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U.S.-ANDEAN SECURITY COOPERATION

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2011

United States Senate,
Caucus on International Narcotics Control,
Washington, D.C.

The Caucus met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in
room SD-562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Dianne
Feinstein, Chairman of the Caucus, presiding.

Present: Senator Feinstein.

1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DIANNE FEINSTEIN, A U.S.
2 SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
3 SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

4 Chairman Feinstein. Good afternoon, everyone,
5 ladies and gentlemen, and ladies and gentlemen in the
6 audience. Senator Grassley has indicated that he is
7 detained but will be along shortly, so I would like to
8 begin in the interest of time.

9 We are here to explore ways to deepen our
10 counternarcotics cooperation with the countries of the
11 Andean region--Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and
12 Venezuela. While violence caused by Mexico's brutal
13 drug-trafficking organizations splashes across the
14 headlines, we really should not and cannot neglect the
15 problem of drug production in the Andean region which
16 feeds this violence. In spite of the impressive security
17 gains made in Colombia, the country still produces over
18 90 percent of the cocaine seized in the United States.

19 So, first and foremost, we should ensure that the
20 security assistance that Congress appropriates for the
21 Andean region is, in fact, delivered. And,
22 unfortunately, what just came to light, what we
23 understand is that the Defense Department's
24 counternarcotics funding is in jeopardy since certain
25 Defense Department authorities were not included in the

1 last CR, continuing resolution. I do not think I need to
2 say that these programs are very important in the region,
3 but also have an impact in Afghanistan, Mexico, and
4 countries throughout the world.

5 Yesterday, I spoke with Senator Levin, the Chairman
6 of the Armed Services Committee. He indicates that his
7 defense authorization bill includes the renewal of the
8 authorities. In other words, it reauthorizes the
9 authorities. Furthermore, he indicated that he would
10 plan to include these authorities in the next CR. So I
11 hope you gentlemen will join me in seeing that this
12 happens, I know my Co-Chairman Senator Grassley, who is
13 also very concerned about this issue, will join in seeing
14 that this gets rectified.

15 You see a couple or three visuals here. Plan
16 Colombia, at least I believe--and I think the statistics
17 indicated--has been remarkably successful in dismantling
18 Colombia's largest drug-trafficking organizations and
19 reducing violence. According to United States Government
20 estimates, 100,000 hectares of coca were cultivated in
21 2010. Now, coca cultivation remains high, but it has
22 decreased dramatically from the 167,000 hectares of coca
23 cultivated in 2007. So in 3 years, it has gone from
24 167,000 hectares to 100,000 hectares.

25 In neighboring Peru, coca cultivation increased from

1 40,000 hectares in 2009 to 53,000 hectares in 2010. So
2 there it is going up. And in recent years, the Shining
3 Path--that is, the illegal armed group that terrorized
4 Peru in the 1990s--has become deeply involved in drug
5 trafficking, another real danger signal. The good news
6 is that Peru's newly inaugurated President has referred
7 to the United States, and I quote, as a "strategic
8 partner" in combating illegal drug trafficking. So with
9 increasing coca cultivation and the revival of the
10 Shining Path, it is really essential that our
11 administration focus on deepening our counternarcotics
12 relationship with Peru. So I hope you gentlemen will
13 comment on that.

14 Now, of course, coca eradication alone is going to
15 be insufficient. With limited resources available, we
16 have got to support alternative development programs that
17 help bring poor farmers out of poverty, because without
18 effective alternative development options, the millions
19 of dollars spent on eradication are essentially rendered
20 useless.

21 In September, President Obama stated that Venezuela
22 and Bolivia had "failed demonstrably"--those are his
23 words--to meet their international counternarcotics
24 obligations. This was the seventh year that Venezuela
25 was decertified and the fourth year for Bolivia. The

1 only other country to join them was Burma.

2 So I am concerned by actions taken by both Bolivia
3 and Venezuela with respect to counternarcotics. In
4 Bolivia, I was disappointed to learn that the DEA agents
5 were expelled in 2009. In Venezuela, 14 individuals--
6 including 6 Government officials--have been sanctioned by
7 our Treasury Department since 2008 for acting on behalf
8 of the FARC in support of narcotics- and arms-trafficking
9 activities. Now, at the end of the day, nobody wins when
10 we are unable to cooperate with our neighbors on
11 counternarcotics. So I would really also like to hear
12 from all of you how we can improve the counternarcotics
13 activities with both Venezuela and Bolivia. Really
14 important.

15 The second visual, and something that concerns me,
16 is the use of semi-submersible and fully submersible
17 submarines to smuggle cocaine from the Andean region to
18 the United States. While traffickers have used semi-
19 submersible submarines for over a decade, the use of
20 fully submersible submarines is relatively new. Three
21 fully submersible submarines were seized at their
22 construction sites over the past year: one in Ecuador in
23 July of 2010 and two in Colombia in February and
24 September of this year.

25 As a matter of fact, we do not have that one chart

1 up, but in my binder somewhere, I have an interesting
2 chart that shows the transportation routes and the
3 activity on these routes of drug trafficking out of these
4 areas into Mexico. Good, if you would hold that up,
5 thank you very much. I think this is very interesting
6 because you see where it is going heavily into Central
7 America and then, of course, up into our country. I was
8 surprised that it is such a preponderance of activity,
9 really more than double all of the other activity. So
10 that would appear to me to be the big area where we ought
11 to concentrate our activity.

12 Okay. So that really completes my comments. I
13 would like to welcome you all, and I will stop and ask
14 Senator Grassley when he attends what comments he would
15 care to make. But in the meantime, let me welcome our
16 witnesses.

17 Ambassador William Brownfield is the Assistant
18 Secretary of State for the Bureau of International
19 Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Prior to his
20 appointment, he served as United States Ambassador to
21 Colombia, Venezuela, and Chile. He has also served as
22 Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western
23 Hemisphere Affairs. Thank you for being here.

24 Kevin Whitaker currently serves as Deputy Assistant
25 Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. He

1 previously served as Director of Andean Affairs at the
2 State Department and as Deputy Chief of Mission at our
3 embassy in Venezuela.

4 Rodney Benson is Chief of Intelligence for the DEA.
5 Mr. Benson began his career with DEA in 1983 and has
6 worked with DEA's Mexico and Central America section
7 where he coordinated enforcement activities conducted by
8 DEA offices in Mexico and Central America.

9 And last, but not least, William Wechsler is the
10 Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for
11 Counternarcotics and Global Threats. In prior Government
12 service, Mr. Wechsler has served a Special Adviser to the
13 Secretary of the Treasury and on the staff of the
14 National Security Council. His prior service in the
15 Department of Defense includes positions as Special
16 Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and Special
17 Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for International
18 Security Affairs.

19 So, gentlemen, I really appreciate your being here
20 today. This is obviously being recorded, and I would
21 hope that in your opening comments, if you could answer
22 the two areas that I kind of spelled out in my remarks,
23 that would be much appreciated. And, of course, anything
24 else you have to say will be as well. So, Mr.
25 Brownfield, why don't we begin with you, and we will go

1 right down the line.

