). In terms of the institution they have made, the results disprove the constant drumbeat about lax standards and abuses that outsiders, especially international human rights organizations, often make. To the contrary, the military, under its reform-minded leadership, has consistently emerged in Colombian polls as one of the most respected institutions in the country, with favorable numbers reaching near the 80th percentile.

In sum, the reforms have endeavored to demand more from officers professionally, particularly as regards the mechanics and theory of warfighting. This has resulted in greater knowledge at the strategic and operational levels of war as well as increased tactical expertise.

Put together, military popularity and effectiveness have undoubtedly contributed to President Uribe’s own consistently high rating with the public. It remains to be seen how recent scandals will affect his position, but the damage is unlikely to be long-lived or deep.

For his part, Uribe has dealt with the military in an increasingly sophisticated and collegial manner. He especially grew to respect the professional judgment of Carlos Ospina, when Ospina was CG Joint Command. This allowed Ospina to exercise a degree of influence and to be heeded when he counseled caution at appropriate times. It remains to be seen, in the post-Ospina command environment, if Uribe will be so dominant as to upset the civil-military balance necessary for the armed political campaign that is counterinsurgency.

The strategic approach is critical. The strategic approach, with its operational (lines of action and campaigns) implementation, must be the foremost concern of leadership in a counterinsurgency. To this end, Uribe was fortunate to have officers of the caliber of Mora and Ospina. If Mora saw COLAR through its early transformation, Ospina not only finished the job, but implemented the central operations of Plan Patriota. He had to do this even as resources remained constrained and demands rose for greater emphasis upon other national priorities.

It is not enough, say critics, to regain control of the population; areas seized and held must be consolidated. The military is keenly aware of the point at issue—and has U.S.-supported programs designed to address this dimension of the conflict. The real questions revolve around resource allocation and timing. Here, Uribe has stood his ground, remaining true to the spirit of his strategy: security is the necessary basis for all that follows. Now, in his second term, he has indicated that he intends to exploit counterinsurgency gains and put additional emphasis upon consolidation.

It is precisely the substantial progress made in restoring a semblance of “normal life” that has allowed internal debate over other issues to surface, to include discussion of trends in civil-military relations. The latter is often overlooked in judging the effectiveness of military leaders, but here, too, Colombia has been well served. Ospina, in particular, sought to implement a very “American” vision of the military’s subordinate relationship to civil authority.

However, as with the emphasis upon combat as the key determinant for promotion, so the reinforcement of civilian authority as the final word in matters of moment has not sat well with some military elements. It is President Uribe’s understanding that healthy civil-military relations depend upon an invisible line not being crossed—by either side—that has tempered any military discontent and made operations function as smoothly as they have under various defense ministers. The military has maintained firmly its right to determine operational and tactical particulars, and President Uribe seems to have acquiesced.

That COLAR continues to transition from its “German” heritage (transmitted historically through Chilean vectors) to an “American” model has been stated directly in command briefings to officers. (The air force has long looked to America for inspiration, the navy to the British.) Yet this has not led to an uncritical adoption of either U.S. forms or procedures. American difficulties in Iraq, stemming at least in part from the intervention of civilian leadership in military operational efforts, have been a poignant reminder that a balance must be struck between obedience to civilian authority and institutional independence. In Colombia, what this balance should be has been left deliberately indeterminate.

Challenges to Come

In the larger sense, Uribe’s national policy has always stood upon three legs, not merely security but also fiscal health and social development. Fiscal health is necessary for all else to proceed and has given no grounds for complaint. Social development remains at the heart of all illegal actors’ ability to recruit manpower. It, too, has been addressed by progress in the other two sides of the triangle. That one would wish for greater emphasis or speed is a judgment call that imprudently ignores demonstrable progress.

Although the *Democratic Security* approach might not require major adjustments, there are strategic areas that bear close monitoring, especially by Washington in this, a critical theater of the battle against global insurgency:

- *The battle is not over.* U.S. support, both materiel and personnel, will play an important role for the foreseeable future. It must be maintained. Unfortunately, a tendency has emerged in U.S. circles that seeks to interpret realities on the ground in terms that speak to the artificial deadlines created by funding legislation. This is extraordinarily dangerous, particularly the notion that the war is won and it is time to talk of winding down U.S. aid and converting Colombian forces to other uses (such as United Nations peacekeeping).
- *The U.S. Government needs to grasp the true nature of Colombia’s struggle.* In some U.S. political and media circles, the conflict is still labeled counter-narcotics, *or* counter-terrorism, *or* counterinsurgency, *or* something else. It is all of these things and must be approached in a unified manner. This is precisely what the Colombians have been fighting to achieve, and they have made dramatic strides, although these

have come at considerable political and personal cost for key players such as President Uribe, former Minister Uribe, and former CG Joint Command Ospina.

- *The drive toward unity of effort must extend to the U.S. side.* Greater effort is necessary to raise the level of awareness in Washington that what happens in Colombia underpins our Latin American position. This is not a new domino theory so much as a recognition that, in the present strategic environment, Latin America is the forgotten theater, Southern Command the forgotten command, and Colombia our forgotten but closest, most reliable ally. At a time when the forces of the radical left are again on the march throughout the hemisphere, to include advocating a severely restricted fight against drugs, Colombia's interests coincide with those of the United States. More than that, Colombia remains a stable democratic state committed to reform and the market economy. Its contrast with an increasingly unstable and strategically dangerous Venezuela could not be greater.
- *Operationally, recognition of the points above should lead to an enhanced relationship between U.S. and Colombian forces and the two countries' strategic cultures.* Military cooperation could be enhanced in myriad ways, in particular by augmenting training programs so that they more accurately reflect the close relations between Washington and Bogota. Simultaneously, both governments should encourage closer relations between U.S. and Colombian centers of strategic thought, risk assessment, and regional analysis. Colombia has a level of expertise and analytical capability surpassing any in Latin America, but its talents have been underutilized. They could make a greater contribution to *Democratic Security*, as well as the larger war against terrorism.

There are other areas one could highlight, such as the desire for even greater force strengths and mobility assets. Yet these must be carefully balanced against available resources and the system's ability to absorb any more inputs. Burnishing what the Uribe administration has already done should pay greater gains than seeking to load any more requirements onto the system.

What bears repeating is the point to which this analysis has returned often: the present effort is both correct and sustainable; it is the right strategic posture required for progress and popular security. Hence, continued care must be exercised to ensure that *Democratic Security* remains a multifaceted approach—a strengthening of the state's governance, finances, and democratic capacity enabled by the ever more powerful and capable shield provided by the security forces. By themselves, these facets are not the *solution*—that lies in the use of *legitimacy to mobilize* response against those using political violence for illegitimate ends—but they will certainly *enable* it.

Endnotes

1. At one point Colombia was third in U.S. foreign aid, behind only Israel and Egypt.

2. A sixth division was organized during the Uribe administration from what previously had been the Joint Task Force (which had been positioned in the extreme south). The COLAR order of battle thus became I Division (2, 4, 11, 17 Brigades); II Div (5, 14, 16, 18 Brigades); III Division (3, 8 Brigades); IV Division (7, 9 Brigades); V Division (1, 6, 13 Brigades); and VI Division (12, 26, 27 Brigades). Later, in July 2005, a seventh division was created when the very large I Division area was split. The new VII Division (based in Medellin) had assigned to it 17, 11 (both from I Div) and 14 Brigade (from II Div). The former Caribbean-bounded I Div heartland became a joint command. Additionally, the national reaction force, or FUDRA (*Fuerza de Despliegue Rapido*), which matured during the Pastrana administration, is a light division equivalent, with 3 mobile brigades and 1 Special Forces brigade (of 4 SF battalions). An independent task force (Omega) of virtual division strength operates in the south.

3. Literally, “Commanding General of the Military Forces,” which accurately defines the authority and responsibility inherent to the position. I have rendered it as “CG Joint Command” to facilitate my analysis.
4. See *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, 23–30.
5. *Ibid*, 42.
6. Recent official documents have dropped “nacional” from their translations of Ministerio de Defensa Nacional.
7. Initially, the local-forces were called *Soldados Campesinos* (Peasant Soldiers), a name the troops themselves disliked—Colombia, despite its substantial agricultural sector, is classified as approximately three-quarters urban, and the units were universally located in rural towns. Hence, *Soldados de mi Pueblo* (“Home Guards” would be the most useful rendering) came to be used simultaneously.
8. *Masa dispersa*, or “dispersed mass,” is a slang rendering of the technique. It is not a formal term.
9. MG Mario Montoya was promoted to lieutenant general (the highest rank in the Colombian military system) in early December 2006.

War Without Borders: The Columbia-Ecuador Crisis of 2008

Dr. Gabriel Marcella

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Westphalia in the Andes

Climate change, deforestation, pollution, contraband, weapons proliferation, trafficking in humans, diseases, narco-trafficking, terrorism, money-laundering, illegal immigration, and gangs combine with the diffusion of technology and modern communications to mock international order. Legal and illegal nonstate actors render practically inoperative the sanctity of borders. Within this witch's brew, the Andean states are experiencing a profound crisis of authority, governance, democratic legitimacy, and territorial security—ingredients of the weak state.¹

The crisis is superimposed upon a tradition of laissez faire on ungoverned space and border control and continuing disagreement on what to do about terrorism. Given this background, the institutional capacity, the political will, preventive diplomacy, and the mechanisms for effective security cooperation and conflict resolution between states have not caught up to the demands of the new geopolitical realities of wars without borders. Irregular forces and an assortment of criminals depend on weak borders and weak states. The events and aftermath of March 1, 2008, along the Colombia-Ecuador border are eloquent evidence that international order in Latin America is in deep trouble.

Midnight in the Amazon

At half-past-midnight on March 1, three A37 aircraft and five Brazilian-made Super Tucanos of the Colombian air force fired precision-guided bombs into a camp of the terrorist-narco-trafficking Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) 1.8 kilometers inside the border in a difficult jungle area of Ecuador known as Angostura.² The target of the attack was long time FARC leader Raúl Reyes (nom de guerre for Luis Edgar Devia Silva), who was killed along with 24 others (including four Mexicans and an Ecuadorean).³ (See Map 7-1.)

The camp was located in the north-easternmost part of Ecuador, within a trapezoid south of the Putumayo River, across from an area in Colombia which has been the redoubt of the FARC's Front 48 for years. Colombian ground troops and police followed up. Nine hours after the strike, President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia called to inform President Rafael Correa, his Ecuadorean counterpart, during the latter's weekly Saturday morning national radio broadcast. Correa was caught totally unaware and led a verbal and diplomatic assault against Uribe and Colombia that would last into June. The 9-hour delay apparently offended Correa, who accused Colombia of planning the attack. It took the Ecuadorean Army 6 hours to reach Angostura, an area so remote that the last Ecuadorean patrol there took place a year before.



Map 7-1

Chronology of the Crisis

February 29	A source reported Raul Reyes' location in Angostura, at 22:30.
March 1	At 0:30, Colombia attacks camp, 9 hours later Uribe informs Correa.
March 2	Ecuador breaks relations with Colombia, Venezuela's President Chavez mobilizes troops.
March 3	Defense Minister states that Colombia will not send troops to border.
March 3	Colombia accuses Chavez of sending \$300 million to FARC.
March 4	Uribe announces that Colombia will denounce Chavez for support to terrorism before the International Criminal Court.
March 5	Organization of American States (OAS) condemns Colombian incursion.
March 7-8	Uribe, Correa, and Chavez lower tensions at the Summit of Rio Group in Santo Domingo.
March 9-10	OAS Secretary General Jose Insulza visits site of attack.
March 18	OAS rejects Colombian incursion and calls members to combat threats posed by irregular forces.
April 17	Correa warns FARC that incursions will be act of war, later announces purchase of 24 <i>Super Tucanos</i> and radar system for border defense.

May 14	Interpol declares Raul Reyes computer files authentic.
May 24	Announcement that FARC leader Manuel Marulanda died on March 26, 2008.
June 6	Colombia and Ecuador announce plans to restore full diplomatic relations.
June-July	Ecuadorean government suspends plan to restore relations.
July 2	Senator Ingrid Betancourt freed from FARC in bold rescue by Colombian Army.

By mid-April, Correa’s aggressive tone had moderated to a warning that if the FARC crossed into Ecuador, it would mean war, a statement that was well-received in Colombia. Nonetheless, his accusation seemed on the surface to be one of surprising strategic and operational innocence, since generations of Ecuadoreans have memory of border violations by terrorists, drug traffickers, and contrabandists along its borders with Peru and Colombia, in addition to high levels of social delinquency, and an intense national debate about the ecological integrity of its Amazon region, which has suffered illegal logging and pollution from oil spills. Moreover, the Ecuadorean polity was hardly innocent in the strategic use of military power. In 1995, its armed forces performed superbly in a short war against Peru, culminating 2 centuries of border conflict between the two countries with the Brasilia Accord of 1998.

Indeed, the attack had been prepared. Colombia was able to fix the location of Reyes at the camp via an informant on the night of February 29. Reyes had been moving around various camps in Ecuadorean territory. Days later the FARC bombed a pipeline that transports oil from Ecuador to the Pacific through Colombian territory to widen the breach between Quito and Bogotá. Following March 1, a torrent of incandescent insults and reactions ensued between Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela that lay bare the contradictions that haunt Latin America when it comes to fighting terrorism and the panoply of international crime.⁴ The March 1 attack and its aftermath are a part of a larger tableau that tells us much about the vulnerabilities of weak democracy to the corrupting influence of narcotics, the intimidation by terrorism, the need for effective civil-military relations in confronting complex national defense issues, the contradictions that populism generates in foreign and defense policy, as well as understanding the unintended consequences that American power can engender.

The results of the attack added strategic value to Colombia’s war against the FARC. Reyes was a member of the secretariat of the murderous narco-terrorist FARC. Somehow five Mexican university “students” (one survived the attacks; Lucía Morett would later become a *cause celebre* between Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico, and Nicaragua, which gave her political asylum) found their way to a clandestine FARC camp deep in the jungle of Sucumbíos, a feat either beyond the capabilities of Ecuadorean authorities, or they looked the other way. The FARC camp had been in existence for at least 3 months, disposing of such amenities as beds, two gasoline powered generators, a satellite dish, TV, training area, chicken coop and pig pen, and stored food, in addition to an arsenal of weapons.⁵ Captured film clips showed campers dancing and singing, a man (the Ecuadorean citizen killed in the attack) swinging at a piñata, as well as lectures on FARC ideology in the insufferable heat and humidity of the Amazon. Thus the FARC had established a semi-permanent site in Ecuador, a serious breach of Ecuador’s security cordon.

The Ecuadorean killed, Franklin Aisalla, was an unobtrusive locksmith who for years had been part of the FARC network in Ecuador and had apparently brought the Mexican students to the camp. A Colombian female survivor serving as cook had been tied to a tree by the FARC for apparent disciplinary reasons, deprived of food for 2 days and given only water. The “students”

had been attending an extreme left gathering called the Bolivarian Continental Coordinating Conference in Quito (a local helper included a Mao Tse Tung Viteri). The 400 attendees to the conference requested that no pictures be taken, according to press reports. They included FARC, Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), the terrorist Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement of Peru⁶ (the seven were later arrested by Peruvian authorities), as well as other delegates of the international extreme left. Apparently, Peruvian, Colombian, and Spanish authorities had very good information (including films) on the presence of so-called “Bolivarians” from their respective countries. Why was the Ecuadorean government not equally well-informed? Some possible conjectures are discussed later in this monograph.

Among the resolutions of the Bolivarian conclave was to demand that the world recognize the FARC as a belligerent and to establish the Army of Latin America, under the tender leadership of the FARC.⁷ A picture of Reyes saluting the participants was displayed. The event was organized with the participation of María Augusta Calle, member of the constitutional reform assembly and the government party. Calle, a sympathizer with the FARC, is also a leading opponent of the U.S.-supported *Plan Colombia* and the presence of the American Forward Operating Location (FOL) at Ecuador’s Eloy Alfaro Air Base at Manta. The FOL is used for counternarcotics reconnaissance flights covering the Andes and eastern Pacific.⁸ The access agreement terminates in 2009, and American officials indicated in April and May 2008 that the United States will be able to conduct the flights from existing facilities in Aruba and El Salvador. The Municipality of Quito sponsored the event. Funding support apparently came from the Venezuelan government. Press reporting would later uncover a hemispheric-wide support structure for the Bolivarians, with some 400 open as well as clandestine organizations of the extreme left that advocate armed violence to take power.⁹

The meeting of the Bolivarians and the attack at Angostura put into stark relief the inescapable reality that Ecuador did not exercise sovereign control over national territory nor over the people that legally and illegally entered its borders. Computer files captured at Angostura also indicated that Reyes was perhaps the brains behind Continental Bolivarian movement.

Clashing Principles

On March 8 the Summit of the Group of Rio meeting in the Dominican Republic unanimously condemned Colombia’s violation of sovereignty. (See Appendix for resolution of the Rio Group). Later, the OAS took up the dispute and agreed on a consensus resolution on March 17 that “rejected” the Colombian incursion, stating the venerable international law principle: “no state or group of states has the right to intervene, either directly or indirectly, for whatever motive, in the internal or external affairs of another.”¹⁰ The resolution did not condemn Colombia but reiterated the commitment of states to fight irregular groups, preserving some legitimacy for the Colombian position.

