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6 Collateral Damage

The U.S. "War on Drugs" and Its Impact on Democracy in the Andes

The dramatic increase in drug trafficking poses real dangers to countries throughout the Western Hemisphere. Drug trafficking in the Andes breeds criminality, exacerbates political violence, and hence greatly increases problems of citizen security. It has corrupted and further weakened local governments, judiciaries, and police forces and rends the social fabric, particularly in poor urban areas where both drug abuse and drug-related violence are rampant. Illicit drug abuse—a minor problem in Latin America a decade ago—has reached epidemic proportions in cities such as Caracas, Medellín, and Lima. The physical and moral damage to individuals, communities, and societies of the illicit drug trade is creating new challenges for Andean societies, already struggling to overcome endemic poverty and injustice.

As the world's largest consumer of illicit drugs, the United States also confronts a myriad of problems stemming from illicit drug abuse and drug-related violence. The policy response developed in Washington, however, is largely driven by domestic political considerations and a desire to be "tough" in combating the illegal drug trade—hence, the drug war rhetoric that prevails today. Through its diplomatic and economic leverage, the United States has to a large extent dictated the policies adopted by the Andean governments, often over the objections of both local governments and important segments of civil society, at times draining scarce resources from other national priorities. Apart from breeding resentment and tensions in bilateral relations, the U.S. approach to international drug control has also left a path of "collateral damage" in its wake.

This chapter explores such collateral damage in three Andean countries—Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia—and in two principal areas: first, the influence and role of security forces and their relationship to civilian-elected governments in the postauthoritarian regime period; second, the way in which the drug war exacerbates existing problems of political violence and fosters human rights violations. The U.S. government's war on drugs clearly hinders efforts to put civilian-military relations on a new footing and as such constitutes

an obstacle to the strengthening and deepening of democratic governance in the Andes. U.S. drug policy is detrimental to efforts to reduce military roles and missions, to eliminate the military's role in maintaining internal public order, to enhance civilian control over military forces, and to increase both the transparency and the accountability of military forces. Moreover, the counter-narcotics mission provides the military with a task that is likely to lead to human rights abuses, and the "confidential" nature of counterdrug programs further exacerbates patterns of impunity.

With the transition to civilian-elected governments in South America have come widespread efforts to reduce the power of local security forces, limiting their authority to the control of national borders, and to enhance the control of civilian-elected governments over local militaries and intelligence services. Washington, its claims to the contrary notwithstanding, erodes these efforts by relying on the Latin American military and police forces to play the lead role in combating the illicit drug trade, providing the resources, training, and doctrinal justification for militaries to play a significant role in domestic counter-narcotics operations, a law-enforcement function reserved in most democracies for civilian police. The dominant role assigned to local security forces in the drug war is detrimental to the region's fragile transition toward more democratic societies following decades of often brutal military rule. In following this policy, the U.S. government legitimates Latin American security forces in a fundamental internal security role, now directed at "new enemies," and confirms them as actors in domestic politics. More often than not, U.S. support is provided prior to any meaningful institutional reforms that would ensure greater civilian control or respect for human rights.

U.S. officials often justify the embrace of local militaries as necessary to confront the firepower of drug traffickers and the rampant corruption among police forces. Yet the long-term consequences of this approach may be even more detrimental than drug trafficking itself to prospects for democratic consolidation and regional stability. Nor is it clear that bringing in the military will allow local governments to circumvent the very real problem of corruption. As former Bolivian president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada once said: "When you have a corrupt chief of police, you fire him. When you have a corrupt chief of the army, he fires you."¹ The lack of accountability and transparency of the region's armed forces makes rooting out the inevitable corruption that accompanies antidrug efforts even more difficult and controlling potential human rights abuses next to impossible.

Through its drug policy, the United States has forged unholy alliances with militaries that have deplorable human rights records. In Bolivia, U.S. drug policy pits coca farmers against the Bolivian police and army, generating conflict, violence, and human rights abuses. In Peru, the U.S. government pro-

vided counterdrug aid to the Peruvian National Intelligence Service (SINI), responsible for death-squad activity and significant setbacks to democracy in that country between the April 1992 *autogolpe*, or presidential self-coup, and Fujimori's dramatic fall from power nine years later. Perhaps most disturbingly, in the name of fighting drugs, the U.S. government has become directly involved in Colombia's brutal counterinsurgency campaign and is providing millions of dollars in economic assistance and training to Colombian military forces, some of whom are allied with the right-wing paramilitary groups responsible for the majority of human rights abuses being committed in that country today. Washington has slid down the slippery slope of increasing involvement in yet another counterinsurgency quagmire in Latin America.

The Illicit Drug Trade

The Andean region is the source of the bulk of illicit drugs that ultimately wind up on U.S. city streets. Cocaine, derived from the leaf of the coca plant, is produced primarily in the Andean countries of Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru. The coca leaves are mixed with easily obtainable chemicals and other products to make coca paste, which is then transported to laboratories and processed into powdered cocaine. Colombia has also become the principal supplier of heroin to the eastern United States. A broad network of dealers and transportation routes is in place to export these illicit drugs to the United States and other areas of the world.

