

2005

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Brandon C. Anderson

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# Wars Waged on Drugs, Terror, and Individual Rights in Columbia

**Abstract**

During the height of the drug boom, felt worldwide during the 1980's, 80% of the world's cocaine supply was cultivated and manufactured in Colombia. During the same period, the number of cocaine users in the United States was almost 12 million. This comprised almost half of the cocaine users worldwide. Faced with this mounting problem, United States foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere has become increasingly focused on this issue, waging a War on Drugs in Colombia. The results of this campaign to date, however, are quite unnerving. Today still, almost 80% of the world's cocaine comes from Colombia. Moreover, the number of cocaine users in the United States has risen to almost 13 million. But these are the results felt on American soil and in political agendas around the globe.

**Degree Type**

Open Access Senior Honors Thesis

**Department**

Political Science

**First Advisor**

Dr. Richard Stahler-Sholk

**Keywords**

Civil rights Colombia, Terrorism Colombia, Drug traffic Investigation, Drug control Colombia

Wars Waged on Drugs, Terror, and Individual Rights in Colombia

By

Brandon C. Anderson

A Senior Thesis Submitted to the

Eastern Michigan University

Honors Program

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation

with Honors in Political Science

Approved at Ypsilanti, Michigan, on this date April 11, 2005

**Wars Waged on Drugs, Terror, and  
Individual Rights in Colombia**

**Brandon C. Anderson**

**E00206633**

**Honors Thesis**

**PLSC 499**

**Dr. Richard Stahler-Sholk**

**Winter 2004**



During the height of the drug boom, felt worldwide during the 1980's, 80% of the world's cocaine supply was cultivated and manufactured in Colombia. During the same period, the number of cocaine users in the United States was almost 12 million. This comprised almost half of the cocaine users worldwide. Faced with this mounting problem, United States foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere has become increasingly focused on this issue, waging a War on Drugs in Colombia. The results of this campaign to date, however, are quite unnerving. Today still, almost 80% of the world's cocaine comes from Colombia. Moreover, the number of cocaine users in the United States has risen to almost 13 million. But these are the results felt on American soil and in political agendas around the globe.

The one outcome of America's War on Drugs in Colombia is that over 200,000 Colombian citizens have died in this bloody and brutal conflict. Based on these statistics together, it is clear to say that the War on Drugs has failed. It has failed to curb the increasing threat that the drug trade presents to the security of Colombia, the United States, as well as the Western Hemisphere. It has failed to give hope to the people of Colombia. Colombia as a whole has been divided along socioeconomic lines. Its government is ineffective and corrupt. Furthermore, the social and political fabric of Colombia as a whole has been irreparably damaged in its current environment and the country as a whole is on the brink of collapse.

This predicament has been propagated by several different factors. First, the government of Colombia has refused to hear the outcry of the poor peasantry in its country. In reaction, this peasantry has taken up arms against this government, and in doing so; they built a system of military defiance.

Next, the United States has time and time again employed a policy that defies its stated goals. These policies that are publicized to stop the flow of drugs from Colombia have, in all effect, increased that flow. Using this basis, it is clear to say that US policy toward Colombia has been carried out for the specific purpose of propping up the corrupt and ineffective governmental regime in Colombia, and therefore to exert its will on Colombia and Latin America.

Finally, the international community has refused to see the problem and interact on behalf of justice. In each instance that an actor other than the United States becomes a party to any action in Colombia, such as Plan Colombia, they are repeatedly shunned by US and Colombian policymakers for not giving in to the militaristic basis for all previous intervention. This model, which has again presented itself in the War on Terrorism, will continue to fail should there be no change in its policies and the way in which these policies are carried out.

Colombia has been stuck in a stagnant predicament for decades. It has been said that the conflict in Colombia is a direct result of the drug trade. This is simply not true. Colombia is embroiled in a civil war, which began long before the drug trade ever existed. Colombia's current situation has been molded by many factors, most specifically the actors involved. Another factor that cannot be overlooked is the stance of the United States regarding Colombia.

At the turn of the century, with a need for new and innovative trade routes, the United States took a keen interest in Colombia. Colombia possessed a prize they, themselves, did not even fathom until the US brought it to their attention. That is, the small strip of land connecting North and South America, which would later become the

Panama Canal. After a less than friendly meeting between US and Colombian officials, the United States was left with little hope of constructing and taking control of such a canal under the Colombian regime.

With this in mind, the United States policy changed to “suggest” the secession of the northern region of Colombia to become what is today known as Panama. Once this secession was complete, the US found the Panamanian government much more helpful in negotiating the construction of the Panama Canal as well as a forward base of operations for the US military.

The United States has embarked on a journey in Latin America, which has seen many changes since the end of World War II. During the 1950’s, the primary goal of US policy in Latin America was to stem the tide of Communism. Kennedy’s administration had already seen a close relationship form between Castro’s Cuba and the Soviet Union. This relationship brought the US to the brink of nuclear war with the Bay of Pigs standoff. It was clear that US policy had to reflect the nature of an impending crisis, should more Latin American states choose to follow the path of Communism.

It is with this in mind that US policy was crafted in an attempt to direct and control the influences on governments of Latin America. Often times this resulted in a military coup of the existing regime, backed by the CIA. The US even went so far as to support many ruthless authoritarian dictators whose cruel torture of thousands repressed the voice of the poor. These sorts of alliances favored governments who were stable, while overlooking the horrendous treatment of its population.

As the Kremlin fell, and Communism was seemingly defeated, the drug trade took its place as a serious threat to the security of Latin America, and in turn, the United States

itself. This was the ideology used by Washington bureaucrats at the time. This ideology made clear that this new threat, whether real or altogether harmless, called the United States to create a policy that mandated military intervention of some sort. The “War on Drugs” was carried out with its express purpose being to stifle the drugs flowing from Latin America into the United States. For more than a decade the United States carried out this war by focusing on the source of the problem. This source presented itself as the cultivation, manufacture, and transportation of these illegal substances in Colombia.

And yet again, another change has forced US policy in Latin America to react. The tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup> turned the focus of US policymakers to that of terrorism. This contemporary “War on Terror” has supplanted the “War on Drugs” as the prime focus of US foreign policy. Even in Latin America, and specifically Colombia, the war on terror has become the focus, even though the “War on Drugs” has not curbed the drug trade. These trends have become evident when examining the conflict in Colombia.

Colombia has faced constant strife since the mid 1960’s with no clear end in sight. It has not seen the revolving door of coup after coup ousting legitimate governmental leadership. For the topic at hand it is necessary to return to 1961 in order to evaluate the historical significance of events which still plague Colombia today.

Evaluation of the Colombian case requires a look at the different actors who influence the future of this Latin American state. Furthermore, several sub-actors present themselves as playing an important role in changing the outcome. The first set of actors includes: leftist guerilla militants, right-wing paramilitary groups, as well as the military of the government of Colombia itself.

Inequity plagued Colombia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The rich became richer at the expense of the poor, who became poorer. Ninety percent of the land in Colombia was owned by less than ten percent of its population during the 1950's and 1960's. (Thoumi, 1995) The poor were laborers who worked for meager salaries to cultivate land for the rich. One statistic shows that more than fifty percent of Colombia's population lived on only a few pesos a day. (Thoumi, 1995) These peasants were subjected to the worst living conditions imaginable in Colombia, and their numbers kept climbing.