The United States supported Colombia’s right to self-defense, while Ecuador deplored the violation of its sovereignty. Thus the eternal dilemma of conflicting values in international relations: which is higher, nonintervention or self-defense? Should Colombia have restrained itself, accepting the risk of having its citizens attacked, and informed Ecuadorean authorities prior to the attack? Colombia could not let this opportunity go by. A more timely call on the night of the attack from Uribe to Correa might have helped build confidence in the bilateral relationship, instead of adding to strains and misunderstandings that had been developing for years. Three points support these judgments:

1. All states reserve the right of self-defense. Colombia's action could be seen as a preemptive, instead of a preventive or precautionary, military strike made necessary by the FARC's demonstrated decades- old capabilities and intentions to make war against the state and people of Colombia.¹¹ That the FARC would strike again had the highest certitude, therefore justifying the Colombian attack as a preemptive measure. Reyes was wanted for 121 criminal charges against him, including the massacre of 119 children, women, and elderly in Bojayá in 2002, and the assassination of the Minister of Culture and 11 legislators. The FARC habitually used safe havens in Ecuador because of Ecuador's inability to control its border and national territory, and in Venezuela, because of difficult terrain and the apparent laissez faire complicity and demonstrated support of Caracas for the FARC. According to the International Crisis Group of Brussels, the weak link in Colombia's security policy was its undefended and open borders.¹² Brazil and Peru made serious efforts to prevent the FARC from using their territories. For example, Peruvian authorities (the National Counter-Terrorism Directorate, or DINCOTE), arrested the seven Peruvian delegates to the Continental Bolivarian Coordinating Congress as terrorists when they reentered Peru. Moreover, Uribe's military has been pursuing an aggressive decapitation strategy against FARC leaders, with increasing success.¹³ The head of the Colombian National Police stated that this was the fifth time that Colombian forces had attempted to strike Reyes, who had moved around to various locations in Ecuador. Colombia's military strategy and its implications for Ecuador should have been well known to Ecuadorean statesmen, as will become clear in succeeding pages.

2. It appears that operational security for the plan to strike the FARC would be compromised if Colombia suspected that the Ecuadorean government was unreliable in maintaining secrecy. "Because we didn't trust Ecuador," said Colombia's Defense Minister, Juan Manuel Santos, when asked by *Semana* magazine why Colombia had not enlisted the support of Ecuador.¹⁴ According to Bogotá's *El Tiempo*, Colombia's intelligence service, the Department of Administrative Security (DAS) had informed Ecuador 16 times and as recently as November 26, 2007, including providing a document with the exact location of 25 FARC "bases" inside Ecuadorean territory. Colombia alerted other governments about FARC activities on their soils: Argentina four times, Bolivia twice, Brazil seven, Peru four, and Venezuela ten. The DAS report stated that 80 percent of the alerts received no response or "evasive" answers.¹⁵ Over the years, the FARC had established a support network within Ecuador, a task made easier by the insecure border and the emergence of a permissive political-intellectual climate for the extreme left.

Given apparent ambivalence, if not sympathy, towards the FARC among members of the Correa government, operational security became paramount in the Colombian decision. Under these circumstances, allowing the FARC and Reyes to escape once again would be an embarrassing setback for Colombia and a continuing menace for Ecuador. On April 13, 2008, the Colombian government issued a communiqué stating that President Correa had prevented (*desautorizado*) the Ecuadorean military from conducting operations against the FARC in Ecuadorean territory, "contradicting Ecuador's contention that it did not know about the presence of the FARC and Raúl Reyes."¹⁶ Ecuador rejected the statement in the face of declining confidence between the two governments.

3. Based on the events of March 1, 2008, the rudimentary system for early warning and crisis management between Colombia and Ecuador showed itself to be ineffective.¹⁷ Colombia violated Ecuadorean air space in its campaign against the FARC during the conduct of *Plan Patriota* in 2006. As a consequence, Ecuador activated its air defense, while the two defense ministers made a joint declaration to improve security and avoid border incidents. Ecuadorean border vigilance may have been inadequate, though the Ecuadorean Army maintained 13 frontier detachments.¹⁸

In January and February 2006, the Ecuadorean military activated the air defense system in an effort to prevent border incursions from Colombia. At the time, Defense Minister Oswaldo Jarrín stated: “The Ecuadorean Army will act in legitimate defense against any element that intends to violate the national sovereignty.”¹⁹ Lack of resources and continued spillover of the Colombian conflict made this difficult. Moreover, corruption, to include the politicization of the armed forces, had weakened the effectiveness of recent Ecuadorean governments. Given weak and potentially penetrated Ecuadorean capabilities, Uribe may have decided to strike soonest before the opportunity disappeared.

It is uncertain what role corruption in high places may have played in the Ecuadorean response, but there were recent intimations of an attempt at vote buying involving a military intelligence officer and a civilian opposition political figure (the Julio Logroño case).²⁰ Earlier, Correa was accused of manipulating promotions among senior admirals of the Ecuadorean Navy. Minister of Defense Wellington Sandoval stated to *El Comercio* on March 30 that coordination between Ecuador’s military intelligence and the police failed in following up on the pro-FARC activities of Ecuadorean Franklin Aisalla.²¹ Sandoval also stated that “we knew that Reyes was in Ecuador frequently.” Sandoval’s comments followed the “unauthorized” release of intelligence about Aisalla to the media, causing Correa to order an investigation of who released it. Correa claimed that Colombia and the media had the information before him, an apparent criticism of the handling of intelligence within his government.

On the surface these apparently byzantine developments in civil-military relations suggest that military intelligence did not have confidence that civilian officials of the government could be trusted with the information, since those same officials might compromise the information to the FARC. Accordingly, a deteriorating security situation on the border paralleled deteriorating confidence in the civil-military relationship at the level of national policy, contributing to failure at border security. In democracy, civil-military relations is the process for developing and implementing military strategy. Dysfunctional civil-military relations can therefore be costly for national defense. It appears that at the decisionmaking level, the Quito government did not have a smoothly functioning working relationship among Correa, his senior advisors, and the military leadership.²² Bolstering this view was the fact that by April 2008, slightly more than a year in power, he had appointed four defense ministers (the first was killed in a helicopter accident), all ill-informed about defense strategy.

At the same time, the Correa government reoriented the military to social and economic development missions and away from national defense, thereby weakening the linkage between defense strategy and military strategy. One wonders if in these circumstances the capture of FARC members (such as Simón Trinidad in January 2004 and others) by Ecuadorean authorities would have been possible under the permissive environment engendered under the Correa government. **This disjunction undermined democracy and security. Bogotá certainly must have been aware of Ecuador’s internal debilities, how these affected coherent strategy, and how the FARC was taking advantage.**

The fluid domestic political context of weak intelligence coordination, poor border control, and the audacity and professionalism of the Colombian attack engendered strategic surprise in an area which for all practical purposes was remote ungoverned territory lacking Ecuadorean state presence and security. It may also have had the psychological impact of humiliating Correa, leading him to act tough abroad in order to be respected at home. A preventive strike could not be expected to be welcomed by Ecuador, as distinguished British strategic analyst Colin S. Gray notes: “A state and society militarily bested in a surprise assault cannot be assumed to be

willing to cooperate with the victorious power of the preventor.”²³ This was not the first time that Colombia had inserted forces in Ecuador, doing so previously in “hot pursuit” of the FARC on various occasions. For example, in January 2006, Colombian planes entered Ecuadorean airspace to pursue a FARC column reputedly containing Raúl Reyes. Uribe declared at the time: “Our Public Force entered Ecuador involuntarily in order to prevent the FARC terrorist group, in violation of Ecuadorean territory, from continuing to launch attacks to kill our soldiers and police . . . in addition to doing damage to our civilian citizens.”²⁴ Ecuador recalled its ambassador to Bogotá for consultations, a serious rebuke in Latin America’s diplomatic culture. In recent years there were numerous violations by Colombian aircraft, so many that Ecuador activated its air defense system and moved a wing of A37 aircraft from the south to Sucumbíos. **Thus, the two countries developed a pattern of responses that served to weaken the trust between them, without developing some institutionalized method for dealing with the incursions and the potential for miscalculation, or worse yet, ceding the initiative to the FARC.**

While Colombia was succeeding in driving the FARC to the southeast (through *Plan Patriota*) decisional elites in Ecuador saw the impact differently, more refugees and more FARC crossing the border, and growing Colombian power against weak Ecuador, rather than the Colombian state asserting control over national territory and building democratic governance and security. The declining trust between the two capitals was also evident in the dispute over the spraying of diluted glyphosate by Colombian aircraft to eliminate coca plantations adjacent to the Ecuadorean border. The dispute culminated in studies and counterstudies, rhetorical threats by Correa to shoot down Colombian (as well as American) aircraft, and the threat to take Colombia to The Hague for damages allegedly caused to the flora, fauna, and human beings in Ecuador, even though the spraying aircraft maintained a 10 kilometer distance from the border.²⁵ After much delay, Quito took its glyphosate case to The Hague on March 28, 2008, ostensibly in retaliation for the March 1 attack. The International Court’s lengthy process may happily offer an opportunity for the issue to cool.

The attack of March 1 humiliated Ecuador because it portrayed Ecuador’s vulnerability to its much stronger neighbor, whose military capabilities had been significantly enhanced by assistance from the United States. Victimization became a common theme in the declarations of Ecuadorean statesmen. The humiliation extended to the officer ranks of the Ecuadorean Army, where commanders were now blamed for failure. Therefore, the Colombian attack had a profound psychological impact on the political balance within Ecuador, one that strengthened the popularity of Correa, and led to soul-searching among the political class and intellectual community about Ecuador’s national defense. The debate over the release of intelligence about FARC-related activities shed light on failures of national security decisionmaking at the highest levels. As Correa ordered an investigation, he played the conspiracy card: “. . . unfortunately, we have a great infiltration of the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] in our (intelligence) services.”²⁶ One wonders whether this astounding statement was designed to shift blame, gain leverage against Ecuadoreans (including members of his government) sympathetic to the FARC, serve as a diversion from the reality of Ecuadorean failure, provide a strategic opportunity to assert greater civilian authority over the military, or all of the above.

Colombia’s Case, Chávez, and Ecuador

Colombia has been assailed for decades by the FARC, who are on the defensive as the result of a vigorous commitment by the government and armed forces to bring peace and democratic governance. Since the administration of Andrés Pastrana in 1998, Colombia has, with U.S. and European economic and military support to *Plan Colombia*, invested heavily in eliminating the

twin scourges of terrorism and narcotics. The Uribe government has achieved great success in reestablishing security. The public security forces (military and police) expanded significantly in size, operational capability, and professionalism, allowing for superior territorial control. By 2007 Colombia had made significant progress in achieving greater security over the national territory, thanks to implementing the plan called *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*. Though the process was far from complete, some 30,000 illegal paramilitary forces accepted demilitarization and demobilization. The FARC was on the defensive. Approximately 10,800 FARC combatants remained in the organization, down from 16,800 in 2002. Security improvements were impressive: 80 percent reduction in kidnappings, 40 percent in homicides; terrorist attacks declined from 1645 in 2002 to 349 in 2007; the murder rate was the lowest in 20 years; and the area of coca cultivation was reduced from 163,289 hectares in 2000 to 77,870 in 2006. Moreover, 2.3 million Colombians rose out of poverty. With this momentum of strategic and operational success, the attack on the Reyes camp was immensely popular in Colombia, even more so when days later another member of the FARC secretariat, Iván Ríos, was killed by his own men because of mounting pressure by the army and because of Ríos's record of executing hundreds of his followers. That pressure would continue to decimate FARC forces into May 2008, forcing the rendition of former Front 49 commander Nelly Avila Moreno (alias Karina), who implored the FARC to stop fighting. The death of long-time leader Manuel Marulanda in March, reportedly as the result of a heart attack, added to the FARC's declining fortunes.

The support of the international community in fighting terrorism is mandated by the United Nations and makes superb sense in Latin America, which has seen its share of terrorism in the last two generations, as well as a massive crime wave not unrelated to narcotics. The FARC are terrorists to the United States, the European Union, and Colombia, but neither the OAS nor most Latin American countries have declared them so. The ambivalence is demonstrated strikingly by the posture of Hugo Chávez, who has imperial ambitions fed by petrodollars at 130 dollars per barrel in mid 2008, while at home he is losing political support because of incompetence, corruption, and dictatorial tendencies. Failure at home did not deter him from declaring a moment of silence for the death of Reyes and earlier had his compliant *chavista* legislature declare the FARC to be liberators. Indeed, for some time Chávez had been campaigning internationally to have the FARC recognized as "belligerents." Captured Reyes computer files (the files survived the attack because they were stored in a steel safe) show that Chávez may have offered to send up to 300 million dollars to the FARC; coordinated diplomatic moves with them; provided guns, rocket propelled grenade launchers, and thousands of rounds of ammunition; as well as sanctuary within Venezuela.²⁷ Colombian Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos asserted: "What they (the computer files) show is that the level of cooperation was much more than we had earlier estimated, we knew there was a level of cooperation, but not as intense, not as close and not as effective as we're now seeing."²⁸ Ironically, some of the money came from American buyers of CITGO gasoline, which is owned by Venezuela. Moreover, administrative shabbiness and corruption last year allowed some 270 tons of cocaine to pass through Venezuela bound for the United States and Europe. In reaction to the Colombian strike, Chávez ordered 10 battalions and tanks to the Colombian border ostensibly to support Ecuador. Few of the units made it to the border because of the deplorable condition of Venezuela's military. Though his order raised the specter of the dogs of war, it was mere rhetoric. Uribe coolly ordered no military response, and instead threatened to haul Chávez to the International Criminal Court for aiding terrorism. Uribe withdrew the threat when the Rio Group consensus declaration was achieved in Santo Domingo.

Colombia and Ecuador historically have been friendly neighbors, offspring of the same Spanish empire that governed the Viceroyalty of New Granada and the Audiencia of Quito for more

than 3 centuries. The western part of their 590 kilometer border is one of the most economically dynamic in the Andes, though Ecuador's side has larger population clusters than Colombia's. The heavily forested eastern end of the border has never been controlled, allowing drug traffickers, criminals, and contrabandists to move freely in crossing the San Miguel and Putumayo rivers. It is classic ungoverned space where criminals exploit the lack of state presence, services, infrastructure, and security.²⁹ The narcotics economy across the river in Colombia provided seductive opportunities for Ecuadorean peasants to make money, allowing easy FARC infiltration of the border populations. The International Crisis Group reported in March 2008 that Ecuador is a transit and storage point for Colombian and Peruvian drugs, for the passage of precursor chemicals, and a money-laundering platform because of the dollarized economy.³⁰

In 2005 the Ecuadorean armed forces found some 25 illegal border crossing points. Ecuadoreans claim, with impeccable logic, that the same 25 illegal crossings should have been known to Colombian authorities. The growth of FARC military capabilities in the last 20 years and the increasing success of the armed forces of Colombia against the FARC, as well as the FARC's war with the paramilitaries, created a spillover of the Colombian conflict into Ecuador. The FARC's 48th front once considered the Putumayo region its citadel. In the meantime, the adjacent departments of Nariño and Putumayo saw a veritable explosion of coca plantings since the 1990s, increasing the competition between the FARC and paramilitary forces, and challenging the Colombian state to reestablish order.

Ecuador's location gives it the misfortune of being a transit country for drugs, dirty money, guns, precursor chemicals, and FARC members. Colombia needs support from Ecuador in controlling these activities, and at some levels cooperation has been very good. For example, Simón Trinidad, the senior FARC leader, was apprehended in Ecuador, later extradited to the United States where he was sentenced to prison for drug trafficking. Given these considerations, Ecuador's unpreparedness for the incident of March 1 was surprising. Its National Security Council (*Consejo de Seguridad Nacional*, or COSENA) should have been cognizant of the possible need to resolve a political-military crisis with Colombia, and developed and rehearsed contingency plans. Given the commitment of Colombian governments to eliminate narcotics and terrorists and given the repeated FARC intrusions, incidents of hot pursuit by the Colombian armed forces, the number of FARC camps destroyed within Ecuador, the level of diplomatic interaction with the United States on Ecuador's regional security, and the intense political-diplomatic-military learning issuing from the 1995 war with Peru, Ecuador's statesmen should have been better prepared for preventing or managing the eventuality of a serious crisis. Some of the blame resides in Correa, whose academic credentials did not prepare him to deal with issues of war and peace at the international level. Apparently, he did not receive (nor requested) a daily information briefing from his military.

Perspectives from Ecuador

Ecuador's dynamic, combative, loquacious, and very nationalistic president, Rafael Correa, is trying to right the ship of a very weak state, a dysfunctional democracy, and sick economy.³¹ He came to office with a strong mandate in the throes of a deep national crisis which saw eight presidents in the previous 10 years. Armed with a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Illinois, a career in university teaching, a tour as Minister of Economics, and imbued with the concept of a social market economy (as opposed to the neoliberal market economy), he claims to be launching a peaceful "citizen's revolution," as he promotes constitutional reform, and some nebulous "socialism of the 21st century."³² To distance himself from the corrupt politics

of the past, he campaigned without the support of a political party, eventually elected by a large majority in late 2007. His presidential style has been called “permanent campaign, permanent confrontation.”³³ The constitutional reform that he pushed will, according to the political scientist Adam Przeworki, establish a “hyper presidency,” “direct democracy,” under “citizen scrutiny.”³⁴ The country faces staggering challenges of social exclusion: 56 percent of the people and 80 percent of the Indians live in poverty.