The areas under coca cultivation, drug-trafficking carrels, and trafficking routes have proliferated since the drug war was launched. Coca production can be compared to a balloon: squeezing it in one area merely causes it to pop up somewhere else. In Peru, for example, coca production used to be confined to the Upper Huallaga Valley. Coca-eradication efforts and the mysterious spread of a fungus in coca-growing regions led to new production areas in the lower and middle Huallaga, the Apurimac river valley, and elsewhere. Just as the Peruvian Air Force and the U.S. Southern Command (SouthCom) began intercepting airplanes flying with coca paste from Peru to Colombia for refinement into cocaine, coca production in Colombia exploded.

A similar trend has occurred with cocaine production and trafficking. Following the crackdown on Colombia's Medellín cartel, the Cali cartel quickly replaced it. Once most of the Cali cartel leadership was behind bars, a "democratization" of the drug trade in Colombia took place, as smaller, regionally oriented networks of drug traffickers—much more difficult to infiltrate and dismantle—took root around the country. Drug mafias have since proliferated in Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela, and Brazil. Traffickers have adapted quickly to drug control strategies, developing new methods and routes to circumvent detection.

Fortune magazine once described the cocaine trade as "probably the fastest growing and unquestionably the most profitable" industry in the world.² In fact, the illicit drug trade has become an escape valve for Andean economies, which have fared poorly over the last two decades. Particularly in the boom years of the mid- to late 1980s, when the cocaine trade took off, coca and cocaine dollars helped alleviate Peru's and Bolivia's severe balance-of-payments problems and at least partially compensated for the lack of new loans and investments. In recent years, as coca-eradication efforts have succeeded in reducing overall coca cultivation in Bolivia, the local economy in the Cochabamba area has bottomed out and malnutrition and related diseases have skyrocketed in the Chapare coca-growing region—clear indicators of the dependence on the revenues derived from the coca trade. Even in Colombia, with the largest economy of the three, the drug trade has helped lubricate the economy and provides substantial, though risky, employment opportunities.

As the gap between the rich and poor has widened following a decade of free market reforms, for many of the region's poor coca production has become a means of survival. In Bolivia, following neoliberal reforms that devastated the tin industry and led to widespread factory shutdowns, people flocked to the Chapare region. In Colombia, peasants forced off their land as a result of political violence and poor urban dwellers with no prospect of legal employment make their way to the southern coca-growing regions, either to plant coca or work as *rajbarinos*, or harvesters of coca leaves. There are simply too many poor people, and too much land suitable for coca production, to put a lid on illicit coca production. Likewise, rampant unemployment and underemployment in urban areas ensure a steady supply of recruits for other stages of the drug industry, from those who transport coca paste to others higher up in the drug-trafficking ranks.

U.S. International Drug Control Policy

As a result of these conditions, the Andean region is the frontline in the U.S. war on drugs. Successive U.S. presidents have sought to target the "source" of production: the coca leaf, a traditional crop among Andean peasant communities. While the roots of the drug war go back to the Nixon administration, the launching of the "Andean Initiative" by President George H. W. Bush in 1989 focused attention on source-country efforts. The stated objectives of the five-year strategy were to strengthen the political will and institutional capabilities of the Andean governments to combat drugs, increase the effectiveness of local law enforcement and military antidrug activities, and work with these countries to disrupt and dismantle drug-trafficking organizations. The thrust of the source-country approach is to make the illicit drug trade more dangerous and costly, thereby driving down production and

availability, driving up prices, and ultimately discouraging U.S. citizens from buying and using illicit drugs.

A final objective of the Andean strategy was to strengthen and diversify the legitimate economies of the Andean countries so that they could overcome the destabilizing effect of eliminating coca and cocaine as a major source of income. However, economic assistance was originally to be provided only after success was obtained in significantly disrupting the coca and cocaine trades. Security assistance, on the other hand, was front-loaded in the five-year plan. The Andean Initiative was centered on a dramatic escalation of support for military and police forces in the region, promotion of a direct hands-on role for both local and U.S. military forces in combating drug trafficking and production, and an enhanced role for some local intelligence services in domestic intelligence-gathering operations.

At the outset of his administration, President Bill Clinton promised a different approach to the drug war by proposing treatment on demand for drug users and education at home. Administration officials largely dropped the use of war metaphors and paid greater lip service to promoting democratic institutions and economic development in drug-producing countries. But the administration soon reversed course, following the path laid out by Bush's Andean Initiative. Approximately 65 percent of the federal drug control budget continued to be allocated annually for supply-side efforts at home and abroad, and the Andes remained the centerpiece of U.S. international drug control policy.

By the mid-1990s, the Clinton administration—backed by the Republican-controlled Congress—had dramatically increased funding for international counternarcotics assistance. As the 2000 presidential and congressional elections approached, Congress approved another major infusion of aid for international drug control efforts. In addition to nearly \$300 million approved through the normal appropriations procedure, an emergency supplemental aid package for "Plan Colombia" was legislated, amounting to \$1.3 billion over a two-year period, making Colombia the third-largest recipient of U.S. military assistance in the world. Nearly \$1 billion was allocated for the Colombian armed forces—almost \$2 million a day (A small portion of that package was provided for counternarcotics efforts in Bolivia and Peru and for "forward operating locations," or FOIs, military bases used to refuel sophisticated U.S. aircraft involved in aerial surveillance of the Andean region to gather counternarcotics intelligence.)