Moreover, the peasantry of Colombia was excluded from the political process in Colombia. This exclusion set up a political system in which only the rich landowners could voice their interests. This type of elitist government setting protected only the interests of those who were rich. Most of the poor peasantry were those who were uneducated, and therefore, deemed by the state unqualified to participate in the political process. They were unable to change their situation using traditional methods of political participation, and grew restless with the dark future before them.

President Camargo took the first step toward reconciliation with this enormous group of peasants in 1961 when he began to institute Colombia's first agrarian reform. This reform planned to shift ownership of unused government lands to the peasantry of Colombia. This agrarian reform plan went further to divide idle plots of land owned by private citizens among these poor peasants as well.

Although well intentioned, this plan did not garner the support of the elitist ruling class in Colombia. This group blocked all attempts by Camargo, along with his two successors, Valencia and Restrepo. Restrepo even went so far as to establish a grassroots movement. This movement, known as ANUC had aspirations of pressuring

change from the bottom up, rather than relying on a political system, which had forgotten them long ago. The two catalysts were in place for the ignition of the dispute still haunting Colombia today.

In 1964 a Communist-inspired peasant group calling itself the “Independent Republic of Marquetalia” was operating in southern Tolima inside of Colombia. The goals of this group were to garner some sort of economic stability by bringing together a group of people who would work as one to allow the entirety of the group to survive. This cohort, although small in number, threatened the legitimacy of the government of Colombia by overtaking a small parcel of land to call his or her own. Furthermore, their “Communist intentions” gave the United States policymakers just enough incentive to order the CIA to back the government’s offensive. In May of that year, the Colombian military was called to intervene. This conflict matched 16,000 well-armed military personnel against the cooperative community of less than 1000.

The bloody raid to put down the perceived uprising of the Communist party within Colombia was later known as the Marquetalia raid. This escapade gave birth to what we know today as the guerilla groups within Colombia. Two distinct sub actors impact the politics of Colombia substantially, irrespective of their relatively small numbers.

Shortly after the raid on the Independent Republic of Marquetalia, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia was founded. This group, known by its Spanish acronym (FARC), was founded by Manuel Marulanda and survivors of the Marquetalia raid. FARC comprises the largest militant guerilla group in Colombia and

quickly established strongholds in the rural, jungle territories of the state. It is by far the most influential of these guerilla groups due to its size and range of territorial influence.

FARC grew quickly and secured the support of many rural farmers who relied mainly on subsistence to survive. Marulanda and his guerrillas began to attack rich landowners, civilian targets, as well as many military installations, quickly gaining the attention of the government in Bogotá.

The goal of FARC was simple. It wanted to make the voices of the many poor, starving people in Colombia heard. From their perspective, the government of Colombia had abandoned them. Their basic needs were not met. Some indicators of their impoverishment included the infant mortality rate at this time. Twenty five percent of all children born during this time did not live to see the age of ten in Colombia. (Thoumi, 1995) They suffered from malnutrition. Those who did survive received little or no education. They had no access to the government to change their plight. Furthermore, these people had little or no hope of changing their situation through conventional means. Therefore, they were resolved in shaking up the Colombian government and the overall political environment through violent methods.

These methods proved to be quite successful and were not limited to the government of Colombia. FARC targeted government officials, members of the military, and influential business leaders, landowners, or drug cartel leaders alike. This turned their war into a war of haves against have-nots. A combination of guerilla tactics and keen intelligence proved to be too much for Colombia's military to handle throughout the decades of their campaign.

Between 1984 and 1987, and after almost twenty years of strife, this group began the reconciliatory peace process through talks with government officials. They even went so far as to found a political party that would serve as the voice of the underrepresented peoples of Colombia. This party was known as the Patriotic Union.

A cease-fire was declared, allowing the political wing of this guerilla group to run for office. Less than two years after open elections including members of the Patriotic Union began, this group monopolized many of the elections in the rural areas of Colombia. The government of Colombia saw this as a threat to security, so in conjunction with paramilitary groups and drug cartels, the government's security forces oversaw the murder of more than two thousand officials of the Patriotic Union. (Thoumi, 1995) These included congress members, mayors, and election candidates. These actions of repression served as a catalyst to spark a full-blown revolution in Colombia.

After these atrocities, FARC grew quickly throughout the 1990's. This expansion occurred for three main reasons. First, land concentration and the coca boom accelerated peasant migration to the lowlands. Second, a wave of previous struggles brought severe repression by the state, thereby invigorating the population to support FARC through direct or indirect participation in their mutual struggle. Finally, the guerilla victories in surrounding Latin American states energized the hopes of victory for these militants. (Livingstone, 2003) Most sources consistently state that their numbers doubled between 1986 and 1995. Moreover, this number has almost tripled since then, reaching between 16,000 and 20,000 active combatants. ([www.farc-ep.org](http://www.farc-ep.org), 2002) Most of this support is derived from poor peasants and unemployed rural workers. Clearly, the



combination of increasing poverty and severe government repression was the catalyst for the revolutionary mentality of FARC and its members.

FARC quickly regrouped and abandoned any hope for peace after their political party was left leaderless. The main focus turned again to violence and militant campaigns. They quickly took hold of massive territories within Colombia. This group now turned the main focus of its financing to two major sectors. First, the drug trade became the main source of financing FARC.

Most accounts find that a wide majority of Colombia's coca is grown in FARC controlled territory. In fact, between \$200 and \$400 million (US) dollars of FARC funding comes from its connection to the drug trade. ([www.ciponline.org/colombia/infocombat.htm](http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/infocombat.htm), 2003) Although FARC does not actively participate in the cultivation and refining of coca into cocaine, most believe that they control the latter transportation phase of the cocaine trafficking chain. Furthermore, it is believed that they mainly focus on the "taxation" of coca growers located within its territories.

The other main source of financing for FARC comes from kidnapping and extortion for ransom. Both of these endeavors have been quite successful for FARC. No one type of individual seems to be discriminatorily eliminated from being kidnapped by FARC. The two factors for being a target of FARC are to be rich or powerful. Possessing either of these two qualities have resulted in the abduction of thousands, and countless more extortion attempts, which have profited FARC tremendously.

Presently, FARC's influence is felt in at least 60% of Colombia's 1050 municipalities. Further, FARC controls over a third of Colombia's territory. The territory that is most often a point of conflict is in the Putumayo region of Colombia.

The second subgroup of militant guerrillas in Colombia is the National Liberation Army. It is known by its Spanish acronym, ELN. Founded in 1964 by Colombian students who underwent training in Cuba, it has followed the Cuban model of rural rebellion, which was employed by Fidel Castro during the 1950's. This group is highly popular among students whose critical view of the government inspired them to militancy. Furthermore, a segment of Catholic priests who subscribed to the idea of liberation theology served as another major supporter of this group. ELN is, at its core, more ideological in nature when compared to FARC. ELN's focus is to take back the country from oppressors in the government for purposes of equality in rights, rather than just economic equality. The segment of student and priest support for ELN is comprehensive and overwhelming in fervor, yet limited in number.