Ecuador’s former Defense Minister, retired army General Oswaldo Jarrín, eloquently described Ecuador’s internal difficulties in 2004: “High levels of poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion are factors which feed social pressure to obtain more attention to services, opportunities for work and quality of life, and (create) social frustration which delegitimize already weak institutions and accentuate un-governability, instability and violence.”³⁵ Correa speaks Quechua (the most commonly spoken Indian language in the Andes) and is the first Ecuadorean president to publish his speeches in that language in addition to Spanish. The United States quite wisely opted to seek common ground with Correa insofar as possible.

Responding angrily to the March 1 attack, Correa accused Uribe of lying, broke diplomatic relations with Bogotá for violating Ecuador’s sovereignty, and fulminated against the United States and the international media (especially Madrid’s *El País*) for its alleged organized campaign against Ecuador. He even proposed establishing an OAS without the United States, and invited the United States and Spain to send troops to guard the border. Uribe upheld Colombia’s right to self-defense, stating that the FARC had conducted some 40 incursions from Ecuadorean territory in the last 5 years. The northern border had become increasingly hot with incursions by criminal elements from Colombia. For example, in October 2000, a group calling itself the *America Libre Command* (having the modus operandi of the other Colombian terrorist group, the National Liberation Army—ELN) kidnapped seven petroleum workers, killing the American, Ron Sanders. Oswaldo Jarrín reports that an estimated 70 percent of the population of Sucumbíos province conducts commerce with the FARC. To combat the emerging threat, the Ecuadorean government implemented border development programs, later the ambitious *Plan Ecuador*, that would provide alternative economic incentives to the local people.

In March 2000, Ecuador’s COSENA analyzed the emerging situation and *Plan Colombia* and decided to employ preventive diplomacy, “instead of the neorealist confrontational logic, which focuses on solving the problem with force, a control of the situation based on the strategy of influence and the logic of cooperation, within international law and respect for international agreements of which Ecuador is a part.”³⁶ This posture would guide Ecuadorean foreign policy and defense strategy. In the meantime, Ecuador would remain a transit country for guns, dirty money, precursor chemicals, and cocaine, as well as a place where the FARC enjoyed rest and recreation within an increasingly permissive environment that culminated in the Bolivarian Conference. For its part, the United States saw Ecuador as an invaluable ally in the counternarcotics crusade, and an ally in the battle for Colombia. As will be seen later, the rigidities of American law prevented Washington from providing essential security assistance at a critical moment in Ecuador’s developing weakness.

Referring to the bad relationship between the two countries, Colombia’s leading strategic analyst, Alfredo Rangel Suárez, calls it a “dialogue of the deaf,” especially for the last 3 years.³⁷ It is remarkable that two neighboring friendly countries have such profound misunderstandings about each other, especially about the complex nature of Colombia’s conflict that affects Ecuador so deeply, and Colombia’s apparent lack of empathy for Ecuador’s internal troubles. Rangel’s

criticism does not speak well for the academic communities and decisional elites in each country. Eduardo Posada Carbó, one of Colombia's leading historians, admonishes: "We need to know Ecuador better, a task that should be better handled by our universities, think tanks, and the press."³⁸ In fact, the Colombian government needs to make an equally serious effort.

Since 2000 Ecuador has taken the principled position that Colombia's conflict is to be solved by Colombians, that the FARC are irregular forces rather than terrorists. The international law distinction, argues Ecuador, is that to call them terrorists would be intervention in the internal affairs of Colombia. Moreover, to call them terrorists would risk reprisal by the FARC. As noted before, on March 28, Ecuador took Colombia to The Hague, asking for compensation for alleged damages caused by Colombia's aerial spraying of glyphosate to eliminate coca fields adjacent to the Ecuadorean border. Colombia saw this as a denial of its threat assessment. To satisfy Ecuador, Uribe suspended the spraying, ordering that eradication be done manually, only to see coca cultivation multiply near the Ecuadorean border.

Ecuador's position progressively hardened as its internal troubles became more acute, especially after the Lucio Gutiérrez presidency ended in 2004. Accordingly, it seems that the Ecuadorean government has magnified its weakness (it ranked as the eighth most corrupt country in 2007). For example, Quito said even before Correa was elected, that the agreement allowing the United States to use a small section of Eloy Alfaro air base for counternarcotics reconnaissance flights (which helped intercept nearly 208 tons of cocaine in 2007) would not be renewed in 2009. A noisy anti-American base (access to Eloy Alfaro) and anti-*Plan Colombia* coalition, some under the banner of human rights, emerged to challenge Ecuador's international relations. Ecuador's foreign policy has held the strategically innocent view that the U.S.-supported *Plan Colombia* threatens the security of Ecuador. Correa made this remarkably paranoid statement on March 15: ". . . Ecuadoreans shouldn't be surprised that there is a plan to destabilize the government and establish a puppet (*titere*) government which would lend itself to involve the country in the Colombian war and be an associate and an accomplice of the government of Uribe."³⁹

It is not certain whether Correa believes such ultra-nationalistic rhetoric because he has to balance moderate and radical elements within his governing coalition. *Plan Colombia* is designed to promote security, economic development, and justice—achievements which would truly benefit Ecuador. These are precisely symmetrical with the goals of *Plan Ecuador*, an idea that had been gestating in Ecuador since 2000, motivated to some degree by *Plan Colombia*, though the latter has a far more robust defense component than *Plan Ecuador*. Ecuador's unwillingness to understand and publicly recognize the threat to the Colombian state and society is perceived in Bogotá as sympathy for the FARC and alignment with the reckless strategy of Chávez, who champions a paranoid interpretation of *Plan Colombia* for his authoritarian populism and anti-Americanism.

At the same time, Colombia does not recognize, as the influential Alfredo Rangel Suárez admonishes, that Ecuador has made an immense effort to secure its border far beyond what Colombia has done, and this needs recognition on the part of both the United States and Colombia. Colombia has the tough task of securing its five borders: Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil. Historically, much like all of its neighbors, border control was of little urgency in faraway Bogotá. The task is complicated by unforgiving geography, especially on the Venezuelan side, in much of the Amazon Basin, and even on the northwestern border with Panama.

Appearing to weaken Ecuador's pristine defense about the March 1 incident was information found in Reyes's computer: Ecuador's Minister Coordinator of Internal and External Security was negotiating with Reyes. Allegedly, the meeting took place in Venezuela to negotiate the release of hostages, such as the notable Colombian-French citizen, former senator, and candidate for president, Ingrid Betancourt, who would be liberated in a daring rescue in early July. On the face of it, this initiative suggested a complacent, if not complicit, attitude towards the FARC. But the matter was not so simple: Larrea's mission was approved by Correa. A number of foreign leaders, including Chávez, President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, and others have been involved in the same effort. That Larrea has roots as a communist (he has renounced the violent path to power, according to a press interview), therefore potentially sympathetic to the FARC, did not help Ecuador's international credibility, nor his standing within Ecuador's military. Additional information issuing in May from the Reyes computer files indicated that the FARC had sent \$100,000 to the presidential campaign of Correa, which the latter vehemently denied.⁴⁰

Ecuador has asked the United States to support *Plan Ecuador*, and requested and got an extension of trade preferences for its products to enter the United States so that farmers do not plant coca. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been supporting with funds Ecuador's job creation and agricultural programs on the northern border: the Unidad de Desarrollo Norte (Northern Development Unit). By coincidence, President George W. Bush signed the 10-month extension of the Andean trade preferences for Ecuador on February 29, 2008. The United States is also working with the Ecuadorean National Police to strengthen drug law enforcement on the northern border, and to control cargo transiting Ecuador's sea and airports. Similarly, U.S. support goes to the military to provide security on the northern border and to improve communication and cooperation with the police.⁴¹ The logic of the Ecuadorean position seems confounding. A weak country with extensive trade with friendly Colombia cannot have it both ways, seek the support of the United States, appear to loosen its commitment to fight the narcotics traffic by telling the United States to leave Eloy Alfaro, and assume a position of virtual neutrality without strengthening its border security and military capabilities to deter "irregular forces" from using its territory to attack its neighbor. American officials state that access to Eloy Alfaro is a convenience, not a necessity, hard to replace to be sure, but the real issue will be Ecuador's commitment to fight the narcotics traffic beyond 2009. Ecuadorean officials have reassured that their country will cooperate. The contradiction of neutrality is articulated by one of Ecuador's finest scholars, Simón Pachano:

The other task, and the most important, is the country's definition of its position on the Colombian conflict. The recent episodes indicate a strictly reactive character, which expresses the absence of a long range strategy. For many years we have taken refuge in neutrality, without understanding that it is an absurdity in terms of principles and the source of practical problems. All of us who at some moment have supported (neutrality) must recognize the error, for the simple fact that a State (sic) cannot be impartial in the face of an attack by an irregular group against another State which it recognizes as legitimate.⁴²

While not in the same geopolitical league as Ecuador, Switzerland and Sweden combine principle and power by maintaining robust military capabilities to defend their neutrality. To be sure, the Correa government attempted to respond to the vulnerability of the northern border. Its *Plan Ecuador* is intended to improve border security by promoting social and economic development. *Plan Ecuador* is off to a slow start as it employs the military and an inter-ministerial effort in nation-building activities.

Ecuador has done much with limited resources. Foreign Minister María Isabel Salvador and Minister of Government Fernando Bustamante declared at Washington's Inter-American Dialogue on March 18 that Ecuador has an impressive record against narcotics and the FARC, and that, moreover, Ecuador has welcomed some 300,000 Colombian refugees, and in the past asked Colombia to take responsibility for the refugees.⁴³ Ecuador has dismantled 170 FARC camps, destroyed cocaine labs and coca plantings, and supports the OAS and other international efforts to eliminate narcotics. Foreign Minister Salvador noted that Ecuador places 11 percent of its military and police (11,000) on the border with Colombia, while Colombia places a mere 2 percent. In 2006, Ecuador seized 38 metric tons of cocaine, 3,327 people were arrested for drug trafficking, and 114,000 coca plants were destroyed by the police and military. In addition, cooperation for counternarcotics, smuggling, and illegal immigration is very good among the Coast Guards of Colombia, Ecuador, and the United States. This effort merits more recognition than it has received.

The Ecuadorean people are well aware of the price of insecure borders, having ceded considerable territory to Peru and Colombia in the last 2 centuries. In 1941 Ecuador's best troops were kept in Quito while Peruvian troops occupied the southern provinces. Ecuador fought an expensive war in 1995 that led to the final demarcation of the boundary with Peru.⁴⁴ In sum, Ecuador feels victimized at a time of national weakness by the insensitivity of Colombia's power and by the United States which supports it. There is also a tendency to blame American power, simply because it is pervasive and easily available as a target for rhetorical outbursts at no cost. Such recourse has the collateral benefit of fending off the left, at least for a while.

Good Intentions vs. Principled Pragmatism

This incident has enormous significance for peace, security, and development in Latin America and for the United States. States must do more to secure their borders. There ought to be greater awareness about the insidious threat of terrorism and narcotics and their ability to exploit societal and international vulnerabilities, the seams among international law, sovereignty, official corruption, ungoverned space, and weak state capacity, amply demonstrated throughout the Andean and Amazon regions, as well as Central America and the Caribbean, and the tri-border area of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay.

At some point, the conspiratorial and bullying Chávez *imperio* will end because of corruption, administrative incompetence, and the democratic yearnings of the Venezuelan people. Venezuela can then resume its role as constructive member of the international community. Colombia seems to be on its way to peace and security, but needs continued support from its neighbors. In the meantime, a blind anti-American and anti-democratic populist rage, fed by dysfunctional state systems, massive poverty, and social exclusion, is alive across a number of countries, complicating the defense agendas of governments, forcing counterproductive compromises between internal and external domains.⁴⁵ Populist governments tend to be idealists on national defense, relying on diplomacy and "development" to solve conflict, often running away from the deterrent potential of the military instrument, while making deals with the devil and distancing themselves from the United States. Such governments tend to focus the military on internal development programs rather than external defense, precisely Correa's pattern. An astute analyst of contemporary civil-military relations in Latin America adds:

Without an external threat to focus on, civilian politicians in a democracy typically assign defense issues a low priority in favor of economic and political ones that will bring tangible electoral returns. Also, militaries with histories of

political autonomy and intervention are reluctant to share defense information with civilian politicians, let alone educate them about these issues, for fear of generating alternative sources of power that could threaten their corporate interests.⁴⁶

Correa's populist definition of the national defense problem at the border can be gleaned from an interview with Bogotá's *Semana* magazine of April 20, 2008:

Colombia does not take care of its southern border, it's a deliberate strategy to involve us in *Plan Colombia*. A great part of the population, especially in the Amazon, supports the FARC because the Colombian and the Ecuadorean state is (sic) not there and those who provide work to the people (drugs, etc.) are the FARC. How do you stop it? Uribe thinks it's by bombing. Our strategy is human development in the region.⁴⁷

The statement once again misinterpreted *Plan Colombia* and overlooked the fact that the FARC forces peasants into the illegal drugs economy. Moreover, a realistic view would have seen that the Colombia-Ecuador distemper of March 2008 has been brewing for years, because Colombia's neighbors have not secured their borders, and because the FARC would seek refuge in Ecuador and Venezuela if pressure increased in Colombia, and that "human development" is impossible without security.⁴⁸ **The contrasting views on security underscore that the eloquent declarations of the triumph of peace and diplomacy at the OAS and at the Group of Rio Summit and the handshakes between Uribe, Correa, and Chávez are very much part of Latin American strategic culture, but they leave unfinished the tasks of border security and dealing with the insidious penetration of terrorism, drugs, dirty money, contraband, and international organized crime.**

The Latin American states need to find common ground between fundamentally different views on what constitutes terrorism versus legitimate political activity. As Uribe stated at the Group of Rio Summit:

It surprises me that they speak of the violation of the sovereign territory of Ecuador, but not of the violation of the sovereignty of the people of Colombia. . . . To speak of territorial sovereignty you have to speak of the other sovereignty, which is more important than the territorial, which is the right of a people not to be attacked.⁴⁹

Uribe was enunciating a new concept of sovereignty, a concept that has not taken root in the ministries and the intelligentsia of Latin America. Terrorism cannot be liberation or irregular warfare to one legitimate democratic government and crime to another. Governments should defend coherent principles in foreign and defense policies, because they all benefit from international order. They must take seriously the combustible combination of drugs and terrorists, at times supported by extreme leftist social protest groups masquerading as nationalists, human rights movements, and legitimate democratic forces while threatening fundamental security and democracy.⁵⁰

Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, and Venezuela should create effective mechanisms for dealing with border security, international crime, and terrorism. A potentially useful initiative is Brazil's proposal for a South American Defense Council. Defense Minister Nelson Jobim stated in the aftermath of the crisis that its purpose would be to strengthen military

cooperation and to prevent situations like the Colombian-Ecuador incident. Brazil, with some 15,000 kilometers of practically undefended borders with 10 countries, has a lot at stake. Though various countries signed up for the Defense Council at the May 2008 meeting of the presidents of South America in Brasilia, a number of knotty issues must be resolved. What are the threats that would agglutinate the Defense Council? Unless a majority of members recognize terrorism and drug trafficking as the main threats, what other threats would cause common action? Furthermore, are the members willing to invest in organizing and integrating forces, managing intelligence, training, and equipment, and in establishing a political-military command and control system among governments which, in many cases, do not trust each other, especially for ideological reasons? Unless these matters are effectively dealt with, the South American Defense Council might become what one Latin American senior officer termed an opportunity for “diplomatic tourism.”

The regional community has an effective mechanism retrievable from its historical memory: the Military Observer Mission Ecuador/Peru (MOMEPE). MOMEPE is one of the most successful peacekeeping efforts ever undertaken.⁵¹ Constituted by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the United States, it supervised the separation of forces and demilitarization of the zone of conflict after the 1995 war between Ecuador and Peru, and helped establish the conditions for the Peace of Brasilia of 1998, thereby ending a centuries-old conflict. A Brazilian general commanded MOMEPE. A similar arrangement should be possible for the Colombian-Ecuador border, under OAS auspices and perhaps rotating command among Latin American countries, to deal with irregular forces.

The United States: The Price of Noble Intentions

For its part, the United States needs to demonstrate greater sensitivity and respond effectively to the legitimate security needs of regional partners who face a complex blend of threats at the lower end of the conflict spectrum. The United States is the anchor of international order and of regional security architecture that includes Colombia and Ecuador, but American law and competing global priorities prevented Ecuador from receiving military assistance, except for counternarcotics purposes. Accordingly, Ecuador’s current defense vulnerabilities can be partly attributed to the U.S. failure to provide much needed assistance in the form of logistics. In 2006 Ecuador offered to purchase two C130 transport aircraft, boats, troop transports, and equipment for telephone interception from the United States, but was turned down.⁵² An editorial in *Diario Expreso* on July 26, 2006, astutely stated that Ecuador “should not ask for but demand” such support because it would benefit Ecuador, Colombia, and the United States. The equipment would have helped Ecuador respond more quickly to FARC incursions. Later in January 2007, Ecuador would lose two of its functioning helicopters when they collided, killing Defense Minister Guadalupe Larriva, her daughter, and five crew members. On April 17, 2008, Correa, saying that previous governments had “satanized” purchasing equipment for the military, announced the purchase of 24 *Super Tucanos* and radar to help secure the northern border. On May 28, the commander of the army announced that the government would allocate 57 million dollars over 3 years to improve capabilities to patrol the border.