With the advent of the George W. Bush administration, U.S. drug policy has come full circle. In the spring of 2001, the new administration presented its "Andean Regional Initiative," another nearly \$1 billion aid package for fiscal year (FY) 2002 that is remarkably similar to the former President Bush's

"Andean Initiative."³ While still targeting Colombia, the latest program is designed to address the spillover effects of the U.S. drug war in Colombia by providing increased assistance to its neighbors, including Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Venezuela, and Panama. The U.S. Congress approved \$625 million for the Andean Regional Initiative for FY2002 and shortly thereafter began considering a request for FY2003 of over \$600 million.

In short, several billion dollars have been allocated to Andean counterdrug efforts in recent years. Yet there is hardly a dent in overall coca production, and cocaine and heroin are just as cheap and readily available on U.S. city streets as they were when the Andean Initiative was first launched. Washington is losing its self-proclaimed war on drugs in the Andean region. Yet with no "enemy" to declare formal victory, the war continues unabated at a high cost to U.S. taxpayers and, most significantly, to the people of the Andean region.

The Pentagon's Role

Security assistance—aid to local military and police forces—is one of the principal tools for U.S. agencies waging the drug war abroad. While the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is the primary agency engaged in on-the-ground antinarcotics activities overseas, in 1989 the U.S. Congress designated the Department of Defense (DOD) as the "single lead agency" for the detection and monitoring of illicit drug shipments into the United States and expanded its funding for training and equipping local security forces. In addition to the provision of military hardware, the U.S. military runs an array of counternarcotics-related training programs. U.S. training programs take on many different forms, and training teams can be as small as a single officer or as large as an entire platoon. In FY1998, for example, SouthCom carried out at least 2,265 "Deployments for Training" in Latin America and the Caribbean involving over forty-eight thousand U.S. personnel (Isacson and Olson 1999). In addition, U.S. Special Forces also carry out their own training deployments, often numbering in the hundreds per year. In-country training is supplemented by instruction at U.S. military facilities. Among the U.S.-based facilities used for counternarcotics instruction is the former School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia.⁴ It offers officers an eleven-week course that provides instruction in planning, leading, and executing drug interdiction operations, including infiltration and surveillance techniques, patrolling, and demolition and close-quarters combat (Zirnite 1997). In 1999, the last year for which figures are available, the United States trained a total of about thirteen thousand Latin American military and police, either in the region or on U.S. bases.⁵

A vital part of their instruction, U.S. officials stress, is human rights train-

ing. However, training is provided regardless of the human rights record and political will for human rights-related reforms exhibited by recipient forces. Human rights groups point to other inherent problems with U.S. military counternarcotics training programs. The jungle warfare-type training that DOD provides to Latin American security forces is not well suited for drug control efforts, which should be oriented toward sound investigations and criminal prosecutions. Inadequate or illegally obtained evidence continues to be a major obstacle to successful prosecutions, while the killings that occur during violent drug raids often provoke controversy when potentially innocent individuals are involved, such as in the shooting of a civilian aircraft in Peru in April 2001 in which a U.S. Baptist missionary and her infant daughter were killed.

Despite the wide array of DOD counternarcotics programs in place today, the U.S. military's role in counternarcotics efforts was met with some resistance in the Pentagon. Many DOD officials were concerned about becoming involved in a mission that was seen as deviating from the U.S. military's traditional role and that could potentially be detrimental to military readiness in other areas of the world. U.S. military officials were, in short, reluctant recruits to the war on drugs.

However, SouthCom embraced the drug mission enthusiastically. In the wake of the Cold War, the drug war provided the rationale for maintaining SouthCom's budget and troop levels as other areas of the world rose in importance on the Pentagon's agenda. SouthCom officials also viewed the drug war as converging with its previous roles and mission; the low-intensity conflict strategies honed during the years of conflict in Central America were quickly adapted to carry out the new mandate. Perhaps most importantly, the drug war provided SouthCom with a means of not only maintaining but expanding military-to-military relations throughout the hemisphere.

Expanding Military Missions

Counternarcotics training, whether conducted in-country or at U.S. facilities, is viewed by many Pentagon officials as an important opportunity to foster closer ties with South America's armed forces, one of the key goals of DOD's post-Cold War strategy for the hemisphere. In a series of interviews conducted by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) in 1990 and 1991, U.S. military officials with responsibility for U.S. security policy toward Latin America underscored the need to not only maintain but expand relations with militaries across the hemisphere—a strategy they have pursued ever since. They also stressed the need to enhance military capabilities, even as civilian-elected governments took hold: "Currently, in SouthCom's view, the U.S. military's part in promoting democracy . . . is neither to work for a

reduction in Latin American military forces nor to attempt to delimit the role of armed forces in Latin American societies. Rather, the U.S. military role is to continue to strengthen military capabilities on the assumption that democratic values will be transmitted. Enhancing host nation capabilities appears repeatedly throughout SouthCom documents as a goal for countering insurgency, anti-narcotics, and nation-building activities" (Call 1991, 41). In following this policy, the Pentagon is seeking to strengthen the very forces that many local governments are trying to keep back in the barracks after decades of military rule and that remain one of the principal obstacles to establishing effective civilian rule in the Andean region.

