



**U.S. Department of Justice**

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

May 14, 2012

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
Chairman  
Caucus on International Narcotics Control  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ms. Chairman:

Enclosed please find responses to questions for the record arising from the appearance of Rodney Benson, Assistant Administrator and Chief of Intelligence, Drug Enforcement Administration, at a hearing before the Committee on October 19, 2011, regarding U.S. – Andean Security Cooperation.

We apologize for the delay and hope that this information is of assistance to the Committee. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may provide additional assistance regarding this, or any other matter. The Office of Management and Budget has advised us that from the perspective of the Administration's program there is no objection to submission of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "m w", likely representing Ronald Weich.

Ronald Weich  
Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Charles Grassley  
Co-Chairman

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record by  
Rodney G. Benson, Assistant Administrator and Chief of Intelligence,  
Drug Enforcement Administration  
From the Senate Caucus on International Drug Control  
Entitled  
“U.S. – Andean Security Cooperation”  
Presented October 19, 2011**

- 1. On Sunday, Bolivian president Evo Morales reportedly experienced his first political defeat when a majority of citizens cast invalid ballots during judicial elections. It looks like this was a rebuke of the President’s recent decision to punish protesters who opposed the Government’s decision to build a road through an indigenous preserve.**

- a. How have these events influenced the possibility of the United States counter-narcotics programs restarting in Bolivia?**

The decision of whether to authorize DEA to have a presence in Bolivia is one for the Government of Bolivia in coordination with the U.S. Department of State. DEA is not aware that President Morales is reconsidering his position in light of recent events or for any other reason. Recent counternarcotic and diplomatic agreements may offer an avenue for advance cooperation between the United States and Bolivia in the long-term.

- b. Have the U.S. and Bolivia discussed the possibility of DEA agents being allowed to return?**

At this time, there is not a discussion of DEA’s return to Bolivia. The Bolivian government has not requested that DEA return to Bolivia.

- 2. With our successes in the region come new and emerging threats. For instance, the Government of Colombia has successfully weakened the FARC. Factions of this formerly powerful drug trafficking organization are now emerging as smaller players, increasing violence and insecurity.**

- a. How has this changed the way your agencies implement your current programs?**

Despite the success of Colombian security forces in reducing the FARC’s offensive capability, it remains a formidable drug trafficking and terrorist organization. A heavily-armed drug trafficking organization, known as “Bandas

Criminales” or criminal bands (BACRIM), emerged after the 2006 demobilization of Colombian paramilitary organizations. BACRIMs are comprised of former paramilitaries, insurgents, and traffickers, and have since become one of Colombia’s most significant drug trafficking threats.

While the composition of the drug trafficking organizations themselves may change, DEA’s Drug Flow Attack Strategy has remained consistent: disrupt the flow of drugs, money, and chemicals between the source zones and the United States by attacking vulnerabilities in the supply chains, transportation systems, and financial infrastructure of major drug trafficking organizations.

In Colombia, DEA continues to use the Sensitive Investigative Units (SIUs) and Vetted Units Programs to attack the most prolific international drug trafficking, chemical diversion, and money laundering organizations. The SIU’s mission is to train, equip, and support vetted units within host-nation police forces. DEA Colombia currently sponsors 425 host nation law enforcement counterparts in nine SIUs (320 officers) and eight vetted units (105 officers).

**b. What steps are being taken to address the rise in violence and security in the region?**

The Colombian government has proposed a new strategy, commonly referred to as “Plan D6,” to address the drug trafficking and security threats. This strategy consists of six pillars (named for their Spanish titles): break-up, dismantle, deny, dissuade, direct, and disseminate. Plan D6 seeks to apply a coordinated government effort to target criminal groups, particularly the Bandas Criminales. In addition, the Colombian government is continuing its reform of the judicial system, enhancing the size and capabilities of the Colombian National Police, and improving safety and security in major population centers.

**c. What new programs have been developed in response to these changing threats?**

DEA works with our Colombian counterparts in a multitude of ways to respond to the changing threats. For example, DEA provides the Colombian government with expertise in the use of cellular intercept systems, intelligence management, and the planning of operations related to maritime drug interdiction. In particular, DEA has assisted Colombian military and law enforcement in the disruption of new maritime smuggling trends, particularly the self-propelled, semi-submersible and self-propelled, fully submersible vessels.



In addition, DEA and other Department of Justice components have provided training to Colombian police and prosecutors, based on the Colombian implementation of an accusatory judicial system.

Finally, DEA continues to participate extensively in a multi-agency cocaine interdiction program known as Operation Panama Express (PanEx). This operation combines investigative and intelligence resources to disrupt, dismantle, and prosecute the command and control structure of the major drug smuggling and transportation organizations that use commercial and private maritime conveyances from the Pacific and Caribbean coasts of Colombia.

- 3. According to the INCSR, approximately 250 metric tons of cocaine are being transited through Venezuela annually. As counternarcotics cooperation between Venezuela and the United States has declined, there has been a spike in the number of reported drug flights between Venezuela and Honduras.**

- a. What percentage of narcotics is being transited via marine vessel versus airplane?**

The majority of cocaine from South America to the United States is believed to be transited via maritime means. DEA does not produce independent drug flow estimates, but does contribute to the Interagency Assessment of Cocaine Movement (IACM). According to the IACM, in 2010, air movement accounted for only 15 percent of detected transit zone cocaine flow toward the United States, and 85 percent was transited via maritime means. That document also assesses that between 160-210 metric tons of cocaine transited Venezuela in 2010.

- b. What efforts are being taken by your agency to combat the rise in drug flights both out of Venezuela and into Central America?**

DEA maintains informal relationships with host nation law enforcement entities in Venezuela.

DEA and our host nation counterparts have several ongoing initiatives and operations throughout Central America that are designed to target drug trafficking organizations operating in the region. These operations include targeting the groups involved in general aviation drug flights between Venezuela and Central America.

- c. As relations between Colombia and Venezuela have improved, has the Government of Colombia made an effort to address this issue with the Government of Venezuela?**

Colombia has amplified its military interface with the country of Venezuela. Currently there are new military attachés in Caracas, Venezuela (Air Force/Navy/Army). A pending police attaché is slotted for posting in Caracas. The DEA office in Caracas has met with these attachés and has discussed information sharing and planning for the arrival of the Colombian police attaché, in order to continue strides in cooperative intelligence sharing. We have also made efforts to introduce these attachés to Venezuelan law enforcement activities for possible future collaborative efforts. It should be noted that the Department of State may have additional perspectives regarding the relational dynamics between Colombia and Venezuela. Colombia and Venezuela also hold periodic ministerial level meetings to discuss counter drug cooperation.