The American contribution to Ecuador’s weakness originates from having to make tough choices about how to apportion its support in the face of competing regional and global priorities. There were also legal impediments from two directions: (1) The American Service Members Protection Act (ASPA) of 2002, followed by the Nethercutt amendment of 2004;⁵³ and (2) The Rome Treaty giving the International Criminal Court, which came into being after the Nuremberg and Tokyo

tribunals after World War II and received new life after the atrocities in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, jurisdiction over persons committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

ASPA excluded foreign military personnel from receiving U.S. military assistance unless the affected country signed a bilateral agreement with the United States, permitted under Article 98 of the Rome Treaty, which would exempt American military personnel from the jurisdiction of the foreign country's court system. Nethercutt went further, prohibiting countries that ratified the Rome Treaty and had not signed an Article 98 agreement from receiving Economic Support Funds, money that went to counterterrorism, peace programs, and anti-drug trafficking. The weak government in Ecuador, feeling pressure from the left and having second thoughts on the rent-free U.S. access agreement to Eloy Alfaro, refused to sign the bilateral agreement, thereby triggering U.S. sanctions. In October 2006, President George W. Bush signed a waiver that excluded 14 countries, 11 in Latin America, including Brazil and Ecuador, from the provisions of Article 98. The Defense Authorization Bill of 2007 rescinded the provisions of ASPA.⁵⁴ But damage favorable to international disorder had been done.⁵⁵ Washington's tied hands not only weakened American influence, it weakened the perilous condition of the Ecuadorean state and its ability to deal with the complex security problems of the 21st century.

The unintended consequences of virtuous intentions were a blow against American interests in Latin America at a notably sensitive period when populist governments of the left needed a foreign antagonist to solidify their domestic political base, for example: the emerging chaotic politics that Correa inherited. The perception that American military personnel have immunity from prosecution for crimes against human rights is difficult to rebut in such circumstances (especially at a time that violations by military personnel at Abu Ghraib and the symbolism of Guantanamo damaged America's moral standing), even if a state has a status of forces agreement with the United States. Colombia, which had such an agreement with the United States dating back to the 1960s, saw the advantage of a new Article 98 based bilateral arrangement and signed one, despite significant political opposition within Colombia.

Such legal impediments hardly make sense when the United States needs Ecuador as a front line state in the battle against narcotics and terrorism. There is a contradiction: the United States needs the FOL at Eloy Alfaro for counternarcotics reconnaissance flights to complement a contribution from Ecuador across the spectrum of counternarcotics and counterterrorism, but is constrained to meet Ecuador's legitimate defense needs. Therefore, to some degree, American reticence in providing military assistance contributed to the FARC's ease in establishing camps in Ecuador. At that critical juncture, the Ecuadorean army lacked logistical and communications capabilities, having only one helicopter to transport troops to the border. Yet, the United States, for good reasons that matured into a close alliance, had to support Colombia in combating terrorism and narcotics. The asymmetry in power that ensued over time between Colombia and Ecuador did not help American credibility in Quito, given that government's stated opposition to *Plan Colombia*, and especially as the coalition of support for Colombia and the United States weakened under the onslaught of populism, an uninformed and idealistic antimilitarism within Ecuadorean academic and intellectual circles, *chavismo*, self-inflicted wounds by U.S. foreign policy, and the insensitivity in Bogotá to Ecuador's internal dysfunctions. Washington is often unaware of the immense power the United States wields, even if our intentions are noble, especially when such power affects small countries such as Ecuador, where programs of security assistance matter greatly. A good dose of principled pragmatism and smart power is in order.

In the short term, the United States can be an indirect catalyst for confidence-building between Colombia and Ecuador. Given the asymmetries in power and Ecuador's sense of victimization, Colombia will have to take the initiative with Ecuador. Both the United States and Colombia can do more to address Ecuador's concerns. The countries of the region must develop a clearer understanding that intrastate conflict, provoked by illegal actors, can escalate to interstate conflict. Countries must be alert with preventive diplomacy and render more effective the existing international agreements, so that international tensions do not become a platform which benefits illegal transnational groups.⁵⁶

A final reflection takes us beyond the Amazon. The events of March 1, 2008, signify that wars without borders are different from the wars of the past. The wars fought by terrorists and irregular forces avoid battles. They target civilians and control territory by fear, hate, corruption, and by population displacement. They are wars without geographic, legal, and moral constraints. The new wars pit the state against criminals, but the state must be the authoritative defender of standards of human decency. Clausewitz was right that war is the continuation of politics (or policy) by other means. However, the politics have changed while the means, particularly the analytical and institutional capacities of governments, have not caught up to that change. Unfortunately, ungoverned space is matched by ungoverned space in the human intellect and in the ministries of government.⁵⁷

APPENDIX

DECLARATION OF THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE RIO GROUP ON THE RECENT EVENTS BETWEEN ECUADOR AND COLOMBIA

The Heads of State and Government of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Policy Coordination-Rio Group meeting on the occasion of the XX Summit Meeting, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, mindful of the situation prevailing between Ecuador and Colombia, have decided to issue the following Declaration:

1. The entire region views as a matter of grave concern the events that occurred on March 1, 2008, when military and police personnel of Colombia entered the territory of Ecuador, in the province of Sucumbíos, without the express consent of the Government of Ecuador, to carry out an operation against the members of an irregular group of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, who were clandestinely encamped on the Ecuadorean side of the border.
2. We denounce the violation of the territorial integrity of Ecuador, and we therefore reaffirm that the territory of a state is inviolable and may not be the object, even temporarily, of military occupation or of other measures of force taken by another State, directly or indirectly, on any grounds.
3. We note, with satisfaction, the full apology that President Alvaro Uribe offered to the Government and people of Ecuador, for the violation on March 1, 2008, of the territory and sovereignty of this sister nation by Colombian security forces.
4. We also acknowledge the pledge by President Alvaro Uribe, on behalf of his country, that these events will not be repeated under any circumstances, in compliance with Articles 19 and 21 of the OAS Charter.

5. We note the President Rafael Correa's decision to receive the documentation offered by President Alvaro Uribe and which would have reached the Government of Ecuador after the events of March 1, so as to enable the Ecuadorean judicial officials to investigate possible violations of national law.

6. We also recall the principles enshrined in international law, of respect of sovereignty, abstention from the threat or use of force, and noninterference in the internal affairs of other states, underscoring that Article 19 of the Charter of the Organization of American States stipulates that:

no State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatsoever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state. The foregoing principle prohibits not only armed force but also any other form of interference or attempted threat against the personality of the State or against its political, economic, and cultural elements.

7. We reiterate our commitment to peaceful coexistence in the region, based on the fundamental precepts of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, as well as the essential purposes of the Rio Group, in particular the peaceful settlement of disputes and its commitment to the preservation of peace and the joint search for conflicts affecting the region.

8. We reiterate our firm commitment to counter threats to the security of all states, arising from the action of irregular groups or criminal organizations, in particular those associated with drug-trafficking activities. Colombia considers these criminal organizations as terrorist.

9. We support the resolution adopted by the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States of March 5, 2008. Likewise, we express our support for the Secretary General as he carries out the responsibilities assigned to him by said resolution, namely, to head a commission that will visit both countries, travel to places that the parties indicate, to submit a report on its observations to the Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and to propose formulas for bringing the two nations closer together.

10. We urge the parties involved to keep respectful channels of communication open and to seek formulas for easing tension.

11. Taking into account the valuable tradition of the Rio Group, as a fundamental mechanism for the promotion of understanding and the search for peace in our region, we express our full support for this effort at rapprochement. In that regard, we offer the Governments of Colombia and Ecuador the good offices of the Group to help bring about a satisfactory conclusion, to which end the Group's Troika will pay heed to the results of the Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, March 7, 2008.

Endnotes

1. Paul W. Drake and Eric Hershberg, eds., *State and Society in Conflict: Comparative Perspectives on Andean Crises*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006.

2. The *Super Tucanos* later became a matter of dispute between Ecuador and Colombia. The Ecuadorean government would sustain that the *Super Tucanos* could not fire precision-guided bombs because they were not configured to do

so, that thus a third country (implying the United States) was involved. American officials denied involvement. The maker, EMBRAER, says that the aircraft can be armed with air-to-ground bombs. The bombs were American made.

3. Details on the aircraft are found in Richard Lugar, "Playing With Fire: Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela," Report to the Members of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, April 28, 2008, p. 26.

4. Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega also blasted away at Colombia. Potential reasons: to support oil bearing Chávez and to gain leverage against Colombia over jurisdiction to Caribbean islands and maritime space.

5. Sibylla Brodzinsky, "Rebel camp remains reflect fierce attack," MiamiHerald.com, March 11, 2008, www.miamiherald.com/558/v-print/story/448770.html.

6. Tupac Amarú terrorists took over the Japanese Embassy and held hostages in Lima, Peru, in 1997. Peruvian commandos rescued the hostages and killed the terrorists.

7. "A puerta cerrada" ("Closed Doors"), Vistazo, March 21, 2008. www.vistazo.com/webpages/imprensa/imprimir.php?edicion=974 &SID=1761.

8. The air base was built by the United States in World War II as part of the hemispheric defense effort. The United States and Ecuador entered into an agreement in 1999 to allow the United States to use the Eloy Alfaro Air Base as a Forward Operating Location for American aircraft to conduct counternarcotics flights to prevent the movement of narcotics from Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia. The information gathered is fused at the Joint Interagency Task Force South at Key West, Florida. At this location, 12 liaison officers, including an Ecuadorean, are involved in the process. Operational upgrades to Eloy Alfaro cost over 70 million dollars. Most of the flights are conducted by civilian crews and are unarmed. The agreement's stated purpose:

. . . intensifying international cooperation for aerial detection, monitoring, tracking and control of illegal narcotics activity, as called for in international and political instruments, such as the Convention of the United Nations of 1988 against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the Action Plan of the Summit of the Americas of 1998; the Hemispheric Anti-Drug Strategy and applicable counter-narcotics bilateral agreements in force . . .

See "Agreement of Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Ecuador Concerning United States Access to and Use of Installations at the Ecuadorian Air Force Base in Manta for Aerial Counter-Narcotics Activities," November 12, 1999.

9. Press coverage included Peruvian, Ecuadorean, and Colombian newspapers: "Por qué se escogió a Ecuador para la cita?" ("Why Was Ecuador Chosen for the Meeting?" elcomercio.com, April 20, 2008, www2.elcomercio.com/imprima.asp?id_noticia=120320&medio=EC; "El misterio de Lucía" ("The Mystery of Lucía"), Semana.com, April 20, 2008, www.semana.com/wf_imprimirArticulo.aspx?IdArt=111118&Ver=Crl.GS68f3VyiF; El Comercio de Lima, "La Coordinadora Bolivariana, el As de las FARC" ("The Bolivarian Coordinator: Ace of the FARC") April 20, 2008, www2.elcomercio.com/imprima.asp?id_noticia=12031&medio=EC.

See also Maite Rico, "Las FARC crean células clandestinas para su expansion internacional" ("The FARC Creates Clandestine Cells for International Expansion"), ELPAIS.com, downloaded May 20, 2008, www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/FARC/crean/celulas/ clandestinas/expansion/1.

10. Sergio Gómez Maseri, "OEA logró un consenso para superar la crisis diplomática entre Colombia y Ecuador" ("The OAS Achieved Consensus to Overcome the Diplomatic Crisis Between Colombia and Ecuador"), El Tiempo, March 18, 2008, www.eltiempo.com/politica/2008-03.

11. Preemptive vs. preventive military measures are often subjective judgments about the imminence of the threat, while precautionary measures are long term. Both require excellent intelligence. A preemptive attack is offensive in nature and designed to neutralize an imminent threat, while the preventive is defensive, allowing more time to take measures. These distinctions are developed by Colin S. Gray, "The Implications of Preemptive and Preventive War Doctrines: A Reconsideration," Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, July 2007.

12. International Crisis Group, "Colombia's Borders: The Weak Link in Uribe's Security Policy," Latin America Report No. 9, September 23, 2004.

13. Juan Forero, "Colombia's Rebels Face Possibility of Implosion," Washington Post, March 22, 2008, p. A22, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/21/AR2008032103536_p.

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Colombia Can Teach Afghanistan (and the United States) How to Win

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On 1 December 2009, Pres. Barack Obama revealed his new strategy for Afghanistan.¹ After adding 30,000 US Soldiers and Marines to the fight in 2010, the president intends to begin withdrawing US forces in July 2011 and turning responsibility for security over to Afghanistan's forces. Mr. Obama's plan calls for Afghanistan's army to be ready for this responsibility in 18 months. Yet, in spite of years of effort, Afghanistan's security forces will struggle to meet this goal. In the recent battle for Marja in Afghanistan's Helmand province, U.S. and British infantry had to lead the assault against the Taliban, a worrisome indicator of the Afghan army's readiness.²

Recent US government reports reached troubling conclusions about Afghanistan's army. For example, 19 percent of the soldiers in the Afghan army quit or desert each year.³ The Afghan army lacks competent leadership at all levels as well as the ability to generate qualified leaders rapidly. Moreover, although the U.S. government spent more than \$5.6 billion in fiscal year 2009 on training and supporting Afghanistan's security forces, the number of Afghan battalions qualified to operate independently actually declined.⁴ In spite of these problems with Afghanistan's existing army, Afghan and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) officials want to accelerate its expansion, from 97,000 troops currently to 171,600 by the end of 2011 and 240,000 within five years.⁵

Ten years ago, Colombia faced a security crisis in many ways worse than the one Afghanistan currently faces. But over the past decade, Colombia has sharply reduced its murder and kidnapping rates, crushed the array of insurgent groups fighting against the government, demobilized the paramilitary groups that arose during the power vacuum of the 1990s, and significantly restored the rule of law and presence of government throughout the country.

Over the past decade, with the assistance of a team of U.S. advisers, Colombia rebuilt its army. In contrast to the current plan for Afghanistan, Colombia focused on quality, not quantity. Its army and other security forces have achieved impressive success against an insurgency in many ways similar to Afghanistan's. Meanwhile, despite the assistance of nearly 100,000 NATO soldiers and many billions of dollars spent on security assistance, the situation in Afghanistan seems to be deteriorating.

Afghan and U.S. officials struggling to build an effective Afghan army can learn from Colombia's success. This article explores the similarities and differences between the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Colombia, examines how Colombia reformed its security forces, and discusses how to apply Colombia's success to Afghanistan.

Similarities and Differences between the Insurgencies in Colombia and Afghanistan

Counterinsurgency forces in Colombia and Afghanistan face several similar challenges. First, rugged terrain in both countries provides locations for insurgents to hide and limits the ground mobility of counterinsurgent forces. Second, insurgents in both Colombia and Afghanistan take advantage of cross-border sanctuaries and have financed their operations with narco-trafficking.

At their worst, the two insurgent forces had similar strengths. At their peak strengths (around 2001), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) insurgent groups could field a combined 21,500 fighters, about 1.9 fighters for every 1,000 military-aged males in Colombia.⁶ The upper estimate of the Taliban's current strength is 17,000, or 2.3 fighters for every 1,000 military-aged males in Afghanistan.⁷

In the mid-to-late 1990s, the rule of law in Colombia was minimal. In 1995 a quarter of Colombia's municipalities had no police.⁸ In the late 1990s, Colombia's annual murder rate was 62 per 100,000—nearly 10 times that of the United States.⁹ The police and court systems were thoroughly corrupt, and paramilitary militias formed in the absence of state authority.¹⁰ Ernesto Samper, president of Colombia from 1994 to 1998, reached office in the employ of Colombia's drug cartels.¹¹ In 2009, as a result of the insurgency, 2,412 Afghan civilians were killed—about 8.5 per 100,000 Afghans.¹² One could argue that in the late 1990s, Colombia's corruption, violence, and government ineffectiveness were worse than Afghanistan's today.

At the end of the 1990s, when Colombia's security situation was at its worst, the Colombian government lost nearly all ability to counter insurgent forces. FARC military units willingly engaged the Colombian army in open conventional combat. In August 1996, a FARC force overran a Colombian army base in the Putumayo district, killing and capturing more than 100 soldiers. In March 1998, FARC fighters annihilated the 52nd Counter-Guerilla Battalion, considered at the time one of the army's elite units.¹³

Obviously, some stark differences exist between Colombia and Afghanistan. Colombia is a wealthier country, providing an indigenous base of income to pay for security forces. As fractured as Colombia was in the late 1990s, it had a history of effective central government. It also had experience with the Western notion of the rule of law. Afghanistan has little or no such history.

More tangibly, although the Colombian government was either ineffective or corrupt in the late 1990s, it at least had the structures of army and police forces in place. In 2002 the rebuilding of the Afghan army started from zero.¹⁴

Finally, the nature of international security assistance to the two countries is different. Colombia has one ally: the United States. America limits its military assistance to no more than 800 trainers, who are prohibited from accompanying Colombian security forces on combat operations. Although the United States' security assistance mission in Colombia is one of its largest, it pales in size compared to the mission in Afghanistan. There, more than 40 countries will provide close to 140,000 soldiers (in 2010), who will execute a variety of military missions.¹⁵ But the most important difference is the Colombian army's focus on quality, the factor that best explains Colombia's success.

How Colombia Fixed Its Army

Reform of Colombia's army began during Andrés Pastrana's term as president (1998–2002) and accelerated during Pres. Álvaro Uribe's tenure (2002–present).¹⁶ Three key reforms converted the Colombian army from an ineffective, garrison-bound band into an aggressive force that has crippled the FARC and ELN.