ELN forces never used rural communities in the same way that the FARC did. The ELN has mainly been based out of cities. This was due to the higher volume of students and priests. This location has had one major repercussion for ELN rebels. These urban locations have caused a much higher level of repression by government forces. Cities are easier places for Colombia's military to conduct operations rather than the dense jungles of the countryside where supply lines are easily cut off. Therefore, the Colombian military has had many huge successes battling the ELN. This is the key factor when evaluating the size of this guerilla group. Unlike the FARC, it is estimated

that total current combatants within this group number less than 4000. (Livingstone, 2003)

The ELN operates mainly in the in the northeastern regions of Colombia around Arauca, Casanare, and Santander. Although the ELN is similar to FARC in that mainly kidnapping and extortion finance it. The ELN specializes in mass kidnappings. Livingstone states in Inside Colombia, that in 2000 the ELN kidnapped the entire congregation of a church in the region of Cali.

A main target for ELN activities is Colombia's oil infrastructure. In 2001 alone, the ELN bombed the Cano Limon pipeline 127 times. (Scott, 2003) Furthermore, the ELN is known for attacking Colombia's power infrastructure. Specifically, they bomb electrical utilities, wiping power to large regions out for days, and sometimes weeks at a time. ELN's focus on damaging the oil pipelines as well as Colombia's power infrastructure has put a target on this group. Both the Colombian and United States governments view the actions of this group much more damaging to the future of Colombia than the actions of the much larger FARC. These concerns are mainly monetary, and do not take into account the human factor of the actions of FARC.

The overwhelmingly stated goal of the ELN is to conduct a "national convention" of sorts between the people of Colombia and its government. The ELN wants this to be a long-term reconciliation process, which is focused on reparations for the people. With all of this said, both the FARC and the ELN seem to be fighting the same battles using very different methods.

By no means are these guerilla groups simply a militia made up of farmers fighting with pitchforks. It is important to understand that these groups have evolved into

highly efficient networks that rival the coordination between the different groups of the Colombian Military itself. These guerilla groups have developed a highly complicated system of smuggling weapons and information technologies into Colombia from surrounding countries.

Groups like FARC and ELN purchase arms from stockpiles set up during periods of other civil war in neighboring countries. Furthermore, these groups have grown to use the expertise from some of the most elaborate guerilla groups in Latin America, who are no longer functional.

Another important perspective on guerilla groups in Colombia shows that their total numbers may be deceiving. It has been widely reported and confirmed through human rights organizations within Colombia that large numbers of children are recruited into the ranks of the FARC and ELN groups. Children are often “volunteered” from struggling families in the countryside who cannot afford to provide food for themselves. These families are alleviated of the burden of that child, and glad to contribute to the effort.

These children bear the brunt of the casualties for the guerilla groups battling military and paramilitary forces. They are obviously not trained. However, they are seen as a key component of the fighting force by the leadership. Human rights groups around the world view this as being a major reason to end the civil strife between the actors in Colombia. Obviously, the life of a child should not be the price to pay in any struggle.

Although these are the only two guerilla groups mentioned, it is worth noting that many smaller groups exist. Some of these include the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), Guevarist Revolution Army (ERG) and the Popular Revolution Army (ERP). All of

these smaller groups are often categorized as satellites of the two larger groups who carry out actions specific to their areas of operation. These groups are not nearly as influential as their larger counterparts; however they play an important role in understanding just how widespread these guerilla groups have become since their inception in 1964.

Now the focus must turn to the paramilitary groups of Colombia. Paramilitary groups comprise the next set of actors who play a major role in the plight of Colombia. The term paramilitary is used to describe various types of illegal right-wing armed groups, which work alongside the armed forces. (Livingstone, 2003)

These groups are privately funded militias of landowners, businesses and drug traffickers. (NACLA *Report on the Americas*, 2003) They were created for the express purpose of defending their financiers from kidnapping, extortion, or murder by the guerilla groups.

The growth of these groups coincided with the growth of the drug trade as well as the appearance of guerilla groups. They were created as a direct response to the kidnapping and murder of rich landowners and drug leaders by guerilla groups and their founding was made possible by the cocaine boom. Their ideology is simple: “private property is essential.” (Scott, 2003) This is what paramilitary groups protect.

The tactics of these groups are brutal and unrelenting. Their preferred methods of persuasion include assassinations, disappearances, massacres, and forced displacement of entire populations. As stated earlier, this was the main actor who was blamed with the downfall of the Patriotic Union. The paramilitary groups are a main source of the thousands of human rights violations that occur in Colombia each year.

Until 1989, these groups operated freely in Colombia. One United Nations report states, "Paramilitary operations against the civilian population have been stepped up in intensity and frequency; far from diminishing, they have increased; but they have not encountered any governmental action aimed at stopping them." (Livingstone, 2003) Paramilitary groups collaborated closely with the government and its security forces. This collaboration included mostly intelligence. This included intelligence regarding the position of large groups of guerilla troops. Also, some of this intelligence regarded guerilla plans for future attacks on private civilians, which the government was not able to act on. It seemed whenever there was an action that the government of Colombia was either unable or unwilling to undertake, they left it to the unrelenting, unregulated paramilitary groups.

Paramilitary groups also had free passage within Colombia. They were free to move about at their will. The government seemingly looked the other way when it came to paramilitary operations. This trend of military deception in Colombia with regard to paramilitary groups and human rights violations seems to have occurred directly in response to the threat of lost aid military aid from the United States due to human rights violations by Colombia's military.

These two facts gave paramilitaries a huge advantage when battling guerilla forces. They could easily get intelligence regarding the location and size of force for guerilla base camps from military officials and quickly massacre hundreds. In 1989, the government declared these groups illegal however, little was actually done. Their collusion with the military continued then, and still continues today. This is a major

source of controversy for the Colombian government and will be discussed in more detail later.

The close association between drugs and paramilitary groups in Colombia is well documented. They, along with their financiers are responsible for a majority of the drug trafficking out of Colombia. Although this connection has always existed, little has ever been directed at these groups by the government, until recently.

In 1997, this drug connection was personified, when the paramilitary groups in Colombia settled divisions between themselves to form a national structure known as the Unified Self-Defense Groups of Colombia, otherwise known as the AUC. Until this point, paramilitary groups operated without much communication between their many different factions. The formation of the AUC now made these groups much more dangerous.

Having a hierarchical system of authority and communication in place made this group many times more efficient. The AUC was now capable of coordinating their actions throughout Colombia. Such coordination, along with effective intelligence from Colombia's military would turn what was once a much unorganized group into an efficient mechanism for repressing hundreds of thousands.

At the same time the AUC wasted no time in cementing the stamp of drug trafficking onto their seal when they named several prominent drug traffickers as national leaders. Some of these included Murillo, Mejia, and Zuluaga. (Livingstone, 2003) Each of these men moved from prominent drug positions to command key paramilitary blocks.

Since this time, the AUC has only increased its level of brutality. In 2000, in a statement released to the world, the AUC proclaimed that it would now target human rights workers. Their statement is as follows:

“Barrancabermeja, September 28, 2000

Press Release, Warning...

The AUC identifies the human rights workers and especially members of Credhos as guerilla sympathizers and for this reason from this moment forward we consider them military targets of our organization. It is important to say that all of this crap that they are doing is the policy of the FARC and ELN guerrillas, since we know whom you report to at the end of the day.