1 STATEMENT OF WILLIAM R. BROWNFIELD, ASSISTANT
2 SECRETARY FOR INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT
3 AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

4 Mr. Brownfield. Thank you, Madam Chairman
5 Feinstein. You mentioned that Mr. Whitaker in his bio
6 served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Caracas. He had a
7 very difficult and unpleasant boss, Madam Chairman--
8 although a handsome fellow.

9 [Laughter.]

10 Mr. Brownfield. --nd to this day regrets his years
11 there.

12 Madam Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to
13 appear before you today. I have a written statement
14 which, with your concurrence, I will submit for the
15 record.

16 Chairman Feinstein. Excellent. Thank you.

17 Mr. Brownfield. Madam Chairman, I do not propose to
18 describe for you the importance of the Andean region to
19 our counternarcotics goals, nor will I explain to you the
20 importance of cultivating security partnerships in the
21 region where they can be productive. You already know
22 these things. I will instead give you a quick country-
23 by-country snapshot of the challenges we face in the
24 region and some thoughts on how to address them.

25 I would begin with the country where I most recently

1 served--Colombia. Madam Chairman, I, too, believe
2 Colombia is the greatest foreign policy success story of
3 this century. Coca cultivation and cocaine production
4 are down. Guerrilla and criminal organizations are
5 weakened. The economy is booming. The country is
6 playing a regional leadership role. Congress expects
7 assistance levels for Colombia to come down. I agree.
8 But our challenge is to manage that downward glide path
9 in a way that does not undercut 10 years of progress and
10 encourages Colombian leadership in counter-drug efforts
11 throughout the hemisphere.

12 Peru has a new Government that is only now
13 formulating its new policies. Peruvian officials have
14 sent mixed messages on drug cooperation. It is obviously
15 in our national interest that we cooperate with Peru.
16 The challenge is to develop a meaningful and realistic
17 drug cooperation relationship.

18 Bolivia has dramatically and unilaterally reduced
19 drug cooperation over the past 4 years. While we must
20 always explore areas for collaboration, we should also
21 recognize limitations and road blocks. We do not reject
22 cooperation with Bolivia, but we also do not throw good
23 money after bad. Our challenge, I suggest, is to support
24 programs that deliver value and close down those that do
25 not.

1 Chairman Feinstein. And you are going to tell us
2 which is which.

3 Mr. Brownfield. I look forward to that opportunity,
4 Madam Chairman.

5 Ecuador has sent its own mixed signals. Right now I
6 would suggest those signals are tilting positive. Law
7 enforcement cooperation is improving, and we are working
8 together in some specific program areas. Without being
9 unrealistic, we want to maintain our operational
10 cooperation and explore other areas of cooperation within
11 the realities of that bilateral relationship.

12 And, finally, at the end of the Andean Ridge is
13 Venezuela, whose government has made clear its lack of
14 enthusiasm for drug cooperation with us, and where
15 engagement has been case-specific, sporadic, and
16 unpredictable. I see no indication of a change in that
17 relationship. Our challenge is to find indirect ways to
18 address the explosion of criminal organizations and drugs
19 transiting Venezuela on the way to market. We must be
20 open to other partners, international organizations, and
21 systems to control the flows emanating from the
22 Bolivarian Republic.

23 Madam Chairman, 40 years ago, the Andean region was
24 the single greatest source of cocaine entering the United
25 States of America. It remains so today. We have tallied

1 some successes in breaking the Andean air bridge, taking
2 down the major cartels in Colombia, decimating the local
3 drug industry via Plan Colombia. We have learned
4 valuable lessons. Our counternarcotics efforts must be
5 balanced. Political will and partnership are essential.

6 What happens in one country will affect others. Our
7 adversaries are as nimble and technological as are we.
8 And perhaps the most important lesson of all, successful
9 drug control programs do not happen overnight. It took
10 us years to get into this situation, and it will take
11 some years to get out. But I predict we will get out,
12 Madam Chairman, because never in human history has a
13 criminal organization defeated a community determined to
14 defend its society and its citizens, and I do not believe
15 it is going to happen this time either.

16 I thank you, Madam Chairman, and I look forward to
17 your questions.

18 [The prepared statement of Mr. Brownfield follows:]

1 Chairman Feinstein. Yes, and my first question is
2 going to be: What is working and what is not? So
3 prepare, Mr. Brownfield.

4 Mr. Whitaker?

1 STATEMENT OF KEVIN WHITAKER, DEPUTY ASSISTANT
2 SECRETARY FOR WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT
3 OF STATE

4 Mr. Whitaker. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman,
5 and thank you for the opportunity to appear here today
6 before you.

7 Chairman Feinstein. I forgot to say it with Mr.
8 Brownfield, and he really kept within the time limit, but
9 if you could kind of confine it to 5 minutes so we have a
10 chance to go back and forth, that would be terrific.

11 Mr. Whitaker. Absolutely.

12 Chairman Feinstein. Thanks.

13 Mr. Whitaker. Our counternarcotics efforts directly
14 support the administration's multi-year, interagency
15 National Drug Control Strategy. The President has
16 recommitted the United States to create practical
17 partnerships in the hemisphere to advance our shared
18 interests and protect our citizens. This is a point that
19 Ambassador Brownfield made. We have to work with partner
20 countries. Such high-capacity partner nations as
21 Colombia can help us build rule of law and effectiveness
22 institutions of governance not merely in the Andes but
23 more broadly.

24 Colombia's security improvements provide a concrete
25 example of the success that this strategic approach can

1 give. Colombia's progress has been facilitated by U.S.
2 training and technical and financial support, but mostly
3 due to the will, resources, and sacrifices of the
4 Colombian Government and its people, and I think that is
5 important to note. Once pushed to the brink by
6 insurgents, armed groups, and drug cartels, Colombia
7 today has regained the initiative and is a strong
8 representative democracy committed to open markets and
9 protecting fundamental freedoms. These attributes make
10 Colombia an archetypal high-capacity partner and an
11 increasingly important regional and global partner for
12 the United States.

13 Plan Colombia and its successor programs illustrate
14 the balanced and collaborative effort needed to expand
15 rule of law and improve citizen safety in the Andes. Our
16 efforts support Colombian efforts. The Colombian
17 National Consolidation Plan is supported by our Colombia
18 Strategic Development Initiative, which is our
19 interagency construct for coordinating assistance.

20 It is important to realize--and this is another
21 point that Ambassador Brownfield made--that Colombia's
22 progress, while significant, is neither linear nor
23 irreversible. The United States has an enormous interest
24 in Colombia's success and is supportive of the Santos
25 administration's thoughtful reform agenda and its effort

1 to vigorously solidify the gains of the past decade,
2 including by providing economic opportunities for all
3 Colombians.