New Leadership

In 1998, at the urging of US officials, Pastrana replaced the top three leaders in the army with new generals (Fernando Tapias, Jorge Enrique Mora, and Carlos Ospina) who were trained at US military schools and who had extensive combat experience at the battalion and brigade levels.¹⁷ This new trio then replaced their subordinate commanders who lacked aggressiveness in the field. At this time, the Colombian army began to emphasize the selection and training of better-quality noncommissioned officers for the army's combat units.¹⁸ In his book *A Question of Command*, Mark Moyar studies a variety of counterinsurgency campaigns, asserting that leadership quality rather than campaign plans or tactics is the key to success.¹⁹ Colombia's performance against its insurgents bolsters Moyar's argument.

Reorganization

Beginning with the Pastrana administration and extending into Uribe's, Colombia reorganized its army into a mobile and highly skilled professional component; additionally, a draftee component formed for local security.²⁰ Under the tutelage of trainers from US Army special forces, the professional component of the army established numerous air-mobile, ranger, mountain-warfare, counterdrug, and special forces battalions.²¹ These units improved the army's overall effectiveness by specializing in specific tasks. Perhaps as important, Uribe focused the draftee portion of the army on village defense. He created more than 600 home-guard platoons, each composed of about 40 soldiers stationed in their hometowns, to provide basic security and collect intelligence on insurgent activity. These platoons interdicted the movement of insurgent units in the countryside and freed the professional army for offensive operations.²² The Colombian army also increased spending on logistics support and intelligence analysis, activities supported by the US advisory team.²³

Helicopters

Finally, Colombia's army and police expanded their inventory of helicopters from about 20 in 1998 to 255 by late 2008. To overcome Colombia's mountainous and forested terrain, the army needed air mobility. Today, with extensive US support, the Colombian army operates the world's third-largest fleet of UH-60 Blackhawk assault helicopters.²⁴ Colombia's helicopter fleet has made possible the army's offensive doctrine against insurgent support areas.

As a result of these and other reforms, the Colombian army inflicted severe damage on the FARC and ELN. One study estimated that between 2002 and 2008 army attacks cut FARC offensive capabilities by 70 percent. By 2008 FARC military units, which overwhelmed Colombian army battalions in the 1990s, were unable to function in units larger than squad size. Between 2006 and 2008, more than 3,000 FARC fighters deserted the organization. FARC's remaining forces are believed to be scattered, disorganized, and cut off from their top-level leadership, which has fled into exile in Ecuador and Venezuela.²⁵

Colombia's Lessons for Afghanistan

Officials charged with building Afghanistan's army can learn three lessons from Colombia.

Quality Beats Quantity

Afghan and NATO officials seek to increase the size of the Afghan army from about 100,000 troops to nearly a quarter of a million.²⁶ In Colombia, by contrast, a professional army of just 86,000 has crushed a large and stubborn insurgency, essentially pacifying a country almost twice the size of Afghanistan and almost as rugged. Assisted by no more than 800 US trainers (who do not accompany the Colombian army into combat), Colombia has focused on selecting quality leaders, training the noncommissioned officer corps, and developing specialized rather than general-purpose combat units within the professional portion of the army. In Afghanistan the goal is rapid expansion of the army's head count, regardless of whether the necessary leadership structure exists to sustain this increase. As a Soldier who spent his career in special operations, Gen Stanley McChrystal, the top commander in Afghanistan, is no doubt fully aware of the virtues of quality—a fact that makes this rapid growth in head count all the more puzzling. The lesson from Colombia is to freeze the expansion of Afghanistan's national army, emphasize soldier quality and leadership development, and create specialized units for required security tasks.

Home Guard

A current problem with Afghanistan's army (and formerly a problem in Colombia) is the unwillingness of many soldiers to serve far from their home villages and districts. Consequently, the Afghan national army suffers from high absenteeism and desertion.²⁷ As described above, President Uribe created home-guard platoons composed of draftees who serve in their villages and departments. Instead of expanding the size of the Afghan national army, the Afghan government should permit (and fund) district and provincial governors to form such home-guard units for local defense. Wardak Province is experimenting with the somewhat similar Afghan Public Protection Program.²⁸ Furthermore, in Nangarhar Province, the US military is providing assistance directly to a large tribe that has turned against the Taliban.²⁹ The US and Afghan governments should use the results of these experiments to improve and expand locally based units.

Helicopters

Like Colombia, Afghanistan faces the challenge of finding and massing against insurgent forces in difficult terrain. Colombia established a large helicopter force to bring mobility to its highly trained professional army and to evacuate casualties from the battlefield. Instead of raising the Afghan army's head count, US military assistance should emphasize this aspect of combat support.

Lessons for the U.S. Campaign in Afghanistan

The United States could apply Colombia's experience to its campaign in Afghanistan. Most importantly, US military trainers should concentrate on constantly improving the quality, and not the size, of Afghanistan's 97,000-man national army. In addition, the Afghan army's own training and support establishment should bolster the district-level home-guard program rather than support continued expansion of the Afghan National Army. Lastly, the U.S. security assistance program should expand Afghanistan's helicopter program.

Afghan and NATO campaign plans seek rapid expansion of the Afghan army even though Afghanistan lacks effective leaders to staff this increase, the logistics system to support it, or the helicopters to move it effectively through Afghanistan's vast and rugged terrain. A decade

ago, facing similar circumstances, Colombia's leaders, assisted by a small team of US advisers, implemented a different solution that put Colombians in the lead, and, with patience, achieved great success. U.S. and Afghan officials should learn from Colombia as they attempt to build an effective Afghan army.

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Iran & Venezuela: The “Axis of Annoyance”

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In September 2007, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made a highly contentious visit to New York. In addition to addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations, Ahmadinejad’s agenda included Columbia University, where his invitation to give a speech caused a public uproar days just prior to his arrival. Bowing to public pressure, the university’s president, Lee Bollinger, made sure that Ahmadinejad’s reception at Columbia was a chilly one. Bollinger introduced Ahmadinejad, who has previously denied the Holocaust, as a man who appeared to lack “intellectual courage” and might be “astonishingly undereducated.” He went on to tell the Iranian leader that he exhibited “all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator.”¹ On his way home, Ahmadinejad made a stopover in Latin America. His first destination was Caracas, where his friend Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez greeted him like a long-lost brother. Chavez told Ahmadinejad that he had handled the personal criticism heaped upon him at Columbia University “with the greatness of a revolutionary.”²

Such is the nature of the relationship between Venezuela and Iran. The two countries’ self-styled “axis of unity” is more bombastic than substantive. However, the substance is enough to cause concern. Chavez and Ahmadinejad have clearly formed an alliance of convenience based on formulaic anti-Americanism. Their nations are so incompatible that most of their partnering efforts have resulted in unfulfilled promises and empty rhetoric. Unfortunately, their fiery verbal assaults against the “imperialism” of the United States cannot be dismissed so easily. Booming oil prices have left the two leaders quite capable of backing up their hostile words with actions. That is why Cynthia Arnson, of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, has wondered whether the relationship poses a threat to the United States or is merely an “Axis of Annoyance.”³

What Ahmadinejad Wants

The attention that Iran gives Venezuela today is relatively new. While there are a few examples of Iran previously doing business in Latin America, particularly with Cuba and Brazil, the current levels of Iranian involvement are unprecedented. Serious attention started in 2005 with the election of Ahmadinejad, who came into the presidency intent on using a new aggressive foreign policy to counter the U.S. effort to isolate and tarnish Iran’s international reputation. Accordingly, he has been quick to engage the “new leftist” leaders in Latin America as they have turned away from Washington. Ahmadinejad answers to a regime that focuses on securing a dominant role for Iran in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf region. The United States has been the leading power in the Middle East since well before the birth of the Islamic Republic, a state of affairs that has always been unacceptable to the ruling mullahs. Currently, with the United States so heavily involved in countries on either side of Iran, Ahmadinejad sees it in Iran’s best interest to make Washington as nervous as possible about as many issues as possible. That is one reason why Iran meddles in Iraq and Afghanistan by backing Hezbollah, pursuing nuclear weapons, and forming a strong relationship with Venezuela and Latin America. The fact that Chavez hates the United States provides a geopolitical opportunity that Ahmadinejad is ideologically incapable of passing up.

What Chavez Wants

Chavez wants Iran as a partner willing to share the burden of spreading his “Bolivarian” revolution in the region. Chavez has access to tremendous oil wealth, but even with oil at today’s prices, his resources are limited. His regional and global ambitions are becoming more and more expensive. Chavez began his relationship with Iran in 2001 primarily as a means of diversifying Venezuela’s export market. Once Ahmadinejad came to power, he found someone with interests that converged with his own.

Venezuela is too small a stage for Hugo Chavez. He is a megalomaniac who envisions himself to be the leader of a popular uprising against the “imperialism” of the United States. He has inspired a “lurch to the left” in much of Central and South America. Strong Chavez supporters have gained the presidencies of Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Bolivia.⁴ During the Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in 2005, Chavez gave a fiery speech to an audience of 25,000 people demonstrating against both the U.S. Free Trade Area of the Americas proposal and the presence of George Bush.⁵ Chavez whipped the crowd into such a frenzy that the demonstration turned into a violent riot that caused President Bush to cut short his visit to the region.

Chavez is a conniving enemy of those who oppose his anti-American stance. His relationship with Colombia is strained over that nation’s close ties with the United States. Until recently, Chavez was a valuable ally of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which has conducted an insurgency against the Colombian government for four decades. In the past, he has recognized the FARC as a legitimate belligerent force and may have provided it with financial and material support and safe haven. However, he has proven to be a fickle ally. Once some of his covert support to the FARC came to light and Venezuela started receiving some bad press, he was quick to withdraw it. He recently stated that the guerrilla movement was “out of place” in Latin America.⁶

Political Differences

Chavez has likened the Iranian revolution to his Bolivarian revolution. However, other than both countries having overthrown a long established and corrupt order, these two revolutions could not be more dissimilar. The political systems that emerged from each revolution reveal the starkest differences.

Ahmadinejad, who is not a cleric, is not the lone voice in Iranian politics or the final authority on contentious issues. That role belongs to Ayatollah Kahmeni, Iran’s supreme leader. The Iranian system of government requires Ahmadinejad to look “over his shoulder” to make sure he maintains the favor of the ruling mullahs. This political dynamic is the biggest difference between Ahmadinejad and Chavez, who seemingly answers to no one.

Chavez actively courts popular support through referenda to gain unprecedented power in Venezuela. The nation approved a new constitution in 1999 that created the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and allowed the president to run for two terms. Voters later bolstered Chavez’ power by approving two additional branches of government thereby adding to the classic executive, legislative, and judiciary. Chavez’ electoral branch and a “citizens” or “moral” branch afford him the opportunity to pack the government with cronies dedicated to keeping him in control. Such is the extent of his popularity that all of this is legal because Venezuela’s elections are almost universally acknowledged as fair.

Following this formula, Chavez has managed to achieve near autocratic powers in Venezuela. Opposition to him still exists: the electorate rejected his bid for absolute power in a 2007 referendum. However, for the near future the political dynamic in Venezuela will not be one in which Chavez will have to “look over his shoulder” very often for approval of his actions.

Ideological Differences

No matter how close the two leaders say they are, there is a fundamental contradiction in the Iran-Venezuela relationship that one cannot ignore. The axis of unity is an alliance between a leftist, socialist government and a conservative, theocratic one. As far as political ideologies are concerned, these two are like oil and water. This contradiction was evident in September 2007, at a conference organized by Tehran University students attempting to show parallels between Iran’s Islamic Revolution and the Latin American socialist movement. The story of the conference, as reported by Inter Press Service reporter Kimia Sanati, reads like a comedy of errors.

The planned four-day “Che like Chamran” conference became an embarrassment for its organizers just a few hours after it began. As its title implies, the conference intended to promote the similarities between Che Guevara and Mustafa Chamran as two revolutionaries who had fought alongside rebels in other countries.

Guevara, a leader in the Cuban revolution, spent much of the mid-1960s unsuccessfully attempting to incite socialist revolutions in Africa and Central America before being captured and executed in Bolivia in 1967.⁷ His children, Aleida and Camilo, were invited guests at the conference.

Chamran, an American-educated engineer and Islamist, organized and fought alongside the Amal guerrillas in southern Lebanon in the late 1970s. Early in the Iranian revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini appointed Chamran defense minister. He was killed in 1981 while leading Iranian paramilitary forces during the first phases of the Iran-Iraq war.⁸

The conference’s problems started with the first speaker Haj Saeed Ghasemi, who is associated with one of Iran’s many militia organizations. As he held up a translated Che Guevara book he said, “Che was religious and believed in God,” “Fidel and Che were never socialist or communists,” and “the people of Cuba hated the Soviets for all they had done.” He went on to say that “today, communism has been thrown into the trash bin of history as predicted by Ayatollah Khomeini,” and the only way to save the world was through “the religious, pro-justice movement.”⁹ This sort of language may be common in the Islamic republic where socialism is illegal and punishable by death, but including it in an address to an audience that included Che’s children was indelicate to say the least.

Predictably, Aleida was quick to take umbrage. In her own address, she responded to Ghasemi indignantly, advising him to “always refer to original sources instead of translations to find out about Che Guevara’s beliefs.” She spoke “on behalf of the Cuban people . . . who were grateful to the Soviet Union” and stated that her father “never talked about God, never met God, and knew there was no absolute truth.”¹⁰

The conference-turned-fiasco presented a microcosm of the structural flaws in the Iran-Venezuela relationship. The two countries are in an alliance of convenience based on only a few issues. Once either country feels it has gotten all it can out of the relationship, it is likely that political

ideologies and wide cultural gaps will quickly overcome pragmatism, and the ostensibly close friendship will fade away.

Economic Cooperation

So far, Venezuela and Iran have overlooked their political and ideological differences and worked hard to forge genuine economic and diplomatic ties. The two nations have signed an estimated 180 economic and political accords. At one point last year, the Iranian foreign minister estimated these agreements to be worth \$20 billion.¹¹ However, these agreements have proven to be largely symbolic thus far because the two nations have very little to offer each other economically. Both rely on oil exports as their primary means of economic growth, with all other industries paling in comparison to oil production. Neither country has expertise in industries that would complement the other or is capable of competing in global markets without significant government subsidies.

For example, Chavez's first accord with Iran came *before* Ahmadinejad's election. He visited Tehran in 2001 and 2003 to establish a relationship with the Iranian government of Mohammad Khatami, whose election as a "moderate" in 1997 had opened up possibilities for several Latin American countries (including Brazil) to trade with Iran.¹² After an extended courtship, Khatami agreed to a joint venture to produce tractors in Ciudad Bolivar, Venezuela, with Iran owning a 31 percent stake in the "Veniran" factory.¹³ Today, the factory produces 4,000 tractors a year, but the economic value of the tractors to Venezuela is limited to being symbolic "agents of revolutionary change" because they are of such poor quality. The government gives or leases most of them to cooperatives working land that the socialists expropriated from ranchers and sugar plantations, although some have been sent to Bolivia and Nicaragua in support of Chavez's allies.¹⁴

Since Ahmadinejad came to power in 2005, the two nations signed many more accords. These include a \$4 billion Iranian commitment to build platforms for exploration in the Orinoco Delta oil deposits, jointly owned car factories intended to produce two versions of "anti-imperialist" cars, and a host of agreements to cooperate on agricultural and dairy production.¹⁵ Venezuela has reciprocated by providing Iran with refined petroleum products because Iran lacks the capacity to produce enough gasoline for itself.¹⁶

These efforts are primarily symbolic because they have not created significant economic growth. A recent interview with an Iranian manager at the Veniran plant reveals that the true value of the tractors lies in their message to Washington. When first asked about the purpose of the plant, the Iranian manager said, "The idea is to help our brothers develop the land," but when asked if the objective was also to "stick a finger in George Bush's eye," the manager smiled and nodded yes.¹⁷ Investing in a joint auto plant may help the two leaders with their small circle of admirers, but it will have little or no impact on the United States. The production of poor-quality tractors or cars that cannot compete for a share of the world market is not an economic strategy. An economic plan created for its emblematic value may seem feasible as long as oil prices remain high, but the historic fluctuation of oil prices and failure to invest in its existing oil production infrastructure will certainly cause it to fail in the end.

Diplomatic Cooperation

In keeping with both leaders' geopolitical desires, Chavez helped Ahmadinejad bolster relationships with his friends in the new governments of Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador. Ahmadinejad made well-publicized trips to Venezuela in July 2006; Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Ecuador in January 2007; and Venezuela and Bolivia in 2007. During the last trip, Bolivia

and Iran established diplomatic relations and signed agreements for \$100 million in Iranian financing.¹⁸ Iran set up an embassy in Managua and pledged \$350 million to Nicaragua to build a deepwater seaport and to plow a connecting dry canal corridor for pipelines, rails, and highways. Iran opened a trade office in Quito in January 2008.¹⁹

However, there has been little follow-through on this initial flurry of activity. Iranian financing in Bolivia has not yet materialized, and there are rumors that Daniel Ortega put a planned trip to Tehran on indefinite hold because Iran did not come through on the deepwater seaport pledge. Surprisingly, even when oil prices were at an all-time high in the summer of 2008, Iran refused to forgive Nicaragua's \$152 billion debt, despite Ortega's explicit public request to do so.

