

***Senate Caucus on  
International Narcotics Control***

***Hearing on "Adapting U.S.  
Counternarcotics Efforts in Colombia"  
Tuesday, September 12, 2017***

***Prepared Statement of  
Chairman Chuck Grassley of Iowa***

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Good morning and thank you for attending today's hearing on counternarcotics efforts in Colombia. Before beginning my opening statement, I first want to give a special thanks to the Drug Caucus co-chair, Senator Feinstein, and her staff for helping in planning and organizing this hearing.

Colombia has suffered through internal conflict for over 50 years. The FARC ["Färk"] and other guerilla groups have conducted

terrorist attacks, and destroyed infrastructure for years. These groups have engaged in kidnapping and extortion to make money and intimidate citizens. Their criminal conduct has devastated parts of the country.

In the 1980's, FARC became a major player in Colombia's illegal drug trade. Some estimates show that FARC's current annual drug income is as high as **\$3.5 billion**.

Plan Colombia was a U.S. assistance program designed to help fight the drug problem and narco-terrorist groups like FARC. Plan Colombia included a three-pronged approach: (1) aerial eradication, (2) interdiction and (3) alternative development. The program showed positive results. By

2012, coca production had been drastically reduced; **AND** the FARC was significantly weakened.

Colombia began peace negotiations with the FARC in 2012. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos agreed to halt all aerial eradication efforts. The Colombian government also agreed to pay farmers to grow alternative crops.

The resulting effects on Colombia's drug trade are staggering. Between 2012 and 2017, coca planting skyrocketed by 110,000 hectares (HECK-tares). The amount of export quality cocaine increased from 270 metric tons in 2013 to 910 metric tons in 2016.

Over 90 percent of the cocaine found on the streets of the United States comes from Colombia, so a strong counter-narcotics program in Colombia is vital to the security of our country.

Both Senator Feinstein and I are very concerned about the direction of counter-narcotics efforts in Colombia.

While we all support a strong and lasting peace in Colombia, it should not come at any cost. The massive increase in coca production is troubling. We need to consider what's at stake – namely the safety and security of our country and its citizens.

Earlier this year, Senator Feinstein and I, along with Senators Cornyn and Whitehouse, introduced legislation that modernizes criminal money laundering laws, updates counterfeiting statutes, enhances tools to crack down on smugglers and tax cheats, and promotes transparency in the U.S. financial system. Money laundering is a common practice used by terrorist organizations and transnational drug cartels to disguise profits from illegal activity. It is vital that our federal laws keep up with the methods by which the criminals move and store their illicit funds.

But more tools are needed to combat Colombia's narco-terrorism, and reduce the rising flow of cocaine into the United States.

I look forward to hearing the testimony from the witnesses and to the opportunity to question them about ways we can strengthen our efforts to attack this multi-faceted problem.