The AUC is an anti subversive organization and we are going to carry out a social cleansing in Barrancabermeja and all of Colombia, to create a country free of kidnapping, extortion and trickery.

We have identified the members of Cedhos as working for the political wing of the FARC and ELN guerrillas. These individuals are well known to us and we know where to find them. They do nothing more than denounce crimes committed by the AUC and attack us constantly as enemies of peace and nevertheless they do not publicly denounce the crimes committed by guerrillas.

We carry out this cleansing for the future of Colombia because if we eliminate them we will be constructing the country we desire.

We have in our power a cleansing list and we are going to give some statistics to these S.O.B.S. If they don't clear out, we will kill them.”

This statement should leave no doubt that the AUC does not value human life, nor does it value those who try to protect it. This group is based upon the greedy search for power and money. Whoever stands in its way is expendable.

Another illustration of the heinousness of the AUC's actions comes from the Colombian Commission of Jurists. This commission found that between October 1995 and June 2001, almost 12 thousand murders took place. Of those, almost 76% were attributed to paramilitary groups. Please see Figures 1 and 2.



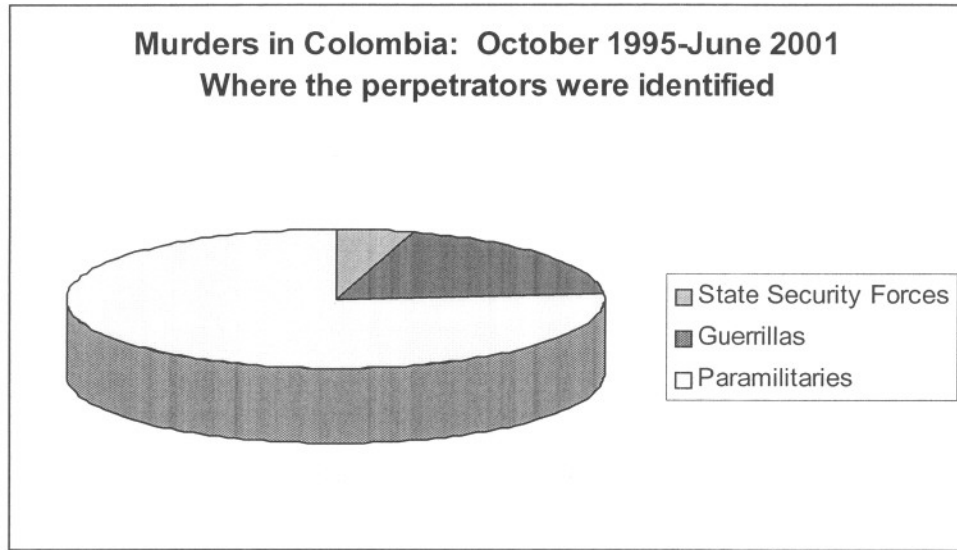


Figure 1

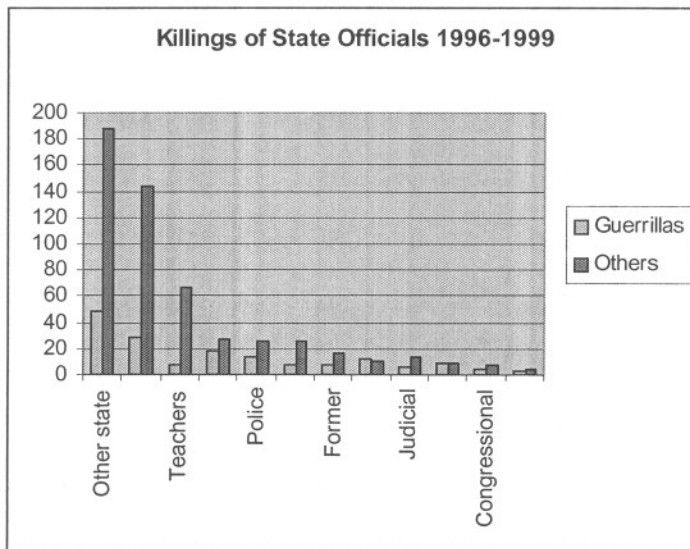


Figure 2

The AUC and other paramilitary groups are responsible for some of the most egregious human rights violations ever committed in Colombia. They have murdered entire villages of women and children simply because their husbands had been linked with guerrilla activity. (Livingstone, 2003) Such violations of human rights have not received the harsh repercussions from the government, if any. They have only been used

as propaganda to spread fear in the hearts of the poor farmers and guerrilla militants who occupy the countryside.

The Colombian government and military assets make up the last of the three actors to be discussed. Colombia has avoided the fate of many of its Latin American neighbors by staving off coup after coup. Often times, coups are as a direct result of an autonomous military regime. These regimes operate as they see fit and when the time comes that disagreement occurs between the military and the government, a coup results.

In contrast to this trend, the military and security services of Colombia operate quite autonomously. ([www.ciponline.org/colombia](http://www.ciponline.org/colombia), 2003) The government forces in Colombia are made up of an Army with 146,000 members ([www.ejercicio.mil.co](http://www.ejercicio.mil.co), 2005), the National Police with 120,000 members ([www.policia.gov.co](http://www.policia.gov.co), 2005), the Air Force with 10,000 members ([www.fac.mil.co](http://www.fac.mil.co), 2005) and the Navy with 5,000 members ([www.armada.mil.co](http://www.armada.mil.co), 2005). The Defense Ministry rather loosely oversees all of these branches.

Despite their claims, Colombia's government is entangled in a battle against insurgency, not drugs, and has been for many years. One trend exemplifies this. If guerrilla groups and paramilitaries are compared with one another it is clear that guerrillas threaten the legitimacy of the government in Colombia, and paramilitaries do not. Simply put, paramilitary groups act to preserve the same interests held by the government. They protect wealthy landowners, who are also the elite that exert influence in the realm of government business.

Both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries have close associations with the drug trade. In fact, it is clear that paramilitary groups are more closely tied to coca production,

manufacture, and transportation than the guerrillas could ever hope for. The drug cartels in Colombia are the main financiers of paramilitary groups in Colombia. Furthermore, more than fifty percent of Colombia's exported cocaine is transported using the same personnel who make up paramilitary groups. (Livingstone, 2003) Based on these facts, it is logical to conclude that the government and military of Colombia do not see the drug trade as a threat to Colombia's survival.

In fact, one may make the claim that Colombia's military has actually encouraged and participated in the drug trade. This blatant corruption has been documented over the years. The brother of General Luis Camacho Leiva used a Defense Ministry plane to smuggle cocaine out of the country. Fernano Botero, the defense minister under President Samper left office after being charged with accepting money from the Cali drug cartel.

In 1983, an entire squadron of army troops smuggled a laboratory used to manufacture cocaine into Brazil using military aircraft. The charges of corruption even seem to reach all of the way to the President of Colombia. In 1996, President Samper flew to the United States for a meeting in Washington with President Clinton. It was discovered upon arrival, that the crew of his jet had packed hidden compartments in the cargo bay of the plane full with cocaine. (Livingstone, 2003)

This pattern of corruption certainly seems to indicate that the government and military forces in Colombia have as much to do with the proliferation of cocaine as the paramilitary and guerrilla groups do. One can assume that if the connection with drugs reaches as high as it seems to, then the military/governmental connection with drugs probably runs rampant throughout the entire organization.