Iran and Venezuela have consistently supported each other in the United Nations. Iran continues to suffer under UN sanctions because of its nuclear ambitions. In 2006, when the International Atomic Energy Agency put forth a resolution condemning Iran, the countries of Venezuela, Cuba, and Syria opposed it.²⁰ After Ahmadinejad's visit to Nicaragua in early 2007, Daniel Ortega joined this short list of Iran supporters. In turn, Iran supported Venezuela's unsuccessful attempt to gain a seat on the Security Council in 2006. This pattern continued in late 2008, when Iran made its own failed bid for the Asian seat on the Security Council. It is likely that Iran's Latin American friends cast a few of the 32 votes Iran received in the secret ballot.²¹

In keeping with Chavez's desire to find a partner for his ambitious regional projects, and Ahmadinejad's desire to buy friends, the two nations launched a joint bank to fund development activities with each country contributing half of the start-up funds to support projects in "anti-imperialist" countries.²²

Causes for Concern

In March 2007, the two countries inaugurated a weekly flight between Tehran and Caracas with a stop in Damascus, Syria. Rumors are that immigration and screening rules in Caracas are quite lax for the passengers disembarking from this flight. Perhaps as a result, there is growing evidence of a Hezbollah presence in Venezuela.

A wholly owned subsidiary of the Iranian revolution in the 1980s, Hezbollah has grown into a huge political force in Lebanon today. It operates at least semi-autonomously, but the organization still takes marching orders from Iran, a source of much of Hezbollah's financial and military support. The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control has targeted the assets of two Hezbollah supporters living in Venezuela, one of whom was a Venezuelan diplomat.²³

The above information, when combined with Venezuelan actions and rhetoric, paints a disturbing picture of what could be going on covertly in the United States' own hemisphere. In the summer of 2006, Venezuela bought 100,000 AK-47 assault and sniper rifles from Russia. At the same time, Chavez and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed an agreement that licensed the AK-47 for domestic production in Caracas.²⁴ At the time, much of the international concern about the agreement centered on Chavez's support for the FARC, but one can imagine an even more nefarious agenda behind the purchase as well. The rising numbers of Hezbollah Iranians, the increasing number of weapons in the region, and the porous borders in Central America cause some observers to worry about terrorist infiltration.

Threat or Not?

Economic realities for Venezuela probably preclude the emergence of any serious security threats in the near term. Venezuela is heavily dependent on the United States economically, and Chavez has shown that he can be very pragmatic when it comes to protecting the Venezuelan economy. While Chavez has worked with China, Russia, and Iran to diversify his economy, the United States remains Venezuela's largest trading partner by far. The main destination for 53.9 percent of all of Venezuelan exports is the United States. The next highest destination, the Netherlands Antilles, receives only 8.8 percent of Venezuelan exports.²⁵ Venezuela still sells over half of its oil, or more than 1.5 million barrels of oil a day, to the United States. A significant portion of Venezuelan refining capacity is located in the United States, which gets less than 15 percent of its oil from Venezuela. This relationship is not likely to change in the near future. An oil embargo would hurt the U.S., but cripple Venezuela. Chavez's recent turnabout of support for the FARC in Colombia was likely a demonstration of his economic concerns.

There is no information currently available to justify concerns about terrorist activity due to Iran's growing presence in Venezuela. Given its Middle East focus and many opportunities there to cause military trouble for the United States, it is unlikely that Iran would resort to terrorist action from Latin America. Iran's current activities in the region are likely more pragmatic than nefarious. In keeping with Ahmadinejad's aggressive foreign policy, Iran is attempting to modify power relationships, which is normal behavior in the international environment. Ahmadinejad may sound like he is out of control, but Iran's mullahs will most assuredly keep him on a tight rein.

Iran faces a tremendous asymmetry with the United States in virtually every instrument of national power. The Islamic Republic of Iran is attempting to erode some of that imbalance, and Chavez, always looking for the opportunity to annoy the United States, has been more than willing to aid this Iranian effort.

Still, many in the United States argue that when Chavez and Ahmadinejad call each other brother, they are bound to be "up to no good."²⁶ Iran's nuclear pursuits only add fuel to this argument. Chavez mentions nuclear cooperation with Iran often and has supported Iran's pursuit of nuclear power at every opportunity. Ahmadinejad does not often reciprocate this sentiment. Should Iran successfully develop a nuclear weapons capability, it is unclear whether the international community will react with engagement or further isolation. However, they will have to react. Iran will certainly have an increased international standing with nuclear weapons, even if it results in universal condemnation. This new status may not require the support of a socialist with whom the religious tenets of the Islamic Republic are at serious odds.

An Undue Level of Attention

The relationship between Iran and Venezuela is the result of a convergence of unique geopolitical circumstances. Both countries are seeking out all of the allies they can find in order to avoid isolation. Chavez and Ahmadinejad have similar personalities and seem to like each other, have taken advantage of every opportunity to antagonize the United States, and have been successful in doing so primarily because they are unpredictable.

Unfortunately for the two leaders, the foundations of the relationship are flawed. These two nations are based on opposite principles. Venezuela is a leftist nation moving further to the left. Iran is a theocracy and unapologetically conservative. The two countries do not complement

each other economically because both nations rely primarily on oil exports for growth. In their enthusiasm to show the world how much they support each other, Chavez and Ahmadinejad have made promises that they simply cannot keep, a fact that has become apparent with the recent downward turn in oil prices. Finally, Hugo Chavez and his Bolivarian revolution may be around for a long time, but Ahmadinejad will be gone in either one year or five. It is unlikely that the next Iranian President will see the wisdom of Ahmadinejad's Latin American focus.

However, until the relationship changes, the rhetoric and hostility toward the United States is sure to continue. Iran and Venezuela will remain a cause for concern for U.S. security policy makers, and they will continue to draw a level of attention not commensurate with their actual threat. They have indeed earned the moniker "the axis of annoyance."

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The Allure of Quick Victory: Lessons From Peru's Fight Against Sendero Luminoso

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Fourteen years after a powerful rebellion spread fear and destruction throughout the nation of Peru, the commanding general of the Peruvian Army, Otto Guibovich, provided the ominous warning: “If we don’t do something they will grow and we will realize we have our own FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia).”¹ Sendero Luminoso (SL) conducted a violent campaign of rural guerrilla war and urban terrorism from 1980 to 1995; however, its growth and expansion seemed to vanish in an instant with the capture of its leader, Abimael Guzmán. The rapid disintegration of SL was cited as an example of successful counterinsurgency, but now rising casualties and violence caused by the formerly dormant group have called those conclusions into question. While the importance of the capture of SL’s leadership is incontrovertible, recent events indicate that the underlying problems that fueled the Sendero insurgency remain. The Peruvian government must use a combination of enemy- and population-focused strategies to defeat SL and produce lasting stability.²

The Emergence of Sendero Luminoso

The environment that spawned SL is similar to that which produced numerous other insurgencies. Like other nations in Latin America, Peru had acknowledged the need to conduct land reform. In the 1960s, it began an extensive program to redistribute land to peasants from the previous hacienda system.³ The Peruvian highlands, however, did not receive much support from these initiatives. The government largely neglected the Ayacucho Department, which would become the heart of the insurgency. By 1980, the annual per capita income there was as low as \$60, and three of its provinces were among the poorest 15 percent in the nation.⁴ Additionally, Ayacucho contained a majority indigenous population that had never fully integrated with Peru’s coastal regions, and its inhabitants maintained the use of their native Quechuan language. The disconnected, impoverished region suffered under an antiquated social-economic structure and was ripe for revolution.

Revolutionary action sprang from the Communist Party. A splintering of the Communist Party of Peru in the 1960s gave birth to the Communist Party of Peru in the Shining Path of Mariátegui (Sendero Luminoso in Spanish).⁵ Its leader, Abimael Guzmán, was a devout follower of Mao Tse-Tung and his philosophies of guerrilla warfare. Mao’s highly influential book, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, set the tone for the beginnings of SL. Mao advised that “success largely depends upon powerful political leaders who work unceasingly to bring about internal unification.”⁶ Shining Path began this process of unification at the University of Huamanga, in the city of Ayacucho, where Guzmán was a professor. Guzmán and other members of SL were able to dominate the faculty and student organizations of the university during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁷ During this time, they indoctrinated the largely indigenous student body with a Maoist ideology that highlighted the vast disparity of wealth in Peru. In 1974, SL lost control of the university, but it had already succeeded in creating a “revolutionary consciousness” in the population of Ayacucho.⁸ Other Latin American communist movements followed Che Guevara’s foco method and brought their ideologies to rural areas.⁹ Guzmán’s followers were not foreigners or crusading

children from the urban middle class, they were a part of the impoverished rural population already. Sendero Luminoso did not need to build bonds with the population; they were the population.¹⁰

Having created a powerful support base among the people, Guzmán organized them for active insurgency. Mao Tse-Tung devoted a considerable amount of time in his writing to “organization for guerrilla warfare,” and provides explicit instructions to aid “students who have no knowledge of military affairs.”¹¹ Mao provides a description of a highly structured organization with clear command and control mechanisms. Following this example, highly organized Sendero units functioned autonomously at the tactical level. All elements operated under the direction of the “central committee” and Guzmán himself.¹² The intense devotion of its followers and its hierarchical organization enabled Shining Path to launch a devastating campaign of violence and terrorism against the Peruvian government. However, Shining Path’s structure also proved to be a key vulnerability.

Smothering the Shining Path

The Peruvian government was in an outstanding position to defeat an insurgency when SL began to form. While Ayacucho was a poor and neglected region, a large portion of the country had been satisfied with land reforms and changes in the former hacienda system. Additionally, 1980 marked a return to free elections for Peru, which included participation by Marxist political parties.¹³ Under these conditions, Shining Path had difficulty expanding its brand of communist ideology outside of its cultivated support base in Ayacucho.

In the beginning, like many governments facing domestic threats, the Peruvian government failed to recognize the seriousness of the situation and struggled with the challenges of counterinsurgency warfare. After some early setbacks, the Peruvian military initiated a more balanced counterinsurgency approach by integrating lethal military action with population security and development. Sendero aided the new strategy by inflicting intense violence and abuse on many Peruvian villages. The government integrated many villages into a local security program called Rondas Campesinas. Under this system, villagers were armed and given authority to defend their villages from SL influence.¹⁴ At the time of Guzmán’s capture, Sendero was already reeling under the effects of the new strategies. However, instead of attempting to return to the countryside and win back the population, Guzmán shifted his efforts to Peru’s capital city, Lima, to try a shortcut to victory. Guzmán believed that Peru’s government had been sufficiently weakened, and that extensive terrorist attacks would cause a mass exodus of rich and powerful Limeños with their financial resources. This would cause a run on the banks, economic collapse, and a call for foreign intervention. Shining Path could take up the banner of a nationalist movement against foreign intruders and regain widespread popular support.¹⁵

On 12 September 1992, Guzmán was captured along with several other SL leaders in a raid by DINCOTE (Dirección Contra Terrorismo), an elite group of Peruvian national police that had received extensive support and training from the United States.¹⁶ Following his capture, Guzmán made statements in support of a cessation of hostilities with the government. The importance of Guzmán’s capture cannot be overstated. Sendero’s highly structured organization was thrown into chaos. In the 18 months after his arrest, 3,600 Shining Path guerrillas turned themselves in or were captured, and political violence decreased rapidly.¹⁷ Shining Path was reduced to a minor nuisance and was believed to be utterly defeated, until recently.

In the aftermath of Sendero's disintegration, the Peruvian government began to dismantle its intelligence agencies in response to accounts of atrocities by some of their operational units. The Barrios Altos massacre by the Grupo Colina, a group backed by now-jailed Vladimiro Montesinos, former head of SIN (Sistema de Inteligencia Nacional), the Peruvian state intelligence organization, proved to be the most powerful motivation for a weakening of agencies once seen as essential in the fight against SL. In addition, the focus on development in disconnected regions of the country lost urgency with the rapid decline of violence.

Sendero Luminoso's Return

Today, after a period of relative calm, there are concerns about a resurgent SL growing in power and influence in Huallaga and the Valley of the Apurimac and Ene Rivers (Valle de los Rios Apurimac Ene, abbreviated as VRAE). On 9 April 2009, Shining Path guerrillas ambushed two Peruvian army patrols in the VRAE, leaving 15 dead.¹⁸ On the morning of 2 August 2009, a reported group of 50 insurgents attacked a fixed police outpost in San Jose de Secce, leaving three police and two civilians dead.¹⁹ On the afternoon of 2 September 2009, long-range fire brought down a Peruvian helicopter on a mission to evacuate three soldiers wounded during a firefight with SL forces in the VRAE. The crash left two dead and one severely wounded.²⁰ Such attacks indicate a more sophisticated level of operations and are a troubling sign for the region.

Perhaps most disturbing is the change in strategy being employed by SL. Following its collapse in the 1990s, SL conducted a 5-year study of its failure and codified its findings in a 45-page summary that became Sendero's new strategy. Within the document, SL renounces many of its former practices including extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, blackmail, and occupying homes.²¹ Shining Path concluded that violence against the population was the critical failure of the rebellion. It is now reportedly providing potable water, building sports fields, and painting schools to garner popular support.²² Victor Quispe Palomino, the leader of the VRAE elements of SL, stated that SL would not target transnational businesses or nongovernmental organizations but rather only the "armed forces, police, and those that take part in the so-called fight against terrorism and narco-trafficking."²³ Such statements by SL leaders and large-scale attacks on army and police units indicate that the belief that SL had transformed into little more than a security element for cocaine production was incorrect. Shining Path remains a communist insurgent organization and has now adopted a FARC-like strategy in which it uses profits from narco-trafficking to fund purchases of equipment and supplies, pays its fighters, and gains the support of the population.

The reason Shining Path is gaining traction once again in Huallaga and the VRAE is the same reason Guzmán was able to develop the organization in the 1970s. These regions remain disconnected and disenfranchised, making them vulnerable to criminal and insurgent influence. Despite the lessons of the 1980s and 1990s, in Huancavelica, Ayacucho, and Apurimac, the average income remains from 60 to 89 percent below the poverty line.²⁴ Security in the city of Ayacucho has improved, but economic activity remains a challenge due to limited connections with major economic hubs like Pisco, Cuzco, and Lima.²⁵ Roads and infrastructure linking the poor highlands with the more prosperous coast remain in disrepair or are nonexistent. Lima, with its population of more than seven million, continues to dominate the national government's resources and focus.²⁶ The lack of legal economic opportunities has led to continued production of coca. Peru remains the number two producer of cocaine in the world and, according to the United Nations World Drug Report, production has increased for the last four years.²⁷ The explosive combination of poverty, lack of government presence, and coca production makes the region fertile ground for Sendero.

Occurring in parallel with the continued poverty and coca production in the VRAE and Huallaga is the reduction of pressure by security forces. The degradation of the Peruvian intelligence community and lack of attention to the maintenance of military and police units has reduced their ability to destroy the remaining Sendero elements.²⁸ Furthermore, unutilized Rondas Campesinas units are now apathetic to counter Sendero's resurgence. Their leaders worry about the marginalization of Rondas Campesinas, who are not part of the security plan as they were in the 1990s. In addition, the national government has not provided medical benefits and benefits for widows and orphaned children as it promised during the terrorist crisis. Rondas Campesinas commanders decided not to participate in an annual parade in 2009 because they were angry at the way the government treated them and because Shining Path had co-opted some of them. Many of the commanders are coca farmers who joined Rondas Campesinas units due to the violence brought by SL. Now with Sendero's change in strategy, they are less inclined to fight in support of an unappreciative government.²⁹

Currently, SL does not represent a threat to the Peruvian state as it did in the 1990s. However, the Peruvian government is recognizing that SL remains a problem. Following the recent attacks on military and police units, the government has begun increasing troop strength in the regions. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has shown some success with its alternative development program. Between 2002 and 2009, USAID invested more than \$110 million and completed 703 public works projects and 54,976 productive projects. Perhaps the most important aspect of the program is that it uses a multipronged approach to strengthen government, provide infrastructure, increase access to markets, and increase access to health care.³⁰ Peru's Plan VRAE and Plan Huallaga, like USAID, are designed as interagency efforts. It remains to be seen if Peru will be able to manage a relentless pursuit of armed insurgents while extending the benefits of societal inclusion.

Lessons

The story of Peru's fight against SL is significant for the United States in the current "era of persistent conflict."³¹ The Sendero insurgency was and is a symptom of social inequity and lack of opportunity. Peru did not effectively address these underlying conditions after its defeat of Sendero in the 1990s. As the United States withdraws from Iraq and transfers control to Iraqi forces, it must be cognizant of latent dangers. Security gains are not ends in themselves. Depending on the region, underlying conditions for instability could include the lack of freedom of religion, and efficacy economic opportunity, and access to political power. Although the disengagement of foreign troops will remove one irritant, the legitimacy of the elected Iraqi government will be paramount. Equally important will be the final eradication of hard-line Islamists who are similar in many ways to the dedicated Maoists of Sendero.

Iraq shares one additional parallel with Peru: local security forces, the Sons of Iraq, have been critical to achieving security, like Rondas Campesinas. It will be essential for the Iraqi government to follow through on its promises and integrate these forces into government security forces or into civil society.

This same strategy is applicable to Colombia as well. As Colombia consolidates its gains against the FARC, a transition to government services in formerly lawless areas must occur. Colombia, however, may provide a roadmap for post-conflict consolidation. Colombia has developed the Policy for the Consolidation of Democratic Security (Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática).³² The U.S. "Colombian Strategic Development Initiative" supports this policy.³³ Both plans focus on delivering enduring economic opportunity and government

services to formerly lawless or FARC-controlled regions. Both plans shift resources from the primarily security-heavy efforts of the last decade, while maintaining extremely successful and unrelenting intelligence-based targeting of the FARC leadership. With continued U.S. support and Colombian political will, Colombia could prove to be an example of successful government consolidation following an internal conflict.

