COLOMBIA AND THE UNITED STATES – THE PARTNERSHIP: BUT WHAT IS THE ENDGAME?

Ambassador Myles R. R. Frechette

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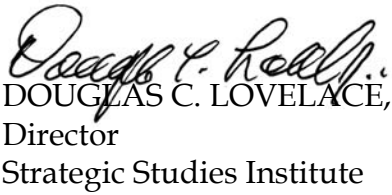
FOREWORD

The American-Colombian strategic partnership has made significant progress since the inception of Plan Colombia. The United States has provided a considerable amount of economic, police, judicial, and military assistance. But much work looms ahead to eliminate the threats to state authority—the terrorism and the drug trafficking that nurture so much violence and corruption. Drug production and trafficking continue as the producers have learned how to outwit government counternarcotics efforts.

In the past decade, the Strategic Studies Institute has published extensively on the Colombian conflict and American strategy. In this Letort Paper, Myles R. R. Frechette, American Ambassador to Colombia, 1994-97, provides authoritative, eloquent, and impassioned perspectives on both the achievements and failures of American and Colombian efforts. He argues that American policy made analytical errors that need to be rectified; for example, underestimating the long-term complexity and interrelated nature of the problem, while both nations overestimated the amount of support that Colombia would receive from the international community. Moreover, nation-building and the rule of law are strategic imperatives which American policy must take seriously. Finally, it is critical to appreciate that Colombian cultural characteristics sharply influence what Colombians will do on their own behalf.

This is a timely contribution to the dialogue on Colombian strategy. Ambassador Frechette asks difficult questions and provides thoughtful recommendations for the elusive endgame in a conflict of long dura-

tion. I therefore commend to you the Ambassador's *Colombia and the United States – The Partnership: But What Is the Endgame?*



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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

MYLES R. R. FRECHETTE is a former U.S. Ambassador to Colombia (1994-97), a former U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon (1983-87), and served as the Special Coordinator for the Santiago (Chile) Summit of the Americas (1997-98). He is presently focused on international trade and business issues and has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Americas Society and Council of the Americas, as well as Executive Director of the North American-Peruvian Business Council. He joined the Foreign Service in 1963 and, in addition to his two ambassadorial assignments, he served in various posts in Honduras, Chad, Brazil, and Venezuela. Ambassador Frechette was also Director of Policy Planning, Coordination, and Press in the Department of State's Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, and Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. He is the recipient of several U.S. and foreign awards, and has written a number of articles and columns on the U.S.-Colombian relationship and on multilateral strategies for Latin America. Ambassador Frechette received his B.A. from the University of British Colombia and his M.A. from the University of California at Los Angeles.

SUMMARY

The United States and Colombia have cooperated to reduce narcotics smuggling for 30 years, with the U.S. Government's attitude toward Colombia being based on its partner's degree of counternarcotics cooperation. In the mid-1990s, members of the U.S. administration and Congress called Colombia a "failed state." In the late 1990s, as counternarcotics cooperation increased, Colombia was called Latin America's "oldest democracy." Today, Colombia is a U.S. ally, and the United States is strengthening democracy there as part of a worldwide strategy. But after 30 years, there is no endgame.

U.S. policy requires more creativity and greater focus. It needs clearly defined benchmarks and attainable mutual objectives. This monograph discusses how to give assistance realistically, with accountability, and better prospects for success.

COLOMBIA AND THE UNITED STATES – THE PARTNERSHIP: BUT WHAT IS THE ENDGAME?

Milestones in the Partnership.

The U.S.-Colombia partnership began 30 years ago. In 1972 President Nixon coined the phrase "war on drugs" to oppose the legalization of marijuana. President Reagan amplified the "war" in 1982. U.S. efforts then consisted primarily of police repression at home and interdiction of illegal drugs from producing countries. Throughout those 30 years, politicians in successive administrations and in the Congress have overpromised results.[1]

In the 1970s, illegal shipments from Colombia to the United States were overwhelmingly marijuana, a signature drug of America's counterculture. The entrepreneurial traits of the Colombia narcotraffickers quickly led them from using small boats to using small aircraft which either dropped their loads on land or in offshore waters where boats from the United States could pick them up. In time, and despite concerns about becoming involved in law enforcement, the U.S. military assumed the task of intercepting these small aircraft and boats.[2]

In the 1980s, Colombian smugglers realized the greater profitability of cocaine. It was much lighter, smaller in volume, and it had a much higher street value than marijuana. In the late 1980s, experts from Southeast Asia taught Colombians how to cultivate the opium poppy, and Colombia also began to supply heroin to the U.S. market. Colombians controlled drug dealer networks along the U.S. eastern seaboard. In the

1990s, profits were so great that smugglers in Colombia used submarines of their own manufacture, expensive fast motorboats, ships of all sizes with elaborate built-in hiding spaces, and even medium-sized passenger jets which they discarded in Mexico after one drug delivery.[3]

Colombia is a highly stratified society; wealth and land are distributed very unequally. If you are born poor, you are likely to die poor. It is not surprising that, despite the risks, crime continues to attract many Colombians as a way to escape poverty. In the mid- and late-1980s, drug profits paid for grotesque conspicuous consumption and even some gain in social acceptance. Pablo Escobar came from the Medellin slums and morphed from being a teenage thug and grave robber who stole gold teeth from cadavers to heading the powerful and successful Medellin cartel. He became famous for giving money to the poor and to the Catholic Church, as well as for his lavish lifestyle. His huge country estate boasted garish living quarters, a landing strip, several aircraft, and a private zoo. He even was elected to Colombia's congress as an alternate member, even though Colombians knew he was a drug lord.[4]

In another example of excessive lifestyle, one of the Cali cartel kingpins, "Chepe" Santacruz Londono, was refused membership in an exclusive social club in Cali. He was so incensed that he built a replica of the club building to use as a residence. Narcotraffickers established front businesses, including pharmaceutical chains. They also infiltrated popular businesses such as soccer clubs and beauty pageants. Some Colombian businessmen publicly argued that drugs were a commodity like any other and criticized the United States for interfering with trade and the laws of supply

and demand. Drug smuggling was so profitable that the Cali cartel cooperated with the Colombian government in the early 1990s to destroy its competitor, the Medellin cartel. Since the capture or surrender of the Cali cartel kingpins in 1995, the drug trade has splintered; there are now many more and smaller organizations involved, making them harder to destroy. Worse, since the mid-1990s, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and *Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional* (ELN) guerrillas, as well as paramilitary groups, adopted narcotrafficking themselves, becoming stronger financially and independent of outside support.[5]

In early 1990 President George H. W. Bush participated in the first Andean Drug Summit in Cartagena, Colombia, along with the Presidents of Bolivia, Colombia, and Ecuador. The "Declaration of Cartagena" committed the participants to "implement or strengthen a comprehensive, intensified anti-narcotics program" focusing on "demand reduction, consumption, and supply" to include understandings on economic cooperation, alternative development, and the encouragement of trade and investment. Hidden behind the rhetoric, there was also a blame game. The Andeans believed that their citizens would not have produced illegal drugs if there were no demand for them in the United States. They resented that the United States seemed to blame them.[6]