Furthermore, Colombia's government has continually included the production and export of cocaine in its plans for the country. This can be said based on Gross Domestic Product Alone. Since 1995, Colombia has estimated the cocaine industry to produce nearly \$4 billion in revenues. Based on this assertion, the Colombian government has continually included this fact in the total published GDP for the country. (Payne, 2003) This may be an attempt to artificially inflate the perceived "development" occurring domestically in Colombia in order to appease the international community and show positive results of the War on Drugs.

Obviously such an assertion would not be the action of a government who wanted nothing to do with the drug trade. This stance indicates that the Colombian government is willing to tolerate the drug trade in its own interests. Contrary to this, when a competing interest is associated with the drug trade the Colombian government seems quick to use the idea of an anti-drug initiative to suppress such a group.

Another serious issue facing the government and military in Colombia is its connection to gross human rights violations. This link implicates many highly regarded Defense Ministry officials and leading commanders in the Colombian military. Beatings, torture, and executions regularly take place at the hands of the military and security forces in Colombia. The number of cases involving torture doubled during the period between 2002 and 2003.

Furthermore, executions of civilians by the military outside of the judicial process in Colombia have increased from 120 cases per year between 1998 and 2002, to 184 documented cases in 2003. (Livingstone, 2003) All of these involve military or security forces. Although in recent years these numbers have seemed to drop from those during

the height of the conflict in the early to mid 1990's, the military's connection to paramilitary groups is undeniable.

In fact, according to Human Rights Watch, in some cases, the military uses the cover of paramilitary groups to carry out gross human rights violations. For example, in response to the mass kidnapping of many Cali drug cartel leaders, Colombia's Third Brigade created, commanded, and provided logistical and intelligence reports for its use. Many of those in command were former military officers recruited by current military officers for this specific task. This specific military group was responsible for 7 executions under investigation by Colombia's Attorney General. ([www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org), 2000)

It is only since the growth of the paramilitary groups that the human rights violations attributed directly to the military have dropped. At the same time, human rights violations linked to the AUC and other paramilitary groups have skyrocketed. The collusion between paramilitary groups and military officials in Colombia may, in fact, be to blame for this phenomenon. (Haugaard et al, 2005)

Notwithstanding the rather indicative connection between the drop in human rights violations attributed to the security forces in Colombia as well as the rise associated with paramilitary groups, the government has taken little or no action regarding the subject. In fact, the US State department called the lack of prosecution involving human rights abusers in the military, "the greatest challenge to the credibility of the government's commitment to human rights." (Haugaard et al, 2005)

Haugaard finds that, "the State Department's last human rights certification memo to Congress could name only 31 military personnel currently under indictment for human rights abuses." She goes on, "Of those, only two are above the rank of major." This

shows the minimalist approach that the Colombian government takes with regard to human rights offenses. Particularly, the government has overlooked countless human rights transgressions in an effort to keep its tight grip on what little control it seems to have over the country at the expense of the rights of its citizens. For example, Human Rights Watch has found compelling evidence implicating half of Colombia's eighteen army brigades in paramilitary activities and human rights violations. Furthermore, this independent group found that most of the commanding officers extending to the rank of general were complicit in these activities. ([www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org), 2000)

Even when the government's Attorney General does decide to prosecute offenders from within the military and security forces, these charges are seldom brought to trial. Even if the cases do make it before a court, many times the charges are summarily dropped at the discretion of the judge. Several examples of this present themselves over recent history.

For example, General Rito Alejo del Rio was recently accused of forming his own personal paramilitary groups. However the Attorney General, at the behest of many current senior military officials, dismissed this case. Furthermore, should the Attorney General not succeed in hiding the facts of these investigations, the prosecutors investigating the cases are often dismissed or transferred in order to avoid any unnecessary court proceedings.

This kind of blatant corruption will haunt the government of Colombia until it puts a stop to it. The obvious lack of interest in the human rights of the citizens in Colombia is seriously damaging any chance that the government has to recover in the struggle against insurgency. This trend does not seem to be changing, even with the

overwhelming presence of non-governmental organizations and international organizations in the country.

All of this being said, it is important to examine the actions that have been taken in Colombia toward the goal of suppressing insurgency and the narcotrafficking. One cannot forget that the main focus of Colombia's struggle is carried out against guerrilla forces through military means. It is important to note, that during the late 1980's to the present, Colombia has consistently allocated more than 3% of its GDP for the military. This figure is enormous when compared to Colombia's neighboring countries. All were consistently below one percent of GDP during this period. (Livingstone, 2003)

There have been, however, several attempts to appease the guerrillas through token peace negotiations. The first significant occurrence happened under the administration of Ernesto Samper. Samper, Colombia's president during the mid 1990's, was surrounded by suspicion as soon as he took office in 1994. Allegations came to light shortly after winning the election, that Samper's campaign had accepted sizeable donations from the Cali drug cartel. To make matters worse, the military performed less than admirably in several battles against guerilla forces.

The counterinsurgency conflict became heated. Samper's administration was forced to make some kind of progress in fear that it would quickly lose all legitimacy. In an effort to do this, Samper made many concessions to the guerrillas. The pinnacle of this occurred when, in 1995, the first offer was made to guerrillas to establish a demilitarized zone. This zone would act as a buffer, as well as act as the scene for negotiations between the two sides.

Samper's plan to create a demilitarized zone backfired. It did not succeed for two reasons. First, the military did not support this initiative. With little legitimacy already, Samper was coming very close to losing the country. To make matters worse, the association between the Cali drug cartel and paramilitary organizations was well known. Based on this, FARC and ELN leadership refused to negotiate with Samper.

FARC officials, instead, agreed to limited peace talks with Samper's rival, Andres Pastrana. In 1998, and due in large part to the peace talks with FARC, Pastrana succeeded Samper as Colombia's president. The first order of business for Pastrana was to acquiesce to the demands of guerrilla militants by establishing a well-defined demilitarized zone. This gave a great deal of hope to the peoples of Colombia, who for too long had endured a bloody domestic conflict.

The military did not approve of this compromise with guerrilla forces. In response to Pastrana's defiance, more than 300 officers, including 16 generals resigned shortly thereafter. (Livingstone, 2003) For the first time, the President of Colombia was seen as a dominant, legitimate, and influential force in the civil unrest.

Pastrana had even broader vision for the future of the conflict, by also negotiating with ELN forces. ELN's stated goal has always been to have a national convention where citizens and government officials can discuss the issues in Colombia over a long period of time. The ELN forces even went so far as to meet with civic groups in Germany where they signed the "Heaven's Gate" agreement. (Livingstone, 2003) This solidified the popular support for the idea of the national convention. The point of contention between the government and ELN leadership became where to hold this national convention. ELN wanted the same treatment that the FARC had received. They



demanded a demilitarized zone in the northeastern territories of Colombia, nearest to their bases of operations, to ensure the safety of all participants.

Pastrana saw this as a threat to the oil industry of that region. Most notably, Occidental and British Petroleum had major assets in the area, which were a constant target for ELN attacks. Pastrana was not willing to give up this area to a demilitarized zone under any circumstances, especially considering the close relationship between these oil companies and the government.

To illustrate this, one must only look at the way in which the government distributes its troops. Over half of Colombia's troops have been deployed to protect oil pipelines and other assets associated with the oil industry. (Scott, 2003) This is partly because an agreement was struck with the Pastrana government in which the oil companies, namely Occidental Oil who's headquarters are in Los Angeles, California, would provide weapons, logistical support, and financing for other military projects in the region in exchange for a dominating presence by the Colombian military.

ELN leadership found this to be unacceptable, and forced Pastrana to act by stepping up operations in its areas of influence. Attacks on the oil and energy infrastructures were more destructive and costly than ever before. Moreover, hijackings and kidnappings were carried out at will by ELN forces.

Pastrana was put in a very difficult situation, and was forced to declare a demilitarized zone in ELN territory. This zone would be highly policed by international organizations and military forces would guard the boundaries of this demilitarized zone to secure oil assets in the area. Paramilitary groups, who carried out a massacre

campaign against anyone who supported the demilitarized zone, heavily disputed this territory.

The crux of Pastrana's administration turned out to be the repaired relations between Colombia and the United States, and will lead into further discussion of US policy. During his administration, Pastrana, the United States came up with a new plan of action for the future of the conflict in Colombia. This was known as Plan Colombia.

The first version of this plan was published in Spanish in 1999. The Colombian government was largely responsible for this version. The original version of Plan Colombia was largely a funding package to help the government cope with the rising pressure associated with insurgency and drug trafficking. In this version there is no mention of military aid in this funding package. After several visits from State Department officials, and US military the English version of Plan Colombia had a very different tone. The Colombian legislature makes clear that it consulted extensively with US officials when drafting later versions of Plan Colombia.

When discussing Plan Colombia, it is necessary to take a moment to examine the trends associated with the "War on Drugs" policy that preceded it. The United States has fought to curb the production of cocaine in Colombia. In the post Cold War era, the largest threat to American security was seen as being the influx of drugs into the United States. (Rabasa, 2001) Statistics show that nearly 80% of the world's cocaine emanates from Colombia, thereby making it the logical choice for intense US scrutiny over the years. After the threat of Communism subsided, Colombia quickly became the third largest USAid recipient in the world, and the largest recipient outside of the Middle East region.

When looking closely at the “War on Drugs,” it is interesting to point out how policy has tried to change the psyche of the American public. The United States government defines drug consumption as posing, “a problem of public health, of crime, and the effect it may have on worker productivity.” (Tokatlian, 1988) These seem to be strictly domestic issues. Why, then, have U.S. policymakers consistently labeled illicit drugs a foreign threat?

The first place to look is directly at the name of this initiative, the “War on Drugs.” This language denotes an external nature of the problem. It could just have easily been called the “War with Drugs.” The latter, however, sounds much too personal, and denotes an internal problem. It could be argued that the external nature of the name alone makes the human mind view the supplier as the problem. Based on this logic, if drugs weren’t “pushed” upon the American public, certainly the people wouldn’t want them anymore. (Tokatlian, 1988)

Going further, based on this external logic, U.S. policy strives to stop the supply, and therefore, stifle the demand. But why would the United States promote a policy that goes against the basic nature of supply and demand? History shows that in a market economy, supply and demand are inherently connected, however it is usually much easier to control the supply by changing the demand rather than vice versa. (Thoumi, 1995) A study conducted by RAND shows that fixing the problem of drugs in the United States would be 23 times more cost-effective by stopping the demand, rather than employing programs such as supply interdiction and eradication. (Rabasa and Chalk, 2001)

Assuming that stopping the supply will change the way the demand for illicit drugs works, why would the United States focus its efforts on an external source, when it

seems much more appropriate and cost effective to deal with the problem domestically? Juan Tokatlian writes in his 1988 article entitled, “*National Security and Drugs: Their Impact on Colombian-U.S. Relations*,” that, “since the United States perceives the danger emanating from an immense supply which threatens to break down social and institutional structures, its logic suggests that it wage war on the ‘source,’ in other words on the place(s) where production and processing are located.” He goes on to write, “By the same token, the concept of war demands that the predominant instruments should be of a coercive-repressive nature.”

Tokatlian makes a very valid point, which leads to the assertion that it is easier for the United States government to repress the rights of the suppliers in another country, rather than to suppress the civil liberties of its own citizens. This is crucial to understanding U.S. policy regarding the “War on Drugs.” In order to prevent the breakdown of social and institutional structures in the United States, go after the source in a country where it does not really matter how this foreign state’s social and institutional structures behave.

Nevertheless, whether this logic is faulty or not, it has dictated the policy regarding the “War on Drugs” for more than three decades. The most telling aspect of U.S. policy in Colombia is the amounts spent and what these funds were used for. Furthermore, the U.S. has consistently used the stick and carrot approach, not only in Colombia, but also throughout Latin America in order to ensure that its policies were fulfilled.

As stated earlier, U.S. policy has evolved over time in reaction to the political atmosphere of the era. In order to evaluate the “War on Drugs” effort, one must begin

during the Reagan Administration. With Communism soundly defeated, a new threat faced the U.S. The drug boom became a major social, economic, and security issue under the Reagan Administration.

But was this truly a threat? Some may make the claim that drugs were not a threat to security. Using this idea, one may claim that US administrations have used the issue of drugs as a reason to keep military funding at high rates rather than to cut these programs. Therefore, this new threat was announced to America as serious threat to the security of the United States.

In any event, the “War on Drugs” was unveiled, and with it came large amounts of USAid to Colombia. During the early 1990’s, this spending was rather limited and focused mainly on military aid. This military aid did not subside, however, even with the advent of Plan Colombia.

Plan Colombia was created in order to stabilize Colombia through ten specific goals. The first of these elements is Colombia’s economic recovery. Through modernization, and job creation, the hope was to attract foreign investment and improve access to foreign markets. The second goal of Plan Colombia was to reform the fiscal operations of Colombia’s government. Strict spending and loan repayment processes were components of this goal.

Next, Plan Colombia hoped to end the conflict through a negotiated peace settlement. The conflict was draining Colombia of any hope of recovery. Furthermore, Plan Colombia went on to call for a strengthened military and national police in order to secure all of Colombia’s citizens. Along with this, judicial reform was seen as a key component to restoring such order. (Livingstone, 2003)

It is interesting to note the ideology used in formulating the policies thus far. A major goal of Plan Colombia was indeed to end the conflict in Colombia. The notion of how to go about doing it is perplexing. The policy used the logic that if Colombia were to commit huge amounts of money to its military, the conflict would be easier to end. In fact, this is not the case. Increased military spending in Colombia has only fueled the fighting, contrary to what policymakers had stated as the major goal of Plan Colombia.

The next goal involved training of military elements with the express purpose of counter-narcotics operations. This involved a military offensive known as the “Drive South.” The military initiative was devised in order to secure areas under FARC control while eradicating coca fields used to produce cocaine. The territory of Putamayo was specifically targeted by this initiative. In conjunction with this, agriculture methods would be offered to many of the peasants in order to offer profitable alternatives to the cultivation of coca. (Rabasa, 2001)

Very few alternatives have been offered to the peasants in Colombia. The issue here is simple. These peasants may grow a legal crop, which compromises their chances for survival, notwithstanding the hope of ever improving their situation. Or, they may cultivate a highly marketable, yet illegal crop, and with it, hope that they may give their children a brighter future.

The final two components of Plan Colombia were focused on social and governmental reform. No longer could the government of Colombia afford the stigma associated with the corruption of the past. Moreover, the government needed to make a concerted effort to offer social programs such as medical assistance and education to its population. But, in fact, neither the government of Colombia nor the United States had

much to do with the formulation of this policy. This policy was in direct response from the European Union countries that refused to fund what they viewed as a military initiative in Colombia. (Livingstone, 2003) Therefore, Plan Colombia included these social and economic aid policies in order to ensure that Europe would fund the initiative.

All of the goals undertaken by Plan Colombia were to be financed through a cooperative association of the international community. In doing so, this would boost the legitimacy of the operations in the eyes of the world. When dissecting the breakdown of which countries funded different initiatives, it is obvious that the United States funded a majority of military initiatives put into action by Plan Colombia. In fact, research shows that 74% of U.S. funds were earmarked for military aid. In contrast to this, the European Union, who was also a large contributor to the Plan Colombia initiative, financed only social initiatives. Figure 3 notes where U.S. funding was used since 1997.

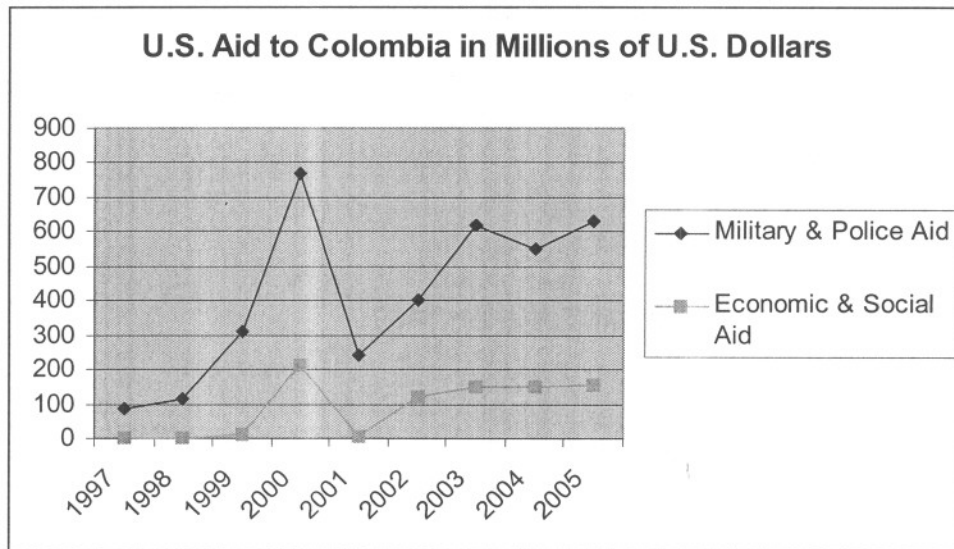


Figure 3

It is clear that military aid was the primary focus of aid given to Colombia by the United States. Specifically, several initiatives took up huge chunks of the budget.

First, in an attempt to modernize Colombia's military, weapons and vehicles such as helicopters were a main component of this aid package. Next, the aerial eradication initiative was a main focus for U.S. policymakers when developing these aid packages.

This program was designed to fumigate large areas of land primarily used for coca production. Although hundreds of thousands of hectares have been fumigated since the inception of this program, according to the GAO, it has been largely unsuccessful. (Rabasa, 2001) This is due to two issues. First, is called the balloon effect. As more and more land in a region is made unfit for cultivation by these fumigation techniques, the farmers of the coca simply move to a different area. Sometimes overflowing across international borders into neighboring countries such as Venezuela, Peru, and Brazil.

Next, these fumigation techniques are not permanent. The soil is ready to be cultivated within 6 months of eradication. (Haugaard, 2005) Furthermore, environmental and health issues have become a major point of contention in Colombia and surrounding nations. The chemicals used to kill the coca plants also have deadly side effects for humans who come in repeated contact with it. Also, wildlife has been irreversibly damaged in the process. Furthermore, many believe that these eradication methods are doing more harm to the farming of legal crops in Colombia, rather than the cultivation of coca. (Livingstone, 2003) This, in turn, drives peasants toward the cultivation of coca even more by lowering their chances of being able to survive by raising legal crops. Not only are those crops not as marketable as coca, but should their land be contaminated by fumigation, then they are literally left with nothing.

The next major component of U.S. funding goes to the training of Colombian personnel. This training takes place in two distinct areas. First of all, under the Southern



Command, military personnel from Colombia are being trained at what is known as the School of the Americas. Between 1999 and 2001 more than 28 thousand Colombian personnel have been trained at the School of the Americas. Please see Figure 4.

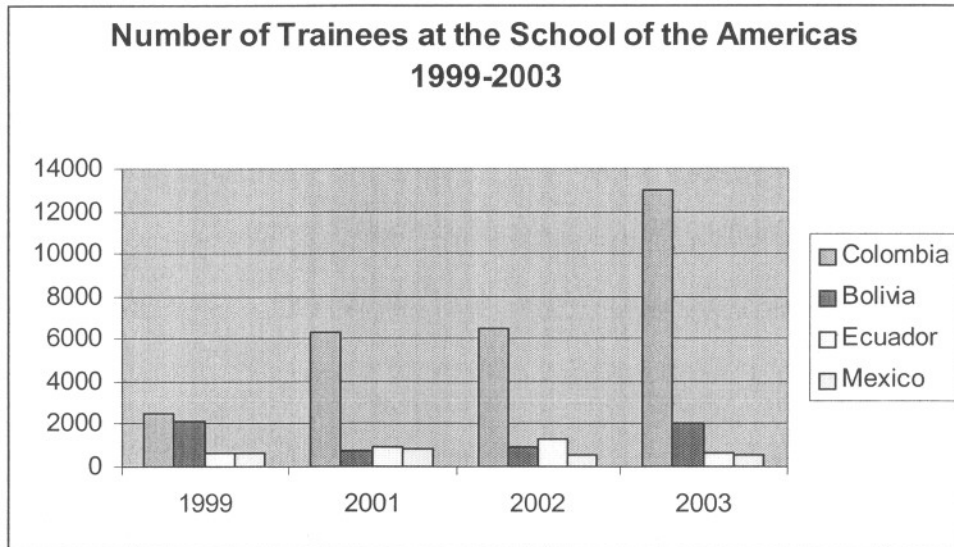


Figure 4

One cannot help but look at the students who have graduated from the School of the Americas with regard to Colombia. Some of the worst atrocities committed in Colombia every year are committed by SOA graduates. Many of the manuals describe using “terrorism against guerrillas,” in which graduates are instructed how to most effectively torture combatants to get information. (Haugaard, 2005)

All of this military funding has come with two key requirements that are stated in U.S. foreign aid law. First and foremost, any nation receiving foreign aid must sign an Article 98 agreement according to the Rome Statute establishing the International Court of Justice. This was established under the Veteran’s Protection Act in U.S. Congress. Under this agreement the foreign state agrees not to prosecute any U.S. military personnel for their actions in the International Court of Justice. In many instances, such

as with Venezuela and Chile, failure to sign this agreement results in a suspension of funding altogether. (Livingstone, 2003)

Military aid from the United States is also contingent on a high standard of human rights, according to the US foreign policy law. In other words, if a specific division of the Colombian Army commits an egregious human rights violation, all funding to that division are suspended until acceptable progress has been made. This is known as the Leahy law.