4 In Peru, we recognize the challenges presented by
5 increased coca cultivation. I will note here--you made
6 reference to the Sendero Luminoso, the Shining Path.
7 This has been identified as a priority target by the
8 Humala administration. He has specifically tasked his
9 military with coming up with a plan for addressing that
10 problem straightaway.

11 We have a unique opportunity in the coming week when
12 Prime Minister Lerner, Salomon Lerner, will be visiting
13 the United States. As we understand it, he is meant to
14 serve in a role as the coordinator for counternarcotics
15 activities for the government. So we will be working
16 with him to deepen our dialogue with the Peruvian
17 Government about the overall counternarcotics program.
18 It will be important in this regard to ensure that
19 eradication is a part of that program.

20 Our efforts in Ecuador mainly seek to support
21 improvements in professional capabilities, equipment, and
22 integrity of Ecuador's police and military. We have had
23 setbacks. The closure of the Forward Operating Location
24 in Manta back in 2009, while the Ecuadorians were well
25 within their rights to do so, this was within the terms

1 of the agreement that we reached, we recognized that this
2 left a serious gap in our abilities to monitor and
3 surveil the eastern Pacific. As well, I will make
4 reference to the precipitous and unwarranted expulsion of
5 Ambassador Hodges in April of this year, which was not
6 generally supportive of a positive and cooperative
7 relationship. We are seeking to move beyond that because
8 it is in our interest to do so. Ecuador's proximity to
9 and connection with illicit activities in Colombia cannot
10 be ignored.

11 Two nations in the Andean region rejected the full
12 complement of U.S. Government partnership, something we
13 regret. We talked about Bolivia expelling DEA. That has
14 left a durable and critical gap in the identification of
15 priority trafficking organizations. You mentioned the
16 decertifications. Bolivia remains an important coca
17 cultivator, but according to DEA, a mere fraction of the
18 cocaine seized in the United States actually originates
19 in Bolivia, probably something like 1 percent. I would
20 defer to my colleagues on this.

21 Nonetheless, we recognize there is a global impact,
22 and it is in our interest to work collaboratively with
23 Bolivia to the extent possible to address these problems.

24 Our approach here to date has focused on working with
25 partners nations, including Brazil and the Europeans.

1 Finally, I will end, as Ambassador Brownfield did,
2 with Venezuela. We continue to be concerned about
3 Venezuela's failure to cooperate on counternarcotics
4 matters. Its cooperation with us has been poor and
5 sporadic. Occasional deportations of fugitives to the
6 United States or Colombia serve only to highlight the
7 inadequacy of Venezuela's overall effort. We have
8 designated a number of senior Venezuelan officials,
9 including the heads of the civilian and military
10 intelligence agencies, the then-minister of interior, and
11 now most recently an army two-star general for supporting
12 the narcotics-trafficking activities of the FARC.

13 Having said all this, we remain open to the
14 possibility of collaborating with Venezuela. This is too
15 important an issue to simply put to the side. We have
16 not received an echo from the Venezuelans in this regard,
17 but this is something that we will continue to insist
18 upon because it is a plague that affects both countries.

19 Madam Chairman, that concludes what I have to say.
20 I look forward to any questions you may have.

21 [The prepared statement of Mr. Whitaker follows:]

1 Chairman Feinstein. Thanks very much, Mr. Whitaker.
2 Mr. Benson?

1 STATEMENT OF RODNEY G. BENSON, ASSISTANT
2 ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE, DRUG ENFORCEMENT
3 ADMINISTRATION

4 Mr. Benson. Good afternoon, Chairman, and really
5 thank you so much for the opportunity to be here to give
6 you DEA's assessment on narcotics trafficking in the
7 Andean region.

8 Chairman Feinstein. You are welcome.

9 Mr. Benson. As you well know, Senator, our efforts
10 in that region are significant and have been for some
11 time and will be in the future. Whether you look at the
12 climate or the strategic location or their proximity to
13 the major drug-consuming nations, our efforts will be
14 there for some time for those reasons.

15 As your chart showed earlier, Colombia, Peru, and
16 Bolivia supply the world cocaine market, and they also
17 supply a great deal, specifically Colombia, of the heroin
18 market here in the United States. And as you well know,
19 there are still major significant violent drug-
20 trafficking organizations that operate in that region as
21 well as significant terrorist organizations.

22 There are challenges as we target those
23 organizations, but we are having success, I believe, in
24 many areas. And as the Ambassador indicated, Colombia
25 speaks to those successes in many, many ways.

1 If you look at the organizational attack and the
2 capacity of the Colombian National Police on targeting,
3 it is very, very robust, and there is success after
4 success in that regard.

5 If you look at the decline in the membership of the
6 FARC, we look at the decline of the cocaine production,
7 as you mentioned, which is significant, we have
8 information of targets moving out of Colombia out of fear
9 of being targeted by police forces there.

10 Chairman Feinstein. Where do they go?

11 Mr. Benson. They go to other countries in the area
12 to manage their operations.

13 You know, you look back in time, the significant
14 kingpins in Colombia who managed previously there for--
15 would operate there for many, many years. When the
16 police forces there look at a kingpin target, there
17 becomes a shelf life on that kingpin. And they have been
18 very successful at targeting and removing those
19 individuals in a short period of time.

20 Then just a comment on the exchange of intelligence,
21 very robust intelligence sharing, where we are receiving
22 a great number of leads from the Colombian forces to
23 many, many different police forces around the world as we
24 globally target these drug-trafficking organizations. So
25 a lot of success in that regard.

1 As you mentioned, Chairman, the increased production
2 in Peru is a concern. The way we see that Peruvian
3 cocaine reaching the United States market at this time,
4 it is about 4 percent based on our Cocaine Signature
5 Program. A lot of that cocaine is moving into Brazil,
6 the second-largest consumer of cocaine in the world, but
7 then also moving into Africa and the European market and,
8 frankly, to the European market because it is yielding a
9 great deal of money more than if they sold that cocaine
10 in the United States.

11 Chairman Feinstein. It is or it is not yielding
12 more money?

13 Mr. Benson. It is yielding more money in places
14 like Europe and Asia. But we still need to be cognizant
15 and look at robust eradication, but also organizational
16 targeting in places like Peru. And we are moving in that
17 direction, and we need to continue to move in that
18 direction.

19 As we look at Bolivia, Chairman, as you mentioned,
20 we were expelled in January of 2009. That has limited,
21 clearly, our ability on having clarity on what is
22 happening there. We know from intelligence we collect
23 from neighboring countries that Colombian drug-
24 trafficking members are moving in there, conducting their
25 operations.

1 Chairman Feinstein. Into Bolivia?

2 Mr. Benson. Yes, as well as Mexican drug-
3 trafficking organization members moving there as well to
4 link up with them to enhance their cocaine supply into
5 Mexico. So, obviously, a major concern as well.

6 From that chart up there in the Venezuela air
7 tracks, Venezuela has evolved into a major transshipment
8 point going into Central America and going into other
9 parts of the world as well when you look at Africa and
10 things like that.