Some local analysts point out that by circumventing civilian institutions, the U.S. government may be undermining people's faith in those institutions at a time when democratic developments remain delicate and when curbing military autonomy remains critical to future democratization. In some Andean countries, the civilian government's control of military forces is tenuous at best, and local militias are increasingly flexing their muscle. For example, in Colombia—which does not have a history of military rule—the military's powers have steadily expanded as insurgency movements have grown. In August 2001, for example, a law was passed and signed by President Andrés Pastrana that, according to one journalist, "allows the military to supersede civilian rule in areas declared by the president to be 'theaters of operation' and reduces the chance that army troops could be subjected to thorough human rights investigations by civilian government agencies."⁶

Since the Andean Initiative was first launched, military power and influence have grown in different ways throughout the Andean region. In Ecuador, a popular uprising and military coup in January 2000 led to the ouster of the sitting president. In Bolivia and Venezuela, military officials have entered power through elections. When former dictator General Hugo Banzer was elected president, he announced his intention to elevate the Bolivian military's role in the country, paving the way for greater military involvement in counternarcotics operations. Hugo Chávez, one-time coup plottor and now president of Venezuela, has "militarized society to a level not seen since democracy was restored in 1958," according to one international observer.⁷ A faction of the military allied with disgruntled civilian sectors nearly ousted Chávez in a failed coup attempt in April 2002. All of these examples provide a potent reminder of the extent to which military forces across the Andean region continue to see themselves as the arbiters of political power.

In Peru, President Alberto Fujimori relied on the active support of the Peruvian armed forces and the SIN to consolidate his authoritarian rule. The power and political influence of the Peruvian military expanded significantly following the 1992 *autogolpe*, as was evident in its increasing role in the judi-

cial realm, the impunity with which it operated, and its role in helping President Fujimori secure reelection in 1995 and again, via widespread fraud, in 2000. Until it was dismantled in 2001, the SIN functioned as the regime's political police. It was responsible for the systematic harassment, intimidation, and blackmail of its perceived political opponents; carried out widespread illegal wiretapping and other surveillance; and was the principal agency involved in manipulating the courts, Congress, and the electoral apparatus to favor executive-branch policies (Youngers 2000). Yet both the Peruvian military and the SIN were courted by U.S. officials as important allies in the drug war and received significant U.S. economic support toward that end.

In short, the allies chosen by Washington as it wages its drug war in the Andes represent some of the most dangerous elements of their societies. In this context, the drug war's collateral damage is quite clear: an enhanced role for local military and intelligence forces in domestic operations that lack sufficient mechanisms for civilian control and accountability. These forces are beefed up at the expense of civilian institutions upon which the future of democracy in these countries depends.

Overcoming Local Opposition

The Andean Initiative's potential dangers to the consolidation of civilian rule initially generated opposition among many Latin American governments. However, the U.S. Congress put its full weight behind ensuring the use of U.S. diplomatic and economic leverage to coerce cooperation from reluctant drug war partners. In 1986 it enacted a "certification" requirement for drug-producing and -transport countries. By March 1 of each year, the administration must "certify" to the U.S. Congress that those deemed to be drug-producing or -transport countries are cooperating with U.S. efforts to control drug production, trafficking, and use. Countries that are not certified face a full range of sanctions, including the suspension of all U.S. foreign assistance not directly related to antidrug programs, U.S. opposition to loans by multilateral development banks, and possible trade sanctions. While numerous countries have been granted a "national security waiver," only Colombia has faced the full weight of U.S. sanctions as a result of "decertification."

Andean countries initially balked at Washington's demand that local militaries play a prominent role in counternarcotics operations and at U.S. insistence that the war on drugs be made a top priority, even in the face of the severe economic crisis that engulfed the Andean region at the time. Andean leaders not only had scarce resources but also feared that some of the political and economic challenges they faced could be deepened by a large-scale crackdown on the coca and cocaine trade.⁸

Even some local militaries objected to this new role. Both Peruvian and

Colombian military officials, for example, repeatedly claimed that counternarcotics objectives took precedence over counternarcotics objectives and saw the two as conflicting, rather than complementary. In the Peruvian Huallaga, the military had adopted a strategy of trying to win "the hearts and minds" of the local population in order to erode any support the Shining Path had among the local population. Eliminating their economic livelihood only risked pushing them into the hands of the guerrillas. As one former Peruvian military commander said, "There are 150,000 peasants growing coca in the zone. Each of them is a potential subversive. Eradicate his field and the next day he will become one."⁹

Despite local resistance, the U.S. government used the threat of decertification and the significant disruptions in both aid and trade with the United States that such an action would cause to bring local governments on board. The Andean militaries in Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru were eventually enticed with the economic and political backing offered by Washington and, like SouthCom, found in the drug war a convenient *raison d'être* for maintaining troop levels, budgets, and political influence. For the Colombian military, the benefits of adapting to the drug war rhetoric are more than obvious from the U.S. aid now flowing into their coffers. More than ten years after the Andean Initiative was first launched, all of the Andean militaries are now actively engaged in the U.S. war on drugs.

Human Rights and the "Narco-Guerrilla" Theory

Among those militaries are those responsible for some of the worst human rights violations in the hemisphere today. As a result, another unintended consequence of the U.S. war on drugs is that Washington is at least indirectly fueling human rights violations and, in Colombia, contributing to the region's most brutal counternarcotics campaign. U.S. support for abusive forces is taking place even as overall levels of human rights violations have declined markedly across the region and most countries have significantly improved human rights records.

