

STATEMENT BY  
THOMAS W. O'CONNELL  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND LOW  
INTENSITY CONFLICT

BEFORE THE  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON  
GOVERNMENT REFORM, SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE, DRUG  
POLICY, AND HUMAN RESOURCES

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
108th CONGRESS

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD MARCH 2, 2004

ANDEAN COUNTERDRUG INITIATIVE

Chairman Souder, Ranking Member Cummings and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is my distinct pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the President's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2005, as it relates to Department of Defense programs and policy that support the National Drug Control Strategy and to provide a current assessment of this strategy's effectiveness in the Andean Region. I have a written statement I would like to submit for the record and will open with a short oral summary.

### **DoD'S Role in the National Drug Control Strategy**

The Office of Counternarcotics is the focal point for DoD's counterdrug activities, which support the National Drug Control Strategy. The Department counternarcotics missions include detection and monitoring, demand reduction, support to domestic and host nation law enforcement and/or military forces. The Department carries out these activities by acting as the lead federal agency to detect and monitor the aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs toward the United States; collecting, analyzing and disseminating intelligence on drug activity; and providing training for U.S. and foreign drug law enforcement agencies and foreign military forces with drug enforcement responsibilities. The Department is not responsible for conducting interdiction operations.

Each year, the Department of Defense expends a great deal of time, effort, and resources to keep drugs from crossing our borders. This is a complex process that requires coordination and funding from all levels of government agencies, local and state law enforcement, and the foreign countries which we assist with the eradication of crops and disruption of their transportation to the U.S.

The Department also carries out certain drug demand reduction programs that help maintain the Armed Forces as an effective fighting force. These programs support drug testing for active duty military, National Guard and Reserve personnel, and DoD civilian employees; drug abuse prevention/education activities for military and civilian personnel and their dependents; and drug treatment for military personnel.

We are increasingly aware of linkages between terrorist organizations, narcotics trafficking, weapons smuggling, kidnapping rings, and other transnational networks. Terrorist groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Colombia, and groups around the world partially finance key operations with drug money. The Department of Defense, with our counterparts in the Department of State and other government agencies, seeks to systematically dismantle drug trafficking networks, both to halt the flow of drugs into the United States, and to bolster the broader war on terrorism effort.

In the international arena, the Department of Defense provides much of its counternarcotics support through deployments and programs to train, equip and furnish intelligence and operational support for drug detection, monitoring, and interdiction operations conducted by partner counterdrug forces. These countertrafficking methods aim directly at disrupting the terrorist drug trade and finance networks and includes cooperative military-to-military programs in which countries grant access to our military operators and enable access to target areas. Our authorities permit us to: maintain, repair and upgrade equipment, transport personnel, establish bases of operations or training facilities, assist with detection, monitoring and communicating trafficking activities,

minor construction, establish C4 networks, provide intelligence analysis assistance, and conduct aerial and ground reconnaissance.

### **President's Budget for FY 2005**

The Defense Department's portion of the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2005 includes \$853 Million for Drug Interdiction and Counter-Drug Activities. Of this, over \$200 Million is tentatively programmed to support Andean Region initiatives, primarily in Colombia. Historically, this account has been focused on counternarcotics missions in the western hemisphere. Given the current worldwide focus on combating terrorism and its sources of funding, Combatant Commanders are using our flexible counternarcotics account and unique authorities to counter illegal drug trafficking, especially where it contributes to terrorism, through activities that include strengthening security forces, constructing border check points, building secure communications systems, and increasing intelligence collection and establishing intelligence fusion centers.

### **Colombia**

Over 75 percent of the world's coca is grown in Colombia and nearly all of the cocaine consumed in the United States is produced and shipped from Colombia. This coca is primarily grown in remote areas of Colombia where there has been little government control. Colombian narcoterrorists receive a large majority of their funds from protecting, "taxing" and engaging in this illegal drug trade. These narcoterrorists seek to overthrow the freely elected Colombian government, the oldest democracy in Latin America. In 2000, Congress recognized the importance of preventing this from happening by providing funds in support of Colombia's own Plan Colombia.

Recently, the Secretary of Defense promised Colombian President Uribe increased support to the Colombian counter-narcoterrorist effort. Under his leadership, the Colombian government is regaining control of areas long held by narcoterrorists. Colombia has made exceptional progress in fighting drug trafficking and terrorism while improving respect for human rights. Colombian security policies have diminished the National Liberation Army (ELN), put the FARC on the defensive, and pushed the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) to the negotiating table. The Colombian government and its people are committed now more than ever before to save their country, and the Colombian military is making great strides in taking an active role in the nation's defense.