11 So, clearly, you know, the region is a transnational
12 problem. It transcends borders. We need every available
13 tool as we battle those criminal organizations. We look
14 at Colombia and the success in extradition, more than
15 1,200 criminals have been extradited to the United States
16 in the last 10 years, which has achieved great results.
17 We need to continue, I believe, in other parts of the
18 world in doing that as well.

19 That pending legislation, the Transnational Drug
20 Trafficking Act of 2011, I wholeheartedly support that,
21 Chairman. I think that adds on to existing
22 extraterritorial advantages to us as we pursue these
23 criminal organizations when you look at targeting them
24 and bringing them to justice in the United States. But I
25 look forward to a great discussion today and any

1 questions you may have. Thank you.

2 [The prepared statement of Mr. Benson follows:]

1 Chairman Feinstein. Thanks very much, Mr. Benson.

2 Mr. Wechsler? And I apologize for mispronouncing
3 your name initially.

4 Mr. Wechsler. Not a problem, Madam Chairman.

1 STATEMENT OF WILLIAM F. WECHSLER, DEPUTY
2 ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR COUNTERNARCOTICS AND GLOBAL
3 THREATS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

4 Mr. Wechsler. Thank you very much for the
5 opportunity to be here, and thank you especially for the
6 news that you gave me in your opening comments about your
7 discussion with Senator Levin.

8 The Department of Defense, as you know, has quite an
9 important role in the fight against narcotics trafficking
10 and has for a number of decades. It is largely a
11 supporting role with the exception of our lead
12 responsibility for detection and monitoring aerial and
13 maritime trafficking into the United States, including
14 that chart that you have before you.

15 The particular authorities in question that you
16 mentioned, authorities 1004, 1021, and 1022, are really
17 the bread-and-butter authorities that allow us to support
18 our law enforcement partners and our foreign partners in
19 this effort.

20 In the last couple of weeks, since the beginning of
21 the month, where we have been without those legal
22 authorities, we have been doing our best to mitigate the
23 damage, but we have not been entirely successful, and
24 there are a large number of important programs in this
25 area of the world that we are talking about today--the

1 Andean region--in Afghanistan, on our southwest border
2 where the programs that we have have been limited in
3 effect, and in some cases outrightly stopped. So I am
4 very happy to hear of the efforts to reinstate these
5 authorities either by passing the authorization act as
6 soon as possible or the next continuing resolution.

7 Chairman Feinstein. Yes, which is November 18th. I
8 just asked that question.

9 Mr. Wechsler. Yes, ma'am.

10 Chairman Feinstein. I would say to you be really
11 alert, stay close, help us. We would appreciate it if
12 you would mention the importance to Senator Levin so that
13 this thing does not fall between the cracks.

14 Mr. Wechsler. Yes, Madam Chairman, absolutely.

15 Chairman Feinstein. Okay.

16 Mr. Wechsler. And we, of course, stand ready to do
17 anything that we can to help anyone in the Senate and the
18 House to get to that. The nice thing about this issue is
19 in my discussions for the last quite number of weeks on
20 this issue, I have yet to find anybody on any committee
21 on any side of the aisle that does not want us to have
22 these authorities. The question is how quickly and
23 through what vehicle can we regain these authorities.

24 It is quite important to do so because, as you well
25 know, these authorities are critical to the two great

1 strategic successes that we have had over the last decade
2 in this area:

3 First, going from a situation in the 1980s when 75
4 percent of all the cocaine coming into the United States
5 was coming directly into Florida, that is less than 1
6 percent today. That is a strategic success.

7 The other strategic success is, as Amendment
8 Brownfield discussed, going from a situation where the
9 FARC looked like it was about to take Bogota, and
10 Colombia was the definition for many observers of a
11 failed state and a narco state and certainly an exporter
12 of insecurity to one that is a great ally and exporter of
13 security throughout the region today. That is a
14 tremendous strategic success, and I agree completely with
15 his assessment of its relative merit in history.

16 Just very briefly, because I want to--you do have my
17 written testimony for the record. I want to suggest that
18 there are really five lessons from the Department of
19 Defense's perspective that we take from these successes
20 on an operational basis.

21 The first is to always go after these adversaries in
22 a counter-network approach, not just to go after
23 individuals, not just to go after entities, but to go
24 after the entire network from top to bottom.

25 The second thing is to do so through intel-driven

1 operations, helping our law enforcement partners and
2 foreign military partners make sure that all their
3 operations are driven by intelligence to have the
4 greatest effect.

5 The third thing is to do this in a counter-nexus
6 approach, to not just look at the drug trafficking but
7 all the other criminal organizations and all the other
8 entities that work with the drug traffickers, some
9 terrorist organizations, insurgent organizations, and
10 look at them all together as a holistic whole.

11 The fourth is to always look at this in a regional
12 context.

13 And the fifth, and perhaps most importantly, is to
14 do this in an interagency context. If this was something
15 that the Department of Defense relied on alone, we would
16 fail. We only succeed because we support our partners
17 who have the authorities and the expertise that really
18 provide the end state for many of these actions.

19 We have taken these lessons, and we have applied
20 them to Afghanistan and are having great success there.
21 But we only learned them in this context here today, so
22 thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

23 [The prepared statement of Mr. Wechsler follows:]

1 Chairman Feinstein. Well, thank you very much, and
2 thank you, gentlemen, for the comment.

3 Before I go to Mr. Brownfield for what is working
4 and what is not, this chart in the lower left-hand corner
5 says an estimated 20 percent of initial cocaine movements
6 depart South America via aircraft. The primary initial
7 landing point is eastern Honduras, which is up there.
8 How cooperative is Honduras? And what can be done to
9 abate that right there? Who would like to take that?
10 Mr. Brownfield?

11 Mr. Brownfield. Why don't I start, Madam Chairman,
12 because it actually falls neatly into a package of where
13 I suspect we are headed in Central America.

14 I think the blunt answer to your question is that
15 the government has expressed the political will, the
16 willingness, and the commitment to address this, for
17 them, overwhelming challenge of their sovereign control
18 over the eastern part of their country.

19 Chairman Feinstein. And you are speaking of
20 Honduras.

21 Mr. Brownfield. Of Honduras.

22 Chairman Feinstein. Okay.

23 Mr. Brownfield. I am responding directly to your
24 question. The problem that they have, at least what they
25 claim--and I am quite sympathetic to them on this point--

1 is at this stage they do not have the resources. Their
2 argument is that they are overmatched, that large
3 criminal drug-trafficking organizations that, quite
4 frankly, have more money, more resources, better
5 technology, and certainly better paid people, are able to
6 defeat the assets and the resources that they have on
7 their own east coast and north coast.

8 Chairman Feinstein. Let me stop you. Do you judge
9 that Plan Colombia was a success?

10 Mr. Brownfield. I do, yes.

11 Chairman Feinstein. Well, as you know, we had to
12 fight to get that done, and it was done, and I believe it
13 was a success. Why couldn't there be another plan
14 whereby, now that we know more of the specifics of what
15 has to be involved in a plan, that could be helpful to
16 Honduras? And maybe Colombia would even participate.

