

Recommendations for Peru's war on drugs

The following are excerpts of an EIR Special Memorandum on "Recommended Next Steps in the War on Drugs in Peru," issued on March 20, 1997, which was circulated among relevant policy-making circles in both Peru and the United States.

I. The current situation

In 1996 there were significant accomplishments in the war on drugs in Peru. In order of importance, they are:

a) significant aerial interdiction by the Peruvian Air Force, with tracking assistance provided by the United States government;

b) the retaking of coca-growing areas controlled by the narco-terrorists, which had been abandoned by the Peruvian Army because of the conflict with Ecuador and the mistaken decision of the Peruvian executive in 1995 to pull the armed forces out of the direct fight against drugs, a decision which in practice was corrected in early 1996; and

c) Peruvian police actions, which led to the capture of important leaders of the Peruvian mafia linked to the Colombian cartels, as well as the seizure of more than 166 kilos of drugs in the course of the year, a record for the country.

These actions led to the following year-end results:

a) Hectares under coca cultivation in all of the coca-growing valleys of Peru have been reduced, according to satellite estimates, to some 94,000, a drop of more than 20,000 hectares compared to the 1995 level. It should be noted that these estimates exclude land left fallow in preparation for future coca cultivation.

b) Prices for coca leaves have fallen dramatically, to historically low levels. However, cocaine prices on U.S. streets have remained stable, suggesting that the drug cartels have large stocks warehoused.

c) More than 150,000 individuals involved in coca cultivation have abandoned that work, which has led to migration out of the coca producing regions—reversing the trend of previous years. . . .

It is worth underscoring the significance of the disruption of the air bridge, which for more than 15 years permitted the easy supplying of basic cocaine paste (PBC) to the Colombian and Mexican mobs. The four phases of Operation Laser Strike have led to a nearly total interruption of PBC smuggling by air to Colombian laboratories, which in 1992 accounted for about 70% of the PBC that entered Colombia.

The success of air interdiction in 1996 also demonstrated the appropriateness of a specific approach to international cooperation, which should be the model for all such interna-

tional coordination in the war on drugs. The approach was based principally on U.S. assistance in the areas of technical support, logistics, and supplies and equipment, with a basic respect for national sovereignty. The United States provided equipment and personnel for radar and infrared electronic surveillance of Colombian narco-planes in the northern area of the Peruvian jungle. U.S. technicians and advisers from the Department of Defense, DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration], Coast Guard, and Customs wore no uniforms, didn't shoot, nor did they otherwise intervene directly in actions against the drug flights. What they did do, was provide information and training to Peruvian troops in the surveillance, identification, and tracking of drug planes. Although they did not provide new planes, but only spare parts, to the Peruvian Air Force, this sufficed such that by the end of the year, the number of drug planes that were crossing the Peruvian jungle was reduced to nearly zero.

II. What should be done

The successes of 1996 have encouraged Peruvian authorities to propose additional goals in the war on drugs, including the government's recent pledge that all coca cultivation in Peru will be eradicated within ten years. However, it is our view that this goal, and others, can be achieved in much less time, if a series of issues are addressed, for which we make the following recommendations:

1) Interception of river transport: yes to technical assistance, no to a multinational military force.

The disruption of the air bridge has meant that the drug mafias are increasingly using river and land routes for the transport of PBC to Colombia and Brazil. River transport, using high-speed boats, and by land, through jungle paths known only to Indians of the region, have created a new and very complex interdiction problem. Patrolling the thousands upon thousands of kilometers of rivers and jungle paths implies new and more sophisticated technology, to which Peru does not have access at the present time. Rapid patrol boats, sophisticated detection and communications equipment, jungle observation posts, low-altitude planes, and highly sophisticated electronic surveillance equipment, are all necessary for this new stage in the war on drugs.

As a preliminary step, in February 1997 the Peruvian government put in service 60 high-speed patrol boats at the Iquitos base on the Amazon, which were built and equipped entirely by Peru, with U.S. support in the form of pilot training. Much more is required in this regard.

However, there are also voices in the United States, as revealed in recent articles appearing in the U.S. press, which are promoting plans for direct U.S. military involvement on Peruvian territory, and in Ibero-America generally. These plans include the possible deployment of special troops, or of U.S. pilots for airplanes and high-speed boats. Some have also proposed the creation of a Panama-based "Latin American Air Force," or some other supranational military deploy-

ment, to combat drugs.

This kind of “cooperation” would be a serious strategic error. Not only would it be unacceptable to the Peruvian Armed Forces, as a violation of national sovereignty, but the presence of U.S. military troops or advisers would hand the narco-terrorists the best possible argument for justifying their subversive operations as a fight against a “Yankee invasion”—that is, they would raise the flag of “narco-nationalism” for their cause. Thus, acting on such proposals would be the surest way to sabotage, in practice, the real and fruitful Peru-U.S. cooperation in the war on drugs which has emerged over the recent period.

What is true for Peru, in this regard, also holds for the Colombian, Bolivian, and Mexican situations.

Rather, the kind of cooperation that was achieved in 1996 should be pushed forward. This cooperation showed:

a) that the Peruvian government and Armed Forces have a real commitment and ability to fight the drug trade; and

b) that U.S. help, in the form of equipment, technology, and training—without any chain-of-command or direct military implications—can yield the desired results.

2) Support the role of the Armed Forces.

The seizure of the Japanese ambassador’s residence in Lima by an MRTA commando squad ran in parallel with the activation of the northeast front of the MRTA in the Middle Huallaga Valley, the country’s leading coca-growing zone. For both the seizure of the diplomatic residence and in the reconstruction of that guerrilla front, the role of the new narco-terrorist international, the São Paulo Forum, was vital. That group, founded in 1990 by Fidel Castro’s Cuban Communist Party, and today composed of dozens of leftist political organizations from throughout the continent, provided all sorts of logistical support—including weapons, cadre, training, and money—for the relaunching of the MRTA. . . .

In this regard, it is vital to strengthen the role of the Peruvian Armed Forces in controlling these isolated regions of the country. Any vacuum left by the state, as was shown in 1995, translates into a growth of narco-terrorism. A civil-military alliance in defense of the nation-state must be strengthened.

Thus, what must not be done is to follow the advice of those voices, originating in London but unfortunately also being echoed in the United States, which argue that the Peruvian Armed Forces, and those of Ibero-America in general, are obsolete, represent unnecessary expenses, and are a threat to “democracy.” In this sense, the international campaign to discredit the Armed Forces for supposed human rights violations, headed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with documented ties to the drug trade and to international terrorism, should not receive political support from London and from certain circles in Washington—for example, the Inter-American Dialogue—as is unfortunately occurring today.

Without the Armed Forces, the country cannot be pacified. The Armed Forces represent the most solid, the final

bulwark of defense against efforts to turn Peru into a narco-dictatorship. . . .

3) Destroy the drug-legalization apparatus financed by George Soros and company.

The international drug trade relies on the support of a London-centered propaganda apparatus which promotes the legalization of drugs. This lobby, which includes numbers of institutions and individuals receiving substantial financial support from U.S. and European sources, is carrying out an ongoing propaganda campaign to induce Peruvians to accept drug legalization as an option. Among these institutions are:

- the Andean Commission of Jurists, which receives financing from Human Rights Watch/Americas, in turn financed by mega-speculator George Soros;

- the Andean Council of Coca Growers (heavily infiltrated by the MRTA and Shining Path);

- a series of human rights NGOs, in particular APRODEH; and

- various media which advocate the decriminalization, or outright legalization of drugs, such as the Lima newspapers *Expreso* and *La República*. . . .

International cooperation to unmask and dismantle this drug legalization network is a priority of the anti-drug fight.

4) Strengthen the legal framework for the war on drugs.

The legal framework and administration of justice in Peru still suffers from major deficiencies for dealing adequately with the drug trade. The 1987 drug control law is so inadequate that, when a top drug trafficker is caught, the anti-terrorism law is frequently invoked in order to be able to apply a sufficiently severe sentence. While the possibility of seizing the assets of drug traffickers legally exists, current banking secrecy laws and the easy expedient of using front men, means that, in practice, the bulk of the money and properties of the arrested traffickers is never confiscated. The laws that cover these crimes, in particular those referring to money laundering, must be strengthened.

The administration of justice also lacks the necessary effectiveness: venality, corruption, and outright fear on the part of the judges are constant problems. The “faceless judge” system, which has been successfully applied in cases of terrorism, should be adopted for drug-related crimes as well.

5) Change the neo-liberal economic policy that favors the drug trade.

There may be the best of intentions behind the U.S.-endorsed program to establish 14 alternative development projects for eradicating coca cultivation, and substituting it with new crops in the country’s nine coca-growing zones. But the strategy has a fundamental flaw: There is virtually no transportation or communication system in place to transport the substitute crops to market in the country’s major cities, and abroad. Without these, it will be impossible to construct a truly viable economy in the regions today dominated by coca cultivation. Therefore, the construction of basic infrastructure to connect the zones of the eastern Andean Piedmont with

the country's main consumer markets, is the key factor in economically developing the zone.

This, in turn, requires fundamental changes in the current neo-liberal economic policy, which gives priority to payment of the foreign debt and to austerity in public spending, above the social needs and the physical economy of the country. The drug trade will never be destroyed as long as the prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund are followed.

Samper hands FARC huge territory

The following is from an EIR Special Memorandum issued on June 16, 1997, which was circulated among relevant policy-making circles in Colombia and the United States.

Summary

With the pretext of securing the release of 72 Colombian soldiers who have been held captive by the narco-terrorist FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces) for 10 months, Colombian President Ernesto Samper Pizano issued a decree on May 20, 1997 ordering the total evacuation of all military and police personnel from a 13,000-square kilometer area in the southern province of Caquetá, near the Ecuadoran border. That evacuation, which has now been completed and verified, has permitted armed FARC forces to take possession of this territory. The Presidential decree, imposed in the face of strong military opposition, not only poses a serious national security threat to Colombia, but to every country in the region, including the United States. The threat is twofold:

1) A substantial portion of national territory has been handed over to an armed terrorist group which is heavily involved in every aspect of the drug trade, from cultivation of the raw material to its processing and trafficking. The result is to undermine the very concept of national sovereignty, and is rapidly creating a dual power situation.

2) The deal struck with the FARC narco-terrorists was shaped by agents of the United Nations and their non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as a prelude to holding "peace negotiations" with the FARC and other narco-subversive groups in the country. This scenario establishes a precedent for appeasement of narco-terrorism, and is an effort to establish a model contrary to Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori's recent firm rejection of terrorist blackmail, in the interest of preserving national sovereignty. . . .

The FARC and drugs: The 13,000 square kilometers which have been demilitarized under President Samper's directive, encompass the townships of Cartagena del Chairá and Remolinos del Caguán, where Army bases are located. The zone is heavily dedicated to the cultivation of coca, the

raw material for cocaine. . . .

All coca producers pay a "war tax" or levy to the FARC; if they refuse, they run the risk of being killed or expelled from the area. In fact, the coca-farmers are enslaved to the FARC, since they work for the FARC, and obey its mobilization orders on pain of death. The FARC's relationship to the drug trade, which now encompasses not only control of coca growing, but also processing laboratories and trafficking routes as well, has turned the FARC into Colombia's so-called "Third Cartel," after the Medellín and Cali Cartels. . . .

The FARC's current objective: The Third Cartel is not merely interested in garnering international attention. As the FARC stated last year, at the beginning of the hostage drama, the captive soldiers would be released only if there were a total evacuation of Cartagena del Chairá and Remolinos del Caguán. The FARC's objective is to seize total control of the region, and to use that control to win international recognition of the one-third of Colombian territory the FARC now claims to dominate. Such recognition would set a precedent for myriad separatist uprisings by "indigenist" and "environmentalist" terrorists everywhere.

The one-worldists behind the drive to turn the United Nations into the seat of a world empire . . . are fully prepared to grant the FARC's petition, and that of their ELN partners-in-crime, as part of a broader strategy to divide and destroy the Colombian nation-state.

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