International antinarcotics accords include provisions relating to the protection of human rights. The 1990 Declaration of Cartagena, for example, requires that "the parties act within the framework for human rights" and states that "nothing would do more to undermine the war on drugs than disregard for human rights." Bilateral agreements between the U.S. and Latin American governments often include clauses on human rights, and administration documents, such as the annual International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, stress the compatibility between antinarcotics programs and respect for human rights. Nonetheless, both the Bush and Clinton administrations have, at different points in time, downplayed the gravity of the human rights situa-

tion in countries such as Peru and Colombia in order to obtain congressional support for counternarcotics assistance.

The "narco-guerrilla" theory, which first gained prominence in the early 1980s, has allowed the counternarcotics and counterinsurgency missions to flourish, creating greater risks that local forces that receive U.S. counternarcotics assistance become involved in human rights abuses. At a 1984 Senate hearing, federal officials warned that international terrorists were turning to drug trafficking to finance their operations.¹⁰ The alleged link between drug traffickers and insurgents became an implicit component of the first Andean Initiative, as administration officials depicted drug traffickers as irrevocably tied to leftist subversives. By the mid-1990s, U.S. officials pointed to Colombia as the center of narco-guerrilla activity. In an April 2, 1998, statement, Representative Benjamin Gilman boldly exclaimed, "The frightening possibilities of a 'narco-state' just three hours by plane from Miami can no longer be dismissed." In the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks, the term now-used most frequently is "narco-terrorist."

While links between drug traffickers and guerrillas clearly exist, the reality on the ground is more complex. No one disputes that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) gains significant resources from the illicit drug trade. It has virtual territorial control of vast areas where coca plantations thrive, providing it with a very important and steady source of income that allows it to advance militarily and maintain a steady flow of recruits. However, the guerrillas are one of many actors—including elements of the armed forces and right-wing paramilitary groups—involvement in the lucrative drug trade. In fact, drug mafias are most closely associated with right-wing paramilitary groups, with whom they have historic ties. These in turn often have close ties to members of the Colombian security forces. The implications for U.S. policy are formidable.

Supporting Peru's Intelligence Service

Abusive army units are not the only ones who have benefited from U.S. largesse; local intelligence services have also. During the years that military dictatorships prevailed across the Latin American region, intelligence services were often the source of the worst manifestations of state terror, and since the return to civilian rule those agencies have largely evaded reform by civilian-elected governments. The character of intelligence and the uses to which it is put depend on whether those in command answer to democratic civilian authority. Yet Andean intelligence services continue to operate with significant autonomy, are not accountable to the public, and often operate with a Cold War mentality that fails to distinguish legal political activity from insurgent or criminal activity.

Perhaps the most blatant case is that of Peru, where the U.S. government provided political and economic support to Peru's intelligence service, the SIN, despite its involvement in death-squad activity and the antidemocratic activities previously described. U.S. officials claimed throughout the course of the 1990s that the SIN played an important coordinating role in counternarcotics efforts, leaving Washington with little choice but to support it. U.S. officials even claimed that the SIN was effective in its efforts, meeting publicly with SIN officials, praising their work in the press (and lending political support even as the SIN's involvement in sinister activities was growing), and providing economic support via the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The de facto head of the SIN and President Fujimori's top security adviser, Vladimiro Montesinos, was long rumored to be on the CIA payroll.

This relationship appears to go back to the 1970s, when Montesinos was thrown out of the Peruvian army and spent one year in jail after an unauthorized visit to Washington, where he was suspected of selling information to U.S. agents. He then launched a lucrative law practice defending accused drug traffickers. In 1978, he defended Colombian drug kingpin Evaristo Porras Ardilla, a former member of the Medellín cartel. The following year he defended Jaime Tamayo, another Colombian trafficker. During the trial it was revealed that Montesinos had served as guarantor for rental contracts on two houses utilized by Tamayo as cocaine laboratories. Later, Montesinos defended one of Peru's most notorious drug traffickers, Reynaldo Rodríguez López, known as El Padrino.¹¹

In 1990, Montesinos was introduced to Fujimori by his campaign chief, Francisco Loayza. After helping Fujimori avoid a judicial trial for tax evasion, Montesinos quickly became his top security advisor.¹² Within a short period of time he had taken over control of the SIN and was being portrayed as the architect of the Peruvian government's war against terrorism and drug trafficking. Although he held no formal title within the government, by the mid-1990s U.S. officials would refer to Montesinos as Peru's "drug czar." Although in other countries Washington was quick to dictate who should control narcotics policies, in the case of Peru, U.S. officials publicly lamented that they had no choice but to work with Montesinos. Privately, they pointed out that he indeed got things done—he was viewed as "Mr. Fixit."¹³

Throughout this period, credible allegations repeatedly surfaced linking Montesinos to unconstitutional acts, human rights violations, and drug trafficking-related corruption. Montesinos is considered to be the mastermind behind the April 1992 *autogolpe*, when Fujimori shut down the Peruvian Congress and judiciary, suspended the country's constitution, and subsequently adopted draconian anticrime legislation. He is also considered to be the key

organizer of a death squad (known as Grupo Colina) responsible for some of the worst human rights atrocities that took place during the Fujimori government. In addition, numerous individuals claimed under oath that Montesinos demanded bribes in order for drug-trafficking operations to go forward unimpeded by authorities.

Periodically reports surfaced regarding the wealth that Montesinos has accumulated. For example, in December 1999, local journalists discovered that Montesinos's bank account in Lima contained 275 times the annual income of a high-level government adviser. Yet every time these allegations arose, U.S. officials publicly stated their confidence in the integrity of Peruvian government officials and refused to back calls for investigations. The unwillingness of U.S. officials to support investigations into allegations of wrongdoing by Montesinos provided him with crucial political support when he was most vulnerable to criticism.