17 Mr. Brownfield. A masterful suggestion, Madam
18 Chairman. May I suggest that you and I are thinking
19 along exactly the same line. And may I even give you
20 kind of a timeline for how this has developed from our
21 side, the Article II branch of Government side of the
22 house.

23 In March of this year, the President of the United
24 States is in the region, El Salvador specifically, and he
25 says publicly this entire region, but particularly the

1 northern triangle of countries--Guatemala, El Salvador,
2 Honduras--are under tremendous threat, and we need a new-
3 --and he called it "citizen security partnership."

4 In June of this year, the Secretary of State goes to
5 Guatemala City where she joins a summit with all of the
6 seven Central American countries' presidents, and most of
7 the major presidents from around the region--Mexico,
8 Colombia--and foreign ministers from most of the rest of
9 Latin America agree to an action plan called SICA in
10 Spanish, for the Central American Integration System
11 approach to this, and commits resources--she commits \$290
12 million of U.S. resources to this in the course of the
13 next 12 months.

14 Chairman Feinstein. Was that from her budget?

15 Mr. Brownfield. That is all from the budget which
16 you and your 99 colleagues are good enough to appropriate
17 and provide to her, which she in turn provides either to
18 me to manage in terms of INCLE funding or to the regional
19 bureau, WHA, and--

20 Chairman Feinstein. Was that money appropriated?

21 Mr. Brownfield. That money is appropriated. For us
22 that is fiscal year 2010 and 2011 money, and of that \$290
23 million, about 60 percent would actually be funds that I
24 am responsible for managing.

25 Our approach, Madam Chairman, is to focus our

1 priority areas in the northern triangle because that is
2 where the murder rates are highest; that is where the
3 tracks indicates the traffickers are coming; that is
4 where the gangs are most prevalent. That is the logical
5 point of entry for drugs that are moving through Central
6 America up into Mexico.

7 We are not ignoring the other four. One of the
8 lessons that we have learned over the last 40 years, as I
9 tried to suggest in my statement, is what you do in one
10 country will have an impact in other countries. If we
11 solve the Honduras problem but leave Guatemala completely
12 untouched, in all likelihood all we have done is moved
13 the chess piece from Honduras to Guatemala. You have to
14 deal with the entire region as a package.

15 Chairman Feinstein. Thank you. Let us move on to
16 the other end, which is Venezuela. As was noted--I am a
17 little puzzled by Venezuela. There has been some
18 cooperation. Venezuela has captured and returned to
19 Colombia several members of the FARC. Are they
20 increasingly cooperating? Or is that just an anomaly?
21 Mr. Benson?

22 Mr. Benson. Madam Chairman, clearly Venezuela is
23 becoming more significant for drug-trafficking
24 organizations, as you note, from a major transshipment
25 point. Right now we have one agent in-country, and we

1 need to continue to build on cooperating with the
2 authorities there on targeting organizations. But,
3 clearly, we have taken several steps back. We need to be
4 able to take some steps forward.

5 Chairman Feinstein. Why did they have this attitude
6 of kicking our people out?

7 Mr. Benson. I do not know the reasons why, and I
8 would defer to my colleagues from the State Department on
9 that, Chairman, on why the--

10 Chairman Feinstein. Mr. Whitaker, can you answer
11 that?

12 Mr. Whitaker. I can try. The stated reasons they
13 gave--and this was back in 2005. They did not actually
14 kick DEA out of Venezuela. What happened in 2005 was
15 that President Chavez stated that he believed that DEA
16 was itself a narco-trafficking organizations and,
17 therefore, it did not make sense for his narcotics
18 authorities to collaborate with them. At that point
19 there started a gradual process during which the
20 Venezuelan police authorities, who had been cooperating
21 with us, refused to do so.

22 What we have seen happen since then is the numbers
23 of visas granted to DEA agents has steadily declined. We
24 used to have I think eight special agents there; now we
25 are down to one.

1 If I can go back, with your permission, Madam
2 Chairman, just on the Colombia-Venezuela question, if we
3 cast our minds back in time, by the end of the Uribe
4 administration, relations between the two countries were
5 in very, very bad shape. Colombia accused Venezuela of
6 harboring the FARC, made a presentation before the OAS to
7 that effect. President Chavez then declared a total
8 economic embargo on Colombia. Two-way trade between the
9 two countries was on the order of \$7 billion at that
10 point. Most of that, \$6 billion, was Colombian products
11 going to Venezuela.

12 President Santos, on taking office in August of
13 2010, made a strategic decision to try to repair that
14 relationship to the greatest extent that he could. He
15 immediately invited President Chavez to Colombia. He has
16 been able to win some cooperation from the Venezuelans.
17 The situation in terms of bilateral counternarcotics and
18 counterterrorism cooperation is better than it was. It
19 is by no means ideal. There continued to be evidence of
20 FARC sheltering within Venezuela, although not close to
21 the border as they had been in the past. The Venezuelans
22 have picked up a number of senior FARC people and
23 delivered them to Venezuela, but as I said in my
24 statement, I think that, you know, my view is that their
25 cooperation has been sporadic, and the occasional handing

1 over of a senior FARC member really highlights the
2 overall inadequacy of the effort.

3 The Colombians have made a political decision,
4 though, to try to repair that relationship and not have a
5 flank out there, and it has worked I think quite well for
6 them.

7 Chairman Feinstein. Good. Mr. Brownfield, the
8 question: What is working and what is not?

9 Mr. Brownfield. Well, Madam Chairman, you have left
10 me enough time that I actually have a reasonably
11 considered response to give to you on that question,
12 perhaps not superbly well organized. Let me break it
13 down, in essence, into two lists, and I will speak with
14 uncharacteristic honesty and transparency with you,
15 particularly on the things that are not working.

16 Chairman Feinstein. "Uncharacteristic"? Don't you
17 mean characteristic?

18 Mr. Brownfield. My wife would say
19 "unprecedentedly." But then, again, she is not here, so
20 her views should not have much weight with you at this
21 point in time.

22 Chairman Feinstein. I hope they do at home.

23 [Laughter.]

24 Mr. Brownfield. Zero back there.

25 Geographically, what has worked? Plan Colombia has

1 worked. I have said it before. I say it to you again.
2 I think it is the most successful nation-building and
3 foreign policy endeavor in which we have been engaged in
4 this century, and this century is now 11 going on 12
5 years old.

6 I am an optimist. I believe the Merida Initiative
7 and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative are also
8 working. I am not yet ready to say that they have
9 worked, but we are seeing positive outputs from them.

10 Geographically, what has not worked? Clearly, our
11 policy in terms of narcotics cooperation with Venezuela--
12 and I would add Bolivia to that list--are not working. I
13 actually agree with those who say it is actually not our
14 fault, but that is not the question you asked me. You
15 did not say who is to blame. You said, "What is not
16 working?" And for whatever reason, our cooperation with
17 Venezuela and to a considerable extent Bolivia are not in
18 the working category right now.

19 Partnership is working. When we addressed Plan
20 Colombia in partnership with the Government of Colombia,
21 it worked. What has not worked on the partnership front
22 is regional partnership. It has not yet given us the
23 means to defeat the balloon effect, which is to say we
24 work with a partner in one country, say Colombia, and we
25 squeeze the balloon there, and we see coca cultivation

1 increasing in places like Peru and Bolivia, or large
2 criminal organizations displacing from Colombia and going
3 to Mexico or to Central America. So that clearly is
4 something that we need to work more on.

5 Chairman Feinstein. Can I just interrupt you? You
6 know, it is interesting because when Plan Colombia was
7 first proposed here, Luis Moreno, who was Ambassador at
8 that time, he spent hours and hours and hours with the
9 Congress. I mean, it was really a big thing for
10 Colombia. And it really, I think, communicated to all of
11 us how important an effort it was. And so, you know,
12 with Merida, I mean, I hear when Mexico wants helicopters
13 or something, but I think there needs to be more ongoing
14 communication on the value of these transnational
15 efforts.

16 Mr. Brownfield. I would agree with you, Senator. I
17 actually do believe we on both ends of Pennsylvania
18 Avenue did a better job in the years 1999, 2000, and 2001
19 explaining to ourselves and to the American people the
20 importance of what we were doing in Colombia and its
21 impact on us than we have so far done on Mexico. And I
22 find that ironic because Mexico almost speaks for itself.

23 I am, I humbly note, a citizen of the State of
24 Texas, and to a certain extent, the thought that--

25 Chairman Feinstein. You mean you are the only

1 humble Texan?

2 [Laughter.]

3 Mr. Brownfield. Don't you go quoting my wife on me
4 on this, Madam Chairman. The thought that we would have
5 to explain the importance of Mexico to the American
6 public I must admit I find almost hard to understand.
7 But I do acknowledge--I think you make a good point--we
8 have not drawn the connection as clearly as we could and
9 we should on how things we are doing in Mexico under the
10 four pillars--attacking the criminal organizations,
11 building a stronger border, strengthening the
12 communities, and building stronger institutions--have a
13 direct impact on the 310 million citizens of the United
14 States of America. I accept that, and I suppose I would
15 add that to the things that are working and not working
16 category, except this hearing is on the Andean region,
17 and to the best of my knowledge, Mexico is not an Andean
18 nation.

19 May I go back to my list? Vetted units or at least
20 special relationships between U.S. law enforcement and
21 law enforcement in the region is something that works.
22 When we put them together, they deliver clear and evident
23 results. Pure voluntary eradication, which is to say we
24 offer to the campesino seeds or money to eradicate but
25 absolutely no consequences if he chooses not to, does not

1 work. And I think we learned that the hard way as well--
2 not that voluntary eradication is wrong, but that it does
3 not work if it is not applied in the context of a broader
4 policy that has both incentives to be positive but
5 sanctions in the event that they do not cooperate.

6 I would suggest that strategic interdiction has
7 worked over the last 20 years. If we use your chart up
8 there which shows suspect air activity and you allow me
9 to take you back to the mid-1980s, I submit that most of
10 those tracks would be going straight up from Colombia
11 into the Caribbean and then into South Florida. That is
12 no longer the case because we were successful in a
13 strategic sense. If we had had that chart in the 1990s,
14 I predict you would have seen a tremendous amount of
15 activity going up the west coast of the Americas, the
16 eastern Pacific, entering western Mexico and then
17 entering the United States through Mexico. That is no
18 longer the case because we were successful in strategic
19 interdiction.

20 The chart today, which I believe also would reflect
21 what we would see on maritime movements, shows quite
22 clearly that the material is moving from South America
23 into Central America and then transiting by ground up
24 into Mexico. So strategic interdiction works, although
25 it takes time.

1 Finally, I would suggest that what we have found
2 that works is the full spectrum attempt to do narcotics
3 control and elimination, addressing supply, demand, and
4 transit, because each one of those elements has their own
5 particular issues that have to be addressed. You cannot
6 address only one and think that you are going to solve
7 the problem. When we address them all as a package, when
8 we approach the problem set from one end, education,
9 treatment, rehabilitation, through coca cultivation,
10 precursor chemicals, taking down laboratories, arresting
11 and taking down the organizations, interdiction, and then
12 attacking their money flows through illicit finance, you
13 actually have a permanent impact on the industry. If you
14 only take out one link of the chain, we have discovered
15 that does not work because the adversaries will always
16 find a work-around.

17 That is my long, tedious, and boring answer to your
18 question in terms of what I think we have found works and
19 does not work over the last 10 years in the Andes.

20 Chairman Feinstein. Actually, it was not boring,
21 you might be surprised to know.

22 Mr. Brownfield. I wish you would send that message
23 to my wife.

24 [Laughter.]

25 Chairman Feinstein. But you left something out, and

1 I want to discuss that for a couple of minutes, and that
2 is, extradition. I think it is a worthwhile tool. I
3 remember when Mexico's constitution did not permit
4 extradition. That has changed, and individuals under a
5 strong president are extradited to the United States, and
6 that has made a huge difference, particularly with
7 respect to what was the Tijuana Cartel, where virtually
8 most of the brothers now are in American prisons.

9 Colombia extradited 148 of its nationals to our
10 country last year for trial. Now, in comparison, Peru
11 extradited seven between 2008 and 2010. And Ecuador's
12 and Venezuela's constitutions bar extradition. Bolivia
13 allows extradition, but there have not been any recent
14 extraditions.

15 So here is my question, and, Mr. Benson, let me
16 begin with you. How valuable does DEA see extradition as
17 a tool?

18 Mr. Benson. Madam Chairman, extradition is very
19 important as we target global drug-trafficking
20 organizations. I spent a few years targeting the
21 Arellano-Felix organization back from 1995 to 1998 when I
22 was assigned down in Imperial County and saw the
23 targeting strategy and the results over a period of time
24 and the success with extradition--

25 Chairman Feinstein. Was it five brothers? How many

1 are now in--

2 Mr. Benson. And now their capacity to traffic--I
3 think there is one left. There is really no capacity,
4 not the control that they had. And you look at our
5 assessment of the cartel's area of operations in Mexico,
6 and they are a very small area of territory under their
7 control.

8 So you look at the success of extradition in
9 Colombia and other areas, it works. Those drug kingpins
10 fear extradition, and they do not like sitting in a U.S.
11 prison cell. And so we need to continue that, and we
12 need to continue with this proposed legislation. It adds
13 that extra value on opposed to--in a reasonable cause to
14 believe that their product is reaching the United States
15 versus they must know is a very positive step to give us
16 additional tools to target those kingpins located in
17 other parts of the world that will never touch foot here
18 in the United States. So I believe it is an important
19 tool.

20 Chairman Feinstein. Anybody else have a comment on
21 that? I guess you have to somehow convince the nations.

22 The Mexicans changed their constitution. I gather
23 Ecuador and Venezuela would have to. It is hard for me
24 to understand Venezuela, exactly where it is going and
25 how the leadership views drugs. Does anybody have any

1 knowledge that they would care to share? Mr. Whitaker?

2 Mr. Whitaker. It is difficult for me to understand
3 what the leadership is doing, what is really going on in
4 their head. It would appear--the facts suggest that the
5 inherent corruption which has existed in Venezuela for
6 some time--and I am talking about rent-seeking behavior
7 on the part of border guards and things like that--in the
8 increasingly deinstitutionalized entity that Venezuela
9 has become has really run rampant. And so in the past,
10 as flawed as Venezuela may have been, there was a court
11 system. It worked. Investigations took place. DEA
12 collaborated in them. But now, as Venezuela become
13 deinstitutionalized, those who would do wrong simply see
14 that there is no penalty associated with it, and that is
15 why you see those very large number of tracks, and that
16 is why we have two-star generals being cited under the
17 Kingpin Act.

18 It cannot be the case that--and, again, I cannot
19 speak for Venezuelan authorities, but I cannot imagine
20 that even a Venezuelan authority would be interested in
21 supporting this because ultimately these kinds of
22 activities are corrosive of the authority of the state as
23 a whole. And so it is a very--

24 Chairman Feinstein. It has not been in Mexico. It
25 has not been corrosive of the Mexican authority--

1 extradition.

2 Mr. Whitaker. No, no. The narco trade itself.
3 That is to say, the theory is the Venezuelans are unable
4 to and have deinstitutionalized their nation to the
5 extent that these activities, the narco-trafficking
6 activities, can continue, then ultimately this can be a
7 threat to the government itself. I am not arguing that
8 it is that case--

9 Chairman Feinstein. Well, but what you are saying,
10 it becomes much like Colombia was.

11 Mr. Whitaker. Exactly. Exactly. And that is not--
12 and, again, just to complete the thought, my theory is
13 that--I do not have to cite myself as a theorist on this.

14 Hugo Chavez has said that he wants to remain in office
15 for the rest of his life. If that is the theory, it is
16 not in his interest to encourage or permit the
17 development of entities like this that can be so
18 threatening to central government authority. That was
19 the point.

20 Chairman Feinstein. Let me ask this question, if I
21 may. What specifically do Bolivia and Venezuela have to
22 do to receive certification in September of 2012?

23 Mr. Brownfield. I will start this and invite Mr.
24 Whitaker to add on. In theory, this process comes
25 through my bureau, Madam Chairman, whereby we make

1 recommendations first to the Secretary of State,
2 carefully coordinated in the interagency community, and
3 she then provides her own recommendations to the
4 President.

5 What has been found to be the case for the last 4
6 years, I believe, for Bolivia and 7 years for Venezuela
7 is that both governments have failed materially, I
8 believe is the statutory term, to either meet their
9 obligations under multinational, international
10 conventions to address narcotics trafficking or have
11 failed to take internal or bilateral steps to address
12 them.

13 Now, this is obviously a subjective judgment, but
14 among the things that we assess as we take a look at
15 those two countries is the extent to which they are
16 cooperating with the UN organizations or the OAS
17 organizations that are responsible for narcotics control;
18 the extent to which they are cooperating with us on
19 narcotics control; the extent to which they are
20 cooperating with other governments in the region or
21 elsewhere in the world.

22 After we have assessed that, we then take a look at
23 what they are doing internally. Are they taking steps
24 with their own law enforcement and their own prosecutors
25 and court systems to address the organizations that are

1 moving the product or in some instances in Bolivia
2 cultivating and producing the product? In each case, we
3 found that they had failed to meet those tests.

4 What would they have to do to be certified by this
5 time next year? I suggest to you they would have to do
6 positive things in one of three areas: either
7 substantial improvement in their internal efforts, what
8 they are doing to control drugs within Venezuela or
9 within Colombia; or that they would be substantially
10 improving their cooperation with us, and that is
11 obviously difficult having, in the case of Bolivia,
12 expelled DEA, the United States of America's premier law
13 enforcement agency responsible for the drug issue, and in
14 the case of Venezuela, having boiled it down to an almost
15 symbolic level; or, third possibility, they are
16 substantially increasing and enhancing their cooperation
17 with other elements of the international community.

18 That is the simple answer that I could offer you.

19 Chairman Feinstein. Okay. What can you tell us
20 about a trilateral agreement being negotiated between the
21 United States, Bolivia, and Brazil that I understand,
22 among other things, would involve United States support
23 for the use of Brazilian satellite equipment for crop
24 monitoring and interdiction efforts in Bolivia? What is
25 the status of that agreement? Mr. Whitaker?

1 Mr. Whitaker. I can touch on this. The notion here
2 was for Brazil to seek to collaborate with Bolivia on
3 narcotics matters generally and help develop momentum
4 towards a more effective law enforcement presence on the
5 part of Brazil.

6 As my colleague mentioned, much of the Bolivian
7 narcotics are actually flowing to Brazil, and so it is
8 principally a Brazilian and European problem in terms of
9 the destination.

10 The initial idea that we had was--this was
11 collectively, in a tripartite way--to look at the
12 question of monitor of coca production. Having come very
13 close to signing this in a tripartite way--we had
14 authority to do so--the Bolivians backed out at the last
15 moment because of an internal Bolivian spat. It really
16 had nothing to do with Brazil; it had nothing to do with
17 the United States. It had to do with internal Bolivian
18 politics.

19 Chairman Feinstein. Is it dead?

20 Mr. Whitaker. Well, the next approach that came up
21 was one that would have required Brazilian congressional
22 approval, and the Brazilians are loath to go that route.

23 We already have C-175 authority for it, so we are in
24 good shape.

25 So I will not call it dead now, but there is not a

1 clear way forward as to how we would achieve this. But I
2 would pull back and just note that the fundamental idea
3 of working in partnership with other countries to address
4 narcotics, and whether we start with monitoring coca or
5 whatever it is, it is a good approach and a valid one.

6 Chairman Feinstein. I wanted to ask you a little
7 bit about replacements for coca, and my understanding is
8 that the Colombian Government has encouraged the shift
9 from coca to biofuels, primarily palm oil. You know, one
10 would think that this would be a good thing, you know,
11 switchgrass, palm oil, other things. Does it make sense
12 as an alternative? Is there enough recompense in
13 biofuels? Mr. Brownfield?

14 Mr. Brownfield. I will start that, Madam Chairman,
15 because I do bring some personal experience with this
16 from my 3 years in Colombia from 2007 to 2010 as
17 Ambassador. The simple answer to the question is it
18 depends upon the place, the people, and to a certain
19 extent the luck. Colombia went into African palm as an
20 alternative crop to coca in a very big way in the middle
21 of the last decade to the tune of thousands and thousands
22 of hectares, which is 2.5 acres, roughly, to a hectare.
23 And for a period of time, it was going gangbusters.

24 What they then discovered was the accident of
25 nature, if you will--well, they discovered several

1 things, but the most important in terms of impact on this
2 approach was the impact of nature, which is to say there
3 is a particular blight that lives in the Western
4 Hemisphere that apparently does not live in Africa where
5 the African palm, surprisingly enough, comes from and
6 most of this cultivation has been destroyed over the last
7 2 to 3 years. In fact, as you drive through particularly
8 southwestern Colombia, you will see just thousands of
9 acres of basically deadened palm trees, and that is
10 nothing more than blight for which they had no natural
11 resistance as they were brought to Colombia.

12 There were other issues, which is why to be fair to
13 those who may have offered you alternative views on this,
14 and lessons that we learned. One is if you are going to
15 support this as an alternative development program, make
16 sure that all of the small farmers who you are trying to
17 bring into this program are allowed to participate and
18 are not, in essence, overwhelmed by a few small business
19 consortiums who in essence buy up all of the production.

20 I believe that was a lesson that we would still be
21 learning today had nature not largely taken over this
22 project for us.

23 Second, some degree of balance I think was a lesson
24 that we have learned. Do not put it all in African palm.

25 In the case of Colombia today, for example, in certain

1 areas, cacao, the plant that eventually produces
2 chocolate, is a very good alternative to coca or to
3 African palm. Coffee in some regions is a good
4 alternative. But the lesson was do not put it all in one
5 single cultivation.

6 The third lesson that we learned, I suggest, was
7 that it takes time before you can produce a complete
8 swing under an alternative development program. That
9 time is about 2 to 3 years from the moment where you
10 begin to plant something new to the point where the
11 farmer is actually getting steady income. And a farmer
12 and his family can get kind of hungry over 2 to 3 years
13 if no income is coming in, and your program has to
14 integrate that reality as well into the effort.
15 Otherwise, he is going to go back after 6 months to coca
16 for the very simple reason that that delivers immediate
17 income, that the trafficker comes to him, buys it right
18 there, he does not even have to deliver it to market, and
19 the price is quite robustly high.

20 Chairman Feinstein. Well, let me ask you, you know,
21 Brazil has been big in sugar cane, and I wonder about
22 switchgrass. Do either of those make sense for the
23 region or not?

24 Mr. Whitaker. I would not know about sugar cane or
25 switchgrass. If I could, Madam Chairman, one point--I

1 know Ambassador Brownfield had this in mind. A final
2 point is on value chains. We did very good work on
3 alternative development in Bolivia in the Chapare with
4 banana and hearts of palm, and these are marketable
5 products. Unfortunately, we had not thought through
6 where the markets would be and how folks would get the
7 products to market. And in time we actually worked it
8 out, and there are very successful alternative
9 development programs in the Chapare now, but it was a
10 very important lesson we learned there. You cannot just
11 get people by the 2 or 3 years. You cannot just get them
12 a good product. But there has to be a mechanism and
13 method where they can market it.

14 Chairman Feinstein. Market it, yes. That is very
15 helpful. Thank you.

16 Well, I think we have come a long way here. Is
17 there anything any of you would like to say that would
18 help us with our work? Please, Mr. Wechsler.

19 Mr. Wechsler. The only thing, Madam Chairman, I
20 would like to add is a response to the question that you
21 raised at the very beginning about the self-propelled
22 semi-submersibles and the self-propelled fully
23 submersibles. In the categories of what is working and
24 what is not working, this is something that is working
25 very well for the drug traffickers, and this is something

1 for which our and our partners efforts to combat is not
2 working nearly as well as we need them to. This is
3 something that not too long ago--I mean, I can remember
4 when the first words of semi-submersibles came out, and
5 there were a lot of people that did not believe them
6 until we caught them. And then the same thing with fully
7 submersibles. There were many that did not believe them
8 until they were recently caught.

9 This is a growing problem, and, of course, once the
10 capability exists, the threat may extend beyond just the
11 counternarcotics issues. In perhaps your role as Chair
12 of the Intelligence Committee we might talk further about
13 this.

14 Chairman Feinstein. All right. What has happened
15 with the fast boats that were being made in Colombia and
16 used to move narcotics up the Pacific coast? Is that
17 still a source of--

18 Mr. Benson. We still see them utilizing all
19 different types of ways to move their product. Go-fasts
20 are still being used. Just on the fully submersibles, a
21 comment on that. There was a glimpse of them, you know,
22 beginning to construct back in 2000 when the Colombian
23 National Police discovered the building of a hull, and
24 then it was not until 2010 that the first one was
25 interdicted, and now I think we have had three, which

1 clearly is a concern.

2 The way we get to that point, though, those three, I
3 mean, it is from human intelligence, and robust human
4 intelligence leads us to things like that. But it
5 clearly is a concern, but they are using all different
6 methods to move that product up into the next part of the
7 supply chain.

8 Chairman Feinstein. Well, you know, my experience--
9 this really surprised me because the amount of airplane
10 transportation is amazing, and I remember when I looked
11 at it before, it was virtually all fast boat. This is
12 quite a while ago. Now it is virtually all plane. Am I
13 wrong?

14 Mr. Wechsler. Approximately 20 percent is through
15 planes, but the rest of it is maritime, and it tends to
16 be mostly, as far as we can tell, in the fast boats on
17 the littorals going up and hugging the coasts. So air is
18 definitely a concern, but it is not the predominant
19 concern in terms of percentages.

20 Chairman Feinstein. Well, give me then the
21 percentages in terms of the transportation of drugs, the
22 mode of transportation.

23 Mr. Wechsler. We think the maritime vector is the
24 largest vector.

25 Chairman Feinstein. Like what percent?

1 Mr. Wechsler. Roughly 80, to 20 maritime. It has
2 to go off land for a portion of the time before, then it
3 hits land in Central America, and then it is tracked over
4 land largely. That tends to be the practice that--

5 Chairman Feinstein. So are these fishing boats?
6 Are they all--well, they are not all submersible. They
7 are fast boats. There are some of the--and the fast
8 boats I gather are built right in Colombia.

9 Mr. Benson. Madam Chairman, we see go-fast boats.
10 We see the fully submersible. We did see in 2006 the
11 first semi-submersible, and then it kind of spiked for
12 us. I think 2008 was maybe 68 interdicted. That has
13 kind of trailed off as we have gotten a little better at
14 interdicting those, but fishing boats, I mean, there is a
15 whole number of ways that they are looking to push up,
16 but primarily maritime, but then that chart up there is
17 clearly a concern as well because they are exploiting
18 certain areas to move and they are using Venezuela as a
19 major transshipment point.

20 Chairman Feinstein. Well, that is right. It just
21 seems to me when you know both ends, where it is coming
22 in and where it is going out, it gives you a pretty good
23 lead as to where you have to go.

24 Well, gentlemen, thank you very much. I think this
25 has been very helpful to our Drug Caucus, and we very

1 much appreciate your time and your testimony. So thank
2 you, and the hearing is adjourned.

3 [Whereupon, at 3:44 p.m., the Caucus was adjourned.]

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