America's support in Colombia and Iraq will be critical in the success of her allies. Follow-through is essential in the final phases of a government victory. The U.S. should heed the lessons of Peru's long fight against its internal enemies. Peru's success in the 1990s using targeting and a whole-of-government approach has not proven to be permanent. A failure to persist with the benefits of government services and a lack of pressure by security forces has allowed SL to regroup. To achieve a lasting victory, the government must address the social foundations of insurgency, the intransigent insurgent leadership, and the support of the population from which the insurgents obtain their intelligence, anonymity, and logistical support.

Endnotes

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Hezbollah in the Tri-Border Area of South America

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Hezbollah, Lebanon's Iran-sponsored Shi'i Muslim terrorist organization, has established global networks in at least 40 countries. Its growing presence in South America is increasingly troublesome to U.S. policymakers, yet there are few experts on Hezbollah and fewer still on Hezbollah Latino America. Hezbollah's operatives have infiltrated the Western Hemisphere from Canada to Argentina, and its activity is increasing, particularly in the lawless Tri-Border Area (TBA) of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. This research was conducted to expose the actions and objectives of Hezbollah in the TBA. The majority of US officials and operators believe that Hezbollah's terrorist wing is separate from its political wing, but these are misconceptions from people who "mirror-image" the American experience when assessing Hezbollah. Unfamiliarity with the organization makes these assessors vulnerable to its propaganda, which is a severe problem that permeates the US government and its operatives. People who think Hezbollah is or could be compartmentalized or disunited are not familiar with the organization and perceive Hezbollah through the lens of the organization's extensive propaganda effort. Hezbollah has a large operational network in the TBA, which generates funds for the party, but its primary mission is to plan attacks and lie dormant, awaiting instructions to execute operations against Western targets. The following is a look at Hezbollah's modus operandi, an analysis of how operational its networks in the Tri-Border Area are, as well as some possible solutions to this threat. First is an examination of how Hezbollah traditionally operates to establish the context.

Modus Operandi

Hezbollah is a centrally run terrorist organization with a grand strategy. All of its deception, propaganda, and political warfare operations are different tactics used to achieve Hezbollah's political objectives. It is a terrorist organization that repeatedly uses atrocities to further its agenda. Hezbollah's most infamous terrorist attacks are the Beirut bombings of the Marine Barracks and U.S. Embassy in 1983, the kidnapping of U.S. citizens in Lebanon to trade in the Iran-Contra Affair, the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Argentina in 1992, the Argentine Jewish Center bombing in 1994, and the Khobar Towers bombing in 1998. They have conducted many smaller operations, kidnappings, firing rockets blindly into civilian centers, hijackings, and assassinations as well as a plethora of criminal endeavors. Since the early 1990s, Hezbollah has been very concerned with public and international opinion. It has developed a well-oiled propaganda machine which has successfully blurred its image to the outside world. Because Hezbollah conducts propaganda and political warfare so well, using a two-pronged approach of coercion and persuasion, it has solidified much support in Lebanon, and is now vying for global opinion. These misconceptions, however, have severe implications. The world is divided on what the nature of Hezbollah is, which prevents efforts to counter it. Hezbollah must be understood as an organization before attempting to determine what exactly it is doing in the TBA.

Hezbollah has many deception operations aimed at creating a distorted image that confuses onlookers. As a pragmatic terrorist organization, Hezbollah is conscious that many of its actions are condemnable to the international community, if exposed. Hezbollah alleges, however, that it is always the victim. They are just the defender of the Lebanese and Shi'i Muslims. To facilitate support from many opposing factions, Hezbollah co-opts others by addressing the basic human needs of the impoverished or war-torn Lebanese. "Hezbollah has created an impressive social

base by setting up an array of public services, including schools, mosques, clinics, hospitals, community centers, and public assistance facilities... This 'kinder, gentler' side of Hezbollah has been used to bolster the party's membership and to increase popular support."¹ These programs were originally created to consolidate support amongst Lebanese Shi'i, but since have become pluralistic. "Hezbollah boasts that, although its social welfare system was first instigated to cater to the needs of its Shiite brethren, it is also available to the poor of other religious sects."² Now Hezbollah drags these programs all over its media outlets, Al Manar satellite TV,³ Al Nur radio, and multiple websites. These stories are then disseminated by other Arab news sources and their message reaches an exponentially larger audience. Deceiving the world and distancing itself from its attacks, Hezbollah has garnished much support in the international arena as well as some in the United States. When they cannot openly persuade people, they blatantly lie. To achieve its objectives, "the organization employed deceptive practices, applying in the name of proxies not publically linked to Hezbollah."⁴ By using fronts, "some donors are defrauded unwittingly into funding terrorism while others are willing participants in Hezbollah's financing schemes."⁵ Hezbollah is creating sympathetic networks by distorting the world's perception. Nasrallah uses a "double-faced policy... to blur the identity of the organization as a terrorist organization and to emphasize the identity of the organization as a political party inside Lebanon and social party inside Lebanon."⁶ Hezbollah is so efficient at distorting its identity that even though they practically wrote the book on modern terrorism, only five countries—the United States, Israel, Australia, Holland, and Canada—have labeled them a terrorist organization.

To forward its agenda, Hezbollah strives to down play its atrocities to favorably influence public opinion and policymakers. Hezbollah does not even officially claim responsibility for its most infamous attacks, except, presumably, to its sponsor, Iran.⁷ Instead, Hezbollah blames its terrorism on a fictional front called Islamic Jihad⁸ that only exists after an attack.

Islamic Jihad threatened, terrorized (sic), and claimed responsibility for a chain of horrendous attacks. Yet it had no distinct public figures, no one particular leader or chieftain to arrest, no offices, and worse still no specific address against which counter-attacks or retaliations could be launched. Its name was deliberately contrived to by the [Iran's Revolutionary] Guards and their recruits to cast confusion... Lebanon's entity was more of a phantom than a fully fledged organisation (sic). It existed only when it was committing an atrocity against its targets: rather like a phony company which rents office space for a month and then vanishes.⁹

This fictional entity disassociates Hezbollah from its crimes, so they can reap the political benefit from the impact of its attacks, but they cannot be dragged in front of the world and condemned.

Their flag, however, provides clarity. "If we look at the flag of the organization, we can see the global aspiration of the organization."¹⁰ The flag has a fist coming out of the word "Allah," holding an AK-47 assault rifle, higher than the globe, next to it. The words are in green, which symbolizes the green gardens of Paradise which martyrs enter, a common theme in militant Shi'i culture. The words roughly translate to: "the Party of God cannot fail." For all of Hezbollah's deception, its flag, and thus its agenda, has not been moderated at all. Global domination through violent Shi'ism is its highest objective.

Hezbollah may try to camouflage its agenda in the media, but its officials often reiterate it publicly. Conducting operations and waging jihad are the obligatory duties for every Hezbollah member, regardless of position. Everything else Hezbollah does is to streamline its ability

to operate. Policies are coordinated, though its means are very diverse. “The organization’s senior members have clarified more than once that Hezbollah and all of its branches are a single organic unit whose policy and activity are decided by its leadership.”¹¹ In a speech on Al-Manar, Nasrallah said, “the Hezbollah leadership...the organization’s leadership is the resistance’s leadership and it is the one to consider all the information, the resistance’s interest and its operational policy. The brothers in the field are the ones who carry out the policy.”¹² Hezbollah is always operational and to assume the organization is compartmentalized, like U.S. institutions, is to project the American concept of specialized occupations on others who do not have that luxury. Hezbollah’s executive is the Shura Council, with seven Lebanese members and two Iranians.¹³ Decisions are made with the terrorist and military branches sitting alongside the social and political branches. Iran, being the sponsor, has the final say, and the biggest decisions go up to the Iranian President, who cannot act outside the will of their Supreme Leader.¹⁴ The organization usually conceals the depth of Iranian involvement, but not its alliance.

One of the highest virtues for all of Hezbollah’s members is self-sufficiency. Hezbollah launches young, bright operatives into many foreign countries with no money and no assistance. They are expected to establish a network as well as funds to ship back to Lebanon, conduct surveillance, and map out and practice operations which can be launched shortly after the decision is made or accepted.

These operations are not contingencies, but the primary means of increasing Hezbollah’s political capital through international cells. The rough standard of what an international Hezbollah cell consists of:

A local Hezbollah network usually includes the following components: Dawa and recruitment entity, based on religious clerics, Islamic centers, Internet sites, and the broadcasts of Almanar Television; a financing department whose capabilities based on the ability to raise money legally and illegally by using organized crime; and an operational team, dealing with smuggling activists and means of warfare and the assembling of intelligence concerning potential targets.¹⁵

Mohammed Hammoud, Hezbollah’s Charlotte Cell’s founder and leader, was given his mission in Lebanon. “Get inside the United States, exploit its vast wealth and comfortable complacency, and help create a hidden network ready to spring into action when ordered.”¹⁶ This is the standard infiltrator; Hammoud was just 21 years old when he set foot in the U.S. To assume that Hezbollah’s foreign cells are strictly concerned with lucrative business enterprises would be a denial of its history and modus operandi. While many U.S. officials are unfortunately dismissive of the threat, Hezbollah operatives have been arrested for conducting surveillance on U.S. Embassies in Asuncion, Cyprus, Russia, and Spain, as well as surveying U.S. targets in Singapore and Germany. “Hezbollah has the capacity to strike against American interests anywhere at any time of its choosing,” according to a senior FBI official who monitored the terrorist group’s U.S. operations for years.¹⁷ Every Hezbollah cell exists for the purpose of conducting operations. These cells are multifaceted with the goal of compelling international actors to act in Hezbollah and Iran’s interest. The effects of these complex, pre-planned operations need to lie dormant so they can strike at the most effective time to magnify the results.

Hezbollah’s international cells have to create an underlying infrastructure to launch these attacks on short notice. The timing is crucial, and if Hezbollah strikes at a critical moment, then even the global dialogue can change, much less influence the countries that were attacked. Covert cells grant Hezbollah the ability to concisely launch its terrorist attacks. “Hezbollah is a terror

movement that maintains extensive infrastructural, operational, and logistic presence and activity in the international arena. This infrastructure grants it the ability to shorten the time between accepting a decision concerning an activity and its actual performance.”¹⁸ Preparation takes years and costs money and lives to full effect. Timing is essential, giving Hezbollah and Iran’s threats credibility, which is capable of influencing even the most powerful governments. “If you know the history of Hezbollah, you know that it has an established modus operandi... It creates an infrastructure, as it did in Argentina, to support its terrorist attacks. Then it brings in the specialists.”¹⁹ These cells are making money while they wait to strike. Generating income is important for Hezbollah’s foreign cells, but it is a second-tier priority.

To demonstrate the Hezbollah’s emphasis on terrorism and not finance, here is a case that took place in the TBA. TBA is crucial to Hezbollah’s income.²⁰ “The tri-border is especially important to Hezbollah, where the group raises close to \$10,000,000 a year.”²¹ One Hezbollah operative in the TBA, Sobhi Mahmoud Fayad, sent \$50 million to Hezbollah alone.²² Fayad made a fortune for Hezbollah, yet his lucratively did not excuse him from his operational responsibilities. Fayad was arrested for performing surveillance on the U.S. Embassy in Asunción. This shows Hezbollah casually risking an operative, who made quite a significant amount of money for the organization, in operational planning.²³ Jihad is a duty of Hezbollah’s operatives and according to Nasrallah, no one is excused, including its parliamentary representatives. “Hezbollah cells are frequently involved in fundraising activities, even if they are primarily operational cells.”²⁴ Hezbollah’s cells are versatile, though people in those cells may have diversified roles. “[T]he idea that they are coming over here simply to make contacts with a mosque in order to get a few thousand dollars, I think, has been counterproductive to the FBI and intelligence.”²⁵ Improperly assessing the Hezbollah’s intent clouds the knowledge of its severity. It is a mistake that is easily avoided if one just sees its history or tactics.

Concealed operatives grant Hezbollah the ability to properly launch its attacks. In 1999, “a police raid in Paraguay reportedly disrupted plans by Hezbollah and Al Qaeda to make simultaneous bomb attacks on Jewish targets in Buenos Aires, Ciudad del Este, and Ottawa.”²⁶ This multi-pronged operation, coordinated between two terror groups in three countries, shows how the amorphous Hezbollah network is not just in Paraguay for money, or anywhere else for that matter. This is a counter-value strategy where Hezbollah has leverage over U.S. assets abroad. Once Hezbollah is established, the situation becomes much more precarious for U.S. interests.

Operations in the TBA

Hezbollah has taken advantage of the lawless region of the Tri-Border Area. The lack of rule of law makes the TBA a haven for criminal syndicates, and nefarious factions from every continent come and function without restraint. Hezbollah too, exploits the lack of vigilant or concerned law enforcement which permits free trade and fairly free movement across the borders of Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina. At this point, Hezbollah’s fundraising capabilities in the TBA are legendary. Most of these funds are acquired through criminal enterprises. The conditions for fundraising in such a chaotic environment allow Hezbollah to exploit the profits of criminal industries without fear of retribution. “This ideal brew of lucrative corner, lawlessness, and a network of possible recruits has made Ciudad del Este and the tri-border region a breeding ground for Islamist terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas.”²⁷ Hezbollah takes advantage of the anarchic environment, establishing and co-opting many businesses in the area. “These enterprises include, among others, mafia-style shakedowns of local Arab communities, sophisticated import-export scams involving traders from India and Hong Kong, and small-scale Arab businesses that engage in a few thousand dollars worth of business but transfer tens

of thousands of dollars around the globe.”²⁸ Facilitating these criminal enterprises is low-cost bribery. The traditional corruption of South American authorities and officials is unrestrained in the TBA. “Several free-trade Latin American Areas with large Middle Eastern populations allow Islamic terrorist groups, organized crime mafias, and corrupt officials to thrive in a mutually beneficial, symbiotic relationship.”²⁹ South American officials and law enforcement are extremely corrupt at the best of times and the accepted lawlessness of the TBA gives them additional cover. To assist in covering up the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish center in Argentina, Iran “reportedly included the bribing of the then Argentinean President Carlos Menem with a payment of \$10 million dollars to keep Iran’s involvement quiet.”³⁰ When the highest levels of government are susceptible to bribery, those concealed are free to turn profit any way possible.

Part of Hezbollah’s reason for such intense participation in criminal enterprises is not just opportunistic, but to “guarantee the groups’ future independence through diversified funding no matter what happens to Iran. That is, Hezbollah likely wants to ensure that even in the event that Iran were to ever strike a ‘grand bargain’ with the West...the group would continue to be able to exist and function on its own.”³¹ Hezbollah is trying to secure its future and it currently cannot without an external sponsor. It will be rejected in environments with a rule of law and a monopoly of force and go broke. So, Hezbollah engages in illegal and highly unethical activities that are also very profitable in chaotic and dangerous regions like the TBA or West Africa to secure its interests in the event Iran and the West come to terms.

The TBA has become a lucrative location and a safe place for Hezbollah to operate, and now it is being used as a launching pad to acquire South American passports and infiltrate other countries and continents in South and Central America, as well as also to infiltrate the United States. In addition to criminal endeavors, Hezbollah also creates alliances with nefarious organizations. This is not only for illegal trade, but also to disperse its operatives through these networks to establish new cells and exchange ideas and tactics. With the increase of Iranian involvement in South America, Hezbollah has acquired many new partners and is effectively infiltrating the Western Hemisphere. The TBA is far from the only Hezbollah activity in South or Central America, but it should be viewed as a nexus and staging area. There, Hezbollah conducts business, sends operatives out, and pulls partners in. The TBA is where Hezbollah works with the Hong Kong Mafia, Lebanese Mafai,³² the FARC, and Al Qaeda. Hezbollah’s South American networks are expanding and integrating in Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, and Costa Rica.³³ These networks are functioning, as Hezbollah smuggles its terrorists into the United States taking the Mexican drug routes.³⁴

Hezbollah’s growing reach has created additional access to new lucrative criminal endeavors and organizations. This provides additional funding which leads to the expansion of cells into new areas which perpetuate the terrorist organization and its ability to strike and terrorize.

Hezbollah’s infiltration of the TBA has led to its entrenchment in the drug industries of South America. They use drugs not only for funding, but also as a weapon. Hezbollah has used the drug trade in the Middle East to create traitors in Israel as well as deteriorate its forces. Islamists benefit from drugs in a couple of ways. First, profit margins are huge in the illegal drug trade and second, people that use drugs are infidels. Destroying infidels in any fashion is commendable. “‘God turn all infidels into corpses,’ adding, ‘whether it is by opium or by shooting, this is our common goal.’”³⁵ As soon as one takes drugs, he is an infidel. So rather than constricting the movement and drug sources, Islamists streamline the drug trade in a conveniently self-serving fashion that puts a lot of money at their disposal.

