

Background

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Colombia and Obama's Latin America Policy: Time to Close Ranks and Support a Friend

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Abstract: *On August 7, 2010, Juan Manuel Santos will take office as the new president of Colombia. His election is a testimony to the Colombian public's commitment to democracy and a strong U.S.–Colombian relationship. Over the past decade, the two countries have achieved an unprecedented level of cooperation on many fronts—from fighting drug-trafficking and narco-terrorism to advancing public safety and meeting human needs. The influence of the criminal FARC has been tumbling, and kidnapping and murder rates have been decreasing. Much of this progress has been possible thanks to the policies of outgoing President Alvaro Uribe, on which Santos can build when he takes office. Despite the many positive developments, Colombia will continue to be reliant on support from its American ally. Instead of courting the anti-American and FARC-friendly Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, the Obama Administration should reassess its global friendships and focus on aiding Colombia—including support of continued funding for Plan Colombia, urging Congress to approve the pending Colombia Free Trade Agreement, and building a comprehensive counternarcotics strategy. Heritage Foundation Latin America expert Ray Walser lays out the historical, political, and security significance of this critical U.S. ally.*

The decisive June 20 triumph of Juan Manuel Santos, elected as Colombia's next president, is a victory for democracy, a vote for policy continuity, and a reaffirmation of the importance of a strong U.S.–Colombian relationship. Closely associated with the policies

Talking Points

- The successful U.S. investment in stability, security, and democratic governance in Colombia is the largest and most sustained in the Americas of the past decade.
- The U.S. and Colombia are addressing drug trafficking, conflict reduction, citizen security, and more equitable economic growth.
- Threatened from within by narco-terrorism and criminal elements, Colombia faces an external challenge from the aggressive authoritarian populism of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez.
- Sustaining current democratic security ties through cooperation and building prosperity through a lasting free trade agreement are the keys to a continuing U.S.–Colombia relationship.
- The Obama Administration needs to examine its ties with such a critical ally as Colombia more closely. It should recognize that friendship and allegiance are not the outcomes of good intentions or fine speeches but of patient, geopolitical common sense and actions.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
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of the transformative Alvaro Uribe, president since 2002, Santos is well positioned to strengthen the ties that bind the U.S. and Colombia, a relationship that has expanded to become an enduring, if sometimes overlooked, foundation point for U.S.–Latin American relations. On many fronts—from combating the drug trade and narco-terrorism to advancing citizen security and meeting human needs—the U.S. and Colombia have achieved an unprecedented level of cooperation over the past decade.

U.S. national interests in South America are broad in scope. They include the fight against illegal drugs, stopping the spread of terrorism, building strong representative democracies with sound institutions, advancing broad-based prosperity, and countering the ideological and geopolitical challenges posed by a range of anti-American actors from Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez to geostrategic interlopers like Russia and Iran. China, Canada, and the European Union (EU) are aggressively pursuing mutually beneficial trade relations with Colombia, while debate over U.S. approval of an already negotiated free-trade agreement (FTA) continues.

As demonstrated by recent visits by the U.S. Secretaries of Defense and State to Colombia, the Obama Administration is inching toward a mid-course correction in its policy toward the country.¹ The time has come for the Obama Administration to aggressively push for immediate legislative approval of the FTA with Colombia. It must make the case that trade union and human rights issues in Colombia will be addressed through active partnership with a shared review process rather than by denying the much-needed free-trade deal and demanding perfection on the human rights front. Protecting human rights, reducing criminal threats to security

and reducing the threat of illicit drug trafficking go hand in hand and require well-coordinated, long-term strategies that link citizen security with the economic opportunities that come with trade, investment, and market access.

The Obama Administration should move ahead to offer Colombia Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) status and make it clear to Hugo Chávez that acts of aggression against Colombia in the name of expanding Bolivarian socialism will be considered hostile acts against the U.S. President Obama should commit to visiting Colombia when he next travels to the region. Finally, the U.S. needs to develop a forward-looking joint venture with Colombia aimed at developing its enormous renewable energy potential as a long-term example of continued friendship and cooperation. History, trade and security interests, democratic ideals, and geopolitical common sense make it imperative that the U.S. shore up its challenged global leadership position with enduring ties to allies and friends who are reliable for the long haul.

At the Crossroads of the Americas

Since the days of the Spanish empire, Colombia has occupied a central geopolitical position at the crossroads of international commerce, both licit and illicit.² Colombia has been a historic partner and enduring friend of the U.S. In the course of more than a century, the U.S. invested billions of dollars in Colombia. From the war on drugs and Plan Colombia, the U.S. has played an active role in political, economic, and security developments in the country.³ The ability of illegal armed actors to threaten a nation of 44 million citizens with anarchy and state failure constituted perhaps the gravest

1. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Remarks with Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa Delgado,” Quito, Ecuador, June 8, 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/06/142846.htm> (July 8, 2010), and The White House, “National Security Strategy,” May 2010, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf (July 9, 2010).
2. A key pillar of U.S. national security strategy is the ability to access the “commons” of sea, air, and space. See Barry Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,” *International Security* (Summer 2003), pp. 5–46; Michelle Flournoy and Shawn Brimley, “The Contested Commons,” *United States Naval Institute Proceedings Magazine*, Vol. 135, No. 7 (July 2009), at http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/story.asp?STORY_ID=1950 (July 8, 2010); Saul Bernard Cohen, *The Geopolitics of the World System* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); and John A. Cope, “A Prescription for Protecting the Southern Approach,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 42 (2006), at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/4210.pdf (July 8, 2010).

post-Cold War threat to regional stability in the Americas. Vigorous U.S. support combined with national leadership and resilience prevented Colombia from toppling over the precipice and produced genuine progress toward a durable, democratic, and secure nation.

Colombia in particular has a major impact on the security of the Americas because it remains at the epicenter of coca growing and cocaine processing.

Colombia is a high-value trading partner with a healthy appetite for U.S. products and investments; it is fundamentally democratic, led by achievement-oriented, pro-American executive policymakers. Bilateral relations are characterized by strong levels of goodwill and mutual trust supported by confidence in the capacity of the U.S. to act as a reliable partner and stabilizing influence throughout the region. Colombia's extensive territory and resources contain substantial economic potential. In an uncertain, competitive global environment, Colombia remains receptive to permanent economic, political, and security links to the U.S.

Colombia in particular has a major impact on the security of the Americas because it remains at the epicenter of coca growing and cocaine processing. While the illicit consumption of drugs is a global problem, Andean cocaine is increasingly controlled by the Mexican cartels that are responsible for the violence and destabilization in Mexico, which has resulted in the loss of 23,000 lives since President Felipe Calderón took office in 2006. The power of narco-corruption cuts deeply into virtually every nation in the Americas. Cocaine from Colombia, and now increasingly from Bolivia and Peru, transits Venezuela—which does not cooperate in counter-narcotics operations—en route to destinations in West Africa and ultimately Europe. In the wake of the lucrative drug trade come arms trafficking,

money laundering, massive subversions of the rule of law, and even global terrorism.

Criminal minds relentlessly exploit vulnerabilities and seek to capitalize on discord and divisions within the ranks of policymakers in the U.S. and abroad. New source countries, routes, patterns of corruption, and means of delivery, such as semi-submersibles, are aspects of a single, inescapable reality. The steady threat posed by illegality, criminal organizations, and endemic violence has shaken the foundations of nations in America's "backyard," making Colombia a critical ally in the continuing struggle to preserve a stable regional order.

Colombia: Critical Gateway to the Andes

Sometimes described as "geography in search of nation," Colombia is larger than France, Portugal, and Spain combined. With a population of 44 million it is South America's second most populous country and the third largest in Latin America. It shares common borders with five countries and offers extensive maritime access to the Pacific and the Caribbean. A series of high Andean ridges divide the country making national transportation and communications difficult. Extremes of geography have slowed national consolidation since independence was achieved in the early 1800s. Less than 5 percent of Colombia's population resides on half the national territory. Much of Colombia could be, until recently, classified as "ungoverned space," making the country an ideal haven for criminal organizations, a spawning ground for rural insurgency, and a favorable environment for coca cultivation and processing labs. Colombia sadly has also proved suitable for poppy production.

The historic challenge for Colombia has been to extend central governmental control over the entire span of national territory.⁴ Local—often feudal—power centers and elites have challenged the authority of the central government in Bogota. Class and ethnic fault lines also run deep, with the poor in urban and rural areas,

3. See Bradley Lynn Coleman, *Colombia and the United States: The Making of an Inter-American Alliance* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2008); Stephen J. Randall, *Colombia and the United States: Hegemony and Independence* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992); and Stephen J. Randall, *Diplomacy of Modernization: Colombian-American Relations, 1929-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

substantial numbers of Afro-Colombians, and a significant indigenous population experiencing marginalization and social exclusion.

