

## **Statement of Senator Dianne Feinstein**

Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control

“Adapting U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts in Colombia”

September 12, 2017

As Delivered

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. And I might just say ditto, because it turns out, without my having seen your remarks, mine are very similar.

I do want to take this opportunity to welcome our witnesses, particularly Ambassador Brownfield. It's very good to see you back before our Committee, Sir, and we welcome the others. So I will say what you said, but in my way.

The Colombian drug trade has had a deadly impact on the United States, and it fuels the American drug epidemic.

Over the past 15-plus years, the United States has invested more than \$10 billion in Plan Colombia, with a primary goal of reducing coca production by 50 percent. This has not happened.

Despite the initial reductions and a comprehensive strategy that focused on security, alternative development, and interdiction, today, 92 percent of cocaine found in the United States originates from Colombia.

Between 2014 and '16, there has been a 68 percent increase, increase, in Colombian coca cultivation and a 207 percent increase in cocaine destined for the United States. So it has more than doubled, and that's what these two charts show with specificity. I was astonished when I saw them.

I was an early supporter of the Plan. As a matter of fact, I was one of the first on the Appropriations Committee that the Ambassador from Colombia spoke with me about. And I very much hoped it would be a success. While the country has achieved security gains and has reached a peace agreement with the FARC, at least as it relates to narcotics production, the plan has failed.

This has a direct impact on our country, where demand for Colombian cocaine among some age groups is on the rise. In 2016, there was a 10 percent increase in new cocaine initiates ages 18 – 25; nearly 2 million Americans were current cocaine users; and approximately 900,000 had a cocaine use disorder. Cocaine overdose deaths increased by 52 percent compared to 2015.

Moving forward, the Office of National Drug Control Policy, which advises the President on drug control matters, must use its budgetary oversight authority to take steps to both reduce the supply of, and demand for, cocaine in our country.

I'm very concerned that the President's fiscal year 2018 drug control budget request will not allow this to happen. Rather, it recommends an 11 percent cut for domestic drug prevention programs, a nearly 10 percent cut for international operations, and those operations support the efforts of the United States and our international partners to address drug trafficking, interdiction only accounts for \$5 billion of the total \$27.8 billion request.

And you can look at that map over there, to see the drugs coming into our country, it's just amazing. You can also look at this map and see whereas the land cultivated for coca is down, now national parks are used and the yield is way up.

I understand that President Santos ended aerial eradication due to a World Health Organization finding that glyphosate contains cancer-causing carcinogens. But given the dramatic increase in coca production, the Congress must only fund creative, sustainable approaches to interdiction and eradication that will result in significant reductions in coca production.

I think we should take another look at this insecticide, or this glyphosate, because I understand there is a mixed view whether it is harmful or not, and maybe our witnesses can comment on that.

And, I was encouraged to learn that both the U.S. and Colombian government have begun to increase their interdiction efforts. Yet, even with these increases, coca production and cocaine export continues to outpace all seizure and interdiction efforts.

The United States and Colombian governments must jointly and aggressively attack the financial networks of those who produce and traffic cocaine, and swiftly arrest and most importantly extradite these individuals to the United States for trial and incarceration. There's a reason for this too.

Extradition has helped disrupt organized criminal networks in Colombia for more than two decades and it should continue to be used wherever possible.

Finally, the United States must continue to work with the Colombian government to prevent corruption.

The DEA has long partnered with the Colombian government to establish vetted units. These units conduct investigations on high-level targets that result in arrests, seizures of drugs and assets, and the collection of evidence that can be used to prosecute drug traffickers.

Unfortunately, despite their susceptibility to corruption, judges and prosecutors trying the cases investigated by these units are not subject to similar vetting. This jeopardizes critical cases.

For example, in March of this year, 15 prosecutors in two cities, were arrested for their ties to drug traffickers and paramilitaries. These were prosecutors. In June, 21 officials from the prosecutor's office in Meta were arrested for accepting bribes in exchange for reduced sentences for drug traffickers. Terrible. And, in July, the Director of the Colombian Attorney General's anti-corruption unit - the Director - was arrested and extradited to the United States on corruption charges. This sends a very loud message of failure.

To protect U.S. investments in vetted units and ensure the successful prosecution of drug traffickers, the United States and Colombian governments, I believe, should establish a robust vetting and oversight process for those who are directly involved in trying cases that are investigated by the vetted units.

In closing, it's clear that the strategies implemented to date have neither reduced the Colombian supply nor the United States' demand for cocaine.

Moving forward, we should see that Plan Colombia is failing in its intent. Any continuation of funding for Colombia should be based on interdiction and eradication efforts which are practical and sustainable. As an appropriator, I won't vote for anything else. Colombia must reduce cocaine production, destroy the places of manufacture, and prevent its export.

I am concerned that Colombia's current proposal focuses disproportionately on alternative development and will fail to reduce coca production, which was the goal of Plan Colombia, after all, when it was initiated in the year 2000. That's 17 years ago, and I remember it well.

The U.S. demand for cocaine is our problem. As such, we've got to redouble its demand reduction efforts at home, we've got to intensify interdiction efforts abroad, and we've got to strengthen our international partnerships to target criminal organizations and their financial networks, and ensure they are brought to justice.

I don't believe for one second that the FARC, as I have watched it over 17 years, is going to suddenly become a peaceful, law-abiding institution. Maybe some, maybe some can in some way can be co-opted. But in the long run, as long as there is profit, this is going to continue.

I can only say, that left unchanged I believe Plan Colombia is going to continue to fail. And we need to wake up and recognize that, and make the necessary changes.

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