Shortly after Montesinos emerged as Fujimori's right-hand man, Peruvian journalist Gustavo Gorriti reported that the CIA was providing counter-narcotics aid to an SIN antinarcotics unit involved in death-squad activity. Inquiries by members of the U.S. Congress revealed that the U.S. State Department had provided small but steady amounts of assistance to the antidrug unit of the SIN until the late 1990s. The CIA was also believed to have channeled aid to the SIN, although it refuses to deny or confirm such reports. Most disturbingly, credible reports say that the CIA paid Montesinos at least one million dollars a year in cash for a ten-year period, allegedly for counter-narcotics programs—and that such money flowed right up until September 2000, when Fujimori was forced to announce new elections in which he would not run, along with the dismantling of the SIN.¹⁴ According to the U.S. ambassador to Peru, John Hamilton, it was not until Fujimori's surprise announcement that all communication with Montesinos allegedly ceased and the SIN was informed that all programs with the United States would be discontinued. He also acknowledged that the CIA had an "official liaison relationship" with Montesinos.¹⁵

In short, Washington maintained ties to Montesinos and to the SIN long after serious and credible allegations of his link to the drug trade and to human rights violations had been put forward and months after his role in creating the 2000 presidential elections had become evident. With the fall of the Fujimori government, the prosecution of dozens of officials implicated in corruption and other scandals, and the subsequent capture of Vladimiro Montesinos, more and more information is being revealed as to the corrupt practices of the Peruvian "drug czar," who amassed a known fortune of nearly three million dollars.

Over the course of the Fujimori administration, U.S. officials consistently

spoke out in defense of human rights and democracy; yet it is now clear that through the drug war, the United States was supporting the very forces that were undermining democratic institutions. U.S. drug policy exacerbated trends toward increased concentration of power in the hands of the president; suppression of legal political dissent and independent reporting; and the steady elimination of mechanisms of transparency and accountability within government, which allowed for massive official corruption to go on for years unnoticed. In short, as a result of drug war politics, the U.S. government became an accomplice, albeit indirectly, of authoritarian rule.

Fueling Violence in Bolivia

Perhaps nowhere is the direct collateral damage of the U.S. war on drugs more evident than in Bolivia. With no guerrilla groups operating in the country, no murky line between counterinsurgency and counter-narcotics efforts blurs the picture as in Colombia. In other words, human rights violations that result from antinarcotics operations are just that. While current abuses pale in comparison to the killings and disappearances that occurred under some of Bolivia's military dictators, a disturbing pattern of detentions, mistreatment, and abuse of the local population prevails in Bolivia's primary coca-growing region, the Chapare. Moreover, the primary victims are not drug traffickers but poor farmers who eke out a subsistence-level income through coca production. The antinarcotics efforts that have led to such abuses are rooted in Law 1008, adopted by the Bolivian Congress on July 19, 1989. Passed under U.S. pressure, Law 1008 gives the government sweeping powers to control coca production and drug trafficking. Social unrest, conflict, and violence in the Chapare have clearly increased as a result of U.S. pressure on the Bolivian government to comply with Law 1008 and to meet annual coca-eradication targets.

The Bolivian antinarcotics police, the Mobile Rural Patrol Units (UMOPAR), are trained and funded by the U.S. government, which provides everything from uniforms to the cost of feeding UMOPAR detainees in some police prisons. The UMOPAR commit a litany of abuses: arbitrary searches and arrests, theft, and mistreatment of detainees during interrogations. A study conducted by the Andean Information Network (AIN), a nongovernmental organization based in Cochabamba, Bolivia, revealed startling statistics: 60 percent of those detained stated that they had been threatened by the police during their arrest, and 44 percent affirmed that they had been tortured and/or beaten.¹⁶ Bolivian officials implicated in abuses are rarely, if ever, sanctioned.

Massive sweeps, where hundreds may be detained at one time, often lead to arbitrary detentions. Detainees are typically held for several days and then re-

leased without being charged or presented before judicial authorities. Often, they are not allowed to notify family members of their detention. Other detentions are not indiscriminate but target those actively opposing coca-eradication activities. Following two investigative missions to Bolivia, Human Rights Watch concluded that antinarcotics police carry out arrests "intended to suppress peaceful and lawful protest activity" and detain coca-grower federation leaders in order "to secure advantage in negotiations with them over government policy."¹⁷ In late 2001 and early 2002, the Bolivian government detained almost all of the coca growers federation's top leadership, charging them with crimes that would have kept them behind bars for life. In the face of escalating violence and decreasing public support, the government finally released them.

In 1998, then-president Hugo Banzer launched a plan to eliminate all illicit coca within his five-year term in office and brought the army into on-the-ground operations to carry out his mandate alongside local police forces. The "zero coca" policy served to intensify the cyclical patterns of violence that plague the Chapare. In May 1998, Banzer announced the transfer of the Armed Forces High Command to Cochabamba, the city closest to the Chapare. Approximately five thousand army troops moved into the area, mostly young conscripts who had no experience in diffusing face-to-face conflicts or social protests and who were unprepared for the severe living conditions of the tropics. The soldiers' presence led to greatly increased tension and a sharp increase in violent confrontations. With U.S. financial support, the Bolivian military is reinforcing its existing infrastructure in the Chapare region to house and train its troops, ensuring military control of the region for the foreseeable future.