The drug industry in the TBA has fostered an alliance between Hezbollah and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia,³⁶ commonly known as the FARC. To capitalize on the drug trade as well as irritate Western security forces, Hezbollah has found common cause with this communist, narco-political organization. “The official intelligence sources say the FARC was in talks with the Iranian-backed terrorist group Hezbollah.”³⁷ Marxist influence unites the two groups which now work on more pragmatic goals. During the Cold War the Soviets flooded the Arab world as well as South America with Marxist propaganda. Its effects last to the present, and Hezbollah is able to connect ideologically on some levels with the popular Leftist movements in South America. Hezbollah divides the world into the “oppressors” and the “oppressed,” and the FARC is a popular Marxist movement, which divides the world the oppressed and oppressors through the guise of class warfare. Hezbollah’s lexicon is “borrowed from Marxism and the Qur’an...infused with a sense of moral dualism and millennialism in its division of mankind into good and evil forces.”³⁸ The United States is viewed as the oppressor to both the FARC and Hezbollah, as they work together exchanging guns and drugs. The logical connection between the FARC and Hezbollah would be Hezbollah sending drugs north to the FARC in exchange for arms. The illegal arms trade is flourishing in the TBA assisted by over 100 illegal airstrips.³⁹ Iran has streamlined this new alliance, building “a large beef processing and refrigeration facility in the heart of the FARC’s demilitarize zone.”⁴⁰ Iran has no business building infrastructure for the FARC, other than to streamline the alliance of their proxy. The coupling of these two brutal organizations provides a sharing of operational knowledge, making the “hybrid narco-terrorist networks that DEA officials describe as ‘meaner and uglier’ than anything law enforcement or militaries have ever faced.”⁴¹ Both organizations run from Argentina to Mexico and into the United States.

Since working with communists, who are doctrinally atheistic, in South America is not an ideological impediment for Hezbollah, neither is working with Muslims from different sects, even if both factions are actively fighting each other in places like Iraq. For all the insurgent-on-insurgent bloodshed and rhetoric in the chaotic areas of the Middle East, in South America, the nuances of Islamic organizations are subdued and much less relevant. Hezbollah and Al Qaeda have worked together at least twice between 1992 and 1994, but lately relations have been quite strained. In Iraq, Al Quds Force⁴² and Hezbollah have been trying to crush the Sunni, Al-Qaeda-affiliated insurgency; the fighting has been brutal, often targeting markets and mosques, peaking in 2007. History and rhetoric do not pose problems for Islamists in South America. There, Islamist groups are assisting each other. “Further collaboration between Hezbollah and Al Qaeda is possible in an area such as the tri-border where Shia-Sunni divisions seem less pronounced, perhaps because such differences are at times muted in an overwhelmingly Catholic region. Argentine intelligence has filmed meetings and monitored communications between Shia and Sunni extremists.”⁴³ Hezbollah and Al Qaeda are not only conducting business, they are training together again, like they did in Libya in the early 1990s. “Organized paramilitary training goes on in the jungles and on remote plantations owned by sympathetic Arabs.”⁴⁴ The training is operational and it seems that mid to lower level Hezbollah operatives have no issue working with Sunni Islamists. It is not like either group issues ID cards; when the violent side of the ideology dominates the Islamic side, then it is easy for these terrorists to blend across amorphous networks.⁴⁵

Hezbollah’s presence and capabilities in the TBA are strong and getting stronger. The organization is now protecting its operations and members with counterintelligence, while infiltrating more operatives into the region. Recently, FBI agents went to the TBA on a covert mission, only informing a select few officials of the host country with little time before arriving. Hezbollah faxed the FBI New York office pictures of their agents de-boarding their plane,

just minutes after it happened. “The implicit message was clear: We know you’re here. We’re watching. It was a classic example of Hezbollah’s superb counterintelligence, another reason why American officials consider the group so dangerous.”⁴⁶ Hezbollah is firmly entrenched in the region. Hezbollah has been funneling operatives to the TBA for over a decade. “Hizballah was bolstering its presence in several regions, including South America. Additionally, the group is believed to have moved entire families from Lebanon to South America to serve as ‘ sleeper cells ’ for future activity.”⁴⁷ For what activity are these families being relocated? “Hezbollah has assets around the world, and it can mobilize them on a moment’s notice.”⁴⁸ Though the U.S. is largely unaware or unconcerned, it is actually a late stage in the game to address the degree in which Hezbollah is operational in the TBA.

Solutions

Hezbollah may be very efficient in the TBA, but recent joint operations of the U.S. with Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay military and paramilitary law enforcement agencies have thwarted several jihadi plots. Most of the details are classified. “The pattern of these foiled plots suggests that TBA-based Hezbollah and/or Al Qaeda operatives will again attempt to carry out simultaneous terrorist attacks against two or more U.S. embassies or consulates in South America.”⁴⁹ The pressure needs to be kept on Hezbollah in order to impede its growing South American networks. First, crime needs to be cracked down on. Hezbollah’s operatives in the TBA are in every criminal enterprise they can vest themselves, from human and drug trafficking, to pirating multimedia on a massive scale. “Counterterrorism is not about defeating terrorism; it is about constricting the operating environment—making it harder for them to do what they want to do at every level. . . It is about making it more difficult for terrorists to conduct their operational, logistical, and financial activities.”⁵⁰ Targeting Hezbollah’s finances is essential, as “money is a terrorist group’s oxygen, attacking terrorist financing is an essential element to combating terrorism.”⁵¹ Neutralizing Hezbollah’s criminal enterprises has the potential to severely cripple the organization, while creating solidarity amongst participating law enforcement entities and granting the U.S. more time to persuade the world that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization and to treat it accordingly. While the international community is disunited on Hezbollah’s terrorist status, it has outlawed the majority of Hezbollah’s financial ventures and can be mobilized to crack down on the drugs and human trafficking and software piracy as well as smaller frauds. Exposing Hezbollah’s links to Al Qaeda and the FARC will generate more international support and further tarnish the organization. Hezbollah’s alliance with a sworn enemy or God-less Marxists contradicts its ideology and these hypocrisies should be exposed and exploited.

When trying to foster support from allies, the U.S. must frame the Hezbollah in the way it shows how it effects our allies’ interests. “So while there is no common understanding between the United States and the United Kingdom on whether or how to engage Hezbollah or even how to classify Hezbollah and its various component parts, there is no ‘gray area’ as to whether drug trafficking is illegal.”⁵² This is the quick path to invigorating our South American allies in the fight against Hezbollah. Brazilians do not have the same view of Islamist terrorism as the United States, because they have never been its victim; but their country is torn apart by drugs. Brazil would be more active in neutralizing Hezbollah’s operatives if the U.S. exposed and assisted in taking out their drug networks. We should utilize the assets of our allies who are capable of doing things we are not. Brazil, like most South American countries, has elite, paramilitary anti-drug units. These paramilitary units are known for being exclusive and lacking corruption since their mission is so severe.

Since we have money and good intelligence, we could constantly tip off these units that are extremely ruthless when dealing with narcotics networks. If the U.S. monitors Hezbollah's drug trafficking, it can pay or assist in paying for these paramilitary operations and assist them in executing their mission more efficiently. Here, we should ironically imitate Iran's approach, by giving funds and arms on a performance-based scale; creating competition amongst these ideologically committed elite units. This would provide a mutual enemy and strengthen solidarity between our two governments, as well as crippling a severe threat to U.S. interests. Most South and Central American countries have these paramilitary units – Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico – and their governments unleash them daily to wage their wars against drugs and all the ills that come with them. Simply assisting with intelligence against Hezbollah's drug networks would allow these energetic, paramilitary squads to accomplish their mission and take the fight to our adversary while distancing ourselves from our actual involvement.

Since Hezbollah is established in the TBA and is using it for a launching pad, the TBA should be where U.S. counterintelligence (CI) operations aimed at Hezbollah should start. The TBA should be used as the staging point for Western security agencies to monitor its operatives as they move out across South and Central America. That way, if a cell is discovered in say Bolivia, the U.S. could say the Bolivians uncovered them, disassociating itself from its moles and CI operations based in the region. Isle Margarita is also a congested traffic point for Hezbollah operatives entering or exiting the TBA, and is also another excellent site established long term CI operations. "Isla Margarita as one of the several strongholds of the Hezbollah infrastructure in Latin America. . . Hezbollah operatives fleeing scrutiny in the Tri-Border Region after the Argentine bombings passed through Margarita Island, where via the Hezbollah network they obtained visas to enter a variety of countries."⁵³ Since the Island is a staging point, operatives there will be more complacent there than when in neutral or enemy territory. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is planning on meeting Brazil's president. The U.S. ought to pressure Brazil to not meet or establish relations with Iran's president. But if the Brazilians are determined, we could try to create a joint operation. The Brazilian security forces currently work with us often, sharing intelligence and running operations. Together, we could allow Iran to establish some networks in Brazil and monitor all of the operatives they import from a position of concealed vigilance. If targets are selected in Brazil, Brazilian forces will neutralize them, masking our CI efforts. If the operatives are targeted in external locations, then the government in those locations could be tipped off and neither Iran nor Hezbollah would know where the source of intelligence came from. If this is done correctly, whether the CI operations are based in the TBA, Brazilian markets, or Isle Margarita, there is the potential for Iran and Hezbollah to 'clean house' and gut its own organization in paranoia. Pablo Escobar killed his loyal lieutenants and drove away his fierce death squads into an alliance with his enemies because of a successful, paranoia-inducing CI operation. The same strategy can be used on Hezbollah in the TBA, or even South America, though the tactics will have to suit the individual situations in each location.

The U.S. should endeavor to drive a wedge between the South American countries that Iran is or has tried to court. There is no ideological, religious, ethnic, or linguistic connection between Iran and South America. Iran should be exposed for trying to start trouble in a region it is not vested in. The U.S. should emphasize the similarities and stress that the U.S. is not going anywhere and Iran's interests in the Western Hemisphere are temporary.⁵⁴ We should also emphasize Iran's willingness to sacrifice its allies, like they did by instigating the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war in Lebanon. The U.S. should expose CITGO's money trail, putting all funds in Hugo Chavez' coffers. CITGO must be banned in America because it is proactively funding our enemies; this can be done by exposing the money trail and using the pretext for shutting down businesses and

charities that fund terrorist groups. Venezuela is assisting Iran and Hezbollah in South America, and a properly executed public relations policy could cripple the Venezuelan economy and foster unrest there as well as in Iran, as well as reduce Hezbollah's financial and political support. It would be simply consist of informing the public without risk to any American lives.

Hezbollah is a brutal terrorist organization and it is flourishing in the Tri-Border Area. It is not only a severe threat to U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere, it is also Iran's insurance policy for retaliation, or threat of retaliation, at least until Iran's nuclear weapon is developed.

Hezbollah must be taken seriously. It has to be seen as a multi-faceted, organization that adheres to the fatalistic culture of militant Shi'ism with a comprehensive strategy. Hezbollah needs to be rolled back wherever it is discovered, if not for national interests, then for transcending ethical ones. They are a narco-terrorist organization that engages in human trafficking for money on the side, it is an organization that needs to be isolated and neutralized, wherever it is found. The logic of engaging Hezbollah for ethical reasons, like its atrocious business practices of human and drug trafficking, can draw in allies who would otherwise not assist, to join us in the fight against Hezbollah's terrorism. Let us not forget that Hezbollah's financial endeavors are to assist its terrorist operations. To view Hezbollah's cells as compartmentalized is delusional optimism. To sum up, "security services should avoid looking for cells that are strictly engaged in fundraising, logistical support, or terrorist operations... 'Hezbollah cells are always a bit operational.'"⁵⁵ By Hezbollah's own decrees, no one is free of his jihadist responsibility, regardless of his position or location. Look at its flag once more. There is no fist holding money or conducting public diplomacy for a better tomorrow.

Research

This is a little examined topic with no academic experts. There are a couple of scholars who are Hezbollah experts, but none specialize in Hezbollah's actions in South America. That being said, sources covering Hezbollah in the Tri-Border Area (hereafter TBA) are scarce and usually vague. As a result of limited secondary sources at my disposal, I was required to conduct extensive research, including a broad range of interviews. I interviewed: Dr. Dan Fisk, former Senior Director of the Western Hemisphere on the National Security Council; Dr. John Tsagronis, former Senior Director of the Implementation on the National Security Council; L.D., a Lebanese-American Professor who strongly sympathizes with Hezbollah; K.N., an American covert operator for the Department of Defense who just returned from the TBA; and, Dr. Efraim Inbar, an Israeli professor and Director of the Besa Center for Strategic Studies. I also attended a Congressional Session, watched one documentary and read more than 2,000 pages of books and articles. Since no one focuses solely on this topic, research usually consisted of wading through readings for a snippet here or there. The officials and people I interviewed knew almost nothing, except K.N. who could not tell me much since it is nearly all classified. L.L. was trying to assess me, and I believe she wants more information on me. She aggressively insisted she receive a copy of this paper, which she will most assuredly not be getting. A couple of my sources have a comprehensive understanding of Hezbollah as an organization and then address its actions in South America. Specifically, I am referring to Dr. Matthew C. Levitt and Dr. Eitan Azani. I hope this research provides insight and clarity of a covert organization and its actions in poorly scrutinized region.

Endnotes

1. Avi Jorisch, *Beacon of Hatred: Inside Hizballah's Al-Manar Television* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy. 2004), 11.
2. Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah, Born with a Vengeance* (New York Columbia University Press. 1997), 148.
3. Al Manar is run and funded by Hezbollah; it is their official news station and openly acknowledges its mission is disseminating propaganda.
4. Matthew Levitt, "Shutting Hizballah's 'Construction Jihad,'" Policy Watch/Peace Watch (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. 20 February 2007).
5. Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God," Op-Eds & Articles. (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute For Near East Policy. February 2005).
6. Franck C. Urbancic, "Hezbollah's Global Reach," Hearing of the House Committee on International Relations–Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, September 2006.
7. To include but not limited to: the Beirut Marine Barracks and Embassy Bombings of 1983, the Argentinean bombings of Israeli Embassy in 1992 and the AMIA Jewish center in 1994, the Saudi Arabian Khobar Towers bombing in 1996, etc. Iran is renowned for distributing funds amongst its terrorist proxies based on the effectiveness of their attacks.
8. Not to be confused with Palestinian Islamic Jihad or Egyptian Islamic Jihad.
9. Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, p. 113.
10. Eitan Azani, "Hezbollah's Global Reach."
11. Azani, "Hezbollah's Global Reach."
12. Hassan Nasrallah, *Al-Majla* 24/03/02.
13. Azani, "Hezbollah's Global Reach."
14. Technically, that makes Iran's Supreme Leader Hezbollah's top authority, though he is not often called upon.
15. Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan. 2009), 204.
16. Tom Diaz and Barbara Newman, *Lightning Out of Lebanon* (New York: Presidio Press, 2005), 13.
17. Diaz, *Lightning Out of Lebanon*, 69.
18. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God*, 202.
19. Diaz, *Lightning Out of Lebanon*, 188.
20. To provide a frame of reference, Iran pays Hezbollah a reported \$100 million, but a suspected \$200 million, annually.
21. Matthew Levitt, "Financing Terror Through Criminal Enterprise," (Herzilya: ICT. 25 May, 2005), testimony.
22. Levitt, "Hezbollah, Financing Terror Through Criminal Enterprise."
23. Fayad would have better served Hezbollah if he kept generating funds. Allowing his sub-standard surveillance skills to risk his financial empire was folly, different operatives would be more effective if they stuck to their specialties; but this is a very American perspective.
24. Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah, A Case Study of Global Reach," Special Events (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. 08 September 2003).
25. Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, "Hezbollah's Global Reach."
26. Diaz, *Lightning Out of Lebanon*, 204.
27. Pablo Gato Robert Windrem, "Hezbollah builds a Western base: From inside South America's Tri-border area, Iran-linked militia targets U.S." (Americas, MSNBC. 09 May 2007).
28. Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God."

29. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, July 2003), 4.
30. Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party God."
31. Ibid.
32. It is hard to discern the Lebanese Mafia from Hezbollah in South America. If they are not synonymous, then they work in close tandem in the TBA.
33. Federal Research Division, *Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area*.
34. Sara A. Carter, "Exclusive: Hezbollah uses Mexican drug routes into U.S.," *Washington Times*, 27 March, 2009.
35. Matthew Levitt and Michael Jacobson, "Drug Wars," Op-Eds & Articles, (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 27 January 2009).
36. Translates to: "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia."
37. Caracas, Gringo, "FARC-Hezbollah and Hugo Chavez," 23 March, 2009. <http://caracasgringo.wordpress.com/2009/09/23/farc-hezbollah-and-hugo-chavez/>. [Accessed October 2009].
38. Saad-Ghorayeb, Amal, *Hizballah: Politics and Religion* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 17.
39. Mark S. Steinitz, "Middle East Terrorist Activity in Latin America" (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2003.) 8.
40. Ibid, 12.
41. Levitt Jacobson, "Drug Wars."
42. Al Quds Force is a special unit in Iran's military that specializes in making terrorist proxies.
43. Steinitz, "Middle East Terrorist Activity," 15.
44. Diaz, *Lightning Out of Lebanon*, 110.
45. Allegedly, Hezbollah has been worried recently about not being violent enough, and that violence-drawn Arab fighters will be more keen to join action-oriented groups like Al Qaeda.
46. Diaz, *Lightning Out of Lebanon*, 94.
47. Daniel Pipes, "Terror Alliance Has U.S. Worried," *Washington Post*, June 30, 2002.
48. Urbancic, "Hezbollah's Global Reach," 23.
49. Federal Research Division, *Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area*, 2.
50. Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God."
51. Urbancic, "Hezbollah's Global Reach."
52. Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah: Narco-Islamism," Op-Eds & Articles. (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 22 March 2009).
53. Diaz, *Lightning Out of Lebanon*, 14.
54. Congressman Brad Sherman, "Iran in South America," Hearing of the Subcommittee on Terrorism—Subcommittee on the Middle East—Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, 27 October 2009.
55. Levitt, "Hezbollah, A Case Study of Global Reach."

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