The Leahy law has been a problem for some U.S. policy makers over the years. The specially trained battalions devoted to anti-drug initiatives are often those with the worst human rights record. Many of those are trained in the U.S. at the School of the Americas. In recent years, however, a loophole has been found to avoid these types of issues regarding human rights.

The Leahy law only applies to funding through the State Department. Beginning under the Clinton Administration and continuing in the Bush Administration, more and more funds are reprogrammed in order to be routed through the Department of Defense. This rids the problem of the Leahy law, and keeping up with human rights offenses.

Congress has also enacted a troop maximum along with a contractor maximum. Until recently, this allowed no more than 400 U.S. troops and 800 military contractors to be stationed in Colombia at any one time. Again, U.S. policymakers have continually found a way around this predicament. This is accomplished by paying mercenaries to fill the role of U.S. troops. Most often these mercenaries are former U.S. officers who have found a more lucrative way to work for the U.S. military. These men and women

comprise more than 10,000 and are closely associated with the anti-drug initiative in Colombia.

The final component of U.S. strategy in Colombia has been to create a very specific divide between counter-drug and counterinsurgency initiatives. As stated before, the United States is helping Colombia fight a “War on Drugs,” not counterinsurgency. It is with this in mind that the U.S. trained troops and U.S. equipment are not to be used under any circumstances in conjunction with a counterinsurgency action. This, however, is quite impossible based on the evidence.

It is clear that the links between drugs and counterinsurgency in Colombia are impossible to separate. The two are intertwined and with one comes the other. Therefore, how can U.S. policy dictate that U.S. assets cannot fight counterinsurgency, when they must stop guerrillas and paramilitary groups who comprise a majority of the drug trade?

Furthermore, many battalions under U.S. funding are charged with protecting much of Colombia’s oil infrastructure. Therefore, one could say that protecting the property of the elites in Colombia, even if those elites are foreign investors, is a major component of US policy and Plan Colombia. Furthermore, based on the trends and patterns presented regarding the ELN guerrillas, one can only wonder how it would be possible to protect these assets without encountering insurgents.

These issues with the divide between the battles against drugs and insurgency as they pertained to foreign aid from the United States have seemingly been put aside as the world environment has again shifted. Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001 America’s focus has shifted from the “War on Drugs” to the “War on Terror.” Recently

passed in Congress, new legislation allowing the crossover from only drug initiatives to include counterinsurgency initiatives has been authorized. This is due in no small part to the fact that the United States has included the FARC, ELN, and AUC on its list of international terrorist organizations.

Contemporary research on the subject is limited, however it is of special importance to note that very little has changed in U.S. policy when comparing the “War on Drugs” and the “War on Terror.” The United States government contends that this too is an external problem, which must be dealt with at the source. Much like the “War on Drugs,” the same people are using the same methods in order to accomplish very similar goals. But, when evaluating the trend of U.S. policy in Colombia, we see that the evolution that was envisioned by the stated goals has not been accomplished.

The first goal of the “War on Drugs” was to lower the amount of drugs coming into the United States and thereby, lower the number of people using drugs. Contrary to this goal, the number of people using drugs, specifically cocaine, has actually risen from almost 12% of the population in 1995 to over 13% in 2003. ([www.ciponline.org](http://www.ciponline.org), 2004) Furthermore, the hope of the United States was to lower the amount of cocaine being produced by Colombia. As the market has grown, so too has the supply. Over 80% of the world’s cocaine is still produced in Colombia. This figure is remarkably similar to what it was at the beginning of the “War on Drugs.”

Finally, although seemingly a minor goal for U.S. policy in Colombia, it seems that the United States felt that in some ways the policies undertaken would change Colombia for the better. In fact, statistics show otherwise. The disparity between rich and poor in Colombia continues to grow. The elite make almost twenty percent more

than they did in the mid 1980's, even after inflation is taken into account, while the majority of population in Colombia earns almost ten percent less than during that same time. (Livingstone, 2003) The numbers of guerrilla and paramilitary forces are on the rise. The Uribe administration has not been able to reverse the corruption that runs rampant throughout all of Colombian government. Justice cannot be provided for the people of Colombia. Human rights cannot be protected for the people of Colombia. Security cannot be provided for the people of Colombia. And still the death toll rises. Over 200,000 civilians and countless guerrillas, paramilitaries, and military personnel are dead, and still the death toll rises. The fear and uncertainty cannot be driven from the hearts and minds of Colombians.

The future in Colombia is uncertain, yet based on this research it is clear that much must change. The bloodshed in Colombia must end. Without an end to this horrific conflict, Colombia will be torn apart across an economic divide so wide it rivals the Grand Canyon. Any policy cannot truly expect a starving family to give up the cultivation of coca if it offers no reasonable alternative that offers no more than a tenth of the profitability. Moreover, no policy can hope for the guerrilla groups to give up their struggle unless positive changes and guarantees are made to ensure a brighter future.

The paramilitary groups, like the AUC, must receive justice for their crimes. No longer can they be hidden in the shadows in hopes that no one notices. They are a major reason as to why the guerrilla groups cannot trust the government's offerings, even if they are token gestures. One cannot expect Colombians to forget the true horror inflicted upon them by this group.

The association with drug cartels must end, and they too must be brought to answer for their crimes. They cannot be included in any sort of peace talks as they have in the past. Their influence must remain of the illicit nature in order to salvage any hope of a positive agreement in the future. Furthermore, the government must take back its country and earn a newfound legitimacy. It must provide adequate social services in all parts of Colombia. Moreover, it imperative to give people access to the political process through free and fair elections, and access to an unbiased judiciary branch of the government.

Finally, and most importantly, none of this will be possible without a re-evaluation of U.S. policy in Colombia. It has been proven that relying solely on military aid does not and will not work. More effort must be made to improve the situation in the whole of Colombia for the sake of Colombians, rather than only for American security. Human rights violators must be brought to justice. They cannot be funded and trained by the United States.

Even as important as the oil industry is to Colombia's economy, new and innovative industry must be developed, and in order for this to happen, a model must be created to supply that industry with a valuable, qualified workforce through education initiatives.

Finally, should the United States hope to win a war that has already been supplanted due to a change in the world's environment, more attention must be paid to those U.S. citizens who make up the supply side of the drug equation. For too long has the United States wished that fighting a battle on a neighbor's soil will make the problem at home disappear. This logic will never solve the problem.

Should these initiatives not become priorities in policy by both the United States and Colombian governments, dire circumstances are ahead. It is naïve to assume that the situation in Colombia will not spread. It is quite possible for Latin America to become overwhelmed by the problems felt in Colombia, if they haven't already. A partnership must be forged, based on mutual benefits and mutual outcomes. Times may change and policies may change in response. However, to imagine that they will ever disappear completely is foolish. Only when policy is created with a goal in mind and executed in the interests of all, shall the progress we hope for be realized.

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