On February 27, 1992, President George H. W. Bush hosted the San Antonio Drug Summit meeting with the Presidents of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru, and the Foreign Minister of Venezuela. This meeting was a reaffirmation of the comprehensive and multilateral strategy laid out at Cartagena 2 years before. This time, however, the declaration recognized that these "anti-drug efforts must be conducted on

the basis of the principle of shared responsibility and in a balanced manner." The "principle" was that the supplier society and the consumer society share responsibility for a problem that hurts their citizens, their societies, and their economies.[7]

On February 20, 1992, 6 days before the San Antonio Summit, two Assistant Secretaries of State and the Commander in Chief of Southern Command testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Relations about the U.S. Andean drug strategy and revealed some of the same interagency differences we have today. In 1992, our Andean strategy, in effect since 1989, was a $2.2 billion dollar plan for military, economic, and law enforcement assistance, designed to show results in 5 years. The two Assistant Secretaries of State stressed that the struggle would take many years and require patience. The Southern Command Commander testified that victory over the narcotraffickers was possible "in this decade."[8]

President George W. Bush is the first Republican president to increase resources for treatment and education against illicit drug use. In his first administration, funding for demand reduction increased markedly. By 2006, however, federal funding for demand reduction had shrunk because it generated controversy and because of budget cuts.[9]

From the beginning, Congress has encouraged an aggressive "war on drugs" by passing legislation designed to persuade other countries to cooperate with the United States. This emphasis has been driven partly by ideology, and partly by the fact that members of Congress are very aware of the damage drug trafficking and drug abuse cause their constituents. In the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, Congress established

an annual "certification" process mandating the U.S. Government to judge whether countries were "fully cooperating" against narcotrafficking with the United States, or taking unilateral steps to comply with the 1988 United Nations (UN) Narcotics Convention. If decertified, a country could lose almost all of its U.S. assistance. The law was passed, even though the Executive Branch warned that sanctions measuring only one aspect of a country's relationship to the United States could be counterproductive. Congress, however, believed the law was necessary because, in its view, the Department of State was too concerned with the totality of U.S. interests in other countries to pressure them enough to cooperate effectively in the area of narcotics control.[10]

One of the quirks of the U.S. Legislative-Executive relationship concerning the counternarcotics struggle is that because many in the Executive Branch rotate assignments every few years, the Executive Branch loses institutional memory about it. In Congress, on the other hand, staff members often work on narcotrafficking issues for many years. However, for congressional staffers, ideology and politics often trump accumulated wisdom.[11]

In 1996 the United States decertified Colombia for the weak cooperation of the Samper Administration in the war on drugs. It did not decertify Mexico, although that country's cooperation was objectively less than Colombia's. The decertification spurred a burst of Colombian cooperation in 1996 and early 1997 that included a number of laws and a maritime shipboarding agreement to squeeze narcotraffickers more. Despite this jump in cooperation, the United States again decertified Colombia in 1997, even though Colombian cooperation again was superior to Mexico's.

This unfair treatment, because the United States had greater interests at stake in Mexico, discouraged those Colombian officials who had cooperated with the United States against narcotrafficking.

Faced with increased resistance by countries offended by unilateral U.S. judgments, the Congress modified the law in Fiscal Year 2002 to change "certification" into reporting which countries "failed demonstrably" in the prior year to fulfill their obligations under international counternarcotics agreements. In addition, to eliminate resentment of U.S. unilateral judgments, the Organization of American States' (OAS) drug commission, Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), began peer reviews of progress against narcotrafficking by all 34 member countries.

Culture Matters.

Cultural differences between the United States and Colombia can hinder cooperation. Violence and accommodation coexist in Colombia. Savagery visited on Colombians by ordinary criminals, the guerrillas, and paramilitary bands over the last 40 years is symptomatic. The various attempts to demobilize guerrilla groups and negotiate with them illustrate Colombians' desire for accommodation. That willingness to accommodate is admirable; it also helps explain why Colombia has so many unresolved problems. Colombian elites too often have avoided hard choices. Colombians also tolerate long drawn-out processes that do not necessarily solve problems, whereas Americans tend to be intolerant of process. Americans want results.[12]

Since independence, Colombian elites have believed in a small, and therefore weak, military. Colombians credit this attitude for Colombia's tradition of civilian

governance interrupted by only two short military dictatorships. But because spending for security historically has been low, the state is weak. This issue has been debated many times. The result always has been to choose an easy way out rather than to solve the problem.[13] Colombia faces such a funding problem in 2006. Will the Colombian government kick the can down the road again?

There is resentment toward the United States in Colombia. First, many Colombians consider U.S. counterdrug policy hypocritical and ideologically driven. A sense pervades that the United States expects more of Colombia than it expects of itself. Second, although some leaders and elites understand that drug trafficking has done great damage to Colombia's society and economy, many Colombians still believe that drugs are just a commodity and should be decriminalized. The media and others frequently suggest such a course. Third, Colombians believe U.S. counterdrug policy in their country has failed. The media gleefully reports on shortcomings in U.S. counterdrug results, and opinion pieces in the press suggest the United States adopt a different policy. Finally, while many Colombians happily accept U.S. assistance, they reject the pressure that comes with it. President Uribe is no exception. In December 2005, he publicly admonished the American Ambassador for public comments about paramilitary interference in Colombia's congressional elections. The Presidential communiqué said the United States should not use its bilateral assistance to pressure Colombia.[14]

Colombia is an inward looking, conservative society that occasionally has difficulty perceiving itself the way the international community does. At times, it takes concerted pressure from outside Colombia to stimulate change. Three examples follow:

- Colombian leaders did not understand the economic damage that narcotrafficking does to the Colombian economy until 1988. President Pastrana was the first Colombian president to accept that cooperating with the United States against drug smuggling was the only effective way to help Colombia's economy grow. President Uribe was the second.
- For years Colombian leaders refused to believe that the international community, including the United States, took human rights violations seriously. As a result, U.S. military aid was cut off for several years in the early 1990s. When military aid was restored with Plan Colombia, the pressure of human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the conditionality placed by Congress on U.S. military assistance for Plan Colombia, and constant reminders by the American military dramatically reduced human rights violations by the armed forces and police.
- Complaints by the U.S. Executive Branch and Congress, other governments, human rights NGOs, and the international community about the extremely weak provisions for justice, truth, and reparations in the Colombian law of "Peace and Justice" have offended many Colombians, including President Uribe. This law, not yet implemented, was intended to encourage the demobilization of paramilitary groups and the guerrillas. Some Colombians reject this criticism from abroad, arguing that Colombia demobilized several guerrilla groups in the past without complaints. They forget that when those demobilizations occurred, Colombia did not

ask the international community for financial assistance, as it is now doing.

Changing Perceptions in the Partnership.