As the Bolivian government pursued its "zero coca" policy, the situation in the Chapare continued to deteriorate, culminating in a massive protest in September and October of 2000. Coca growers blocked the main roads in and out of the region for nearly one month. Food supplies rotted on trucks, and all other commerce ceased. The military responded with its strongest use of force yet, firing indiscriminately into the crowds of protesters. Two civilians were killed, seventy-eight wounded, forty-eight illegally detained, and sixteen tortured. Five members of the security forces and one soldier's wife were also found dead in the rain forest. No serious official investigations of abuses by state forces have gone forward, though coca farmers are on trial for the other killings.¹⁸

The cycle continued the following year, with steadily escalating protests and violent repression beginning in September 2001 and continuing through February 2002. Over that period, ten coca growers were killed as a result of excessive use of force by security forces. Four members of those forces were

killed, apparently by angry coca growers. Over 350 protesters were injured or detained.¹⁹

Although the Bolivian government has declared victory in its "zero coca" strategy, forced eradication efforts continue. To avoid eradication, in recent years coca growers have planted more coca in wild other plants and under trees, where it cannot be detected via aerial surveillance. While accurate statistics are not available on coca production in the Chapare, it is clear that coca is being replanted at a rapid rate. The lack of effective alternative development efforts and pervasive poverty not just in the Chapare but throughout the country ensure that coca will continue to be grown despite the military presence.

Although Bolivia has witnessed 182 coups since it gained independence in 1825, the U.S. government has expressed no reservations about bringing the military into domestic operations that previously pertained to the police. The most significant collateral damage of the drug war in Bolivia, however, is violent social conflict and a range of human rights abuses. Despite millions of dollars and years of coca-eradication programs, the drug trade continues to flourish and coca production continues, while drug war-related abuses abound. The cyclical patterns of violence that have developed in the Chapare as a result of the U.S. war on drugs will no doubt continue well into the future.

U.S. Involvement in Colombia

Although the Bolivian government in recent years has consistently met U.S. coca-eradication targets and other counternarcotics objectives, it has faced cuts in U.S. assistance as funds are diverted to Colombia. In Colombia, the U.S. drug war is inextricably intertwined with the military's counterinsurgency campaign. The number of victims of political violence killed on any given day in Colombia has almost doubled in recent years, to twenty per day.²⁰ Over 70 percent of these killings are attributed to right-wing paramilitary groups, often allied with the country's security forces; the rest are attributed directly to the Colombian security forces and to the insurgents. The tactics of the FARC in particular have become increasingly brutal, and this organization is responsible for widespread killings and kidnappings. In addition, political violence has forced more than one million Colombians from their homes—over three hundred thousand in 2000—mostly fleeing paramilitary rampages.²¹ Paramilitary groups are responsible for hundreds of massacres of civilians a year.

The ties between paramilitary and state security forces are well documented. Human Rights Watch reports "compelling evidence that certain Colombian army brigades and police detachments continue to promote, work

with, support, profit from, and tolerate paramilitary groups, treating them as a force allied to and compatible with their own."²² Despite periodic pledges on the part of the Colombian government to combat paramilitary activity, the Colombian armed forces have failed to take adequate steps toward reining in the paramilitaries. Apart from a handful of high-profile cases where significant international pressure was brought to bear, the Colombian military has failed to prosecute and punish members of its ranks implicated in paramilitary activity and other human rights atrocities. Moreover, the military high command has punished those who have spoken out against collaboration with paramilitary groups and has promoted those who have fostered paramilitary activity.

U.S. policy toward Colombia underwent important changes beginning in mid-1997. The Clinton administration began to move beyond a narrow focus on drug trafficking in Colombia to take into greater account the devastating impact of political violence. Growing U.S. recognition of the insurgent threat turned Colombia into a top national security priority, and, over the course of 1998 and 1999, political support among U.S. policy makers for a more direct U.S. role in the Colombian counterinsurgency effort grew considerably.

The U.S. military steadily increased its support to its Colombian counterparts, carrying out a range of training and assistance programs that appear to go well beyond counter narcotics support, including training, manning radar sites, and intelligence gathering. According to a 1998 *New York Times* investigation: "The separation Washington has tried to make between these two campaigns—one against drug trafficking, the other against the guerrillas—is breaking down. Officials say more United States training and equipment are going to shore up basic deficiencies in the tactics, mobility and firepower of the Colombian military, rather than for operations directed at the drug trade."²³

In late 1998, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen and Colombian Minister of Defense Rodrigo Lloreda announced stepped-up military collaboration and the formation of a bilateral working group, intended to facilitate increased U.S. training, sharing of aerial and satellite intelligence data, and U.S. support for the restructuring and modernization of the Colombian armed forces. According to press reports at the time, then-SouthCom commander General Charles Wilhelm stated that the agreement highlights the close relations between the two militaries, that U.S. assistance is not restricted in any way, and that it could be used to combat both drug trafficking and guerrillas.²⁴ General Wilhelm himself claimed that he had become a "crucial adviser" to the Colombian high command and was assisting with an ambitious reorganization of the Colombian armed forces.²⁵

In mid-2000, the U.S. Congress approved the \$1.3 billion emergency aid

package for Plan Colombia described previously, the bulk of which was geared toward shoring up the Colombian armed forces in their war against the FARC in the southern coca-growing region of the country. It included equipping and training three army counter narcotics battalions and the provision of sixty sophisticated helicopters to allow ground support for aerial herbicide campaigns.