For decades, Colombia's history has been scarred by recurrent and often horrific bouts of violence. Neither ballot box nor electoral democracy had, until the 21st century, dampened the competitive and often conflictive nature of Colombian society.⁵ The assassination of a popular political figure in April 1948 triggered an era of civil war known as "the violence" (*la violencia*, 1948–1953).⁶ Liberation struggles and revolutions in China, Vietnam, and Cuba inspired the formation of a myriad of leftist insurgent groups, notably the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the April 19 Movement (M-19). While this mix of urban and rural insurgents waged a war against the Colombian state in the 1960s and 1970s, these struggles were increasingly eclipsed by the rise of illegally armed actors, particularly the drug cartels of Medellín and Cali.⁷ From the 1970s onward, Colombia's cartels exploited a rapidly rising international demand for cocaine and marijuana that precipitated the four-decade struggle that continues to the present.

Cocaine, along with marijuana, was the foundation of the Medellín cartel, dominated by the notorious drug lord Pablo Escobar Gaviria, who died in 1993. In his heyday, Escobar commanded a personal fortune estimated at \$25 billion, controlled 80 percent of Colombian cocaine production, and was responsible for a bloodbath of murder and terror. The Medellín cartel reportedly earned \$60 million per day. In the 1990s, the U.S. played an active role in tracking and eliminating the Escobar threat.⁸ The Colombian government also largely dismantled the Cali cartel with strong U.S. law enforcement assistance. FARC leaders, frustrated by their inability to gain popular support, discovered they could bolster their numbers and fighting strength by ruthlessly exploiting the lucrative drug trade.⁹ Protection, extortion, and illicit commerce created a means to broaden FARC's power, bringing in a minimum of \$600 million annually.¹⁰ At the same time, coca production in Colombia took off, rising from 51,000 hectares in 1995 to 122,000 in 1999. In that same year, Colombia supplied roughly 80 percent of global cocaine production and 90 percent of the cocaine consumed in the U.S.¹¹

Violence and state weakness led to the formation of the final group of illegally armed actors, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC,

4. The current state-of-the-art term is "ungoverned space." See Angel Rabasa *et al.*, "Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks," RAND Corporation, 2007, at http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG561.pdf (July 8, 2010).
5. Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875–2002* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Harvey F. Kline, *Colombia: Democracy Under Assault* (Boulder, Co.: Westview, 1995); and Jennifer S. Holmes, *Guns, Drugs, and Development in Colombia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).
6. Richard E. Sharpless, *Gaitán of Colombia: A Political Biography* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), and W. John Green, *Gaitanismo, Left Liberalism, and Popular Mobilization in Colombia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).
7. Russell Crandall, *Driven by Drugs: U.S. Policy Toward Colombia* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).
8. Mark Bowden, *Killing Pablo* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).
9. FARC adopted this decision in 1993 as part of its strategic plan. Proceeds from the drug trade enabled FARC to purchase weapons. See General Carlos Ospina-Ovalle, "The Defeat of the FARC," *Regional Insights*, Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies No. 5, March 15, 2008, at <http://www.ndu.edu/chds/docUploaded/ACADEMIC-NEWSLETTER5english.pdf> (July 9, 2010).
10. Stephanie Hanson, "FARC, ELN: Colombia's Left-Wing Guerrillas," Council on Foreign Relations, August 19, 2009, at http://www.cfr.org/publication/9272/farc_eln.html (July 9, 2010).
11. Peter DeShazo, Johanna Mendelson Forman, and Philip McLean, "Countering Threats to Security and Stability: Lessons from Colombia," Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 2009, p. 4, at http://csis.org/files/publication/090930_DeShazo_CounteringThreats_Web.pdf (July 15, 2010).

commonly called paramilitaries). Acting with indiscriminate violence, paramilitaries cut a swath of murder while making a bogus claim to legitimacy by their violent opposition to FARC and ELN insurgencies. Paramilitary violence and lawlessness further destabilized Colombia, while paramilitary elements financed themselves with earnings from coca growing, cocaine production, kidnapping, extortion, and protection rackets.¹² Over two decades, Colombians paid an enormous price for the existence of this Hobbesian triad of drug trafficking, organized crime, and insurgency. By the end of the 1990s, the death toll included four assassinated presidential candidates, 200 judges and investigators, 1,200 police officers, 151 journalists, and more than 300,000 ordinary Colombians.¹³ The United Nations estimates that the overall value of Colombia's cocaine trade alone generated approximately \$88 billion per year, an amount far greater than the gross domestic product (GDP) of many nations in the region. During the presidency of Andres Pastrana (1998–2002), Colombia tottered on the brink of state failure while insecurity spread beyond its borders.¹⁴

Back from the Brink: The Uribe Years

President Alvaro Uribe won election as president in 2002. Following a referendum and change to the constitution, Uribe was re-elected in May 2006 with an impressive 65 percent of the popular vote. Throughout his tenure in office, even in the most controversial episodes that included clashes with the judiciary, Uribe enjoyed broad

popular support. The majority of Colombians appear to have supported the idea of a constitutional reform to permit Uribe a third presidential term. On February 26, 2010, Colombia's constitutional court ruled against a possible third consecutive Uribe term and barred him from any future return to the presidency. While heated debate continues to surround the court's decision, Colombia demonstrated that checks and balances work and that in a democracy executive power has genuine limits. When President Uribe departs office on August 7 and passes the sash of office to President-elect Santos, he will leave behind a Colombia that is institutionally stronger, economically sounder, and demonstrably more secure.

Uribe's governing policy rested "upon three key pillars: expanding security, investing in the future, and closing social gaps and developing social cohesion."¹⁵ Uribe's executive leadership was clearly demonstrated by his capacity to mobilize Colombia's often reluctant elites to bear a significant burden of the costs of his security program while garnering broad popular support. Uribe oversaw a veritable revolution in Colombia military affairs. During his presidency, Colombian institutions were immeasurably strengthened. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton praised Uribe as a "remarkable example of democratic leadership" and "an essential partner" of the U.S.¹⁶ Even Uribe's strongest critics recognize his dynamism, strategic vision, and leadership ability.¹⁷ As his departure from office nears, Uribe still enjoys approval ratings of 70 percent to 80 percent.

12. FARC, ELN, and AUC are all currently on the U.S. list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," January 19, 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm> (July 9, 2010).

13. Rafael Pardo, "Colombia's Two-Front War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (July/August, 2000), pp. 64–73, at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/56238/rafael-pardo/colombias-two-front-war> (July 9, 2010).

14. Gabriel Marcella and Donald Schulz, "Colombia's Three Wars: U.S. Strategy at the Crossroads," U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, March 5, 1999, p. 6, at <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/FILES/PUB34.pdf> (July 9, 2010).

15. Mary O'Grady, "The Man Who Saved Colombia," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 29, 2010, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704717004575268763528382500.html> (July 9, 2010).

16. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Joint Press Availability with President Uribe," Bogota, Colombia, June 9, 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/06/142945.htm> (July 9, 2010).

17. See Adam Isacson "Uribe Checks Out," *Foreign Policy*, March 4, 2010, at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/03/04/uribe_checks_out (July 9, 2010).

Several benchmark achievements of the Uribe government merit praise and continued study:¹⁸

Control of National Territory. The central objective of the Uribe presidency was to recover control over national territory and provide security for the Colombian public. The June 2003 Democratic Security Policy (DSP) was founded on a belief, according to Uribe, that “a strong state structure, supported by citizen solidarity, guarantees the rule of law and the respect of rights and civil liberties.”¹⁹ In 2002, 200 of Colombia’s 1,100 municipalities lacked a resident mayor; 170 had no police presence.²⁰ DSP dispatched soldiers to troubled areas, and as soon as basic security conditions improved against illegal armed actors, policemen, judges, teachers, and health workers followed.

Over time Colombia developed a highly effective “whole-of-government” strategy, creating fusion of a broad array of military and civilian institutions and services, and a special Center for Coordination of Integrated Action (CCAI) to coordinate military and civilian responses to security and human development. The Colombian military also recognized that the key to improving security centered on control of

territory, denial of strategic lines of communication for FARC, and the proverbial challenge of winning hearts and minds of affected citizens.²¹

The process continues as emphasis shifts from simply improving security to advancing civilian, peace-building, and national-development missions. Large areas of Colombia, such as the complex of national parks and surrounding lightly controlled territory known as La Macarena, once a major FARC stronghold, are being reclaimed for the nation with a strategy based on the concept of “clear, hold, and develop” and on the cuing of security operations to support development and government activities, and vice versa.²² Many of the strategies that produced successful results in Iraq and are now being applied in Afghanistan were first put into practice in Colombia.

Enhanced Citizen Security. Between 2003 and 2009, acts of terrorism fell from 1,645 to 303 (84 percent drop); kidnappings from 2,882 to 376 (88 percent drop); and homicides from 23,523 to 15,817 (52 percent drop). National Police statistics show the murder rate fell from approximately 55 per 100,000 in 2003 to 35 per 100,000 in 2009.²³

18. The following section highlights findings in longer studies that include: Peter DeShazo, Tanya Primiani, and Philip McLean, “Back from the Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999–2007,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2007; DeShazo, Forman, and McLean, “Countering Threats to Security and Stability: Lessons from Colombia”; Gabriel Marcella, “Democratic Governance and the Rule of Law: Lessons From Colombia,” U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, December 2009, at <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/PUB955.pdf> (July 9, 2010); and Max Boot and Richard Bennet, “The Colombian Miracle,” *The Weekly Standard*, December 14, 2009, at <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/017/301nyrut.asp> (July 9, 2010). For a more critical study that also provides generally positive evaluations, see International Crisis Group, “Colombia: Making Military Progress Pay Off,” Latin America Briefing No. 17, April 29, 2008, at http://www.crisisgroup.org/-/media/Files/latin-america/colombia/b17_colombia_making_military_progress_pay_off.ashx (July 9, 2010).
19. Quoted in Colonel Alberto Mejia, “Colombia’s National Security Strategy, a New ‘COIN’ Approach,” United States Army War College, March 15, 2008, at <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA478460> (July 15, 2010).
20. John Paul Rathbone, “After the Savior, What Happens Next?” *The Financial Times*, April 6, 2010.
21. The Colombian military, like the Pentagon in Vietnam, lost sight of the critical importance of the control of territory and allowed some senior officers to view “body counts” as a measure of success leading to the cases of “false positives.” A central underlying theme of the evolution from “Plan Patriota” to “Strategic Leap” has been to tighten territorial control and constrict the operating environment of FARC and others. See Gen. Ospina, “The Defeat of FARC.”
22. Colombian Ministry of National Defense, “Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática,” 2007, at http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/Mindefensa/Documentos/descargas/Documentos_Home/Politica_de_Consolidacion_de_la_Seguridad_Democratica.pdf (July 9, 2010). On the theory behind integrated action, see David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Chap. 5, at http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/TUTC050709/Kilcullen_Testimony050709.pdf (July 9, 2010).

Bogota's current homicide rate is believed to be one-fifth the murder rate in Caracas, Venezuela.²⁴

Fewer Illegal Combatants, Fewer Criminals.

Between January 2002 and January 2010, more than 52,633 armed fighters were demobilized—20,823 guerrilla combatants and 31,810 paramilitary members of the AUC—as specified by the sweeping transitional justice process of the 2005 Law of Peace and Security.²⁵ The essence of the 2005 law has been the establishment of a demobilization and disarmament process in exchange for cooperation in uncovering murders and other crimes committed by paramilitaries. The law calibrated a scale of penalties in exchange for confession, forfeitures, and reparations to victims. While hotly debated and often criticized, the Law of Peace and Security disarmed dangerous combatants without blanket pardons or amnesty as had occurred in other conflicts in the Americas, such as in Nicaragua and El Salvador in the 1980s and 1990s, and accelerated a significant recovery of security in Colombia. But further attention must be paid to land

issues arising from the period of AUC violence when an estimated 1.1 million to 2.7 million acres of land were taken over by illegal armed groups, making restitution important for enhanced economic development.²⁶

By early 2010, regular FARC fighters are believed to have dwindled from a high of 18,000 to 20,000 to between 8,000 and 9,000. Colombia successfully eliminated upper-echelon leaders, rescued FARC hostages, and recovered wide swaths of Colombian territory from FARC control.²⁷ Increased Colombian military effectiveness has been reflected in FARC demoralization and desertions while FARC's capacity to operate in units of more than 10 fighters is seriously reduced.²⁸ FARC lost its most valuable hostages in July 2008 in Operation Checkmate, which freed, without a single casualty, former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, three U.S. contractors, and 11 others from years of brutal captivity.²⁹ The Colombian government has also pushed FARC away from some of its coca-growing

23. Adriaan Alsema, "Colombia's Murder Rate Down 45% During Uribe: Police," *Colombia Reports*, January 20, 2009, at <http://colombiareports.com/colombia-news/news/2628-colombias-murder-rate-down-45-during-uribe-police.html> (July 9, 2010).
24. Alfredo Rangel, "Progress and Challenges in Colombia Today," *The Diplomacy, Strategy and Politics Review*, No. 10 (October/December 2009).
25. U.S. Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Drug and Chemical Control," Vol. 1 (March 2010), p. 204, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/137411.pdf> (July 9, 2010).
26. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "2009 Human Rights Reports: Colombia," March 11, 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/wha/136106.htm> (July 9, 2010).
27. Major FARC leadership losses included founder Pedro Antonio Marin, aka Manuel Marulanda; Raul Reyes; Ivan Rios; Herier Triana, aka Commandante "Pata Mala"; and Edgar Tovar, as well as the arrest and extradition to the U.S. of FARC leader Simon Trinidad.
28. DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, "Back from the Brink," p. 5.
29. Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell and Tom Howes, *Out of Captivity: Surviving 1,967 Days in the Colombian Jungle* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), and Otto Reich, "Uribe to the Rescue," *National Review*, August 18, 2008. See also operational analysis by Robert D. Ramsey III, "From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998–2008," *Combat Studies Institute Press Occasional Paper No. 34*, 2009, at <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/csi/docs/FromElBillarOperationsFenixandJaque.pdf> (July 15, 2010). Ambassador Reich notes that the operation was "cunning and bloodless, substituting finesse and intelligence for brute force." During Operation Chameleon on June 13, 2010, Colombian forces rescued four more hostages, captive since 1998, and FARC command subsequently ordered the execution of 47 FARC members for failure to guard the captives properly. See Brett Borkan, "FARC to Execute 47 Guerillas for Hostage Rescue," *Colombia Reports*, June 16, 2010, at <http://colombiareports.com/colombia-news/news/10275-farc-leader-orders-execution-of-47-guerrilla-jailors.html> (July 9, 2010), and Carlos Alberto Gonzalez, "Four Hostages Rescued from FARC Rebels in 300-Man Raid," *The Independent*, June 15, 2010, at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/four-hostages-rescued-from-farc-rebels-in-300man-raid-2000542.html> (July 9, 2010).

areas, cutting the group's drug revenue in half.³⁰ Colombia's defense officials believe, with reason, that FARC is in an "irreversible state of decline."³¹

A new and urgent challenge to security is presented by emerging criminal bands (bandas criminales emergentes, or BACCRIM) and illegally armed groups, often with previous ties to AUC, who remain heavily involved in drug trafficking and other crimes. These criminal bands are believed to be behind the recent increase in murders in Medellin and elsewhere, and require a well-coordinated response by the new Santos government. There is also a growing indication that the emergent bands often collaborate with FARC.³² There is also little known about the penetration of Mexican cartels into Colombia as they seek to gain a dominant position from source to consumer in the U.S. cocaine market. The challenge for the Santos government will be to preserve the security achievements of the Uribe administration and prevent a recurrence of the anomic violence that caused such harm to Colombia in the past.

Less Coca and Cocaine. The 2010 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR)

reported the largest reductions in Colombian coca production, registering a 29 percent decline between 2007 and 2008 (the last year for which figures are available), falling from 167,000 hectares to 119,000 hectares of cultivation, and a reduction in cocaine production by 200 metric tons (MT).³³ In 2009, the government of Colombia eradicated 165,000 hectares of illicit coca crops and seized 205 MT of cocaine and cocaine base. The most troublesome sign on the horizon is the growing amount of coca production in Bolivia and Peru, a dangerous confirmation of the balloon-like nature of the drug trade.³⁴ A United Nations official remarked on coca production that "increases for Bolivia and Peru show a trend in the wrong direction. Since 2000, coca bush cultivation has decreased in Colombia, and has increased in Bolivia and Peru. Peru must guard against a return to the days when terrorists and insurgents, such as the Shining Path, profited from drugs and crime."³⁵

Improved Police and Military Professionalism. Under Uribe, Colombia made giant strides in strengthening its military and police capabilities. Its army moved from a tactical force to a strategic

30. International Crisis Group, "Colombia: Making Military Progress Pay Off," p. 8. The Colombian government estimated that FARC revenues had dropped from over \$1.3 billion in 2002 to roughly \$500 million in 2007.
31. Gabriel Marcella, "War Without Borders: The Colombia–Ecuador Crisis of 2008," U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, December 16, 2008, at <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=891> (July 9, 2010).
32. Bilal Saab and Alexandra Taylor, "Criminality and Armed Groups: A Comparative Study of FARC and Paramilitary Groups in Colombia," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 32, No. 6 (June 2009), at <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a911581889~db=all~order=page> (July 9, 2010). See also "Paramilitaries' Heirs: The New Face of Violence in Colombia," Human Rights Watch, February 3, 2010, at <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/02/03/paramilitaries-heirs-0> (July 9, 2010). See also Simon Romero, "Colombian Paramilitaries' Successors Call a Threat," *The New York Times*, February 3, 2010, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/04/world/americas/04colombia.html> (July 9, 2010). On FARC–BACRIM connections, see Elyssa Pachico, "What Does the Future Hold for the FARC?" *Colombia Reports*, April 6, 2010, at <http://colombiareports.com/opinion/elyssa-pachico/8994-whats-going-to-happen-to-the-farc.html> (July 9, 2010).
33. U.S. Department of State, "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report," 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/137411.pdf> (July 15, 2010). Interdiction efforts between 2002 and May 2009 resulted in the seizure of 1,245 tons of cocaine. Peter DeShazo of the Center for Strategic and International Studies argued in March 2010 that by using U.N. figures one can demonstrate an "overall 50 percent reduction in coca cultivation since the high point in 1999." Peter DeShazo, "Counternarcotics Effort in Colombia," Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 9, 2010, at <http://csis.org/publication/counternarcotics-efforts-colombia> (July 15, 2010).
34. Mark Schneider, "Rethink the Fight Against Cocaine," *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 23, 2008, at <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2008/0523/p09s01-coop.html> (July 9, 2010).
35. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Steep Decline in Coca Bush Cultivation in Colombia as Peru and Bolivia See Increase," June 19, 2009, at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2009/June/coca-survey-report-for-colombia-peru-and-bolivia.html> (July 19, 2010).

force able and ready to take the fight against illegal armed actors to the remote areas and extend security broadly throughout the countryside. Colombian security forces are commanded by a civilian minister who manages the branches of the military and the national police in an increasingly effective organization. Security forces in Colombia currently number 446,000 uniformed personnel—287,000 in the armed forces and 159,000 police. The army has grown from 53,000 to 270,000, with specialized units for jungle fighting and anti-terror missions, as well as a special counter-narcotics brigade. These forces have the will, the skills, and the patriotism for close and direct combat with the enemy. With extensive U.S. assistance, Colombia has developed an air-mobile force consisting primarily of 250 rotary aircraft with the capacity for complex day and night operations. Colombia's riverine "brown-water" navy has increasingly gained control over inland waterways denying important water routes to criminals and narco-terrorists.

Overall, the Uribe administration conducted a well-financed and carefully managed expansion of its military capabilities within the framework of a democratic society.

The Uribe government expanded the National Police from 95,000 to 136,000 officers, and pioneered the creation of numerous 120-man mobile police squadrons (*carabineros*) that patrol rural areas. As the Colombian military and police have become more professionalized, they have also become more resistant to corruption and other illegal behavior. While the record of the Colombian military is far from perfect, as the case of the "false positives" (including

extra-judicial killings to inflate body counts) demonstrated, it has increasingly put respect for human rights at the center of its doctrine and promises to end impunity for the military at all levels and protect civilian lives. Internally, the Colombian military has established a new human rights inspectorate.³⁶

One final feature of note was Uribe's ability to mobilize the nation's tax contributors to bear the brunt of fighting for a national revival. Uribe pushed through a surtax on Colombia's wealthiest to provide funds for the nation's defense. This has continued with a second levy for 2006 to 2012 that is expected to generate \$3.7 billion in additional revenues.³⁷ Overall, the Uribe administration conducted a well-financed and carefully managed expansion of its military capabilities within the framework of a democratic society.

Durable Legal Reform. The transition to an oral, accusatory, and more transparent system of criminal justice was completed on January 1, 2008. The decade-long overhaul of the justice system represents a landmark undertaking, "a revolutionary movement...that drastically altered the adjudication of criminal acts from a centuries-old inquisitorial process based on continental law traditions to an oral accusatory system modeled on Anglo-American practice and procedures."³⁸ The legal reform set strict timetables. A detained individual must be brought before a judge within 36 hours, charged within 30 days, and receive a trial within 90 days. The time required to process the average criminal case fell by 80 percent and conviction rates rose from 3 percent to 60 percent, numbers unmatched by judicial systems elsewhere in the Americas.³⁹

Another innovation underway is the establishment of 49 justice houses (*casas de justicia*) and five

36. Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Colombia, "Commitment and Transparency: A Report on the Comprehensive Policy for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law at the Ministry of National Defense," September 9, 2009, at http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/Mindefensa/Documentos/descargas/Asuntos_de_Interes/Derechos_Humanos/docs_nweb/Boletin_DDHH_sept_eng.pdf (July 15, 2010).

37. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, "Background Note: Colombia," June 2, 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35754.htm> (July 9, 2010).

38. Former Colombian judge Luz Estella Nagle, quoted in Marcella, "Democratic Governance and the Rule of Law: Lessons from Colombia," pp. 25–26.

39. Max Boot and Richard Bennet, "The Colombian Miracle," *The Weekly Standard*, December 14, 2009, at <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/017/301nyrut.asp> (July 9, 2010).

regional justice houses in rural areas with high concentrations of Afro-Colombian and indigenous people. Justice houses provide a mechanism for the “efficient, comprehensive, and peaceful resolution of everyday legal issues.”⁴⁰ Other complementary efforts include the promotion of a culture of lawfulness, with much of the effort directed at the Colombian military and police.⁴¹ Ending impunity for the military and police and making Colombia’s law enforcement and justice system deterrents against future crime will remain primary objectives in the post-Uribe era. Finally, civilian courts have developed a capacity to handle military-related cases and prosecute and imprison military officers who violate human rights and the rules of war. Overall, the military–police–judicial interface has been materially strengthened, but further progress under Santos will be required.

Economic Growth and Opportunity. Between 2002 and 2007, Colombia’s economy grew impressively at more than 5 percent annually. Factors conducive to growth included improved security, increased foreign investment, prudent macroeconomics, and export growth. During the same period, average foreign direct investment (FDI) rose from \$2 billion to \$8 billion, making Colombia the fourth most important destination for foreign investment after Brazil, Mexico, and Chile. Two-way trade between the U.S. and Colombia reached nearly \$20 billion. U.S. exports to Colombia rose from \$3.6 billion in 2002 to \$9.4 billion in 2009, making Colombia a good client for the U.S.⁴²

Open or declared unemployment fell from 18 percent in 2002 to 10.5 percent in late 2007 and is now at 11.8 percent. Before the global recession, Colombia registered a reduction in poverty from 56 percent to 42 percent, lifting 4 million people out of poverty.⁴³ Overall robust growth raised the number of employed to more than 18 million and made serious inroads against unemployment.⁴⁴ Colombia today shows signs of recovering this dynamic despite trade sanctions imposed by Venezuela and the failure of the U.S. Congress to approve the free-trade agreement (FTA) with Colombia.

The Uribe government has preserved strong macroeconomic stability and launched important budgetary and pension reforms. The World Bank reported that it is easier to start a business in Colombia than in Chile or Spain.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Colombia’s personal and corporate tax rates are among the highest in Latin America. The Uribe administration also undertook a key, if often unheralded, set of social reforms including expanded health insurance.⁴⁶ Sixty percent of the population has access to health care. School enrollment increased by one million during the past eight years. Challenges for Santos include preserving economic growth and investment, job growth, and new land and agricultural policies needed to give land tenure to rightful owners and to stimulate a viable rural economy. Sustaining the costs of peace requires steady economic growth and a chance for previously alienated, displaced, and marginalized people to enter the formal economy and gain greater economic independence.⁴⁷

40. USAID, “Success Story: Bringing Justice to Rural Colombia,” September 2, 2009, at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/colombia/ss_col_justicehouses.html (July 9, 2010).

41. Marcella, “Democratic Governance and the Rule of Law: Lessons from Colombia.”

42. U.S. Census Bureau, “Foreign Trade Statistics: Trade in Goods (Imports, Exports and Trade Balance) with Colombia,” June 10, 2010, at <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c3010.html#2009> (July 9, 2010).

43. The World Bank, “Data: Colombia,” 2010, at <http://data.worldbank.org/country/colombia> (July 9, 2010).

44. Juan Carlos Echeverry and Verónica Navas, “Does Uribe Deserve a New Term?” *Latin Source*, May 25, 2009, at http://www.semana.com/documents/Doc-1884_2009527.pdf (June 23, 2010).

45. Colombia has participated in substantial World Bank efforts aimed at encouraging the streamlining of business start-ups and improving competitiveness. See World Bank and International Finance Corporation, “Doing Business in Colombia, 2010,” 2010, at <http://www.doingbusiness.org/documents/subnational/DB10-Subnational-Report-Colombia.pdf> (July 9, 2010).

46. “Colombia’s Health Reforms,” *The Economist*, February 4, 2010.

47. Vanessa Neumann, “A Peace Grows in Colombia,” *The Weekly Standard*, March 15, 2010, at <http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/peace-grows-colombia> (July 9, 2010).

Legacy Issues and New Challenges

The Santos administration will need to establish a strong record of upholding the rule of law, demonstrate support for the independent if often critical judicial arm, and distance himself from actions and policies (such as crimes against civilians and alleged abuses of power) that caused harm to Uribe's international reputation and weakened trust in Colombia's democracy. When necessary, Santos will need to undertake thorough investigations and prosecution of individuals who violated laws during the Uribe administration. Colombia's openness to working with the United Nations and other international bodies and NGOs who monitor human rights is commendable. While the government has not always found their reports favorable, it is difficult to think of another country that has undergone so much scrutiny in the midst of a major internal conflict.⁴⁸

Unconcluded legal questions coupled with policy considerations for dealing with the internally displaced, trade unionists, and the remnants of the FARC narco-insurgency will play a critical role in shaping the Santos agenda and serve as reference points for the future.

Para-Politics. A total of 87 members of the 2006–2010 congress, 15 current and former governors, and 35 mayors were investigated for illegal ties with right-wing paramilitaries. Because of investigations by the supreme court and a special investigative unit of the attorney general's office, 30 congressmen, 11 governors, and 25 mayors were jailed on charges of corruption. Investigations and trials will be needed to complete the judicial process without outside influence or political pressure from the Santos administration.

False Positives. These cases involved abduction and extrajudicial executions of unarmed civilians whose deaths were falsely reordered as killed enemy combatants, and which seriously weakened confidence in the professionalism and integrity of the Colombian military. The number of victims remains in dispute but is believed to exceed 1,000. (By contrast, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights estimated that in Brazil, there were 11,000 "resistance killings" by police in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro between 2003 and 2009.⁴⁹)

The Colombian government and armed forces took actions to address these deplorable abuses. To date, 51 Colombian officers and soldiers have been dismissed from service. A special U.N. rapporteur acknowledged that the unlawful deprivation of human life was not a matter of official policy in Colombia, but saw connections between the military and extrajudicial killings and called for greater oversight, transparency, and accountability in military operations.⁵⁰ The Colombian armed forces have stated they remain committed to preserving efficiency and transparency, ending impunity, and preserving public confidence and trust.

Intelligence Services Abuses. Misuse of intelligence authority occurred within the Administrative Department of Security (DAS), Colombia's domestic intelligence agency. Abuses included illegal wiretaps of supreme court magistrates, opposition politicians, and non-governmental organizations, discrediting the professionalism and ethical foundations of the chief national intelligence body.⁵¹ In September 2009, President Uribe announced his support for dismantling DAS. Further revelations point to improper contacts between DAS and the presidential office. These allegations

48. United Nations, Human Rights Council, "Mission to Colombia: 7–18 September 2009," September 2009, at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/docs/A.HRC.13.22.Add.3_en.pdf (July 9, 2010).

49. United Nations, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Philip Alston," May 28, 2010, at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/14session/A.HRC.14.24.Add4.pdf> (July 9, 2010). Resistance killings are killings by the police in "self defense"; as the report notes, Brazilian law appears to give the police a "shooting license" in cases where the claim of self-defense is used without internal investigation. See also "UN Expert Reports Alarming Rates of Murder in Brazil Despite Efforts to End Violence," UN News Centre, June 1, 2010, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34875&Cr=brazil&Cr1=> (July 9, 2010).

50. United Nations, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Philip Alston: Mission to Colombia," March 31, 2010, at [http://reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/SNAA-85T799-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/SNAA-85T799-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf) (July 9, 2010).

require continued impartial investigation by the Santos government and the establishment of procedures to make sure they do not reoccur.

Trade Unionists. Attention remains focused on the protection of trade unionists. Nevertheless, the number of trade unionists killed either as a result of targeted killings or for other motives continues to decline. The number of trade unionists killed in 2008 was either 26, 38, or 49 (according to three different sources), while the number in 2009 was either 23, 28, or 39 (according to these same sources).⁵² The trend continues to decline. Moreover, in 2009, government prosecutors obtained 38 convictions for murders of trade unionists, a remarkable achievement in a region where homicide convictions outside Colombia average between 1 percent and 2 percent. These declining numbers reflect the success of Colombian efforts to protect trade unionists and to extend the reach of its judiciary to investigate crimes against them. Indisputable is the basic fact that during 2009 the homicide rate for unionists was five per 100,000 and 35 per 100,000 for the general population at large.⁵³ In 2010, the International Labor Organization (ILO) recognized significant progress on labor issues and removed Colombia from its watch list, a significant recognition of the concerted efforts of the Uribe administration to curb violence that targeted trade unionists and to protect and strengthen labor rights and laws.⁵⁴

Internally Displaced. Internal conflicts produced one of the largest numbers of internally displaced persons (IDP). Official estimates for the number displaced since 1985 range from 3.3 million to 4.9 million. Fortunately, improving security has produced a decline in the numbers of IDPs registered by the Colombian government. But as many as 300,000 Colombians experienced displacement in 2009. The Santos administration will need to continue investing in long-term solutions to aid the productive settlement of IDPs.⁵⁵

Peace. FARC's threat to the Colombian state has seriously diminished. Yet, the path to a stable and lasting peace is uncertain. FARC lacks public support or legitimacy. It survives because of its capacity to coerce, terrorize, and engage in criminal activity via drug trafficking, kidnapping, and extortion.⁵⁶ FARC counts on international backing from radical leftist regimes like that of Hugo Chávez and enjoys support from leftist political parties and groups unhappy with the Uribe government and nostalgic for the armed revolutionary strategies of Fidel Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara.⁵⁷ FARC also relies on the moral anarchy of the Organization of American States (OAS) which, unlike the U.S. and the European Union, refuses to recognize FARC as a terrorist organization.⁵⁸

Since the breakdown of peace talks in 2001, FARC lacks a credible track record of good faith in

51. Lisa Haugaard, Kelly Nicholls, Abigail Poe, and Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli, "Far Worse than Watergate," Latin America Working Group Education Fund *et al.*, June 2010, at <http://wola.org/media/COLOMBIA/Far%20Worse%20than%20Watergate.pdf> (July 9, 2010).

52. Numbers most frequently cited are kept by the Single Confederation of Workers of Colombia (CUT), the Ministry of Social Protection, or the National Union School. The numbers are reported in the International Labour Organization Report and the U.S. Human Rights Report. See also U.S. Department of State, "2009 Human Rights Reports: Colombia."

53. *Ibid.*

54. International Labour Office, "Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations," Conference, 99th Session, 2010, at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_123424.pdf (July 9, 2010).

55. U.S. Department of State, "Country Human Rights Report: Colombia 2010."

56. Unaccustomed to the highly ideological double-speak of progressive forces, it is important for U.S. observers to recognize that, as pointed out, "the use of drug trafficking and terrorism as ways to achieve political ends, have clearly alienated the FARC from the masses." Mejia, "Colombia's National Security Strategy, a New 'COIN' Approach."

57. FARC's approval rating is under 2 percent. See "Posture Statement of General Douglas M. Fraser, United States Air Force Commander, United States Southern Command," before the Armed Services Committee, U.S. Senate, March 11, 2010, at <http://www.southcom.mil/AppsSC/files/634038960550937500.pdf> (July 9, 2010).

negotiations.⁵⁹ Friends of FARC urge “humanitarian accords,” an exchange of FARC captives for jailed guerrillas. Such steps may relieve individual suffering but do not advance peace and give inappropriate legitimacy to FARC. Having failed to influence the 2010 elections, FARC will nonetheless seek to capitalize on potential confusion and loss of strategic focus at the end of the Uribe presidency to re-strengthen and bore deeper into Colombia.

As the Santos government organizes, it is incumbent upon the U.S. and other responsible nations to avoid fueling false hopes on the side of the violent left. FARC’s best option for the future is a path that renounces violence and terrorism, frees hostages, ends involvement in the drug trade, and opens a way for demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR). These steps may be accompanied by new measures of transitory justice similar to the 2005 Law of Peace and Justice. Demands for a protected territorial zone and deep socioeconomic and constitutional changes are and will remain non-starters. U.S. policymakers can assist by supporting their counterparts in Colombia and the international community in developing war-ending strategies focused on FARC’s (1) renunciation of armed violence, (2) cessation of involvement in the drug trade, (3) release of all hostages, (4) demobilization, disarmament, and reinsertion, (5) acceptance of judicial review of past crimes, and (6) the government’s continued reform of land ownership, social programs, and local governance initiatives.

In general, the Santos administration will be expected to establish a strong human rights record straight out of the blocks. Protecting human rights groups, allowing investigative services to carry out impartial investigations, and preserving the separation of the judiciary from the executive branch will

remain a challenge in a country that until the last decade tended to leave justice in the hands of the strongest. The U.S. must deal in an associative and non-punitive manner with challenges that now become the property of Santos government. Strong mutual interests will be best served by establishing a process of action, cooperation, and review rather than waiting for Colombia to attain legal perfection, something that eludes all nations.

A Reliable Partnership with the U.S.

U.S. Administrations have worked closely with Colombian governments since the 1980s. The U.S. and Colombia successfully broke up the Medellin and Cali cartels, symbolized by the joint effort to terminate the dangerous career of Pablo Escobar. Plan Colombia, a program designed by President Andrés Pastrana in cooperation with the Clinton Administration in 1999, focused on a broad approach to security and development.⁶⁰ Plan Colombia began as an integrated strategy to advance peace, fight drug trafficking, revive the Colombian economy, and strengthen the democratic pillars of Colombian society. It remains bound by this original concept. Since 2000, Plan Colombia has served as the tie-beam for the U.S.–Colombia relationship. It was successful because it involved: (1) multi-year U.S. and Colombian commitments, (2) a comprehensive strategy that targeted drug supply and interdiction as well as drug-trafficking and narco-terrorist organizations, (3) commanded major bipartisan congressional support in the U.S., and (4) received adequate resources to meet multiple objectives. Plan Colombia is a remarkable undertaking in terms of U.S. foreign policy programs.

The U.S. resource commitments have been substantial, reaching roughly \$7 billion since 2000. Assistance from Plan Colombia has accounted for approximately 10 percent of Colombian security

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58. U.S. Department of State, “Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” January 19, 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm> (July 15, 2010). From the U.S. legal and security standpoint, FARC, ELN, and AUC are terrorist organizations. U.S. policy does not condone negotiations with or concessions to terrorist organizations. The prospects for peace therefore require a radical transformation of the political direction including a renunciation of terrorism by these groups as preconditions for a viable peace process.
59. PBS Online News Hour, “Confrontation in Colombia,” February 25, 2002, at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/latin_america/jan-june02/columbia_2-25.html (July 15, 2010).
60. Connie Veillette, “Plan Colombia: A Progress Report,” Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, June 22, 2005, at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL32774.pdf> (July 9, 2010).

spending since then. Over the past decade, Colombia became the fifth-largest recipient of U.S. foreign assistance. Yet, the assistance provided left a minimal footprint with no U.S. involvement in combat, and no U.S. military fatalities. Over time a process of “nationalization” of Plan Colombia has begun, as the threat from FARC and other illegally armed actors has diminished and as the Colombian government has assumed responsibility for programs that formerly relied on U.S. assistance. The fiscal year (FY) 2011 budget of the Obama Administration calls for further reductions in military or “hard assistance” to Colombia, calling for a 20 percent reduction from FY 2009 and leaving \$228 million in available military assistance. This same budget calls for approximately \$239 million in non-military or “soft” assistance to Colombia.⁶¹ The Obama Administration and Congress need to look carefully at the risks of losing hard-won territorial and security gains and work with the Santos regime in order to not lose the fighting edge.

On October 30, 2009, the U.S. and Colombia signed a 10-year defense agreement further cementing a solid security partnership.⁶² This agreement grants the U.S. access to seven defense facilities, primarily for interdiction and surveillance operations aimed at enhancing “domain awareness” and control of national territory. Access to Colombian facilities allows U.S. aircraft to continue a number of the missions previously performed from the air base in Manta, Ecuador, from which the U.S. was expelled

by Chávez’s ally Rafael Correa.⁶³ As part of this enhanced defense relationship, the U.S. will invest \$46 million to upgrade Colombia’s Palanquero air base in Puerto Salgar, 120 miles north of Bogota. The agreement does not alter the pre-existing limit of 1,400 U.S. military personnel and contractors allowed in Colombia. (As of 2010, the number of military personnel is 487, 30 percent of the allowed number.)⁶⁴ The agreement, the Obama Administration has repeatedly stated, is directed at internal threats to Colombian security, and will not jeopardize the security of Colombia’s neighbors.⁶⁵ The agreement nevertheless produced an anti-American response largely fueled by the propaganda of Hugo Chávez and prickly reactions by rising regional hegemon Brazil.⁶⁶

The Obama Administration and Congress need to look carefully at the risks of losing hard-won territorial and security gains and work with the Santos regime in order to not lose the fighting edge.

The U.S. Southern Command considers Colombia to be a “long-term strategic and global partner” and a “positive exporter of security.”⁶⁷ This past April in Bogota, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates noted that Colombia had become “a linchpin of security and prosperity in South America.”⁶⁸ President Uribe and his successor Santos are ready to

61. “U.S. Aid to Colombia, All Programs, 2006–2011,” Just the Facts, at <http://justf.org/Country?country=Colombia> (July 9, 2010). See also U.S. Department of State, “Congressional Budget Justification,” FY 2011, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/136355.pdf> (July 15, 2010).

62. U.S. Department of State, “U.S.–Colombia Defense Cooperation Agreement,” October 30, 2009, at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/oct/131134.htm> (July 9, 2010).

63. For political reasons, President Rafael Correa of Ecuador chose not to renew the lease for the base. It closed on September 18, 2009. See “In Historic Move, Ecuador Shuts US Military Base,” Press TV, September 19, 2009, at <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=106597§ionid=351020706> (July 9, 2010). Correa maintains a close relationship with Hugo Chávez and is a member of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) touted by Chávez as the people’s option for trade and integration and an alternative to U.S.-led free-trade agreements.

64. Kirsten Begg, “U.S. Military Presence in Colombia Drops,” Colombia Reports, June 15, 2010, at <http://colombiareports.com/colombia-news/news/10245-us-military-presence-in-colombia-drops.html> (July 9, 2010).

65. Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Remarks with Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa Delgado,” U.S. Department of State, June 28, 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/06/142846.htm> (July 15, 2010).

66. “Off Base,” *The Economist*, December 3, 2009. See also discussion by Carin Zissis, “UNASUR’s Base Debate,” America Society, August 11, 2009, at <http://www.as-coa.org/article.php?id=1843> (July 15, 2010).

assist the U.S. and its friends with a range of military and counter-drug support missions. Colombian specialists are training Mexicans in aviation, while 40 Colombian National Police instructors are working with Mexican federal police trainees, middle-level officers, and senior managers.⁶⁹ Colombians are also training Peruvian marines.⁷⁰ The Uribe government has repeatedly offered to send Colombian troops to Afghanistan to engage in military training and mine-clearing.

The broad cooperation between Colombia and the U.S. extends well beyond the security and counter-narcotics field. A mutual recognition of persistent social challenges in Colombia led to the formulation of an Action Plan on Racial and Ethnic Equality that was signed by Colombian Foreign Minister Jaime Bermudez and U.S. Under Secretary of State James Steinberg in January 2010. The Action Plan aims to increase access of marginalized Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples to education, health care, and employment opportunities. Colom-

bia actively participates in several U.S.-led groups, including Pathways to Prosperity and the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas.⁷¹ The U.S. State Department's most recent report on human trafficking released in June 2010 recognized Colombia as one of the most proactive nations in Latin America working to prevent trafficking in persons.⁷²

While Colombia is the fourth-largest market for U.S. goods in Latin America, the U.S. stands to lose market share if tariff barriers are not removed. Despite repeated signals from the Obama Administration that it wants to move ahead on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, as well as on the Panama FTA, it may end up appeasing neo-protectionists, thereby ceding trade momentum to other international competitors.⁷³ Having raised expectations, the Administration may be content to settle into inaction for the remainder of 2010.⁷⁴

The case for the Colombia Free Trade Agreement has been made often and with convincing argumentation.⁷⁵ Overcoming a largely ideological and sub-

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67. "Posture Statement of General Douglas M. Fraser," p. 38. The previous posture statement by Admiral James Stavridis called Colombia "a strategic ally, an important friend, and a crucial anchor for security and stability in this hemisphere." "U.S. Southern Command 2009 Posture Statement," at <http://www.southcom.mil/AppsSC/files/OU1011237496303.pdf> (July 9, 2010).
68. Donna Mills, "Gates Praises Colombia as 'Exporter of Security,'" American Forces Press Service, April 15, 2010, at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=58770> (July 9, 2010).
69. U.S. Department of State, "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report," 2010, pp. 202–203.
70. Bryan Bender, "Colombia Offers Lessons for US Aid Efforts Elsewhere," *The Boston Globe*, April 18, 2010, at http://www.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/2010/04/18/colombia_offers_lessons_for_us_aid_efforts_elsewhere/ (July 9, 2010).
71. Christina Hawkins, "One Year On and Going Strong: The Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas," DipNote: U.S. Department of State Official Blog, April 13, 2010, at http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/site/entry/energy_and_climate_partnership_of_americas (July 9, 2010).
72. U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, "Trafficking in Persons Report 2010: Colombia," June 2010, pp. 115–116, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/142982.pdf> (June 24, 2010).
73. Press release, "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address," The White House, January 27, 2010, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address> (July 9, 2010), and Office of the United States Trade Representative, "USTR Fact Sheet: Trans-Pacific Partnership," November 2009, at <http://www.ustr.gov/about-us/press-office/fact-sheets/2009/november/ustr-fact-sheet-trans-pacific-partnership> (July 9, 2010).
74. José R. Cardenas, "Gates in Colombia: Promising Signs or Empty Promises?" *Foreign Policy*, April 23, 2010, at http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/04/23/gates_in_colombia_promising_signs_or_empty_promises (July 9, 2010).
75. Daniel Griswold and Juan Carlos Hidalgo, "A U.S.–Colombia Free Trade Agreement: Strengthening Democracy and Progress in Latin America," CATO Institute *Free Trade Bulletin* No. 32, February 6, 2008, at http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=10656 (July 9, 2010), and James Roberts, "The U.S.–Colombia Free Trade Agreement: Strengthening a Good Friend in a Rough Neighborhood," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2129, April 30, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2008/04/The-US-Colombia-Free-Trade-Agreement-Strengthening-a-Good-Friend-in-a-Rough-Neighborhood>.

jective opposition and restoring leadership on the trade agenda should be relatively simple. The argument that the FTA will take away U.S. jobs is dispelled by the fact that most imports from Colombia are energy products or commodities, such as coffee, flowers, and fruits. The overall jobs impact of the FTA for the U.S. will most likely be positive.⁷⁶ Inaction, on the other hand, means the U.S. will bleed jobs and market share to nations more competitive, agile, and open to freer trade.⁷⁷ Examples are not hard to find in the Colombian case. In 2008, U.S. yellow corn commanded 80 percent of the Colombian market, but in 2009, Colombian agreements with Argentina and Brazil dropped tariffs to zero, while the U.S. continued to pay a 15 percent duty. As a result U.S. corn sales to Colombia fell by half.⁷⁸

While the U.S. debates the need for a trade agreement, the European Union forges ahead. During the May 2010 EU–Latin America summit in Madrid, the EU signed a trade agreement with Colombia, granting duty-free access to Colombian products with the exception of bananas and sugar. On June 14, 2010, Canada's lower house of parliament approved a free trade agreement with Colombia that will pave the way for an increase in Canadian agricultural exports, an area where the U.S. has traditionally had an advantage, pushing Canadian–Colombia trade beyond the \$1 billion mark.⁷⁹ Neither Canada nor the European Union can be considered indifferent to human rights and labor issues. As trade experts know well, lost market share is very difficult to recover. Finally, the U.S. Congress will likely renew the

Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA) before it expires in December 2010, further extending extensive duty-free benefits for Colombia and Ecuador while denying the U.S. the opportunity to make gains in Colombia.

Neighbors: Responsible, Negligent, or Hostile?

Peru plays the role of responsible neighbor in its relations with Colombia. The two governments work jointly to provide security along their common border and maintain regular communications between militaries. Both parties recognize that counter-narcotics success in Colombia has placed new pressures on Peru, reviving concerns regarding the deadly synergy between the narco-terrorism of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and coca production. Both Colombia and Peru are dedicated to working with the U.S. in counter-drug and security cooperation.

The 2002 election of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva as president of Brazil appeared to open a door to enhanced relations between FARC and Lula's Workers' Party (PT). Allegations that FARC had given campaign money to PT candidates quickly emerged, a charge the PT denied.⁸⁰ PT and Lula could hide the relationship they established with FARC via a collective of leftist parties known as the Forum (or Foro) of Sao Paulo, established in the waning days of the Cold War to chart a path for the Latin American left.⁸¹ Once established, the PT–FARC link has persisted, although the Foro has dis-

76. U.S. Department of Labor, "United States Employment Impact Review of the United States–Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement," March 2008, at <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/usfta/colombiaemploymentimpact.pdf> (July 9, 2010). A proposed trade agreement between Colombia and Canada could jeopardize an estimated \$1.7 billion in U.S. sales of wheat, barley, and beef to Colombia. See Roger Noriega, "Colombia Si, Castro No," *Forbes*, March 31, 2010, at <http://www.forbes.com/2010/03/31/cuba-colombia-trade-opinions-contributors-roger-noriega.html> (July 9, 2010).

77. Howard LaFranchi, "U.S. Losing Jobs as Free Trade Languishes, Colombia Says," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 22, 2010, at <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2010/0422/US-losing-jobs-as-free-trade-agreement-languishes-Colombia-says> (July 9, 2010).

78. *Ibid.*

79. Eric Farnsworth, "Canada Passes Trade Agreement with Canada," *Americas Quarterly*, June 15, 2010, at <http://www.americasquarterly.org/node/1607/> (July 9, 2010).

80. "FARC Funds Tied to Lula," *The Washington Times*, March 21, 2005, at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2005/mar/21/20050321-091831-2085r/> (July 15, 2010).

81. Alejandro Peña Esclusa, *The Foro de São Paulo: A Threat to the Freedom of Latin America*, *Uno America*, February 24, 2009, at <http://www.unoamerica.org/unoPAG/libros.php?id=5> (July 9, 2010).

tanced itself from FARC and barred it from participating in meetings since 2005.

Correspondence captured on the computer of FARC leader Raul Reyes, killed in a Colombian cross-border raid into Ecuador in March 2008, revealed an embarrassing number of connections between FARC emissaries and prominent members of the PT and Lula's government. FARC sought to obtain political support in Brazil that would help to validate its claims to be a legitimate political force. On September 30, 2008, the U.S. Treasury identified Francisco Antonio Cadena Collazos (El Cura Camilo) as the prime member of FARC's International Commission operating in Brazil and made him the subject of prescriptions specified in the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act.⁸² Wanted in Colombia, Cadena requested and was granted refugee status in Brazil. Former FARC guerrillas recently told the Colombian press that FARC is extensively involved in supplying the drug trade in Brazil.⁸³

Despite these political affinities and connections, the Brazilian government appears to be moving toward a tougher stance on FARC and combating Colombian drug-trafficking. Since 2004, Brazil has employed a shoot-down policy for clandestine drug flights and is stepping up enforcement against FARC-connected traffickers along the Amazon. On May 8, 2010, Brazilian police arrested Jose Samuel Sanchez, a Colombian national the police believe is a FARC finance and logistics expert.⁸⁴ The Brazilian government has vowed to arrest any FARC fighters on its soil, an important step toward cross-border cooperation and further isolation of FARC.

Relations between Colombia and Ecuador remain troubled following Colombia's March 1, 2008, cross-border raid on the Ecuadorian camp of FARC's second-in-command Raul Reyes. Following the attack, the Ecuadorian government broke diplomatic relations with Colombia, claiming that this act of self-defense by Colombia constituted a violation of international law and aggression against Ecuador. Troubling evidence surfaced in the Reyes files and in a July 2009 statement by a senior FARC

Former FARC guerrillas recently told the Colombian press that FARC is extensively involved in supplying the drug trade in Brazil.

leader that it gave money to finance Ecuador's president Rafael Correa and his party.⁸⁵ Overall, a combination of corruption, abuse of legal authority, and increases in drug trafficking is eroding the fragile roots of democratic governance in Ecuador.⁸⁶

On the other hand, during a June 2010 visit by Secretary of State Clinton to Quito, President Correa appeared to offer a more constructive relationship with the U.S. and reasserted Ecuador's claim of seriousness about securing its border with Colombia. Ecuador claims it has spent \$100 million on its military and deployed 11,000 troops along the Colombian border to prevent illegal movements and establishment of sanctuaries by FARC and other drug traffickers. The U.S. has undertaken a survey of the region to assess its needs.⁸⁷ Certainly Ecuador's readiness to prevent FARC from finding a safe haven on

82. Press release, "Treasury Designates FARC International Commission Members," U.S. Department of the Treasury, September 30, 2008, at <http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/hp1169.htm> (July 9, 2010).

83. "Las FARC Trafican Drogas en Brasil desde los Noventa," *El Espectador*, June 6, 2010, at <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/elmundo/articulo-207169-farc-trafican-drogas-brasil-los-noventa> (July 9, 2010).

84. Raymond Colitt, "Brazilian Police Bust FARC-linked Drug Operation," Reuters, May 8, 2010, at <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N08140503.htm> (July 9, 2010).

85. Adriaan Alsema, "FARC Admit Financing Presidential Campaign of Rafael Correa," Colombia Reports, July 17, 2009, at <http://colombiareports.com/colombia-news/news/5050-farc-admit-financing-presidential-campaign-of-rafael-correa.html> (July 9, 2010).

86. Douglas Farah and Glenn R. Simpson, "Ecuador at Risk: Drugs, Thugs, Guerrillas and the Citizens Revolution," International Assessment and Strategy Center, January 24, 2010, at http://www.strategycenter.net/docLib/20100125_EcuadoratRiskIASC.pdf (July 9, 2010).

Ecuador's soil and re-establishing full diplomatic relations with Colombia should become important factors when the U.S. considers renewing Ecuador's eligibility for trade benefits under the ATPDEA later this year.

Venezuela's Hugo Chávez is and will remain for the foreseeable future the principal destabilizing force in the region. Over the past two years, he has increased pressure and threats against Colombia. As the architect of the "Bolivarian Revolution" and the "Socialism of the 21st Century," Chávez has, since becoming president in 1999, actively reversed the history of generally friendly relations between the neighbors. The reasons for Chávez's deep animosity toward Colombia are multiple. Chávez harbors a fixation with Colombia as occupying the critical geopolitical space that was once *Gran Colombia*, the Latin American super-state established by his hero, the Venezuelan revolutionary in the fight for independence from Spain, Simón Bolívar.⁸⁸ It is a space that, for Chávez, allows only one master. Chávez's solidarity and ideological kinship with FARC and other revolutionary social movements compels him to offer political, diplomatic, and material support for FARC as well as safe havens for FARC leaders on Venezuelan soil.

Chávez considers Colombia's governing class, especially President Uribe and President-elect Santos, to be oligarchic and reactionary by nature and dangerously associated with the U.S. and its "imperialist" ways, and therefore existential enemies of Venezuela's revolutionary experiment. This ideological perception justifies Chávez's punitive economic measures, border tension, and an endless war of words. Via a process of either illegal penetration, corruption, or outright official complicity, Venezuela and the Chávez regime are increasingly linked to international drug-trafficking, primarily as a transit country.⁸⁹ Treating Colombia as an enemy and the launching point for the supposed impending U.S. invasion of Venezuela or covert attempt at regime change helps Chávez justify Russian arms purchases with offensive capabilities and other measures aimed at stemming alleged U.S. imperial designs on Venezuela.⁹⁰

Finally, Chávez views war with Colombia as a potential last-ditch escape valve from a political and economic implosion caused by economic mismanagement, repression, and popular unrest in Venezuela.⁹¹ Under Chávez's leadership, Venezuela increasingly became an "accomplice state," one that opens the way to illegal activities, has lax

87. Peter Kranstover, "Reclaiming the Northern Border: The Future of Plan Ecuador," DipNote: U.S. Department of State Official Blog, May 25, 2010, at http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/site/entry/ecuador_future (July 9, 2010). The government of Ecuador offers a rather uninformative Web site devoted to Plan Ecuador at "Plan Ecuador: País de Paz," at <http://www.planecuador.gov.ec/pages/index.php> (July 15, 2010).
88. Ray Walser, "Hugo Chávez Eyes Colombia," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1784, January 28, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2008/01/Hugo-Chaacutevez-Eyes-Colombia>; Walser, "The Crisis in the Andes: Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela," Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 1080, May 2, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Lecture/The-Crisis-in-the-Andes-Ecuador-Colombia-and-Venezuela>; and Douglas E. Schoen and Michael Rowan, *The Threat Closer to Home: Hugo Chávez and the War Against America* (New York: Free Press, 2009).
89. U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Drug Control: U.S. Counternarcotics Cooperation with Venezuela Has Declined," July 2009, at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09806.pdf> (July 9, 2010).
90. Stephen Blank, "Russia in Latin America: Geopolitical Games in the US's Neighborhood," Institut Français des Relations Internationales, April 2009, at http://www.ifri.org/?page=contribution-detail&id=5332&id_provenance=88&provenance_context_id=35 (June 9, 2010), and Norman Bailey, "Iranian Penetration into the Western Hemisphere Through Venezuela," House Committee on Foreign Affairs, October 27, 2009, at <http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/111/bai102709.pdf> (July 9, 2010).
91. Ray Walser, "State Sponsors of Terrorism: Time to Add Venezuela to the List," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2362, January 20, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/01/State-Sponsors-of-Terrorism-Time-to-Add-Venezuela-to-the-List>, and Peter Brookes, "Flashpoint: The Chavez Challenge," *Armed Forces Journal*, 2010, at <http://www.afji.com/2010/03/4419149> (July 9, 2010). The influx of Russian-made weaponry includes advanced fighter aircraft, attack helicopters, tanks, S-300 missile defense systems, and MANPADS. New Russian-made military capabilities will provide a deep strike capability, reduce time for crisis management, and provide perception of military superiority which may act as incentives for Venezuelan aggressiveness.

judicial systems, and in which key political and military figures become involved in criminal activities.”⁹² Given Chávez’s open animosity to Colombia and the U.S., his increasingly Marxist–Leninist ideology, and the pronounced anti-Western orientation of his foreign policy, Chávez will remain a hemispheric outlier and “a dangerous and disruptive force in inter-American affairs and a relentless and malicious opponent of the U.S.”⁹³ Continued containment of Chávez and Venezuela’s eventual return to the cooperative security fold will require a strong, resilient, and pro-U.S. Colombia that will look forward to Venezuela’s eventual return to the cooperative security fold.

The U.S. role in the region must remain focused on employing all available bilateral and multilateral tools to build strong institutions to enhance the rule of law and protect citizen security, promote renewed, cross-border counternarcotics cooperation, and steadily constrict ungoverned or lawless spaces in which illegally armed groups and transnational criminal organizations have traditionally operated.

What Congress and the Administration Should Do

- **Approve Free Trade in 2010.** The time is overdue for the White House and Congress to approve the pending free trade agreement with Colombia. In order to preserve the credibility of the Obama Administration and to demonstrate that the U.S. Congress is ready to complete a deal with a vital regional partner, this process should be completed before the end of 2010.
- **Continue Support for Plan Colombia.** The U.S. must continue to commit resources to strengthen security and consolidate gains in Colombia in order to defeat narco-terrorism, prevent renewed criminal violence, and develop solid foundations for peace, particularly in the areas of humanitar-
- **ian assistance, judicial reform, and alternative development.** Building peace in Colombia cannot be done on the cheap.
- **Presidential Visits.** President Obama should reinforce the U.S. commitment to Colombia with an early visit to meet with President Santos. Such a visit would demonstrate the importance the Obama Administration attaches to strong ties with friends.
- **Grant Major Non-NATO Ally Status.** The U.S. should grant Colombia status as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA).
- **Issue a U.S.–Colombia Security Guarantee.** The Obama Administration should expressly state to Colombia’s neighbors, especially to Venezuela, that it will consider an armed attack by Venezuela’s armed forces against Colombia or a major indirect act of aggression, such as arming FARC with surface-to-air missiles, to be a hostile act against the U.S.
- **Invest in Colombia’s Peace.** U.S. and Colombian officials should develop a major private–public project that will make use of and unleash Colombia’s unique bio-economic potential.
- **Apply Pressure on Ecuador:** The Obama Administration should keep pressure on Ecuador to take control of its northern border, deny safe haven to FARC, and restore diplomatic relations with Colombia. It needs to make clear that renewal of Andean trade preferences will be linked to improvements in counter-narcotics and in assisting Colombia to end narco-terrorism.
- **Add Venezuela to the State Sponsors of Terrorism List.** Chávez’s continued support for the terrorists of FARC and ongoing efforts to destabilize Colombia while aligning with the world’s most dangerous state sponsors of terrorism makes this action both timely and necessary.⁹⁴

92. Julio Cirino, Silvana Elizondo, and Geoffrey Wawro, “Latin America’s Lawless Areas and Failed States: An Analysis of ‘New Threats,’” in *Latin American Security Challenges: A Collaborative Effort from North and South*, ed. by Paul Taylor, Naval War College Newport Papers, 2004, at <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA430425&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf> (July 9, 2010).

93. Peter Hakim, “Obama Administration Policy in Latin America: Year II,” *Inter-American Dialogue*, March 10, 2010, at <http://www.thedialogue.org/page.cfm?pageID=32&pubID=2298> (July 9, 2010).

- **Build a Comprehensive Counter-Narcotics Strategy.** The Obama Administration must continue to integrate all elements of its various counter-narcotics strategies into a comprehensive plan that covers drug production, transit, and domestic consumption. It needs to integrate its Andean, Mexican, Central American, and Caribbean programs into an increasingly seamless whole.⁹⁵ Priority should also be assigned to working with Brazil on counter-narcotics at the highest level.

Conclusion

After 18 months in control, the Obama Administration is still searching for a signal accomplishment or victory in the Americas. The Administration has encountered the unforeseen and the horrific in the catastrophic earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, and responded generously. It stumbled in its management of the Honduran constitutional crisis of mid-2009, but is working to promote democracy and restore normal relations with Honduras. Efforts to overcome Cuban and Venezuelan hostility have fal-

tered because of the immense gap between free and un-free societies. Brazil's Lula, emerging champion of a more responsible Brazil, severely disappointed Washington after breaking ranks with fellow U.N. Security Council members to side with Iran on grave nuclear proliferation issues.

At this juncture, the Obama Administration needs to closely examine its ties with friends, especially such a critical friend and ally as Colombia. The White House and the U.S. Congress should recognize that bonds of friendship and association are not the outcomes of good intentions or fine speeches but patient, geopolitical common sense and actions. The U.S., according to the U.S. Southern Command, wants to remain the "enduring partner of choice" in the Americas.⁹⁶ Yet, this can only be accomplished with deeds, not promises.

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94. Walser, "State Sponsors of Terrorism: Time to Add Venezuela to the List."

95. The U.S. currently relies on four key initiatives to tackle drug trafficking in the region. These four clusters of programs are Plan Colombia (http://www.state.gov/www/regions/wha/colombia/fs_000328_plancolombia.html), the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/142298.pdf>), the Merida Initiative (<http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/fs/122397.htm>), and the new Central America Regional Security Initiative, which separates Central America from the Merida Initiative (<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2010/142297.htm>) (all four URLs current as of July 9, 2010).

96. "Posture Statement of General Douglas M. Fraser." Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns argued that, "a stable Colombia is absolutely essential to the security of our hemisphere." Burns, "Promoting Peace and Prosperity in Colombia," remarks to the Council of the Americas, October 22, 2007, at <http://www.as-coa.org/article.php?id=648> (June 25, 2010).