Colombian-U.S. cooperation has waxed and waned. During the 1980s, narcotraffickers employed battalions of lawyers and used the media to oppose extradition. "Better a grave in Colombia than prison in the United States" was a nationalistic narcotrafficker slogan used in that public relations campaign. At the end of the 1980s, Escobar and other narcotraffickers used violence in several Colombian cities, including Bogota, killing men, women, and children indiscriminately, to intimidate Colombian society. This intimidation resulted in a key change in Colombian international cooperation. The 1991 Constitution eliminated extradition.[15]

Cesar Gaviria's presidential term (1990-94) reflected these changed attitudes and, at first, created tension with the United States. Gaviria began trying to deal with Pablo Escobar and the Medellin cartel through negotiation. A deal was made in which Escobar was put in a prison called "La Catedral." There he enjoyed a lavish life style and entertained his cronies and business associates while continuing to direct his narcotrafficking empire. One day Escobar simply walked out, and the Colombian government's attitude toughened, both because of the international embarrassment and a very negative U.S. reaction. The Colombian and U.S. governments collaborated in hunting down Escobar, and Colombian authorities killed him in a December 1993 shootout.[16]

The friction between the United States and Colombia in the 1990s began to change Colombian public opinion about narcotrafficking. Many Colombians realized

that the United States and the rest of the world did not accept Colombian attitudes toward this issue. When Ernesto Samper was elected president in 1994, the U.S. Government had reason to believe he had received $6 million from narcotraffickers for his presidential campaign. This was unacceptable to the United States, which pressured Samper to cooperate against narcotrafficking. Relations with Samper began tensely and got more abrasive over time.

Samper appointed two generals, one to command the Armed Forces and the other the National Police. The United States considered that both had been corrupted by narcotraffickers. After much U.S. pressure, they were replaced by more reliable partners in the war on drugs. One of these reliable partners, General Serrano, commanded the National Police well beyond Samper's term. Because of his successes against narcotrafficking, the U.S. Executive Branch and Congress trusted him.

U.S.-Colombian cooperation at the ministerial level, and with the Armed Forces and National Police, improved during Samper's term and brought down the Cali cartel kingpins in 1995. However, Samper's Liberal Party, the majority party in congress, continually tried to water down legislation intended to toughen sanctions against narcotraffickers. U.S. pressure persuaded Samper to reverse course. In 1996, the United States "decertified" Colombia for failing to cooperate effectively with it against narcotrafficking. The United States also revoked Samper's tourist visa. This was the first time it had taken such action against any sitting president.

As a result, coordinated Colombian counternarcotics cooperation with the United States during 1996 and early 1997 increased. The Colombian congress strengthened several penalties for narcotics related

crimes, and approved a law providing for asset forfeiture of ill gotten gains. A bilateral maritime seizure cooperation agreement was signed. On December 17, 1997, after 3 years of very intense U.S. pressure, the Colombian Congress amended the Constitution to allow extradition once again. Samper extradited nobody during the rest of his term which ended in August 1998. His two successors, however, extradited close to 400 individuals through 2005, 355 of whom were Colombians.

The United States trusted President Andres Pastrana and treated him with the respect denied his predecessor, Ernesto Samper. Antidrug cooperation improved during his term (1998-2002). However, he also broadened the bilateral U.S.-Colombian relationship beyond the counternarcotics focus it had had since the 1970s. Early in his term, both governments agreed to "Plan Colombia." The United States designated paramilitary groups as "terrorist" organizations, joining the FARC and ELN guerrillas which had been on the "terrorist" list for years. The United States overcame legislative human rights constraints on military assistance so as to help Colombia combat "narcoterrorist" organizations such as the FARC, ELN guerrillas, and paramilitary groups. This was an important step forward in bilateral cooperation. Beginning in President Pastrana's term, human rights violations by the Colombian military began to diminish.[17]

Strengthening the Partnership—Plan Colombia.

Plan Colombia highlighted Colombia's many interrelated problems. It discussed publicly long neglected political, social, economic, judicial, military, and law enforcement challenges that Colombia needed to address.

The Pastrana administration announced the Plan would cost U.S.$7.5 billion over 3 years, with $3.5 billion to be provided by the international community and $4 billion by the Colombian government. Two elements of the Plan were to take longer than 3 years. First, President Pastrana proposed a peace process that involved negotiating with the FARC and the ELN guerrillas. He recognized this might take several presidential terms to accomplish and expressed the hope of establishing at least a basis for this process. The second concerned the counternarcotics strategy, the only section of the Plan with a clear and detailed approach and one key goal, to reduce coca production in half by the end of 2005. In 2004 the goal seemed to be within grasp but, ultimately, it was not achieved.[18]

By early 2002, the international community had pledged and provided a little more than $2 billion. The United States contributed $1.7 billion, about 80 percent of which was earmarked for counternarcotics and 20 percent for "strengthening democracy and institution building," including human rights. The rest was contributed by various European countries, Canada, and Japan. The United States contributed most of its resources to counternarcotics and counterterrorism, assuming that Colombia and other international actors would contribute most to resolving problems that were not necessarily byproducts of drug trafficking but had developed over decades.[19]

Pastrana made several very important contributions to help resolve Colombia's many and interrelated problems. He began a peace process with the FARC guerrillas almost as soon as he took office. The UN Secretary General's office helped facilitate it. Pastrana concentrated almost single-mindedly on the peace negotiations until February 2002, when guerrilla actions

made clear they were not interested in negotiations. Pastrana discontinued the process and ended the *zona de despeje* (demilitarized zone) that he had granted the FARC. By ending his peace process, President Pastrana recognized the failure of trying to negotiate with the guerrillas "among the bullets," as the guerrillas termed it. Violence had to cease for negotiations to proceed seriously. His effort demonstrated to the Colombian people and the international community, including the Europeans, that the guerrillas were not interested in good faith negotiations. They wanted power.[20]

Pastrana's effort at peace negotiations was not unique. His disgraced predecessor, Ernesto Samper, (1994-98) did not have the political credibility to negotiate with the guerrillas. But three Colombian presidents (Belisario Betancur, Virgilio Barco, and Cesar Gaviria, representing both the Conservative and Liberal parties) had tried to negotiate peace with the guerrillas from 1982 to 1994, albeit with different approaches and limited success.[21]

In handing a demilitarized zone to the guerrillas, Pastrana turned over Colombian territory the size of Switzerland, as well as more than 90,000 Colombian citizens living there. The guerrillas promptly expelled all judicial authorities and other government representatives and administered the region in a ruthless and totalitarian manner, violating the human rights of the inhabitants and killing those who defied them. The guerrillas turned this demilitarized zone into a safe haven to strengthen their position vis-à-vis the government by using it as a logistics base and staging area for armed action against the state; a detention center for captured soldiers, police, and kidnapped civilians; and a place to grow illegal crops, and refine and smuggle out narcotics.[22]

Beginning in 1996 and well into 1998, the guerrillas had carried out a series of highly successful attacks against police and Army installations and units. Ironically, in October 1998, soon after the peace process began, the Army won a victory over the guerrillas at Mitu which proved to be a turning point. Army performance improved after that even though the FARC took every advantage of the demilitarized zone.[23]

Colombians supported Pastrana's ending the peace process, and wanted the state to adopt a harder approach toward violence perpetrated either by the guerrillas or the paramilitary groups. Pastrana's attempt to propitiate the guerrillas by establishing the demilitarized zone, where they were safe from the armed forces and had a secure area within which to negotiate, was discredited as naive. Still, in spite of public rejection of guerrilla misuse of the safe haven, polls showed Colombians did not support an all-out war against the guerrillas. In fact, all the presidential candidates in the 2002 elections envisaged continued negotiations with the guerrillas, albeit with conditions different from those accepted by President Pastrana.[24]

More significantly, and flying in the face of traditional Colombian cultural behavior, Pastrana publicly laid out Colombia's many and interrelated problems in the Plan Colombia document and asked for international assistance. It proved to be an extremely effective device to recover Colombia's international image, so badly tarnished by his predecessor. The Colombians' self-image improved as well, and they praised Pastrana for focusing international interest on Colombia.