The emergency aid package, however, coincided with a serious effort on the part of the Colombian government to restart peace talks with insurgent groups. Washington adopted a two-pronged strategy, publicly expressing support for the Pastrana government's efforts, while privately urging for more military action. Few in Washington believe that the war can be won militarily. Many argue, however, that an El Salvador-type strategy must be pursued, whereby the U.S. military provides the assistance, training, and intelligence necessary for Colombian troops to bolster significantly their ability to confront the guerrillas. That, in turn, is intended to change the correlation of forces, increasing the political clout of the military and eventually forcing the guerrillas to negotiate from a position of weakness.

The September 11, 2001, attacks, followed by the collapse of the filtering peace process in February 2002, bolstered the position of those arguing for a military approach and a direct U.S. counterinsurgency role in Colombia. The FY2003 aid package announced by the administration includes nearly one hundred million dollars to equip additional army battalions to protect oil pipelines in the northeastern part of the country. The administration has also requested congressional approval for eliminating restrictions on providing U.S. assistance and intelligence for counterinsurgency purposes, erasing the previously murky line between U.S. counter narcotics and counterinsurgency support.

Some of Colombia's neighbors have become alarmed at the escalating U.S. involvement in Colombia and the potential "spillover effects" of U.S. military aid. Ecuador in particular has raised two issues: the potential environmental impact of dumping large quantities of herbicides into the fragile Amazonian ecosystem and the potential flood of refugees fleeing political violence and human rights violations as the conflict intensifies.²⁶ The aerial eradication program funded by the U.S. government has also generated significant controversy within Colombia because of the potentially devastating health and environmental consequences of spraying toxic herbicides on a massive scale and because of the government's failure to provide adequate economic alternatives for those growing coca. The governors in the areas most affected by the aerial spraying have actively campaigned—in Colombia and Washington—against the program.

The eradication program tends to target small coca farmers, while 745-

hachinas, or coca-leaf harvesters, are some of the primary victims of drug sweeps on the ground. Coca-growing regions have become a melting pot of people from all over Colombia: those fleeing right-wing paramilitary or leftist guerrilla violence, peasants forced off their land, and young men with no prospects for employment in urban shantytowns. With no other economic alternative, they are willing to face the jungle region's harsh living conditions in order to eke out a subsistence-level wage through the region's main economic activity: coca. Coca, in other words, is an economic necessity for many. As bluntly stated by one local bishop, Belarmino Corea, "The people fear that if they stop growing coca, they will die of hunger."²⁷

When their coca crops are eradicated, as in the case of the small farmers, or they are forced off coca fields, as in the case of the *rachachinas*, there are three options: go deeper into the jungle to grow more coca, become farmhands of drug traffickers who manage large coca plantations in more remote areas, or join the ranks of the FARC. In short, U.S. coca-eradication efforts in Colombia are counterproductive. Colombia is the only country in the Andean region that has accepted the use of chemical herbicides to eradicate coca; yet since the program got underway in 1995, coca production in Colombia has increased by more than 150 percent.²⁸

In contrast to the other Andean countries, the collateral damage of U.S. policy in Colombia stems from a very real war with high costs for the civilian population. U.S. officials claim that the situation would likely be even worse without U.S. assistance. Yet each day that the war is prolonged, another twenty people lose their lives—more than seven thousand people a year. Another several hundred thousand are forced to flee their homes. The main con- fact: that many Colombians have with the state in the worst areas of violence is with the forces of repression that have refused to sever their ties to brutal paramilitary groups. U.S. support provided to the Colombian military comes at the expense of aid to civilian institutions and development programs, which remain woefully underfunded but which ultimately are the only viable means of creating a truly democratic, and peaceful, country.

In the post-September 11, 2001, foreign policy-making environment, the U.S. war on drugs is increasingly being folded into the broader war against terrorism. Casting it as a war against "narco-terrorism," however, exacerbates the worst elements of the U.S. war on drugs and hence poses even greater risks to democratic consolidation in the Andean region.

In making local military forces strategic partners in the so-called war on drugs, Washington is expanding their role and mission precisely when it should be seeking to reduce their power and influence, particularly in maintaining internal public order, a task that should correspond to the police. Through the provision of training, intelligence-gathering capabilities, and

military hardware, the U.S. government emboldens local militaries and sometimes reduces the ability of civilian governments to exert control and effective oversight over those forces. Assigning them a task that is inherently "confidential" in nature also hinders civilian oversight, transparency, and accountability. The Colombian military provides a case in point. Since it began receiving significant U.S. assistance, its powers have expanded and the ability of civilian courts to oversee its conduct has declined markedly.

In Colombia, billions of dollars in U.S. counterdrug assistance are fueling the region's only significant counterinsurgency war, hence exacerbating the most serious human rights crisis in the hemisphere. In Bolivia, the human rights crisis in the Chapare coca-growing region is a direct result of U.S. drug policy. And in Peru, through its counternarcotics program, Washington supported the most sinister element of the authoritarian Fujimori regime: the SIN, or the national intelligence service. The "collateral damage" of the U.S. war on drugs is not evident on U.S. city streets—where illicit drugs remain as cheap and readily available as ever—but is far too evident to the people of Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru.