



Prepared Statement of
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Department of Defense
Counternarcotics & Global Threats
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Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
*“Adapting U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts
In Colombia”*
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Statement for the Record
Mr. Joseph J. McMennamin
Principal Director for Counternarcotics and Global Threats
Office of the Secretary of Defense
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Chairman Grassley, Co-Chairman Feinstein, and other distinguished members of the Caucus, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department of Defense’s efforts to disrupt illicit drug trafficking and associated transnational organized crime in light of Colombia’s recent agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Today, Colombia is among our closest partners in the region and is now capable of sharing its hard-won lessons with other nations in the region that are grappling with related challenges. Colombia’s success has been made possible through U.S. security cooperation efforts, including close and continuing military-to-military engagement. The modernization and professionalization of Colombia’s military has been essential to Colombia’s efforts to establish security, which is necessary for successful counterdrug operations and delivering government services to vulnerable populations.

Significant challenges remain in Colombia. In particular, the illicit drug trade will continue to present a significant obstacle to the long-term security and prosperity of Colombia and the region as Colombia's coca cultivation and potential cocaine production has surged since 2013. Other criminal groups, including FARC dissidents, are likely to gain influence in areas formerly controlled by the FARC, which could jeopardize Colombia’s security gains of recent years. Continued engagement with the Colombian national security forces will be essential to addressing these shared threats to Colombian and U.S. national security interests.

In my testimony today, I will highlight the Department of Defense's perspective of the evolving security environment in Colombia, and its efforts to counter drug trafficking and related transnational crime in Colombia and the region.

The Colombian Narcotics Threat

The growing illicit drug trade in Colombia threatens the national security interests of Colombia, the United States, and our regional partners. In addition to being the source of approximately 92% of the cocaine seized and tested in the United States, Colombia's cocaine trade undermines its own stability, as well as stability in key regions for U.S. interests such as Central America, Mexico, the Caribbean, and West Africa. The trade fuels corruption, distorts legitimate economic activity, and provides vital revenue for terrorist groups and other transnational criminal organizations that threaten U.S. security interests worldwide.

In 2016, Colombia produced its largest coca crop in history. 188,000 hectares of coca were cultivated in 2016, an 18 percent increase from 159,000 hectares cultivated in 2015. Additionally, cocaine production increased over 36 percent from 520 metric tons in 2015 to 710 metric tons in 2016, according to U.S. Government estimates.

The key components of the Colombia's illicit drug trade – a highly profitable commodity, a stable and lucrative market, well-established illicit pathways, and ungoverned territory, - will continue to provide a strong incentive for continued drug production and trafficking in Colombia. Interdiction assets, which reached record seizures in 2016 and are on track to surpass these numbers in 2017, will be strained by the cost of the peace agreement. Even if the FARC were to truly abandon its drug trafficking activities, other organized criminal

groups in Colombia, whether motivated ideologically, politically, or simply by greed, will move into areas controlled by the FARC. This is currently happening and is expected to continue. In addition to drug trafficking, these groups are likely to engage in a wide variety of transnational organized crime, including weapons trafficking, illegal mining, money laundering, kidnapping, and extortion. Illicit revenues from these groups could fuel corruption in the upcoming 2018 and 2019 elections.

Continuing political instability in neighboring Venezuela has the potential to compound Colombia's security challenges. Drug trafficking organizations have long taken advantage of official corruption or complacency to transport drugs produced in Colombia through Venezuela to the United States. These illicit drug flights depart the Venezuelan province of Apure and arrive in Honduras or elsewhere along the Central America/Mexico isthmus as well as in Hispaniola. Continued instability in Colombia's neighbor to the east could complicate an already daunting security situation, while facilitating the trafficking of drugs and other illicit activities on either side of the border.

Finally, Colombia's estimates for the cost of implementation of the recent agreement with the FARC is staggering. Estimates from a leading Colombian economic think tank say that the ten-year cost is between \$68.3 and \$160.3 billion.¹ The sheer scale of the agreement will further compete for resources that could support drug eradication and interdiction.

DoD Counternarcotics Program Overview

¹ From "Dividends, Benefits, and Costs of Colombia's Peace Process," La Asociación Nacional de Instituciones Financieras (ANIF, the National Association of Financial Institutions), Bogotá, May, 2017.

The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Global Threats is the single focal point for DoD's counterdrug activities and oversight of resources specifically appropriated for counterdrug purposes. DoD's counterdrug efforts are implemented through the Combatant Commands, Military Services, and Defense Agencies. The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary was established within the Office of the Secretary of Defense to ensure that DoD develops and implements a focused counterdrug program with clear priorities and measured results that are well-integrated into the National Security Strategy and the National Drug Control Strategy. For nearly three decades, the Department of Defense has provided unique military platforms, personnel, systems, and capabilities in support of local, state, federal, and foreign law enforcement agencies to diminish the national security threats caused by the vast revenue, violence, and destabilization linked to the drug trade.

As the lead federal agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime drug trafficking bound for the United States, DoD provides a variety of airborne, maritime, and ground-based sensors such as the Relocatable Over-the-Horizon Radar system, as well as other military and intelligence assets in support of interagency and international law enforcement interdiction and apprehension efforts.² In the principal drug transit zone, these efforts are led by U.S. Southern Command's (USSOUTHCOM) Joint Interagency Task Force – South (JIATF-South) headquartered in Key West, Florida. JIATF-South is widely considered to be a model for interagency and international collaboration, with 18 federal agencies and 17 foreign countries participating. Through the integration and dissemination of all-source intelligence, JIATF-South facilitates multinational operations that have resulted in the disruption of 950 metric tons of cocaine since 2012. These operations helped deprive criminal networks of more

² Section 124 of Title 10, United States Code

than \$9.5 billion in illicit revenue, provided critical information on drug shipments and financial transactions to support law enforcement actions and judicial prosecutions, and prevented these dangerous drugs from being consumed in U.S. communities.

The Department also provides training, equipment, maintenance, infrastructure and other support to partner nations to enhance their maritime and border security and interdiction operations and to facilitate multinational counterdrug operations. DoD capacity building support is carried out by each of the six Geographic Combatant Commands as well as U.S. Special Operations Command. Training is largely provided by U.S. active duty and reserve personnel, including U.S. Special Operations Forces.

DoD Support to Colombia

Colombia continues to be a key ally in counterdrug operations in the Western Hemisphere. Through USSOUTHCOM, DoD has provided capacity-building support to Colombia since the 1990s, and those efforts were accelerated with the implementation of Plan Colombia beginning in 2000. In FY 2005, in recognition of the unique challenges Colombia was facing, Congress approved authority (Section 1021 of the Defense Authorization Act for FY 2005) to use its counterdrug resources to support Colombia's unified counterdrug and counterterrorism campaign plan. Section 1021, along with similar authorities available to the Department of State, has been essential in removing artificial barriers among funding streams to facilitate a unity of effort that has helped maximize the impact of U.S. support.

The focus of DoD's support has been to enhance the capabilities of the Colombian Military including its Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Special Forces, and

select anti-narcotics units of the Colombian National Police. These efforts have focused on addressing the unique challenges the Colombian military has faced in its counterdrug and counterterrorism efforts.

For instance, because of the importance of air mobility to the Colombian Government's ability to project power into remote and inaccessible regions where insurgents and drug traffickers operate, DoD has provided helicopters, training, and maintenance support for Colombia's pilot training facility in Melgar, Colombia. Likewise, because drug traffickers widely exploit Colombia's complex system of rivers and coastal waterways, DoD has provided hundreds of riverine boats, training, and maintenance support to the Colombian Marine Corps Riverine Forces with specialized mobile training teams of U.S. Marines and Sailors. U.S. Special Operations Forces have routinely provided training support to their Colombian counterparts. This training has proven so effective that Colombia's Special Forces are today considered to be among the world's most elite units. Finally, during the November 2016 Colombia-U.S. Bilateral Working Group Meeting, Colombia requested additional cooperation on counter-threat finance to include assistance developing the Colombian military's strategic analysis capabilities to target the funding of drug trafficking and terrorism.

Through our close and continuing collaboration, Colombia has become an exporter of security assistance in the region. For example, Mexican and other Spanish-speaking countries' helicopter pilots have received training in Colombia's U.S.-built aviation schools; the Colombian Navy trains other navies, coast guards, and maritime police at the U.S.-supported International Coast Guard School in Cartagena; and the Colombian Military and Police have begun to train Central American units in counterdrug operations as part of the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan for

Regional Security (USCAP) – a partnership among USSOUTHCOM, the Department of State, the Colombian Ministry of Defense, and six Central American and Caribbean recipient nations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting that DoD support to the Colombian military, including pilot training, riverine operations, and special operations, has been essential to Colombia's success against the FARC since the 1990s. Significant challenges remain, particularly in the prospect of criminal organizations continued involvement in the drug trade. Record drug production will continue to undermine shared national security interests. The most effective operations, such as aerial eradication, no longer occur resulting in cocaine production being at the highest it's ever been. Establishing security and Colombian government authority, particularly in remote areas where cocaine is produced, will be essential to continuing effective counterdrug efforts in Colombia. Sustained U.S. support is critical to tackling the resurgent drug production in Colombia. However, the Colombian government must commit to doing more in its eradication efforts if the counterdrug mission is to have a realistic chance of success.

DoD intends to continue its successful and effective partnership with the interagency and our Colombian and regional partners to disrupt the production and trafficking of illicit drugs, disrupt the finances of terrorists and insurgents, and reduce the corrosive, corruptive, and destabilizing impact of illicit drugs on other nations in this hemisphere

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss DoD's efforts in support of our Colombian partners. I look forward to your questions and comments.