Plan Colombia provided a rationale for asking the U.S. Congress to increase assistance to Colombia. The broader approach and explanation of Colombia's many

problems made possible wider bipartisan support for a vastly increased flow of U.S. aid to Colombia, including sharing real-time intelligence and renewed training for the military to help Colombia counter terrorism by guerrillas and paramilitary groups. The fact that other countries and international financial institutions would also be involved made the Plan appealing. President Pastrana realized that reducing narcotrafficking was central to the effort because the illegal drug profits exacerbated virtually all of Colombia's many problems.[25]

When the United States broadened its concerns in Colombia, it should have recognized that the problems laid out in Plan Colombia had to be addressed, not in serial fashion but in tandem, so as to create synergy.

The Uribe Administration.

Alvaro Uribe was elected president in 2002. This was the first time a president was elected in the first round of voting under Colombia's 1991 Constitution. He won an impressive mandate from the Colombian people and still remains very popular. His "democratic security" policy has increased security for Colombians and reduced violence. It is now possible for Colombians to travel on much of their highway system without fear of kidnapping or robbery by organized crime, guerrillas, or paramilitary groups. Colombian collective self-confidence has improved. Homicides and kidnapping have declined steadily. In 2005 kidnappings were down by 51 percent and murders by 13 percent. Uribe has begun to restore the authority of the state by placing police in all the 1098 counties (*municipios*) in Colombia. He also has added 111,000 men to the Army and police.[26]

President Uribe's election ushered in the greatest level of counterdrug cooperation ever achieved between the United States and Colombia. In addition, Colombia was the only country in South America that supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq, so President Bush considers President Uribe an ally. Coca and opium poppy eradication rose to unprecedented levels and so did seizures of cocaine and heroin. Between 2003 and 2004, the purity of Colombian heroin dropped in the United States, and the retail price rose. Between February and September 2005, the price of cocaine again rose in the United States, and its purity diminished. This suggested that bilateral counterdrug efforts were beginning to have an impact on price and availability of these drugs. These fluctuations, however, did not last long enough to assume a trend.

As U.S. assistance has increased, so has the U.S. presence. Including all U.S. contractors, Bogota is the largest American Embassy in the Western Hemisphere. Congress has capped temporary duty levels at 800 for the military and 600 for civilians. With the help of U.S. military assistance for training, real time intelligence, and logistics, Uribe has pressed the FARC guerrillas in their traditional areas of strength with "Plan Patriota." Using military pressure, Uribe is attempting to persuade the FARC to negotiate and to end their more than 40-year insurgency. So far, the FARC has refused to negotiate with Uribe because he will not negotiate under the same conditions granted by Pastrana. In the weeks prior to the 2006 presidential election and recognizing popular interest in negotiating, Uribe has offered to negotiate political issues with the FARC and even to grant them a demilitarized zone much like Pastrana did. He is negotiating with the ELN guerrillas, using Cuba's good offices. The ELN is much smaller

than the FARC and does not depend as heavily on narcotrafficking for financing. Nevertheless, success is uncertain. The ELN has negotiated five times before with earlier Colombian governments.

President Uribe is a micromanager who works tirelessly, including on weekends, with his cabinet as well as with the Armed Forces and police. He does not tolerate substandard performance. His charisma, superb political skills, and outstanding leadership, as well as extraordinary results, mark him as Colombia's most effective president in the modern era. His public approval ratings hovered around 70 percent during his entire first term. In the March 2006 congressional elections, the various parties supporting him represented a substantial majority in both houses of congress. This will help him with reforms to local government revenues and pensions. It is unlikely that this majority will agree to significant tax increases because of opposition by the elites and by criminal influence in the congress wielded by the paramilitary, guerrillas, and organized crime. Should that occur, it will be hard to ask American taxpayers to pay for resources Colombians refuse to fund.

Uribe successfully completed the negotiation of a free trade agreement (FTA) with the United States. If approved by the Colombian and U.S. Congresses, this FTA will help him face key challenges in his second term: economic growth, job creation, and the attraction of foreign investment, in addition to dealing with the botched demobilization of paramilitary groups and encouraging the FARC and ELN guerrillas to demobilize. Fiscal reform is a top priority. Colombia has one of the highest corporate taxes in the region, and in addition, corporations must make heavy payments to the government for worker retirement and health

benefits. These heavy burdens will attract fewer investors than Colombia needs to create the economic growth and employment opportunities potentially available when the U.S.-Colombian FTA comes into force.

Colombia's central government expenditures have increased over the last 15 years from 11 percent of gross national product (GNP) to 21 percent, especially since the beginning of Plan Colombia. Only 4 percent of Colombia's income tax is collected from individuals, whereas the average in Latin America is 25 percent. Rural landowners pay very low taxes. The Uribe government must broaden Colombia's tax base. President Uribe has reduced tax evasion, but more needs to be done. This includes some redistribution of income in a country where distribution of wealth is among the most unequal, not only in the region, but on earth.[27]

Taxes represent just under 15 percent of GNP which is below the world average. But defense and security spending has been low since colonial times. Colombia has increased defense spending by about 30 percent, adjusted for inflation, since 2000. Nevertheless, Colombia's military spending is about 3.3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), lower than that of several countries in the region, none of which face the violence or challenges to the state that Colombia does. Colombia has fewer police per capita compared to other countries and fewer soldiers per capita than many of its neighbors.[28]

Colombian government resources are stretched to the limit by the security manpower required to prosecute "Plan Patriota"; occupy and hold the areas "cleared" by the paramilitary demobilizations with government forces and deal with guerrilla violence;

provide "democratic security" for Colombians, and patrol Colombia's borders to avoid tension with its neighbors. Colombia needs more tax revenue urgently. President Uribe has been trying to demobilize the various paramilitary groups using the law of "Peace and Justice" enacted in July 2005. The objective is to reduce violence. Indeed, since demobilization talks with the paramilitary groups began 3 years ago, violence has dropped.[29]

Colombia's Constitution was amended recently to permit Colombian presidents a second term. Alvaro Uribe was reelected in the first round of voting on May 28, 2006, with over 62 percent of the votes, thus obviating a run-off. This is higher than the 53 percent he got when first elected in 2002. For the United States, Uribe's election means that bilateral counterdrug cooperation will intensify.

The year 2006 marks the first time a Colombian president has been reelected after his first term by direct vote since 1892. These were also the least violent presidential elections in 20 years. The second highest number of votes, 22 percent, went to a leftist candidate who represents a clutch of leftist groups. This is also historic in Colombia, where the two major parties had never yielded political space to the left at the national level.

Finally, 2006 was also the end of an era which has lasted almost since independence. It sounded the death knell for Colombia's two traditional parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, now perceived as corrupt and unresponsive to citizen needs. The Liberal candidate came in a distant third with under 12 percent. The Conservative party, which has been shrinking for years, did not even field a candidate. Uribe, a dissident Liberal, was elected by a group of

new parties.[30] What happens when President Uribe leaves office in 2010? Colombian political parties may well become disposable, personalist electoral vehicles as in Brazil.

Many in Colombia fear that criminal influence in the Colombian congress increased in the March 2006 elections. If that is true, there is danger ahead for President Uribe, for Colombia, and for the United States. Those representing criminal interests will vote against laws proposed in the second Uribe administration that hurt their interests or strengthen the state. Another danger is that the criminal influence in the congress might be strong enough to amend Colombia's constitution to once again bar extradition.[31]

Plan Colombia—Results at the End of 2005.

The U.S. Government issues two reports in early March each year which evaluate the results of its efforts against narcotrafficking and drug consumption the previous year. These are the State Department's International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR)[32] and the National Drug Control Strategy prepared by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).[33]

The National Drug Control Strategy Report for 2005 praises U.S.-Colombian cooperation and progress, and emphasizes the drop in purity of heroin and cocaine available in the United States. The seizure of 200 metric tons of cocaine and coca base in 2005 set a single year record in Colombia. However, it also notes that coca continues to be replanted quickly in remote and hidden areas, which makes eradication difficult. The INCSR makes the same points as ONDCP's report but with added detail. Despite the vigorous coca eradication

in Colombia, which includes record amounts of coca sprayed, narcotraffickers embarked on an aggressive replanting campaign in 2005 that nearly equaled the coca destroyed by eradication. In April 2006, ONDCP announced that expanded imaging revealed 39,000 additional hectares of coca. Colombia did not accept this figure and waited for the UN to announce its own estimate of the increased land devoted to coca cultivation before conceding an increase.[34]

Coca farmers also are planting coca in smaller, harder to find and spray areas, and have developed ways of saving coca plants by stripping them of leaves just after the plant is sprayed so that the plant does not absorb the herbicide. The INCSR stresses that the United States and Colombia are looking for ways to counter the rapid replanting. These would include stepping up the aerial spraying program and helping Colombia to build its capacity to take over the program in the future.[35]

There are additional discouraging data. Air Bridge interdictions over Colombia went down in 2005. There were 17 in 2004 and only 7 in 2005. A Colombian admiral stated recently that drug seizures off Colombia's Pacific coast are down in the first quarter of 2006. Only 2 out of 10 boats were intercepted.[36]

Plan Colombia—The Sequel.

During a visit to Colombia in April 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice responded to questions about continuing Plan Colombia. She said Plan Colombia had run its course, but the United States would continue to assist Colombia.

The partnership to reduce drug production is now 30 years old. The United States did not intend the high

levels of Plan Colombia assistance to continue beyond 6 years. In short, continued reports to Congress and the American people that the United States and Colombia are "making progress" are wearing thin. The United States has a number of more urgent international priorities. A growing deficit is forcing very difficult choices and budget cuts.

Other issues also concern Washington. One is that the chemical used by the United States to spray and eradicate coca and opium poppy, Glyphosate (known commercially in the United States as "Round Up"), is not as effective as it once was because narcotraffickers are taking countermeasures. Glyphosate is bio-degradable in a few days, but its use still is being challenged in Colombia despite all the scientific evidence marshaled over the years in its defense. Further, Colombian environmental laws and NGOs will not permit the use of more efficient substances for plant eradication because of their environmental impact.

Manual eradication, being used to destroy coca plants in Colombian national parks, is slow, inefficient, labor intensive, and has drawn deadly attacks against the eradicators from FARC guerrillas who wish to protect a source of income. Some officials in the United States and Colombia perceive manual eradication as little more than a jobs program for the Uribe administration.

Two members of Congress recently introduced legislation mandating ONDCP to test the feasibility of using naturally occurring mycoherbicides (fungi) to destroy coca plants. The Colombian government, however, has opposed this approach for several years. The Executive Branch also opposes it, but it was approved by the House of Representatives. Were the United States to use such mycoherbicides, it would

be accused, by Colombians and others, of engaging in biological warfare and causing environmental damage. Further, those who produce cocaine already use fungicides and will not hesitate to use more to kill this new fungus. Estimates are that 550 kilograms of gasoline, sulfuric acid, ammonia, insecticide, fungicide, and fertilizer are dumped into Colombia's forests by narcotraffickers to grow one hectare of coca and then convert it into cocaine. If the mycoherbicide approach is approved in the Senate or in conference, the United States will become embroiled in a contentious and unnecessary conflict with Colombia driven by ideology and frustration.

Between 70 and 80 percent of Plan Colombia assistance has been for counternarcotics and counterterrorism, and between 20 and 30 percent for "soft" issues such as strengthening democracy and institutions as well as judicial reform, alternative development, refugee assistance, human rights, and many other purposes. This distribution reflects Washington's priorities in Colombia which are unlikely to change. U.S. budgetary pressure makes it crucial that both governments adopt realistic plans and goals. This means greater pressure on President Uribe and Colombian taxpayers to meet those Colombian goals that are not high priorities for either the United States or other international actors.

Reports to Congress On Plan Colombia and On What Assistance Will Follow.

The Uribe administration presented a proposal for continued Plan Colombia assistance. The United States has responded that its assistance will be reduced gradually, and Colombia's contribution must increase. From 2000 to 2005, the span of the first Plan Colombia,

American taxpayers donated well over $4 billion to Colombia. Neither the international community's nor Colombia's contribution met the expectations assumed in 2000 when Plan Colombia began. This, of course, reduced the Plan's potential effectiveness.

In March and April 2006, the State Department sent two long, detailed reports to Congress about Plan Colombia. One covers what the United States is doing in terms of "soft" assistance to strengthen democracy and institutions. The second explains what the United States intends to do, both in terms of assistance and about transferring responsibilities to Colombia for operations and funding through Fiscal Year (FY)2008. Annual funding would continue at roughly $600 million, the same funding level as in FY2005.[37]

One key message of both reports is that Colombia is better off because of Plan Colombia. Another is that much more needs to be done, and Colombia must provide greater resources. The reports provide a wealth of detail about "making progress." That said, the reports are not useful analytically unless the reader has a thorough knowledge of Colombia and can put assertions of "progress" in context.

There are relatively few goals mentioned. In a few cases, budgetary constraints are mentioned as reasons for not achieving goals. In several places, continuing violence is cited as a reason for being unable to complete projects. And yet, among the main achievements of President Uribe's presidency, made possible by Plan Colombia assistance, are decreased violence and increased security. A police presence in every county in Colombia for the first time in Colombian history is cited as progress, which it is. However, control of its national territory is one of the basic attributes of a nation state. Colombia still does not control all of its territory effectively.[38]

Since President Pastrana's time, the government, police, and armed forces have been pursuing aggressive counternarcotics and counterinsurgency campaigns. These efforts are designed not only to increase state presence in and control over the national territory, but also to increase the availability of government services in rural areas. This is expensive, time consuming, and requires the integration of social, economic, and military components. For the first time in its history, Colombia is devoting a lot of resources to this multiyear effort. But the police and armed forces are insufficient to the task and must continue to grow. This means Colombia must raise more in taxes through fiscal reform.

The reports do not explain funding cuts since 2000, such as for judicial reform, which reflect a drop in U.S. priority. They are silent about what Colombia did, and give no idea of what synergy may exist between U.S. and Colombian activities. U.S. programs include one for Colombian national parks. It is hard to imagine how this and some others could be a priority for the United States at this stage.

Colombia under Presidents Pastrana and Uribe has made impressive progress. Colombia requires continued U.S. assistance. It occupies a strategic position in South America, is close to the United States, and borders both the Caribbean and the Pacific Oceans. Ninety percent of the cocaine and about 50 percent of the heroin entering the United States come from Colombia. But the partners have no clearly articulated endgame, realistic goals, benchmarks for measuring "progress," and no united vision of where Colombia ought to be in 2008. If the administration and Congress are satisfied with simply giving assistance to Colombia in order to help an ally or show voters that the United States is "doing something," then the mantra of

"making progress" may be acceptable. However, some members of Congress expect better results and say so publicly. Where are we after 6 years, 4 of them marked by superb counterdrug cooperation?

Looking to the future and to follow-on activities, changes in management and emphasis are necessary. This is especially true since U.S. funding will be cut. Some programs seem to be on autopilot. Future programs should include realistic goals, both short and medium term, and benchmarks for measuring progress and priorities. For example, the Air Bridge Denial Program to reduce airborne drug smuggling is expensive and controversial. In 2004, 13 drug-laden aircraft were destroyed, 1 damaged, and 3 impounded in Colombia. In 2005, five aircraft were impounded and two destroyed, plus the seizure of 1.5 metric tons of cocaine. Is this cost effective considering the hundreds of flights that avoid detection going north from South America over the Caribbean and Central America?

The reports give little sense of how Colombian democracy will have been strengthened at the end of 3 more years of investment by both partners. Beyond that, U.S. assistance will continue, albeit reduced, to support the top U.S. priorities—counternarcotics and counterterrorism—and to provide capacity building.[39] There should be an explanation of Colombia's goals, and an understandable explanation of whether and how these mesh with and reinforce what the United States and other significant donors are doing. This vision and its details should be shared with the U.S. Congress to illustrate and help its members understand how effective the U.S.-Colombia partnership is. Goals and objectives should be measured rigorously against performance.

The two reports submitted to Congress after 6 years and $4 billion of U.S. assistance do not give many

clues about U.S. expectations at the beginning of Plan Colombia, except for the unachieved goal of cutting coca production in half by 2005.[40] Coordination should be transparent between the two partner governments to ensure synergy and to measure commitment. There also should be a very senior State Department official to oversee all this to avoid programs acquiring a life of their own, and to ensure, in a resource poor environment, that all programs advance U.S. interests rather than being shaped by individual agencies to reflect agency biases or do what Colombians should do themselves.[41]

Lessons Learned from Plan Colombia.

The key U.S. analytical error was not recognizing that Colombia's various problems took decades to develop and will take at least a decade more of intense attention to approach resolution. The U.S. hope that 6 years of enhanced assistance through Plan Colombia might be enough was unrealistic.[42]

The second error was the belief, held by both the United States and Colombia, that the international community, and particularly the European Union (EU), would provide more resources to support those "soft" activities outside the scope of U.S. assistance for counternarcotics and counterterrorism. Instead, assistance from the international community, especially the EU, was much smaller than anticipated. Colombia did contribute to the Plan, but the amounts also were disappointing. Colombians, especially the elites, seem unwilling to sacrifice to strengthen their own country. It is worth noting that the same unrealistic assumptions about assistance from other donors were made at the 1992 Andean Drug Summit.

The third error was not recognizing that the range of the issues in Plan Colombia amounted to "nation-building." The United States had offered to fund counternarcotics and counterrorism activity, not all the "soft" issues involved in nation-building. But, as it became clear that resources from Colombia and the international community were insufficient to fulfill expectations for Plan Colombia, the United States found itself, in effect, the Plan's principal source of resources for 6 years.

The fourth error was the belief, particularly in parts of the Department of Defense and Congress, that, prior to Plan Colombia and the resumption of military assistance, the drug war had been handled as a law enforcement issue rather than as a military problem. But the 6 years of Plan Colombia have shown that it is not enough to strengthen the Colombian military's capacity to use force. Strengthening of the rule of law and of institutions is equally fundamental. At the same time, Colombia must increase its capacity to deliver services such as education, health, and infrastructure throughout the national territory. That requires sacrifice.

The fifth error was not to understand the cultural differences between the United States and Colombia.

Colombia will be challenged severely to increase taxation to pay for a more effective Colombian response to its many problems. Although President Uribe has high approval ratings and has improved Colombia's sense of self-confidence, he has not mobilized the Colombian people or asked them to sacrifice to strengthen their nation. He has asked the wealthy to increase their taxes, with some success, but continues to rely on the poor to provide the troops for the struggle. The Colombian constitution allows national

conscription, but there are exceptions for the educated and the wealthy. Until military service can call on all Colombians equally, the elites will not support fully, except rhetorically, their government's efforts to use the legitimate coercive power of the state to exercise control over all of its territory.

A Stronger Regional Approach Is Needed.

The spillover effect of drug trafficking with its corruption and violence affect all of Colombia's neighbors. The same is true of Colombia's illegal groups. The social cost of addiction and corruption caused by narcotrafficking from Colombia affects almost all transit countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, destabilizing the smaller economies and overwhelming their judicial systems and law enforcement agencies. Brazil has become the world's second largest consumer of cocaine, after the United States. Brazilian drug gangs have become powerful enough to challenge the authority of the state in both Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. The Andean Counterdrug Initiative provides U.S. funding for the region. But Colombia must do more to make this assistance more effective.

The Clinton administration urged Colombia's neighbors and some European countries to contribute to the Pastrana administration's efforts. Former President Pastrana spent a great deal of time and effort spearheading Colombian diplomatic attempts to obtain assistance in Europe. President Uribe consistently has requested more help from the Europeans. But neither Colombian nor U.S. diplomatic efforts were persuasive or persistent enough for most EU members. There are several reasons for that. European interests in South America are not great, despite the fact that

EU members seek greater sales and have considerable investment in the region. Also, influential political parties in several European countries still have a romantic view of Colombia's guerrillas, and a misplaced faith in the belief that those guerrilla groups sincerely are interested in negotiating grievances with the Colombian government. Some also believe that the Colombian government does not truly represent the Colombian people and their interests.[43]

Brazilian support for Colombia is crucial. Despite the fact that in the last few years Brazil increasingly has been exercising influence positively in South America, it will not cooperate with anything that suggests regional security arrangements under U.S. direction or control. Therefore, Colombia must exercise leadership in working closely with its neighbors and maintaining good relations with all of them. This includes stationing enough troops on its borders to reduce transborder activities by illegal Colombian groups. Up to now, Colombia has relied largely on its neighbors to patrol common borders.[44]

Colombia has not had much regional influence for more than a century and will find it hard to exercise regional leadership now. President Uribe is concerned with bringing about change within Colombia. This effort will require more internal effort and sacrifice. It also will require keeping friction with Colombia's neighbors to a minimum. Specifically, Colombia will not challenge Venezuela's President Chavez. President Uribe has said that, above all, prudence is required in Colombia's relations with Venezuela, which involve important bilateral trade and potential energy cooperation.

It Is Time To Change the Mix of Counterdrug Measures in Colombia.

It is remarkable how little the basic ingredients of the counterdrug effort in Colombia have changed in the last 17 years. The documents of the 1990 Drug Summit sound as though they were written yesterday. There are some crucial differences, however. Time has shown that the struggle in Colombia and in the Andes will last for many more years. Time has also shown that the narcotraffickers are able to change their methods quickly and have the money to do so. As soon as the United States and Colombia become adept at one formula for countering narcotraffickers, the smugglers shift their methods.

We should reevaluate our methods. The State Department and ONDCP reports for 2005 suggest that eradication, despite unprecedented Colombian cooperation, is just keeping pace with new coca plantings. Despite all the intelligence sharing and new radar installations in the region, interceptions, both of air and sea smugglers, should be much better.

Is it possible that we have reached an eradication plateau in Colombia for topographical, weather, accessibility, and other reasons? We should examine whether the marginal increases in eradication which might be produced at great cost in additional aircraft and equipment are worth the expense. Perhaps a more effective approach might be to accept present levels of eradication and shift resources to increased interception of air and sea smugglers.

We have been trying to reduce the supply of illicit drugs for many years with unsatisfactory results. We will, of course, keep trying. Reducing demand also takes many years of education and treatment. It must

include treatment in prisons to help those convicted of drug offenses turn their backs on drugs and crime once they have paid their debt to society. America has the largest prison population in the world. The benefits of demand reduction will be slow in coming, no doubt. But then, 30 years devoted to supply reduction has proven to be neither satisfactory nor quick. Why not put more resources into demand reduction?

A Double Standard for Democracy in Colombia.

President Uribe is Colombia's most effective chief executive in the modern era. He is also the best partner the United States ever had in the fight against narcotrafficking in Colombia. Yet, in Colombia where criminal influence is strong in Congress, the United States has done little to insist that the Colombian government strengthen the legitimacy of its legislative branch. Colombians also have little confidence in their judicial system. The United States has spent millions of dollars over 15 years supporting efforts to strengthen the Colombian judicial system. Yet, since 2000, the United States has reduced funding for judicial reform in order to shift funds to crop eradication.[45]

On August 4, 2005, Presidents Uribe and Bush met at Crawford, Texas, to hail the U.S.-Colombia partnership. President Bush said "our two nations are working together to fight drug trafficking and terrorism, and to promote security, democracy and the rule of law . . ."[46]

Colombia really needs to strengthen its democracy. *Latinobarometro* is a prestigious Chilean organization that has been polling attitudes in Latin America for a decade. Its polls are respected by private sector and government analysts. The 2005 *Latinobarometro* poll

showed that only about half of the region's population supports democracy. This support has decreased since 1996 and is worryingly low in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru.

Colombia's law of "Peace and Justice" does not strengthen the rule of law. This law was intended to reduce violence by paramilitary and other illegal groups by encouraging their demobilization. It was gutted by criminal influence in the Colombian Congress, taking its cue from the permissive bill introduced by the government and building on weaknesses in Colombia's criminal justice system. The law as passed provided ludicrous penalties for those taking advantage of it. President Uribe will not extradite to the United States those paramilitary kingpins who have smuggled drugs into the United States and agree to demobilize under this law. The United States insists on extradition. Nevertheless, the administration seeks $48 million over 3 years to help Colombia apply some aspects of this law.

Enacted in July 2005, the law was criticized heavily by the international community, the U.S. Government, and NGOs. The law as passed would bring little peace to Colombia and makes a mockery of justice, truth, reparations, and the rule of law. Its implementing regulations were issued in December 2005, but it could not be applied until the Constitutional Court ruled on its constitutionality.

In April 2006, the Colombian government announced that the demobilization of the paramilitary groups was complete. Over 30,000 paramilitary members have demobilized and surrendered, turning in roughly one weapon for every two members. This is the largest demobilization in Colombian history. It exceeds by far the highest U.S. and Colombian government

estimates of paramilitary group membership. Knowledgeable Colombians have concluded that thousands of common criminals paid to be included in paramilitary groups in order to benefit from the law's extremely lenient terms. Colombian estimates are that, in theory, several hundred paramilitary members will "cooperate" to shed light on some of the most serious crimes committed in Colombia in the last 20 years. In addition, more than one thousand "paras" already in prison for common crimes can benefit from the law.

The U.S Government tried to put the best face possible on the law by arguing that it expected it to be applied rigorously. A toothless law cannot be applied rigorously. In mid-May 2006, Colombia's Constitutional Court upheld the constitutionality of the law of "Peace and Justice," and fortunately also corrected several of its most troubling provisions. There was a brief moment of panic in the government and among the paramilitary when the Court's decision seemed to suggest that the extremely lenient sentences provided in the law had been struck down. In response to these concerns, the Court quickly flip-flopped and issued a calming interpretation. The question now, for the United States as well as for Colombia, is whether there is any disposition or will on the part of Colombia's Attorney General to apply the teeth the Constitutional Court implanted in the law. However, even if applied strictly, the law of "Peace and Justice" will strengthen the criminal influence of paramilitary groups on Colombian social, political, and economic life. No one expects this law to be applied anytime soon.

How could President Uribe support such a bad law? His critics believe the leaders of paramilitary groups supported his candidacy in 2002. Whether that is true or not, it is a fact that the Colombian state is weak. Uribe

has sought to reduce violence for many years. When he was Governor of Antioquia a decade ago, he sought advice on conflict resolution from Harvard. He may have calculated that offering the paramilitary groups what amounts to impunity for their crimes, including barring their extradition to the United States, was the best way to reduce the violence they cause. In the time-honored Colombian tradition, he was prepared to let his successors deal with the criminal influence the paramilitary inflict on Colombian society.

Indications are growing that paramilitary organizations have not demobilized totally. Their remnants and even demobilized "paras" continue their criminal activities.[47] This will lead to increased violence as the guerrillas seek to impose their control over areas and activities the paramilitary groups supposedly have "given up" by demobilizing.

How could the United States support such a weak law after all the years, effort, and money it has spent strengthening Colombia's justice system? One senior U.S. official describes the law of "Peace and Justice" as a "mess" and believes the United States "backed into it," not realizing its defects. Another U.S. official explained that the administration's priority is to support its ally, President Uribe.[48]

Colombians have a different understanding of the separation of powers in a democracy than Americans. The reaction by a number of prominent Colombians to the Constitutional Court's striking down some provisions of the law of "Peace and Justice" was to chastise the Court. Some said the Court was thwarting the government, as if the Court were part of the Executive Branch. Others asserted that, since that law was intended to sanction a political deal between the government and paramilitary groups, the Court should

not have applied legal criteria in its decision. Critics of the decision also claim the Court has ruined and made unworkable the government's sweetheart deal for the paramilitary groups.