In order to maintain this momentum, Congress provided expanded authority to support Colombia's counternarcotics and counter-narcoterrorist efforts. Expanded authority has been crucial to leverage our resources against narcotics and terrorism at the same time. The expanded authority needs to continue through Fiscal Year 2005. Using this expanded authority and acting within the congressionally approved personnel ceilings, the Department of Defense is supporting the Colombian military in various ways. We moved forward to provide United States military assistance teams to help the Colombians fuse intelligence and operations, and we intend to expand this program this year. This is an increased effort to capitalize on the commitment by President Uribe in the fight against narcoterrorism. Other Defense counternarcotics programs supporting Colombia include training, logistics, maintenance support, construction, radar support, intelligence collection, command and control systems, and equipment. I am pleased to

announce that the FY05 DoD Counternarcotics Budget request for programs in Colombia has been increased by \$43 Million reflecting our commitment to President Uribe's initiatives. This is part of a broader effort which is being coordinated within the interagency.

We focus our joint programs on the development, equipping, and training of strategically focused units within the Colombian military. These units include the Colombian Counternarcotics Brigade, Rapid Deployment Force (FUDRA), National Urban Assault Unit, Marine Riverine Units, and the LANCERO and COMMANDO Battalions of the Special Operations Command.

The Counternarcotics Brigade provides security for eradication operations and conducts raids on drug labs and facilities. This unit has been extremely successful in the Southern region of Colombia and has now expanded their operations throughout the country. The Rapid Deployment Force conducts immediate offensive operations as the situation in Colombia dictates. The National Urban Assault Unit is a highly trained anti-terrorism force that conducts hostage rescue and apprehension of personnel in urban and semi-urban areas, and is directed by the Colombian Joint Chiefs of Staff. Riverine Combat Elements patrol the vast river network in Colombia that is constantly used for trafficking illicit drugs. The training of the Counter Narcotics Brigade and the COMMANDO Battalion to pursue enemy leadership has already produced results.

Department of Defense - funded infrastructure allows these specially trained units to deploy forward and put their training and equipment to use directly against narcoterrorists. In order to support these new forces, we are assisting both the Colombian

Army and Air Force with mobility, including aviation training, logistics, and maintenance support. Department support for the Colombian C-130 fleet has increased their operational readiness by over 60%. We plan on consolidating the Colombian helicopter logistics and maintenance under a joint program, allowing the Colombian military to increase their operational readiness by having a centralized repair parts inventory and a pool of qualified mechanics. We increased support to the Colombian Navy by providing infrastructure, interceptor boats, and fuel. We also provided a command and control system, linking the Colombian Navy, Marines, Police, and U.S. law enforcement personnel along the north coast of Colombia. We plan on replicating this system along Colombia's west coast this year.

Eighteen months into his four-year term, President Uribe has made Colombia safer and more stable economically. Under his leadership, the Army is helping to regain control of urban neighborhoods long since held by narcoterrorists. President Uribe has raised taxes to provide greater resources to his nation's security forces. Though much remains to be done, I believe we are on the right path in Colombia. Our continued support to President Uribe is critical. If we do not keep up the pressure and momentum we will lose the progress that has already been made. Although there are many pressing concerns in other regions of the world, we must keep in mind that Colombia is a close ally within this hemisphere.

### **Andean Region**

While success in Colombia is essential for our national security, we cannot risk winning the battle in Colombia and losing the war in the region. The Department

continues to fund Tactical Analysis Teams (TATs) to the Andean Region countries of Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Bolivia. The TATs play a critical role in facilitating the timely and accurate flow of actionable counternarcotics intelligence between Department elements, U.S. and foreign drug law enforcement agencies, and foreign military forces with drug enforcement responsibilities. Last year, we sorted over 27,000 aircraft tracks in the Andean Region to detect possible illicit drug flights. The Department continues to provide tactical and technical counternarcotics training to Andean Region military forces. These programs are intended to complement the progress we are making in Colombia and focus on the region rather than on Colombia alone.

### **Ecuador**

Ecuador remains a significant transshipment country for illicit drugs and is the country most immediately vulnerable to narcoterrorism spillover from Colombia. Ecuador is host to one of U.S. Southern Command's Forward Operating Locations (FOL) in Manta. The FOL has proven to be an effective launch site and critical element in our source zone counterdrug operations. This FOL provides coverage in the eastern Pacific where we have seen an increase in drug smuggling activity. Manta's substantial contributions to counterdrug efforts are even more valuable with the recent resumption of the Air Bridge Denial Program in Colombia.

### **Peru and Bolivia**

We are helping the State Department as they work with Peru to establish an aerial information and identification capability. This will help us determine if we should proceed toward an air bridge denial program similar to that now active in Colombia.



Despite political instability and popular protests in Bolivia that led to the resignation of former President Sanchez de Lozada, joint counternarcotics initiatives continue without pause.

### **Conclusion**

The Department appreciates Congress' continued support of our counter-narcoterrorism initiatives, most notably the granting of expanded authority for Colombia. These initiatives play a great role in our efforts to aid key allies around the world in their fight against narcoterrorism. I thank you, Chairman Souder, Representative Cummings and the members of the Subcommittee for the tremendous support you have provided. I look forward to answering your questions.