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The Peace Process in Colombia and U.S. Policy

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Preface

As this document goes to press, the eighteen-month peace dialogue between the government of President Andrés Pastrana and guerrillas of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC) was in crisis. Following the brutal assassination of a 53-year-old dairy farmer -- a sophisticated bomb was placed around her neck and detonated hours later when she refused to pay $7,500 in extortion money -- President Pastrana blamed the FARC and cancelled an international gathering to discuss drug crop substitution, alternative development, and environmental protection scheduled for the end of May. Within days, however, Colombian government officials, including the Attorney General and then the President himself, indicated that someone other than the guerrillas might have been responsible for the deadly attack. The FARC, for its part, denied involvement. Although a formal rupture in the peace talks was avoided, the incident served to underscore deep frustration with the FARC's behavior and with the peace process in general. Indeed, despite repeated initiatives by the government, reciprocal gestures from the FARC were conspicuously absent.

At an earlier moment in the peace process, and as calls for the United States to increase its involvement in Colombia became more frequent and pressing, the Latin American Program's *Project on Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America* convened a conference on September 28, 1999, to explore the peace initiatives of the Pastrana government and its implications for U.S. policy. Since taking office in August 1998, Pastrana had made the search for a negotiated settlement to Colombia's nearly four-

campus of the National University constitutes a staggering loss to Colombia and to students of conflict resolution everywhere.

This report in English constitutes Part I of the conference proceedings. Part II, in Spanish, contains papers commissioned for the conference.

The Latin American Program is grateful to Daniel García-Peña, former director of

Introduction

Cynthia J. Arnson

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Taking note of a burgeoning peace movement in Colombian civil society and an intensification of the war, Conservative Party candidate Andrés Pastrana made the search for a negotiated settlement a central platform of his 1998 presidential campaign. He met with the FARC's principal commander Manuel Marulanda before his inauguration, and made several bold gestures upon taking office aimed at creating a propitious climate for peace talks. Foremost among them was the decision to create a demilitarized zone (*despeje*) in five municipalities in southern Colombia, an area about twice the size of El Salvador. The peace talks were formally launched on January 7, 1999, with President Pastrana himself in attendance but Marulanda, citing security concerns, a last-minute no-show. The guerrilla leader's unannounced decision not to appear embarrassed the president and immediately ra

1999, and two more resigned or were discharged during the year.[1] Talks resumed, with agreement on a provisional agenda. They reached a solid impasse in July, when the government and FARC could not reach agreement on the conditions for international verification within the zone of *despeje*. At issue was the FARC's unwillingness to permit international monitors free, unaccompanied access within the zone. This capacity has characterized other international verification teams, notably the United Nations missions in El Salvador and Guatemala (ONUSAL and MINUGUA, respectively), but was not insisted upon by the government as an initial condition for creating the *despeje*.. Meanwhile, the guerrilla force excluded from the peace talks, the ELN, carried out two collective kidnappings of civilians in April and May 1999, as if to demonstrate that it, too, was capable of wreaking havoc unless the government agreed to parallel and equal negotiations with them.[2]

Throughout the first half of 1999, the FARC demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to take advantage of the political space for the peace process created by the Pastrana administration, to recognize the significant political risks Pastrana had taken in making concessions, or to respond with reciprocal political gestures of real or symbolic importance. The FARC's summary execution in March 1999 of three U.S. indigenous

[1] The two brigadier generals were Fernando Millán Pérez and Rito Alejo del Río. In August, President Pastrana accepted the resignation of General Jaime Uscátegui, under investigation for his role in a 1997 paramilitary massacre in Mapiripán, Meta. General Alberto Bravo Silva was dismissed in September 1999, along with a regional police commander and a regional director of the state security agency (DAS) for failing to prevent a paramilitary massacre in Norte de Santander. A captain and two lieutenants received dishonorable discharges and five police officers suspended for failing to prevent a May 1998 massacre in Barrancabermeja.

[2] In February 1999, the "National Convention" proposed by the ELN as a way of advancing the peace talks was indefinitely postponed. On April 12, 1999, the ELN abducted 41 passengers from an Avianca flight. A month later, they took over 140 hostages at a church service in Cali.

rights workers further poisoned the atmosphere for the talks, appearing to some a truer indication of the group's nature and intentions.

During the initial period of the peace process, Pastrana enjoyed significant and public political support from the Clinton administration. During a joint press conference at the White House in October 1998, President Clinton stated that "the insurgency looms over all other challenges [in Colombia] today," and praised "the way that President

"that results in 16,000 square miles of territory being given to narco-guerrillas, who work hand-in-hand with the world's most dangerous drug dealers."[9]

The FARC's murder of the three activists, coupled with the lack of progress in the initial months of the peace talks, deepened skepticism within the administration that the guerrillas were interested in the peace process given their military strength, or were prepared to end their involvement in a drug trade that reaped them hundreds of millions of dollars a year in profits.[10] General Barry McCaffrey, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) told the Colombian magazine *Semana* in March 1999, that thirty-two years in uniform had taught him that carrots and sticks had to be combined to bring an opponent to the bargaining table. "At this time, I don't see why the guerrillas are at the table."[11] Later in the year, chief of the U.S. Southern Command General

negotiations," U.S. officials expressed concern over the impact of the peace process on anti-narcotics operations, in light of an agreement to suspend over-flights in the demilitarized zone. Some U.S. officials also made known their objection to the indefinite prolongation of the 90-day period for *despeje*,[13] a proposal so thoroughly rejected by the Colombian officer corps that it contributed to the resignation of Defense Minister Lloreda and other senior officers in May 1999.

The skepticism in the Congress and the executive branch had as a common backdrop three inter-related developments: 1) the growing military capacity of the guerrillas; 2) the "explosion," in McCaffrey's words, of coca cultivation in southern Colombia; and 3) the overlap between zones of increased drug production and guerrilla control in remote, rural areas.

According to the General Accounting Office, by 1999 Colombia had surpassed Peru and Bolivia as the world's largest producer of coca, had become the source country for over three-fourths of the world's cocaine supply, and was the major supplier of heroin to the eastern United States. Coca production expanded by 50 percent between 1996 and 1998, despite extensive aerial eradication efforts. Moreover, despite record seizures of cocaine in 1998, there was no net reduction in processing or exporting refined cocaine.[14] The figures in mid-2000 were even more dire. According to Gen. McCaffrey, 90 percent of cocaine in the United States and two-thirds of the heroin seized originated in or passed through Colombia.[15]

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[13] General Accounting Office, *Drug Control: Narcotics Threat From Colombia Continues to Grow*

The GAO reported that an estimated two-thirds of FARC units and one-third of ELN units were engaged in drug activity.[16] The nature of guerrilla involvement also

situation" caused by "criminal trafficking organizations."[23] These concerns were echoed in an August 3, 1999, letter to President Clinton from Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-IL) and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.). In it, the Republican leaders argued that "the collapse of democracy in Colombia and the emergence of a narco-state south of our border would be an extremely serious threat to our national security."[24]

If the heightened attention to Colombia was driven primarily by an agenda dominated by drug trafficking, increased coca production, and the overlay with the guerrilla war, the State Department became the most prominent voice within the administration for a multifaceted approach to address the multiple challenge to democratic governance in Colombia. Secretary of State Albright wrote in an August *New York Times* op-ed that Pastrana "needs – and deserves – international support that focuses on more than drug interdiction and eradication." He was right to initiate peace talks, Albright said, citing a need for "pressure and incentives that will cause the guerrillas to respond." But she said that achieving peace and fighting drugs required a "medley of strategies," including alternative development, justice reform, human rights protection, and economic recovery.[25]

The Colombian government's apparent lack of a coherent strategy to confront its multiple crises stood in the way, however, of increased U.S. support. Senior

[23] Larry Rohter with Christopher S. Wren, "U.S. Official Proposes $1 Billion for Colombia Drug War," *New York Times*, July 17, 1999, 5; and Serge F. Kovaleski, "McCaffrey Defends Anti-Drug Aid to Colombia," *Washington Post*, July 28, 1999, 19.

[24] Miles A. Pomper, "Hastert Leads the Charge in Colombia Drug War," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, September 11, 1999, 2090.

[25] Madeleine K. Albright, "Colombia's Struggles, and How We Can Help," *New York Times*, August 10, 1999.

administration officials, most

and by satisfying demands of congressional Republicans who had long emphasized Blackhawk helicopters as the key to the anti-drug fight; other provisions governing human rights and judicial reform, for example, appeared aimed at congressional liberals. The entire supplemental aid package passed the House on March 30, 2000 by a solid 263-146 vote margin. But it ran into trouble in the Senate, where Majority Leader Trent Lott objected to including the Colombia aid in a swollen supplemental spending bill containing numerous domestic "pork barrel" projects. As of this writing, it was not clear whether the Colombia aid package would be considered on an expedited basis or only as part of the regular fiscal year 2001 appropriations cycle. In either case, the long delay represented a significant blow to President Pastrana on an issue that had taken on key symbolic as well as practical significance for his administration.[27]

The prolonged debate in the United States over Plan Colombia was surprising in many ways, given Colombia's central role as a source country for narcotics as well as the presumed reluctance of members of Congress to appear "soft on drugs" in an election year. The debate, which will undoubtedly continue into the next U.S. administration, has evidenced a bipartisan reluctance to deepen U.S. involvement in Colombia, out of fears of "another Vietnam," skepticism about the efficacy of supply-oriented aspects of the drug war, or concern for the human rights record of the Colombian military.[28] On this

[27] The Senate Subcommittee on Foreign Operations considered the Colombia aid package on May 9, 2000. The subcommittee cut the administration's request to $934 million. It eliminated the 30 Blackhawk helicopters contained in the administration's proposal, substituting Huey's instead, and imposed new human rights conditions extending and expanding the "Leahy amendment," which required the vetting of troops to receive U.S. training and support. The subcommittee also required the administration to report every six months on measures to bring military personnel to justice in civilian, not military courts, as well as efforts to disband paramilitary groups. See U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, *Report to accompany S. 2522*, Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriation Bill, 2001, 106th Cong., 2d Sess., May 11, 2000.

[28] See, for example, David Passage, "The United States and Colombia: Untying the Gordian Knot," U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, *Letort Papers*, March 2000.

latter issue, if there was universal recognition of the improvements made by the Colombian armed forces in their human rights practices, significant concern lingered over the institution's collaboration with or tolerance for paramilitary groups that continued to commit the bulk of abuses.[29]

As debate in the U.S. Congress dragged on, the peace process in Colombia encountered its most difficult moment. Even after Colombian government officials stepped back from their accusation of FARC involvement in a brutal "necklace" bombing, the climate remained tense. President Pastrana himself was mired in a growing political crisis following his announcement of a referendum for the election of a new Congress. And the lack of progress in the peace talks despite significant efforts to build confidence between the parties caused public support for the process to plummet. In December 1999, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan had named veteran Norwegian diplomat Jan Egeland as a special adviser for Colombia. Through his facilitation, FARC and Colombian government leaders jointly toured several European capitals in February. In March, leading members of Colombia's private sector made an unprecedented visit to the *despeje*, a significant gesture from the economic elite in support of the peace process.[30] Expectations ran high that the FARC would reciprocate with some gesture of its own. Instead, the guerrillas announced "Law 002," calling on

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[29] The State Department's annual human rights report for 1999, published in February 2000, said that "credible allegations of cooperation with paramilitary groups, including instances of both silent support and direct collaboration by members of the armed forces, in particular the army, continued." The Colombia office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights said in its report for 1999 that "the Office has received reports indicating that members of the military forces participate directly in the organization of new paramilitary groups and in disseminating threats. In some cases, victims recognized members of the military forces who formed part of the paramilitary groups that committed the massacres. The security forces also failed to take action, and this undoubtedly enabled the paramilitary groups to achieve their exterminating objectives."

[30] See "La Nueva Colombia," *Semana*, March 28, 2000.

Colombians with assets of $1 million or more to pay a "peace tax" or face kidnapping. Following the announcement, High Commissioner for Peace Víctor G. Ricardo resigned, amidst a firestorm of criticism of the peace process and the Pastrana administration's strategy.[31]

The debate within these pages contains a snapshot of the diverse perspectives on U.S.-Colombian relations, as well as such issues as the reform of the armed forces, alternative development, and the role of the international community. Our hope, through the conference and this publication, is to contribute to a more informed debate over Colombia policy, and a deeper understanding of the issues that promote and impede a

Benjamin A. Gilman

Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives

During his visit to Washington in September 1999, Colombian President Andrés Pastrana announced his $7.5 billion plan to reinforce Colombia's military forces to fight drug trafficking and to strengthen the presence of the state in the lives of the citizens of his nation. President Pastrana met with the House International Relations Committee and a number of members of Congress. It is my feeling that President Pastrana is sincere and a friend of our nation. However, we may not agree with all of his policies. It was obvious that he hopes that his investment would bring peace to a Colombia that's ravaged, ravaged by violence and disfigured by narcotics trafficking.

President Pastrana would like to attract $3.5 billion in foreign contributions to his plan, and I understand that the IMF is looking seriously at that request. The outline of the Pastrana plan appears to be logical. It is broad-based and seeks to rectify important weakness that undercut the legitimate authority of his state.

What happens in Colombia matters virtually in every community throughout our nation. Colombia provides all of the cocaine and up to 75 percent of the heroin that we abuse in this country. Each year in our nation, we suffer 14,000 drug-related deaths, each and every year. One-third of all new AIDS cases in our nation are drug-related. A good portion of our prison population--they estimate over 70 percent of our prisoners--are there because of drug-related crimes. Colombia's crisis is our crisis, and that's why it's of such critical importance that we take a good hard look at all of the facets of this problem.

idea of a $1 billion aid package to Colombia over a three-year period. It is obvious that the administration is now seeking to limit the political damage from its failed Colombia policy and to make certain that it will not be an issue in the forthcoming Presidential campaigns.

The administration had encouraging words for President Pastrana's plan. This makes sense, as key administration officials traveled to Bogotá to consult with the Colombian team that wrote the plan. As of late September 1999, however, the administration gave no indication of any timeline for the introduction of a supplemental appropriations request to the Congress. The administration has been so preoccupied with

General McCaffrey's flip-flop affected other Clinton officials. In early 1998, we urged Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to pay close attention to Colombia's needs for helicopters in order to fight drugs and be able to fight the narco-guerillas. She testified before our International Relations Committee, stating, and I quote, "I think there is some dispute as to whether those helicopters are needed or not needed. General McCaffrey discussed this issue and he believes they are not necessary."

Today, I don't think there's any dispute. Even General McCaffrey, President Clinton's drug czar, now admits and says of Colombia's narco-guerillas, and I quote, "If we could cut off their drug financing, the activities of these groups would fall to one percent of what they are now." And as we know, they receive substantial profits from their drug trade.

I have always understood and supported President Pastrana's strong desire to try to achieve peace in Colombia. No one who has seen the terrible toll that drugs and the violence have wrought could think otherwise. However, there are many of us who have been skeptical that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC, has any real interest in negotiating a peace and their reluctance of late in coming to the table underscores that. What, after all, can the Colombian government give them that they cannot take by force or buy with their resources?

Rebel groups in Colombia earn substantial funding from the drug trade, up to $1 billion a year. That's one *billion* a year from their drug trafficking, a figure that dwarfs U.S. assistance to Colombia up until now.

My problem is not with the peace negotiations. None of us favors war over peace. What has been troubling, however, is President Pastrana's decision, endorsed by the administration, to cede a Switzerland-sized portion of his countryside, a unilateral

DMZ, to the narco-guerillas, something that has only emboldened them. Instead of negotiating, the FARC rebels have kidnapped and killed Americans and launched attacks from the DMZ, even to the outskirts of Bogotá. The Colombian military reports that the FARC is building substantial war infrastructure in the unilateral DMZ.

Unlike the situation that prevails in other parts of the country, the military is prohibited from countering FARC activities in the DMZ. The unilateral DMZ is not a political problem here in Washington, as some have suggested. It constitutes a problem for President Pastrana that he will have to address sooner or later, most likely at a terrible cost.

I supported conditioning U.S. counter-narcotics assistance on Pastrana's not extending the unilateral DMZ indefinitely. I agreed to give the administration waiver authority if, in the administration's judgment, suspending assistance for an additional limited period of time would benefit our national interest.

The fundamental problem with the peace process is, of course, time. The guerillas have all the time in the world. President Pastrana, however, has only a limited term in office, until 2002. The indefinite extension of the unilateral DMZ means that there is no timetable associated with the peace process and no real pressure on the FARC to act.

Some maintain that for historical reasons, the FARC cannot bring itself to trust the Colombian government. On the other hand, President Pastrana has bent over backwards to reassure the FARC. He has given them everything, but in return has received nothing but kidnapping, killing, smuggling, more drugs and hostility.

In May 1999, FARC leader Manuel Marulanda signed an agreement with President Pastrana pledging to allow independent observers to be deployed to the

unilateral DMZ. Now the FARC refuses to respect the government and is pressuring Pastrana to restart negotiations all over again. I think President Pastrana should resist that kind of pressure.

For the first time since the great depression, Colombia is experiencing an acute economic recession. Unemployment has risen from eight percent to 20 percent in Colombia. The gross domestic product is expected to shrink by 3.5 percent this year, and by 2.5 percent next year. One Colombian recently remarked, "When the economy was strong, we could afford to make war or peace. Now, we can't afford to do either."

In response, Colombians who can afford to are leaving the country in droves, a possible indication of a future immigration crisis. A failed, Balkanized Colombia in our backyard would have deep, long-term implications for U.S. interests in the entire Western Hemisphere.

If the administration is truly serious about solving the Colombian dilemma, it needs to take concrete action now. First, our nation can deliver badly needed helicopters to the Colombian National Police, for which Congress has pleaded for years. The CNP's counter-narcotics police, which has a sterling human rights record, needs 100 helicopters to eradicate the opium crop and adequately fight coca production. After almost seven years of Clinton policy, the CNP has only 20 choppers they can fly, and some of them are

little U.S. support, the CNP tells us they can completely eradicate the opium poppy fields within a two-year period, thereby denying the narco-guerillas a revenue stream and destroying the market for heroin in America. Taking the finances away from the narco-guerrillas saps some of their underlying strength.

Second, the administration can provide for fast-track processing of Colombian army and police aid from U.S. stockpiles. Today, such requests for the purchase of ammunition and other supplies for the Colombian military and police are treated just like those of Chile and Argentina, nations who are not at war. Our administration must make Colombia a very high priority on our list of needs.

And third, the administration should establish an unambiguous policy of not legitimizing narco-guerrillas. Any and all contacts with FARC and ELN narco-guerrillas should be ended immediately. These groups have killed Americans and directly threatened our national security interests. It's counterproductive to treat them as a legitimate political organization.

And fourth, the administration can increase training for the Colombian military that has been neglected for the past few years. Such training can help improve the professionalism and proficiency of the Colombian military while building greater respect for human rights.

And finally, the administration must demand reforms in Colombia. End the class-based elitist policy that, for example, exempts high-school graduates from combat units in the Colombian military. Let the Colombian currency float to eliminate the black peso market that helps launder billions of dollars from the drug trade. Condition any U.S. military aid to the Colombian military forces on a respect for human rights. In ten years of U.S. anti-drug assistance, not one credible allegation of human rights abuse has

emerged against the counter-narcotics police, the anti-drug unit, whose policy should be a model for the Colombian military.

Above all, the administration must formulate a realistic, credible policy and take responsibility for making certain that it is implemented expeditiously.

William D. Delahunt

Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives

It is very tempting for American policy makers to hope for a panacea or an easy answer to the problems of and the conflict in Colombia. That is simply unrealistic. The conflict in Colombia is confusing, complex, and not well understood by most Americans or by most members of Congress.

There is a tendency to believe that the violence that we have heard about, seen on TV, and read about ever since the late 1980s, when Colombia became part of our drug problem, is a recent phenomenon. But the level of violence that has been visited on Colombia has existed since the mid-1950s, the period known as *La Violencia*. This historical context suggests that there is no easy answer or quick fix.

What does the United States need in order to assist in securing peace in Colombia? Two things are necessary. One is patience. We have to understand ourselves. We expect immediate results. It is part of our culture. We spawned the "fast food syndrome" in this country. We expect U.S. corporations to perform on a quarterly basis. We must recognize that it's the American psyche that expects quick results.

Look at our most recent involvements in Iraq and Kosovo. There was clearly a genuine and sincere concern on the part of American policy makers that our engagement in those situations be limited to a very short duration because of the American psyche, the limited level of patience.

Another aspect of supporting peace is to have realistic expectations. Peace in Colombia is going to demand substantial time and a sustained commitment by the United States if it is to be achieved. The conflict has been going on for some 35 years already.

This is not a recent phenomenon. It's important for American policymakers to remember the origins of this conflict, in social conditions that were predicated on a disparity of wealth and living standards in Colombia. We must not forget that aspect in our analysis.

On other occasions, and with respect to other peace processes in such places as the Middle East and Northern Ireland, we have not lost our patience. In the Middle East, it has taken 30, 40, 50 years, and a series of wars. In Northern Ireland, we Irish deal in millennia. But we have sustained our commitment to peace. And in the end, the Israelis saw that it was necessary to sit down and speak to Yasser Arafat. And the British understood that it was necessary to sit down and dialogue with Gerry Adams. You don't go to the peace table to talk with your friends. That just doesn't happen.

Persistence and perseverance are important. The peace process in Colombia, under the Pastrana administration, only began in January 1999. Have there been disappointments? Has it been frustrating? Of course, it has. But look what has been achieved so far in the Middle East.

I perceive that there is an evolving consensus among House Democrats, which is reflected in an August 30, 1999 letter to President Clinton

the Colombian military as an institution in terms of its respect for human rights would be the direct engagement with the paramilitaries. Too many are concerned--and justifiably so--about the relationship between the paramilitary and military. What better evidence would there be of change than an aggressive operation by the Colombian military against the paramilitary groups?

Finally, Democrats in the House would aggressively support the ongoing peace process and would encourage international involvement by the Organization of American States and the United Nations. It is absolutely essential to keep the dialogue going, because the bottom line is that it is in the vital interests of the United States to support the peace process.

There is no disagreement regarding the problem of drugs in our communities, our neighborhoods, and our streets. In my previous career, I was the district attorney in the greater Boston area and put thousands of individuals in prison for drugs. I know all too well on a personal level what the scourge of narcotics means to every American.

But I also know that those engaged in narcotic trafficking welcome instability, turmoil, and uncertainty. If there is no stability in Colombia, and stability will only come with peace, the United States will never see a reduction in the flow of cocaine and heroin into this country. I don't care how many helicopters we send to the Colombian National Police. It will not happen. Despite the good efforts of people like Chairman Gilman and the head of the Colombian National Police, General José Rosso Serrano and others, it will not happen.

We have had success in terms of eradication. 1998 was a record year for eradication of coca, 65,000 hectares, a fifty percent increase over the previous year. And yet, at the same time, there was a net increase in coca cultivation and cocaine production.

The answer to the problem of the flow of drugs into the United States from Colombia is peace in Colombia. I honestly believe that the achievment of peace in Colombia can only be done by Colombians. But the support of the United States in that process is absolutely essential and critical, and the Democrats in the House of Representatives will support that peace process.

Phillip Chicola

Office of Andean Affairs, U.S. Department of State

I have spent the bulk of my career, over 20 years, in the Foreign Service working on Latin America. And I spent most of the 1980s working on Central America, which

I am struck by the number of 100 helicopters for the national police. Considering that its counter-narcotics unit has approximately 2,500 members, it would mean a ratio of 25 persons to a helicopter. I am not aware of any other armed force that has such a ratio. It is closer to the Dade County police ratio of cars to cops.

The Clinton administration's objectives are very similar to those described by the congressmen. We want to see a strong, united, democratic Colombia where there is social peace, reconciliation, and an end to the conflict. Colombia has a narcotics problem that, as Congressman Gilman so eloquently stated, affects our community so deeply. Colombia can deal with that problem and can reduce the scope of the impact that the drug problem has in our country. Those are our basic objectives.

For several years, we were handicapped in our efforts to pursue those objectives because of the previous government of President Ernesto Samper. Many of the problems confronting Colombia today are inherited by the Pastrana government from the maladministration of the previous four years. The economic crisis has significant roots in the bad economic policies of President Samper. The same is true with regard to the state of the armed forces, which are now beginning to recover under the able leadership of General Tapias. The Samper administration did a terrible job of governing the country. Many of the problems today have a direct link to what we consider to have been a failed presidency.

There is no question that President Pastrana came into office with the best intentions and with a general concept of how to deal with myriad problems. But it does not appear that the government quite grasped the extent of difficulties it would confront. Frankly, neither did the United States. The difficulties that Colombia encountered throughout 1999 clearly exceeded the more pessimistic expectations, about the economic

downturn, the loss of public confidence as a result of that downturn, and the difficulties with getting the peace process underway.

We strongly support the administration of President Pastrana and believe that he represents the best possibility for Colombia to address its deep and interrelated problems. Since taking office, President Pastrana and his team have developed a variety of approaches to address individual problems. Contrary to popular belief, the United States did not design *Plan Colombia*. It was certainly discussed with us. But it reflects a realization by the Colombian government that the various strategies they had developed needed to be linked because so many, if not all, the problems were inter-related.

The economy in Colombia will have a hard time recovering amidst the high levels of violence generated by the insurgency. The insurgency will continue to thrive so long as its links to narco-trafficking continue. Narco-trafficking will continue to grow and prosper so long as it is affected by an army of 20,000-plus guerrillas, several thousand paramilitaries, and even some members of the ELN.

Peasants in Colombia will be tempted to continue producing narcotics so long as such production continues to be profitable and so long as they have no viable alternatives in other areas of the economy. The problems are inter-related, and we believe that *Plan Colombia*, as developed by the Pastrana administration, is the right approach to deal with them.

The plan seeks to address the counter-narcotics problem by increasing and enhancing the ability of the Colombian police, and of the armed forces in support of the police, to deal with the narco-traffickers and the guerrillas that provide so much of their protection. It seeks to rejuvenate and re-energize the economy through a variety of economic reforms, to spur greater investment, create jobs, etc. It seeks to modify and

reform the judicial system. It seeks to enhance democratization, strengthen local governments, promote social development, and deal with the tremendous damage and impact that this conflict has

I cannot affirm whether or not the FARC is interested in talking. I cannot tell you with any degree of certainty that the FARC is serious about talking peace. However, to do anything other than treat the present situation as an opportunity to try to bring the conflict to an end would be irresponsible.

I met with the FARC in December 1998. Subsequent to my meeting, the FARC assassinated three American NGO workers, and we broke off all subsequent contacts. I have been asked whether I regret having met with the FARC. The answer, very simply, is no. I would have regretted much more not having met with them once those three individuals were killed. I would have forever wondered whether I would have been able to intercede on their behalf and save their lives. Now I know that the death of those three individuals was not because our government failed to do all it could to save their lives. Regardless of the criticism I have received, I will ever be proud of that.

The United States also supports President Pastrana's initiatives to modernize and enhance the government's counter-narcotics effort. For it to succeed under the current circumstances, the strong support of the military is required. It is no longer possible for a 2,500-man counter-narcotics police to carry out its activities when confronted with thousands of armed guerrillas that, one way or another, help protect the processing and cultivation of drugs. The army must be in a position to support and clear the way for the counter-narcotics police to do its job, by dealing with the guerrillas.

With regards to the internal situation, we believe that the government of Colombia, with its own resources and the support of international financial institutions, has a viable plan to begin to deal with basic needs that have been created by the conflict. But until the economy revives and peace breaks out, or the intensity of the conflict is reduced, some of these problems will continue.

Finally, we are concerned about the regional effect of the Colombian conflict. To be frank, however, the regional impact has been relatively small. The noise about it has been greater than the actual effect. The conflict remains almost entirely a Colombian problem. The conflict has affected areas in Venezuela, Panama, and Ecuador. One of the eventual components of a solution in Colombia will be for its neighbors and the rest of the international community to come together in support.

We support President Pastrana's efforts to address the problems of Colombia. We believe *Plan Colombia* is the correct recipe for doing so. We have discussed with the Government of Colombia how we can help implement the strategies outlined in that plan. We also understand, as Congressman Delahunt mentioned, that addressing Colombia's problems will be a long process. We are not looking for short-term solutions.

Caryn C. Hollis

U.S. Department of Defense

The office of Inter-American Affairs at the Department of Defense focuses on the the full range of Colombia's defense relationship with the Department of Defense

- a U.S./Colombia conference in Washington in July 1999 on the role of defense organizations in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief;
- the joint development by the Colombian armed forces, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Staff Judge Advocate's Office of U.S. Southern Command of a human rights training program for the armed forces, including design, publication and distribution of a handbook on which that training is based;
- the passage by the Colombian legislature of a military justice reform bill which, among other provisions, restricts jurisdiction of military courts to military offenses and some minor common-law crimes; places "crimes against humanity" e.g., genocide, forced disappearance and torture, under the jurisdiction of civilian courts; removes from commanders the authority to investigate their own subordinates for common-law crimes, placing that authority in the hands of a special prosecutor; and calls for the creation of a professional military judge advocate corps;
- "subject matter expert visits" on such subjects as optimum use of U.S. security assistance programs, especially International Military Education and Training (IMET) and other forms of training, and force development planning;
- a study by a private consulting firm, funded by DOD, to assess the counterdrug capabilities of the Colombian armed forces, including institutional structure, support systems, resource requirements, doctrine, training, and statutory issues and policies; and
- some $65 million in DOD counterdrug programs, mostly in the form of training, equipment, infrastructure development, intelligence, detection and monitoring for

rights violations in Colombia were attributed to the armed forces; by 1998, that figure dropped to less than 4 percent. At the same time, however, the percentage of human rights violations attributed to the paramilitaries rose to 76 percent; that shift, along with evidence of ties between certain army and police units and the paramilitaries, has led to the widely-held belief that the paramilitaries have become agents of the armed forces in the fight against the insurgents. There is certainly evidence that units of the security forces have in some cases in the past tolerated, tacitly supported, or even directly assisted paramilitary groups. The U.S. government has made it clear to the Colombian government and to the leaders of the armed forces at every opportunity that a failure to sever links between the military and the illegal "self-defense forces" would jeopardize U.S. support for Colombia. President Pastrana has removed from office several senior officers accused of complicity in paramilitary operations, while some have been indicted and convicted in civilian courts. Those actions, and an apparent change in attitudes regarding human rights among the leadership of the Ministry of Defense and the armed forces, indicate that further progress on this critical issue can be expected.

International Military Education and Training (IMET) is an important part of assistance offered by DOD to Colombia. Colombia has a broad-based IMET program emphasizing professional military education, technical training, instructor training, and executive development. The country part

the Army Command and General Staff College. All personnel nominated for training under the IMET program are thoroughly vetted for compliance with the Leahy Amendment. In Fiscal Year 2000, $900,000 is allocated for Colombia for IMET funding.

In each of the last three years, DOD has provided additional assistance to Colombia through Presidential "drawdowns" of articles and services from its inventory and resources under Section 506 (a) (2) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Drawdowns for the Colombian police and military totaled $40 million, $14 million, and $41 million respectively in fiscal years 96 through 98; DOD is expected to provide up to $69.7 million in articles and services under the FY99 drawdown. Items provided under these drawdowns have included helicopters, airplanes, trucks, rifles and machine guns, ammunition, and communications equipment, as well as training.

The Military and the Peace Process in Colombia

Alfredo Rangel Suárez

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Colombia is currently pursuing a process of political negotiation aimed at resolving an internal armed conflict while in the midst of war. This situation requires that the armed forces of the state fulfill two very complex and demanding roles. First, in fulfillment of their duty to obey and be subordinate to civilian power established by democratic institutions, they must cooperate with civilian authorities and adhere to the course they set in the search for a political solution to the armed conflict. Second, because the war is ongoing, the armed forces must assure through force of arms that

The manner in which the civilian government interacts with the military in Colombia is at the core of these conflicts. The relationship revolves around the conduct of the internal armed conflict and for decades has been marked by a kind of permanent bartering between civilian and military elites: civilians give complete autonomy to the military in all matters related to the use of force in the internal conflict and in planning for external defense, in exchange for the military's non-intervention in electoral politics. Until a civilian became defense minister under the Gaviria administration, civilian participation in security matters had been limited to: 1) responding to requests for financial resources to fight the internal conflict as well as hypothetical external conflicts (the identification and evaluation of which were left solely to the military); and 2) approving the promotions of high-ranking officers. Military accountability and an evaluation of its performance by civilian authorities were perfunctory, because for many years there was no clear national security strategy with plans for achieving specific objectives; it has never been possible to determine clearly what type of results are expected of the military.[34]

It is important to recognize, however, that in Colombia's prior successful peace processes, which led to the demobilization of five guerrilla groups, and in spite of some minor incidents and other more tragic events, the armed forces have obeyed and supported the decisions made by the civilian government both during peace negotiations and the subsequent demobilization and reinsertion of former guerrillas into civilian life.

The military's attitude during previous negotiations between the government and guerrilla groups does not, however, alter the fact that the current peace process in

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2 See Alfredo Rangel, *Colombia: Guerra en el fin de Siglo* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes and Tercer Mundo Editores, 1998.)

Colombia is completely different from thos

populations has increased; the number of massacres is the highest in decades; targeted assassinations and the dirty war have worsened; and illicit crops and drug trafficking are much more widespread than ever before.[3]

This difficult situation is linked to the significant growth of the guerrillas in terms of numbers and the amount of territory under their control, as well as to the clear, undeniable, political and military incapacity of the state to contain this expansion of the armed insurgency. Moreover, as a result of the growth of the guerrillas, their cruel harassment of the civilian population, the inability of the state to guarantee public safety in many regions of the country, and the continued increase in drug trafficking and other illicit activities, Colombia has witnessed the emergence and strengthening of a third actor in the armed conflict: the paramilitary groups. These groups are responsible for the great majority of deaths outside of combat, massacres, and forced displacement of the civilian population.[4] Such groups represent, without a doubt, a growing threat to public safety and institutional stability.

These circumstances create a scenario that is very different from the past. The military must adopt a very different role as the current peace process unfolds. Present circumstances force them to play a much more active role, unlike the relatively more passive role of previous years. This new role takes shape in three different arenas: 1) the demilitarized zone, where peace talks are taking place; 2) the rest of the country, where the military continues to confront guerrilla and paramilitary groups; and 3) the

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3 See Jesús Antonio Bejarano, *Colombia: Inseguridad, Violencia y Desempeño Económico* (Bogotá: FONADE and Universidad Externado de Colombia, 1997).

4 See U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Colombia, 1997, 1998.

negotiating table, where, for the first time, the agreed upon agenda includes the theme of reform of the armed forces.

The Demilitarized Zone

At the beginning of the administration of Ernesto Samper, the FARC made the demilitarization of the municipality of La Uribe, in Meta Department, a necessary precondition for starting direct talks. This prerequisite divided public opinion and was angrily rejected by the military high command, leading the government ultimately to decide not to meet the guerrillas' demand. As a result, talks were indefinitely postponed and no progress was made in the peace process during Samper's four-year term.

By contrast, four years later, both the public and the military accepted without major objections the withdrawal or complete demilitarization not only of La Uribe, but of four additional municipalities: San Vicente del Caguán, Vistahermosa, Mesetas, and La Macarena. What happened? The answer lies in a series of unprecedented military defeats inflicted upon the armed forces by the FARC. These included assaults on and the destruction of fortified military bases as well as open combat between the elite troops of both sides. The results, in terms of casualties and the taking of prisoners, clearly favored the guerrillas. Hundreds of soldiers, officers, non-commissioned officers, and policemen lost their lives; and over 450 men in uniform remain in the hands of the guerrillas as a result of these confrontations.

Simultaneously, the human rights situation had seriously deteriorated during the Samper period, due to worsening territorial disputes between paramilitary groups and guerrillas in many areas of the country. The government did not have a consistent peace policy, peace initiatives with the guerrillas did not bear fruit, and civil society was clamoring for dialogue to be renewed. Peace thus became a key issue during the final

stages of the electoral campaign. All candidates offered to restart the talks and promised to satisfy FARC demands for military withdrawal from the five municipalities to begin the process of rapprochement.

The political situation required that talks be renewed even at the cost of demilitarizing almost 42,000 square kilometers of territory in the south of the country, an area the size of Switzerland. The new military high command understood these new conditions. It obeyed the order to withdraw, issued by a government with unquestioned legitimacy, which, with the elections, had won massive popular support for restarting negotiations with the guerrillas in a demilitarized area within the first three months of taking office.

The process, however, was not without tensions. It seems that the military warned the government about the need to establish clear ground rules regarding how the demilitarized zone would be run by the guerrillas. Unfortunately, due to a number of misunderstandings and confused dealings by presidential representatives, the start of the talks had to be postponed because the military, with the support of the government, temporarily refused to evacuate completely the main military base in the area, Batallón Cazadores in San Vicente del Caguán. In the end the Batallón was evacuated by presidential order. This caused a rift in the good relations between the High Commissioner for Peace and the military, which, apparently, has not been resolved.

The armed forces also warned the government about the guerrillas' use of the demilitarized zone to strengthen their combat capabilities. In fact, the military believes that the FARC is undertaking massive recruitment in the zone, that arms are being stockpiled, and that the FARC uses the zone to prepare attacks on neighboring

municipalities. Furthermore, the military points out that in the demilitarized zone, there is a rise in coca cultivation and in the number of new laboratories for processing alkaloid, as well as an increase in the number of airstrips and planes loaded with cocaine that are taking off from the area.

Such warnings, however, have not been used as arguments against the *despeje* or in favor of breaking off the talks. Rather, they have been presented as problems that must be resolved during the process of dialogue.

Another source of tension has to do with the duration of the demilitarization process. The military voiced its concerns through Minister of Defense Rodrigo Lloreda, a civilian, regarding open-ended demilitarization and the need for imposing terms and deadlines on the negotiation process, while the government indicated that demilitarization would continue as long as negotiations were underway. This exchange took place precisely at the time that talks had been frozen for months due to FARC insistence that the government show results in its fight against paramilitary groups. Public debate on the matter prompted the minister of defense to leave the cabinet and provoked a military crisis. The president was able to neutralize the budding crisis by refusing to accept the resignation of more than a dozen high-ranking officers, who had made public their intentions to retire from the armed forces in a show of support for the defense minister. It is important to underscore that once the crisis was resolved, and following extensive meetings between the military high command and President Pastrana, relations between the two are much closer. The executive branch is paying more attention to the concerns of the military high command with respect to national security and public safety matters as the peace process unfolds.

Executions carried out by the FARC within the “détente area,” as the government calls it, prompted an even angrier reaction by the military. Demands by the military and certain sectors of public opinion forced the government to propose the establishment of a verification commission charged with overseeing the activities of the guerrillas within the zone. This demand created the most difficult impasse experienced by the peace process thus far. Both parties, the guerrillas and the government, backed each other up against a wall: for the government, there would be no dialogue without a verification commission; for the guerrillas, government insistence on a verification commissi

appear that the guerrillas' plans are to continue strengthening themselves militarily for some time with the objective of consolidating their position at the negotiation table. In fact, it is public knowledge that the FARC is engaged in an arms race, stepping up recruitment substantially and retraining its most experienced combat veterans. The FARC has been able to shift from a guerrilla war, based on ambushes and harassment by small groups of fighters of larger military or police units, to a war of positions. This requires the ability to concentrate large numbers of guerrillas, armed with at least some light artillery, which possess great firepower and are able to maneuver skillfully in order to disperse after assaulting and destroying fortified military bases.

Although the insurgents are still primarily engaged in a guerrilla war, in some key incidents they have successfully undertaken new forms of operation. The tactical and

response to surprise attacks by the guerrillas or paramilitaries is truly pathetic. The number of transport and combat vehicles is extremely low, maintenance is very difficult, and the budget to keep vehicles operational is very small. With respect to intelligence, the armed forces lack modern technology able to detect enemy movements in a timely fashion: the old and highly inefficient method of using informants is still in use and the value of strategic intelligence has not been recognized. In the field of communications, the military lags so far behind that often the guerrillas employ much better communications systems and have a higher ratio of radios to combatants. This provides them with greater mobility and effectiveness in tactical movements. Until very recently, the military communications system was based exclusively on outmoded retransmission stations (*repetidoras*) while the guerrillas had fully entered the satellite era. Finally, training of the rank and file and of officers in the military has been no match for the recent developments in the guerrillas' operational capacity. The quality of combatants has been declining, which is cause for concern. Furthermore, there is an acute problem in the availability of weapons, ammunition, and equipment, and once again the guerrillas seem to have more resources than the national army.

Recently, the Colombian government has requested foreign military aid to supplement domestic efforts in the security arena. The government has made efforts in the United States to substantially increase this assistance which, to be honest, has never represented an important share of the national budget for security and national defense.

Without a doubt, the effects of U.S.-Colombian military cooperation are starting to be felt even without increased budget support, primarily through the increased availability of information on guerrilla movements. Until March 1999, there was a

prohibition against sharing information gathered by U.S. personnel and equipment in support of the police in their fight against drug trafficking, with the Colombian military for use in the conflict with the insurgents. Today, such information is transmitted and used in real time by the Colombian army. One cannot rule out that the availability of this kind of information contributed to the defeats that the military inflicted on the guerrillas from June to September of 1999 in the jungles of the Vichada, the towns of Puerto Lleras and Puerto Rico in Meta Department, and in Hato Corozal in Casanare Department.[6] These battles broke the momentum that for almost four years was favorable to the guerrillas, both in terms of combat deaths and the taking of prisoners.

In fact, the defeats suffered by the FARC could indicate important changes in the dynamics of armed confrontation in Colombia. During those months in 1999, hundreds of guerrilla members died in combat, a situation previously unheard of in Colombia. The military is beginning to recover from the defeats inflicted upon them by the guerrillas in previous years.[7]

Analyzing these developments in the military arena is important because sooner or later they will influence the pace, content, and scope of the peace negotiations. The guerrillas know well–and the government is starting to understand—one of the oldest lessons of war: one cannot obtain at the negotiating table what has not been secured on the battlefield.

Up until now, the guerrillas were setting the terms of the military confrontation, something that allowed them to impose on the state the conditions for political

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[6] See "Jojoy muerde el polvo," *Cambio,* No. 325, September 13, 1999, p. 17.

7 Ibid., p.18.

negotiations. But if this situation were to change permanently in favor of the state and its military forces, and if the government has sufficient resolve, the negotiations could enter a new stage in which the guerrillas are no longer able to obstruct and delay the process. This would make the negotiations faster and more consistent.

However, the "fog" of war—the complexity that at times prevents the parties from knowing when they are starting to win or lose--and the fact that much still remains to be played out in the military arena, mean that predictions must be taken with a grain of salt. Strategically speaking, the FARC has not yet been defeated. Yet the armed forces have demonstrated to themselves and to the public that the guerrilla movement, in spite of advances, is not invincible in the tactical and operational arena. On the contrary, the guerrillas have points of great weakness. Arrogance has made them overly confident. Some of their habits are disastrous. They do not learn as quickly as was previously thought, nor is their flexibility as great as believed.

All that being said, one cannot conclude that the FARC has arrived at what Clausewitz called the high point of victory; that is, the moment at which advances becomes reverses due to over-extension.[8] The FARC will have to adjust its operational tactics to counteract air strikes by the military and to neutralize the coordination of air and ground forces. The guerrillas have no lack of options: to suspend actions requiring the concentration of large numbers of combatants; to return to classic guerrilla warfare, using small groups to harass and ambush; to attack air power from the ground; and to engage in an anti-air war, using missiles, with all the accompanying risks.

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[8] See Karl von Clausewitz, *De la Guerra* (Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1984), p. 301.

At various times during the war in El Salvador, guerrillas of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) employed all of these measures in similar circumstances. Yet in the current situation in Colombia, the option easiest to dismiss would be the last: the FARC would simply be incapable of responding to the kind of reaction that would be provoked nationally and internationally by the downing of an airplane or helicopter by a missile attack. After firing the first missile, the guerrillas would either have to have hundreds of them available, or they would suffer greatly in the ensuing response. Nothing would cause U.S. military aid to Colombia to escalate more rapidly or as greatly than the use of missiles.

The most important political consequence of the mid-1999 military strikes against the FARC is the realization that negotiations do not necessarily rule out a simultaneous effort to defeat the enemy militarily. One should have no illusion that the FARC will continue fighting to seize power and defeat the army until the last day before a peace accord is signed. Realistically, it is not possible to wage a successful war of annihilation against the FARC. However, the state is in a position to carry out a successful war of limited scope and objectives. This war can be won, but the kind of victory being sought must first be defined.

Within this perspective of limited war leading to a peace agreement, "defeat" of the guerrillas by the state would mean: limiting their expansion, reducing their firepower, regaining control of strategic zones, taking away their freedom of action and initiative, and ultimately, convincing them that a military victory is impossible and that they should desist from continuing the war.

Yet mistrust remains among many segments of the population who believe that the number of human rights violations carried out by state forces is going down because paramilitary groups are replacing the military as human rights violators and act with either the active or passive support of state agents. Undeniably, people linked with state forces in certain regions remain sympathetic to the paramilitary groups. But it would be an exaggeration to say that in all or in the majority of cases of human rights violations by paramilitary groups, state agents are involved ry

group has gone through intense training, is very well equipped, and possesses both great mobility and air-combat capabilities. Its aim is to control the entry of raw materials into the coca-growing regions, to locate and destroy coca-processing laboratories, and to prevent drugs from being shipped out of the zone. It is a well-known fact, however, that these are areas in which the peasant population lives off the growing and marketing of

one of the most crucial points. The presumption of the guerrillas that they will continue as an armed organization even after signing a peace treaty with the Colombian government is well known. In what has been called the "secret agenda" of the FARC, the group aspires to dissolve the current national army and recreate it based on guerrilla forces. These are rather grand aspirations. The guerrillas have already made clear in various documents their desire to organize as a regular army and insure that their current military ranks be recognized on an equal level as those of the national army.

Presumably, discussions at the negotiating table will also touch upon a new vision of the role of the armed forces in a post-conflict era. The military forces of some countries in the region have already experienced substantial changes. The trend has been to revise the mission of the armed forces within the framework of a new global geo-political order, re-examining such important issues as the military's size, functions, doctrine, and composition. It is possible that this discussion will be transferred to the negotiating table when the military question is taken up. Once again, it will be evident that the armed forces have two alternatives vis à vis the peace process: to cooperate with a government that is in charge of peace policy, in order to reach an agreement with the insurgents; or to block the process, maintain the status quo, and defend interests that exist within the military. It goes without saying that the country hopes the military will opt for the first alternative, which is the position that currently prevails within the armed forces.

Partial Conclusions

In Colombia the military is not opposed to a peaceful solution to the armed conflict between the guerrillas and the state. Throughout the duration of the current peace process they have maintained an attitude of total subordination to the civilian authorities. The military recognizes that it has the legitimacy as well as enough popular

solution. Simultaneously, the military must be willing to assume the institutional costs that may derive from the political negotiations, given that reform of the military has been included as one of the themes on the agenda agreed to by the state and the insurgents.

within the demilitarized zone, as well as their corresponding verification. This issue became one of the causes of the major delays, misunderstandings, and suspicions that have characterized relations between the government and the FARC since October 1998.

The asymmetry in the peace process's treatment of other actors in the war, especially the ELN, has also been a factor in its stagnation. The former government, with the support of the National Conciliation Commission, had signed the so-called "Pre-

This disagreement resulted in an "indefinite suspension of the negotiations." Even though the government gave in on the question of verification and, following consultation with various sectors of opinion, accepted the guerrillas' interpretation, the FARC rejected the Commission of Accompaniment.

The National Conciliation Commission and other members of civil society suggested that the impasse be resolved by starting a dialogue without the designation of such a commission. Rather, they suggested beginning with those points on the agreed-upon agenda that referred to respect for human rights and international humanitarian law (points 2 and 9). Once formal commitments were made, then people could be named to verify compliance, not just in the demilitarized zone but everywhere that there was armed conflict.

Simultaneously, the Civil Political Commission, of which I am a member, tried to restart negotiations with the ELN, predicated on the freeing of hostages seized in mass terrorist acts. At the same time, negotiations could resume involving the government, the ELN, and the National Convention agreed to by civil society and the subversive organization.

The Drug Trade

There is no doubt that the main fuel of the war in Colombia is the drug trade, since it is the primary source of financing for both the subversives and the self-defense or paramilitary groups. The objective of narcotrafficking is obvious. Its illegal business will prosper to the extent that the state is incapable of suppressing the cultivation of coca and poppies and the establishment of laboratories to process cocaine and heroin.

For this reason the geography of the drug trade coincides almost exactly with the geography of the war. Precisely because the drug trade flourishes in isolated and

sometimes inaccessible jungle areas, there must be peace in order to eradicate it, so that the state and judicial system can occupy the entire national territory.

It is also necessary to understand the difference between the drug traffickers and the guerrillas. The latter obviously profit from the drug trade through taxes and tolls, but as a means to an end, in order to finance their illegal activities.

Because of this distinction between insurgents and narcotraffickers, the national government has given the guerrillas the political status required by law to carry out negotiations, while it has categorically declared that there can be no negotiation whatsoever with the drug traffickers.

It is also important to understand that the attitude of the peasants in these isolated regions is to join the guerrillas in order to survive, or to work as migrant field hands picking the illicit crops. This relationship creates an obvious solidarity between these people and the subversives. It explains why these peasants are probably the only sector of the population that at times has supported the subversives, either out of personal interest or because of guerrilla commanders' orders to protest any action that would restrict the growing of crops. The only effective large mobilizations by the guerrillas have been for these reasons. According to opinion polls, 96 percent of the population repudiates the actions of the armed groups. Despite many long years of struggle, they have not been able to build a stable political base.

That being said, it is also important to underscore that the indiscriminate fumigation of drug crops, which began in Colombia in 1985 when only 8,500 hectares of marijuana were grown, has been a complete failure. Since that time, almost 200,000 hectares have been fumigated. Nevertheless, Colombia is the largest producer of coca

leaves, surpassing Peru and Bolivia, and is the main grower of opium poppies on this side of the Atlantic.

Drug crops are now grown on more than 100,000 hectares, mostly by small farmers. For example, in the Guaviare coca is cultivated on more than 10,000 hectares, with an average plot of 1.5 hectares per peasant farmer. This shows that the growing of drug crops should be treated not just as a cause of violence but also as a serious social problem. Fumigating such small holdings (*minifundios*) is an outrage.

Fumigation is causing irreparable ecological damage in two ways. The first is through the devastation of vegetation in the high Andean zone, which is the source of much of Colombia's water supply and prone to erosion, as well as the humid tropical jungle of the Amazon and Pacific regions and some parts of the Eastern mountains' foothills. The second is that as fumigation proceeds, the agricultural frontier spread out into areas that should be reserved either to maintain the original vegetation or for crops that are compatible with the natural surroundings.

It is necessary to seriously rethink the war against drug trafficking in a country as productive as Colombia. Simultaneously with the peace process, there must be an aggressive campaign of alternative agriculture that protects the natural environment. This might include reforestation, or the cultivation of crops to produce palm oil, rubber, hearts of palm or jungle fruits. Such alternatives would give stable, well-paid jobs and real options to the suffering campesinos who are now condemned to work either for the guerrillas or the drug traffickers.

The Economic Effect of the War

Colombia has always experienced positive economic growth, even during the so-called "Lost Decade" of the 1980s when only Chile and Colombia grew steadily. But the

war has finally caused economic decline. The government has had to devote close to 20 percent of the annual budget to the war effort and various analyses calculate that GDP is shrinking between 3 and 5 percent annually as a result of the war's unhealthy influence. During the first half of 1999 negative growth bordered on 7 percent of GDP.

And these figures do not reflect some factors that are difficult to measure, such as the decrease in domestic and foreign investment, and the large-scale emigration of professionals.

Colombia's economy has traditionally been highly competitive: its light industry has led the Andean Group and it possesses enormous agricultural possibilities because of its abundant water and varied climatic zones. Nonetheless, Colombia has passed from being an exporter to an importer of 6 m

the strengthening of the armed forces, the restoration of the judicial system (including significant resources to combat impunity as well as to construct jails), and, of course, to maintain the four components of the Investment Fund for Peace.

The cost of *Plan Colombia* for the next three years will be $7.5 billion, of which 55 percent will be contributed by Colombia, with the remainder hopefully financed with

The legitimacy of the state and its authorities rests on the orderly, peaceful, and honest exercise of power, and on the restoration of its monopoly on use of force in a way that contrasts with the practices of the insurgents and the paramilitary forces who have severely debased the war through massacres, murder outside of combat, terrorist acts, kidnappings, extortion, attacks

Many have cast doubt on the parties' desire for peace. President Pastrana and his government have made abundant demonstrations of their indestructible commitment to negotiations, so much so that many have called them naïve. Examples of these gestures include the unilateral decision to establish the demilitarized zone, the resolve in dealing with the armed forces, the proposal of *Plan Colombia* which aims at achieving true peace, and even the courage to back off and change positions when the peace process seemed comatose.

The guerrillas, on the other hand, make continual verbal pronouncements of their interest in a negotiated solution, but do not offer any tangible sign or carry out concrete acts in favor of peace. They have fallen into the pattern characteristic of all guerrillas who are thinking of beginning a peace process—escalating the conflict to win strength at the negotiating table.

In general, at least in our hemisphere, an insurgency is apt to use negotiations as an opportunity of the moment, part of a strategy that envisions various forms of struggle. Therefore, *peace must be built at the negotiating table*. To the extent that the negotiations progress, it becomes clear that it is easier, quicker, and more effective to obtain the desired transformations through negotiations, rather than through more bloodshed, which only impoverishes the nation that the insurgents seek to govern.

In this effort, one must never give up hope.

The Responsibility of Colombians

! Through the efforts of Colombian citizens over the past four years, it has been possible to achieve the seemingly impossible task of forging consensus over a number of issues. These issues were put forth by the National Conciliation

Commission in the first of its documents, written after numerous consultations with institutions and individuals. There is now consensus on the following points:

- to recognize the need for a negotiated and political, rather than military solution;
- to accept the political status of the guerrillas;
- to negotiate during the armed conflict, although that is less than desirable;
- to request international cooperation but not intervention.
- to seek an early agreement on verifiable respect for human right

Experience has shown that it is not international organizations nor "groups of friends" nor international cooperation that make peace. The only ones that can make peace are the parties to the conflict who have sufficient political will as well as the support of public opinion to give stability, security, and permanence to the process.

One perceives that that all segments of the population have decided to assume responsibility for peace and its costs, and to contribute to authentic national reconciliation.

The government has an unavoidable duty to maintain and consolidate the points of consensus already reached--including that dealing with a national policy. Some members of the Liberal Party and unions have openly criticized the conduct of the executive branch or have distanced themselves from the process of achieving consensus.

The Responsibility of the United States

Just as the United States considers that Colombia must have a unified strategy for peace, our country would like to see unity in the statements of various agencies of the U.S. government and political parties.

Nevertheless, that is not how it is. There are still voices and positions contrary to the unqualified support President Clinton has given to the Colombian peace process.

There are also differences about the level of support that should be provided to the armed forces or the police, apparently more due to electoral politics than substantive disagreements.

It is still not sufficiently understood that the name of the game is not to defeat the drug trade first and then, as a byproduct, end the armed conflict, by economically strangling the participants in the war or the revolutionary forces. The logic is exactly the opposite: it is necessary first to conclude a peace agreement in order to be able to

eradicate drug crops and the drug trade. Plans for alternative development need to be reinforced immediately.

Enlightened circles indiscriminately describe as “narcoguerrillas” or “narcoparamilitaries” all members of those groups who use the readily available money from drug traffickers for their own ends. Such generalizations do not reflect reality.

The most notable points of agreement are perhaps twofold: 1) unanimity regarding the need to support a functioning democracy, which, were it to fall, would gravely affect the political stability of the whole hemisphere; and 2) support must not involve any type of military intervention.

So far Europe and Japan have given encouragement and respectful support to Colombia's efforts. Just as they participated in the Groups of Friends of the peace process in El Salvador and Guatemala, they have responded when asked to support the Colombian effort.

The Cooperation of Latin America

Without a doubt, much of the backing that Colombia needs comes from the nations of Latin America, half of which border it by land or sea.

Colombia is aware of the concern these countries have that the conflict could spill over their borders. Therefore it understands that neighbors, especially those with land borders, are taking precautions, strengthening their border patrols to prevent the risk of infiltration by armed actors in the Colombian conflict. Some of these actors have clearly stated that they will not cross borders to harass neighboring countries, which is as it should be.

Since the 1985 reform of the OAS Charter, the hemispheric commitment to defend democracy has made much progress; such commitment, however, never contemplated nor accepted any joint military force for the defense of democracy or any other purpose. The precedent of Haiti occurred from outside and against the will of the OAS, against a small, defenseless country. Given the difficult historical experiences that have compromised our national sovereignty, no countries of the region should be willing to participate in warlike adventures or offer any help that was not expressly requested by Colombia.

The only minor incident of this type involved Venezuela, which established some unilateral contacts [with the insurgent forces.] Now, however, the Venezuelan position has changed. The most recent facilitation in Venezuelan territory of contact between the

- A mechanism for meticulous international verification will be required to oversee compliance with each and every one of the agreements. It must have the moral authority to denounce violations and those responsible for them. Implementing the peace is at least as complex and difficult as agreeing to it.
- The logistics for carrying out the accords must be prepared well in advance, both administratively and financially. A delay in implementing the accords, or the failure to do so, would seriously damage the prospects for ending violence and achieving reconciliation.
- Reconciliation is the final stage of the process. It involves disarming hearts as well as hands. To achieve this it is necessary that all efforts include from the beginning active education for peace and for the building of an authentic culture of peace.

Oslo, it was broke at the end of the Cold War. That is not the case in Colombia, where there are substantial resources available for conflict entrepreneurs on all sides of the conflict.

Colombia is also distinctive in that violence stems so far beyond the political armed conflicts, and has so for generations. Some say that ten or perhaps 20 percent of the killings are related to the war. This means that 80 to 90 percent are related to other

have tried to help facilitate, leaders have lacked political courage. If they met significant resistance or opposition, they backed off. This is not the case of Colombia's president.

The international community has been involved in Colombia in five basic ways. First, there is substantial humanitarian assistance. This aid has been in place for quite some time and has increased over the last few years, through the International Committee of the Red Cross, international and national NGOs such as the Colombian Red Cross, U.N. organizations, etc.

Second, there is international involvement in the area of human rights. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has an office in Bogotá, as does the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, which is, to my knowledge, the only UNHCR office which serves the internally displaced population. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other international human rights organizations play a very laudable role by criticizing the terrible human rights situation that exists in Colombia.

A third effort is developmental, but it is still relatively small. Large sums have been announced, some of which are loans on normal terms. The Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, and bilateral European and North American donors have programs in Colombia, but up until now they have not been very large and have been fairly scattered and uncoordinated. A key component of what is called *Plan Colombia* is to bring this assistance to a much higher level.

With aid levels increasing, the need for coordination—among donors and between donors and Colombian authorities--is much greater.

There are a number of reasons that international involvement in Colombia thusfar has been so limited. Colombians in general have been more skeptical than many others of having international involvement. Given the history of Latin America and the history of Colombia, this is probably very understandable. The government and the guerrillas have at some times actually agreed only on one thing, and that is not to bring in international mediation. The guerrillas as well as the Colombian diplomatic service, up until recently, have been less active in international public relations than many of their smaller brothers and sisters throughout Latin America.

In my seven years as deputy foreign minister of Norway, I had the FARC once and the ELN twice in my office. By contrast, the Salvadoran Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the URNG and most other guerrilla movements around the world would come to see me at least yearly, to tell us what was happening and ask for help and solidarity. Colombian diplomats also visited far less frequently than the diplomats of many other countries.

This is changing now. There is new international interest in Colombia and sympathy for the parties in their efforts to have a peace process.

During previous administrations in Colombia, the prevailing view, particularly in Europe, was to avoid getting too involved in Colombia because it seemed very complicated. Such involvement could perhaps backfire. There was not a clear "good guy" or a "bad guy" to support or criticize.

Today, the expressions of sympathy from many European, North American, and Latin American countries toward Colombia are quite striking. But it is not easy, for individual governments or for the international community, to plunge into large programs

governmental efforts. To reach a negotiated settlement, it is impossible to do everything on one's own.

in Colombia, that would be the preferred solution. But it could also be that international lawyers and others would need to help in formulating some of the agreements.

I believe that the international community should help to facilitate the wider process of reconciliation, engage in so-called "second track diplomacy," to fund hundreds and thousands of reconciliation programs, projects, and meetings such as the ones undertaken by the National Conciliation Commission (CCN), the church, and others. The parties have already agreed to a systematic process of consulting with civil society through public hearings. These will be organized by the *Comité Tematico* (Thematic Committee) which is to prepare input for the negotiations on the common agenda agreed to between the FARC and the government.

It is imperative to continue and step up the existing humanitarian work, and couple it with longer-term developmental efforts. This includes helping the internally displaced population to return home and resettle and have a permanently better life.

Attention needs to be paid to the peace fund, which is part of *Plan Colombia* but deserves special mention. The peace fund is the vehicle to help fund the agreements as they are concluded. The common agenda includes some 47 points, of which at least 30 are substantive. To negotiate the common agenda could take two years or 200, as it is very comprehensive. Nearly all of it costs money. This funding must be available when agreements are concluded, because implementing agreements is even more difficult than negotiating them.

The international community should actively help facilitate exchanges between all sectors of Colombian society and the outside. Norway has started a military exchange

and 1999 to talk with our military. It was highly successful. It was a positive exchange in both directions, and appears to have helped change the mentality of these generals in terms of understanding the importance of various peace processes, including their own. We should promote more exchanges with the FARC, the ELN, the commercial and

Luis Alberto Moreno

Colombian Ambassador to the United States

The election of President Pastrana, and the mood of the Colombian electorate when Pastrana was elected, represented a turning point in Colombia. Both major candidates agreed to give a unilateral concession to the FARC -- for the *despeje*, or demilitarized zone--to attempt to begin peace negotiations. This is how it all began. President Pastrana delivered a speech during the campaign, and basically all of the elements laid out in the speech indicate exactly what has been followed to date.

Another important element to consider is that there have been peace processes in Colombia that have been successful. Successive governments, especially the last five governments, have all attempted to make peace, and some have succeeded; but mostly, we have failed to bring about the level of peace and the level of negotiation that is needed in Colombia.

This time, not only was a broad agenda established, there was also the concept of internationalizing the peace process. We Colombians are ve

sides to a negotiating table, represented by the government and the insurgency. But it is really civil society that will make this process go forward in Colombia and it will be the international community that will help both parties move along.

In trying to understand Colombia's reality, one need look only at the polls. Eighty percent or better of all Colombians want peace. But I would also say just as many disagree on the actual conduct of the peace process.

For President Pastrana, as we all know, and for Colombia, it has been a very tough year. A kind of a paradigm that had always previously existed in Colombia was that the economy went well. Throughout our history we have been accustomed to years of positive economic growth, and President Pastrana's first year has really been the first time that that paradigm has been broken. As a result, there is a lot of desperation being felt in Colombia.

When one looks at the polls, it is clear that people believe overwhelmingly that the government of President Pastrana has given too much to the guerrillas, but those same people believe that the peace process should not be broken off. This tells you something about the level of confusion that exists in society as we try to embark on the peace process.

From an international perspective, the recently launched *Plan Colombia* recognizes two major things. One is that the problem of Colombia is not just drugs, but rather, that Colombia has a number of problems that feed on each other. Second, the plan puts before the world community what Colombia needs, as well as the budget it needs, if the country is to be able to begin to solve its internal conflict.

If one looks, for instance, at the connection between narco-trafficking and all forms of violence in Colombia, it is clear that in the last three-and-a-half years, Colombia doubled the production of cocaine. This helped strengthen the military might and power of the FARC and definitely of the paramilitary groups. If we are not able to weaken significantly the production of illicit crops, most importantly in narco-trafficking, we are not going to be able to get to peace in Colombia.

But this is not just a military problem. *Plan Colombia* is a comprehensive strategy in which, for instance, alternative development plays a vital role. Colombia, since opening up its economy, lost about 700,000 hectares of cultivation of agricultural crops--cotton, soybeans, and wheat, for example-- which probably has been replaced to a large extent by production in the United States, from soybeans in Iowa or corn in the corn belt. Therefore, Colombia needs better access to the markets of the world and especially to the major market that is natural for Colombia, that of the United States.

Another critical part of *Plan Colombia* is building state support. This is perhaps a very academic way of looking at it. But an important piece of building state support has to do with human rights. There is definitely one case that can be made. And that is that in the last year and in the last several years, human rights violations in Colombia, especially attributed to government forces, have been going down. There is still a lot to be done. But inasmuch as we have these levels of violence in Colombia, it is going to be very hard to eliminate human rights violations completely.

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committed human rights violations, then the whole battalion cannot be vetted. The soldiers in this battalion have at least five years' experience. That takes us to another critical element having to do with the reform of our military.

Reform is not only about changing a conscript army to a professional army. It also has to do with international scrutiny. Inasmuch as all members of the conflict in Colombia are exposed to international pressures, they will continue to improve their human rights records.

A very critical aspect of *Plan Colombia* has to do with peace, understanding peace not just as negotiations, but as a process that more and more starts to take root in Colombia, and that necessitates a full, comprehensive approach if we are to achieve lasting peace.

Finally, very belatedly and very slowly, there is a realization in the United States that Colombia is not just drugs, that the problems of Colombia are extremely complex and unique, and that they are at the center of what many developing countries have to wrestle with if they are to advance in their democratic process. The Colombian state has to regain the presence it needs to guarantee the life of citizens. But the presence of the state does not exist in all of Colombia, and that is a fact of life.

Colombian-U.S. relations are changing. They are changing in the sense that, more and more, we are moving towards a broad agenda. Over the last year a large number of high-level U.S. officials and members of Congress and senators have gone to Colombia and have departed from just the drug-related vision of our country, to look closer at our economy, our environment, and many other things that Colombia can add and enrich in relation to the United States. But there is not one opinion of Colombia in

the United States. This is a government that speaks with many faces and with many voices.

It will take time, but I think we are taking the steps that will make peace achievable in Colombia. It probably won't be achieved by the time this government's term is over. But I believe, as opposed to times previous, that we will have set the process in motion with no looking back.

channel” between Israel and the PLO which led to the Oslo Accord of September 1993, and having directed the Norwegian facilitation of peace talks between the Guatemalan government and URNG which led to the 1996 signing in Oslo of the cease-fire agreement. Mr. Egeland is a former Fulbri

Bogotá, delegate to the National Constituent Assembly, and member of Congress. Internationally, he has served as personal representative of the U.N. secretary-general and chief of the United Nations Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), and personal representative of the secretary-general of the Organization of American States and chief of the Mission for the Restoration of Democracy in Haiti. He has also held senior posts with the Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations Development Program. Dr. Ramírez Ocampo holds a law and economics degree from the Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá.

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