If democracy and governing democratically indeed are the top U.S. priorities in Latin America, it should be consistent in supporting them. The separation of powers is fundamental for democracy as we understand it. The United States frequently points out, as it should, that in Venezuela, President Chavez has packed the legislative and judicial branches of government, thus undermining democratic governance.

The United States recognizes that having all legitimacy reside in President Chavez diminishes the legitimacy of democracy in Venezuela. Yet the United States seems unconcerned that the Colombian courts, justice system, and its congress are weak. U.S. funding priorities and failure to use its influence demonstrate this. The United States has influence in Colombia because of the billions of dollars it has given to that country.

President Uribe twice has asked the Colombian Congress to restrict the jurisdiction of the Constitutional Court. The United States should urge President Uribe not to interfere with the independence of the courts and to find ways to reduce criminal influence in Colombia's Congress. Otherwise, the legitimacy of Colombian democracy increasingly centers on President Uribe. The United States should never betray its own values, not even to assist an ally.

ENDNOTES

1. This assertion and those that follow are based on personal observations and a series of interviews conducted by the author with a large number of senior U.S. and Latin American civilian

and military officials and journalists. These observations and interviews took place before, during, and since the author's tenure as the U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, 1994-97. To allow anonymity for those who do not want their names made public, these observations and interviews are cited hereafter simply as "Author Interviews." Also see William O. Walker III, "The Foreign Narcotics Policy of the United States since 1980," *International Journal of Narco-Diplomacy,* Winter 1993-94, p. 64; David C. Jordan, *Drug Policy: Dirty Money and Democracies*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999, pp.158-170, 193-194, 217; and Angle Rabassa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth*, Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001, pp. 39-60.

2. *Ibid*. Also see *The Economist*, "Survey of Colombia," April 21-27, 2001.

3. *Ibid*. Also see Michael Shifter, *Toward Greater Peace and Security in Colombia*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations and the Inter-American Dialogue, 2000, pp. viii, 1-2, 18; and Michael Shifter, "Un primer paso," *Foreign Affairs en Espanol*, September 2001, pp. 11-15.

4. *Ibid*. Also see: Mark S. Steinitz, "Insurgents, Terrorists, and the Drug Trade," *Washington Quarterly*, Fall 1985; Dennis M. Hanratty and Sandra W. Meditz, eds., *Colombia: A Country Study,* Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1990; and Charles Bergquist, Ricardo Pinaranda, and Gonzalo Sanchez, eds., *Violence in Colombia: The Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective,* Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1992, pp. 273-292.

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6. "The Corr Report: Recommendations and Findings for Expanding Andean Agricultural Production and Trade," for Carla A. Hills, U.S. Trade Representative from Ambassador Edwin G. Corr, leader of the Inter-Agency Team on Andean Trade Initiatives Agricultural Task Force, January 31, 1991.

7. Author Interviews.

8. *Ibid*.

9. For details, see *National Drug Control Strategy 2000*, Annual Report, Washington, DC: Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2000. This report is produced each year, the most recent of which

is *National Drug Control Strategy 2006*, Annual Report, Washington, DC: Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2006.

10. Author Interviews. Also see: Walker, 1993-94.

11. This and the following several assertions are based on Author Interviews.

12. Gabriel Marcella, *Plan Colombia*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001; and Gabriel Marcella, *Colombia and the United States – The Journey from Ambiguity to Clarity,* Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003,

13. *Ibid*.

14. This and the following assertions are based on Author Interviews

15. Author Interviews. Also see Jaime Jaramillo, Leonidas Mora, and Fernando Cubides, eds., *Colonizacion, coca y guerrilla*, Bogota, 1986; Alvaro Comacho Guizado in Diego Garcia-Saipan, ed., *Coca, cocaina y narcotrafico,* Lima: Comision Andina de Juristas, 1989, pp. 191-203; and Stephen E. Flynn, *The Trans-national Drug Challenge and the New World Order,* Washington, DC: Center of Strategic and International Studies, 1993.

16. This and the following assertions are based on Author Interviews.

17. David Spencer, *Colombia's Paramilitaries*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001; Thomas A. Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002; and Thomas A. Marks, *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for Democratic Security,* Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005.

18. Marcella, 2001 and 2003.

19. *Ibid*.

20. *Ibid*.

21. *Ibid*.

22. *Ibid*. Also see Marks, 2002 and 2005.

23. *Ibid*.

24. *Ibid*.

25. Author Interviews. Also see Rand Beers, "Andean Region Initiative," Testimony before the Senate Committee on

Appropriations, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, July 11, 2001, available at *www.state.gov/g/inl/rlsl/rm/2-1/jun_aug/4054.htm*; and Secretary of State, "A Report to the Congress on United States Policy towards Colombia and other Related Issues," U.S. Department of State, November 2002, p. 6.

26. This and the following assertions are based on Author Interviews.

27. "Analisis del Sistema Tributario Colombiano y su Impacto sobre la Competitividad," a study by FEDESARROLLO and other Colombian think tanks funded by USAID. Available on *www.fedesarrollo.org*.

28. *The Military Balance*, 2006, London: IISS, 2006.

29. Marks, 2005.

30. Douglas Porch, "*Uribe's Second Mandate*," Monterey, CA: U.S. Naval Graduate School, Center for Contemporary Conflict, February 2006, pp. 3-7.

31. Author Interviews.

32. These reports may be found at *usinfo.state.gov*.

33. The ONDCP reports may be found at *usinfo.ondcp.gov*.

34. *Ibid*.

35. Available at *usinfo.state.gov*.

36. This and the following assertions are based on Author Interviews.

37. These statements are based on two State Department reports to Congress: "U.S. Assistance Programs in Colombia and Plans to Transfer Responsibilities to Colombia," March 2006; and "Colombia: Report on Reform Activities," April 2006, Washington, DC: Department of State, March 2006 and April 2006, respectively.

38. *Ibid*.

39. *Ibid*.

40. *Ibid*.

41. The author stated this earlier. See Ambassador Myles R. R. Frechette, *In Search of the End Game: A Long-Term Multilateral Strategy for Colombia,* Miami, FL: The Dante B. Fascell North-South Center, University of Miami, February 2003, pp. 5-14.

42. This and the following assertions are based on Author Interviews.

43. Juaquin Roy, *European Perceptions of Plan Colombia*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001.

44. This and the following assertions are based on Author Interviews.

45. Jordan, 1999. Also see Max G. Manwaring, "U.S. Too Narrowly Focused on Drug War in Colombia," *The Miami Herald*, August 15, 2001.

46. This and the following assertions are based on Author Interviews.

47. D. Cariboni, "New Breed of Paramilitaries Infiltrate Urban Refugees," Inter-Press Service (IPS), June 27, 2006, available at *p.7.news.re2.Yahoo.com/s/oneoworld/20060626/.*

48. This and the following assertions are based on Author Interviews.