

EIRFeature

Colombia must follow Peru's strategy vs. narco-terrorism

by Dennis Small

On March 31, the House International Relations Committee of the U.S. Congress held hearings on the rapid takeover of the South American nation of Colombia by narco-terrorist armies of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). Speaking before the committee, the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Southern Command, Gen. Charles Wilhelm, identified the Colombian crisis as a grave threat to the security of the entire Americas, including the United States.

Colombia, he stated, is “the most threatened country in the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility,” which covers all of Ibero-America. There is “an active, growing, and increasingly violent insurgency, an expanding narcotics industry, and brutal paramilitary organizations which are wreaking havoc on the civilian population. In combination, these elements have abridged governance in about 40% of the rural countryside” — which means that the narco-terrorists, and not the Colombian state, run the show in nearly half of the country. This has “created security emergencies for each of the five countries with which Colombia shares a common border,” he said. Moreover, the general asserted, a recent visit to Colombia had confirmed for him that the country’s military is currently incapable of answering the threat, while the government of Ernesto Samper (who was elected to office with \$6 million in drug cartel funds) “is not committed” to even fighting.

At the same hearings, Randy Beers, the Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Narcotics and Law Enforcement, explained that there is a “growing nexus of cooperation between the insurgents and the narco-traffickers.” Calling for prompt action, he stated: “We, the United States, and we, the government of Colombia, cannot cede Colombian territory, either air or ground, to the traffickers and the insurgents.”

Ten days after the hearings, the *Washington Post* of April 10 leaked quotes from what they described as a secret Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) study, which concluded that Colombia could fall to the narco-terrorists within five years.



Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori inspects one of the tunnels used to recapture the residence of the Japanese ambassador in Lima from MRTA terrorists, on April 23, 1997.

It is *EIR's* considered view that Colombia will be lucky to last *one* year as a sovereign nation, if things continue on their current course. Moreover, as we have repeatedly reported in these pages over recent years, the entire Ibero-American continent is facing similar, if less advanced, assaults from the organized hordes of narco-terrorists, which are being run — as policy — out of the City of London. As we document below, London is executing this strategy through the Cuban-run São Paulo Forum, and with the financial largesse of their protégé, the drug-legalizing mega-speculator George Soros.

The United States itself is also directly threatened, both because of the security implications of narco takeovers south of its border, and because U.S. citizens and interests have now been explicitly declared “military targets” by the FARC, which is threatening to turn Colombia into “another Vietnam.”

The Clinton administration has clearly recognized the grave danger facing the Americas. The issue now is, what measures will follow. In his Congressional testimony, General Wilhelm indicated that a policy review was under way, including a comparison of the war against narco-terrorism in Peru and Colombia. He described this as a “study in contrast. . . . Peru, which has made steady and measurable progress against the dual threats of insurgency and narco-trafficking . . . [and] Colombia, which has not.” He reported that his staff is completing a “side-by-side analysis of the situations, past and present, in these two countries,” to provide “a set of benchmarks” for how to address the crisis in Colombia.

The facts regarding the two countries speak for them-

selves. As we document in the adjoining maps and graphs, between 1992 and 1997 Peru reduced its hectares under coca cultivation by almost 50%, from 129,000 to 69,000. In the same time period, Colombia more than doubled its area under coca cultivation, from 37,000 to 80,000 hectares, thereby overtaking Peru as the world's leading producer. Colombia's output rose by 108% during this period, while Peru's shrank by 56%. Even Bolivia, which does not have as aggressive an anti-drug strategy as Peru, was able to reduce its output by 18%. During this same period, terrorism collapsed in Peru; whereas in Colombia, it today threatens the existence of the state.

So, the Clinton administration is asking the right questions: *Why is Peru succeeding, and Colombia failing, in the war against narco-terrorism?* And, what have been the differences in U.S. policy toward these two countries?

To come up with the right answers, however, will require breaking with certain policymaking axioms which have been deeply imbedded in Washington since the Bush era, and earlier. Central among these is the British-authored dogma, that the power and role of the Ibero-American military must be vastly reduced, in the interest of preserving “democracy.” Furthermore, coming up with the right answers will also require adopting a *high-risk*, war-winning approach to the problem, rather than the risk-reduction strategies that are all too popular around Washington.

There are two principal factors in Peru's relative success. First, the government of Alberto Fujimori has, at every point,

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Drugs and terrorism in Peru and Colombia

Figures 1 and 2 show the *decline* in the area of drugs and terrorist activity in Peru during 1995-98. The sources include the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Information Service, Peruvian press accounts, and *EIR*'s Lima bureau. Figures 3-5 show the shocking *growth* of drugs and terrorism in Colombia during 1982-98. Today, 40-50% of Colombia is virtually occupied territory. The sources for the data include the DEA, Colombian press accounts, and *EIR*'s Bogotá bureau.

The criterion applied in the two cases is slightly different: for Colombia, it is general areas of major influence; for Peru, it is more narrowly defined as areas of direct activity. Therefore, the two sets of maps cannot be compared in terms of absolute size of the respective areas marked; what they show is the relative change within each nation. The comparisons of harvested hectares of coca and production of coca leaves (in tons of HCl equivalent), are shown in Figures 6, 7, and 8. The sources of the data include the U.S. State Department's 1998 *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, and *EIR* calculations.

FIGURE 1
Peru, 1995

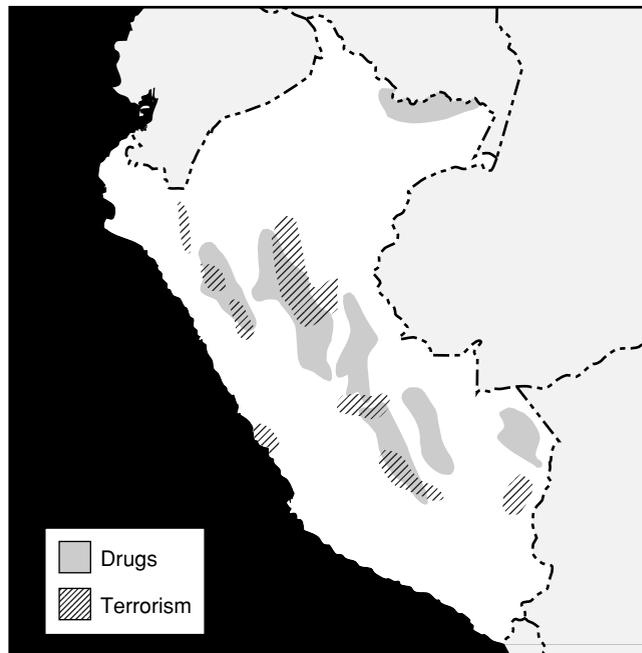


FIGURE 3
Colombia, 1982

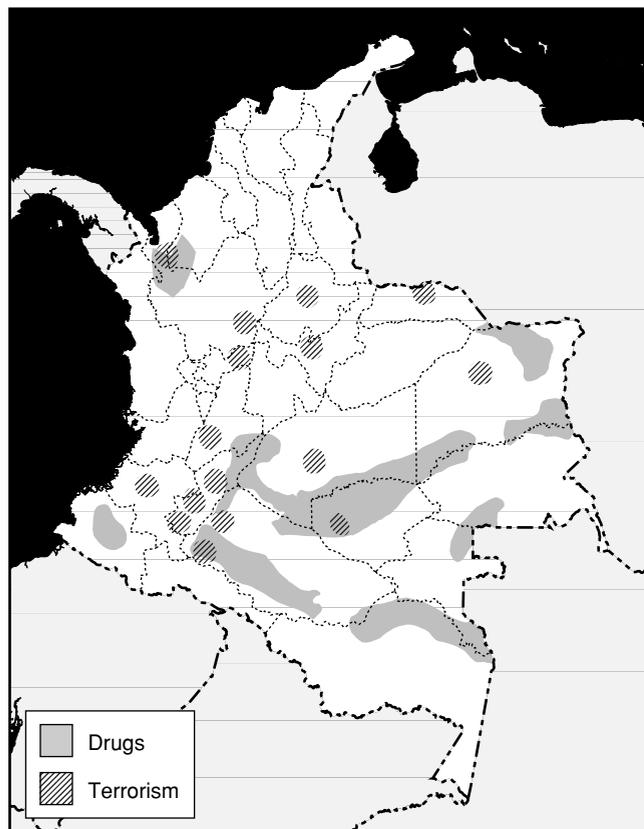


FIGURE 4
Colombia, 1995

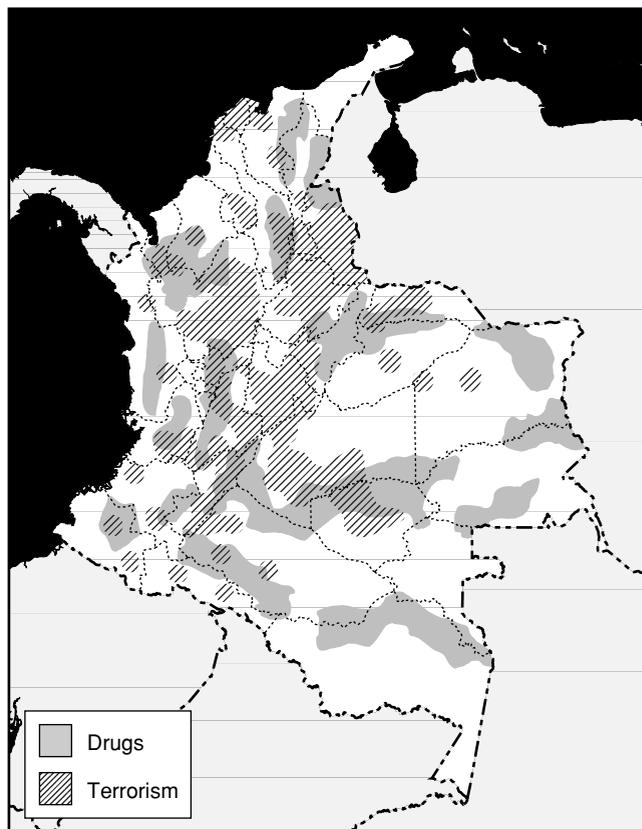


FIGURE 2
Peru, 1998

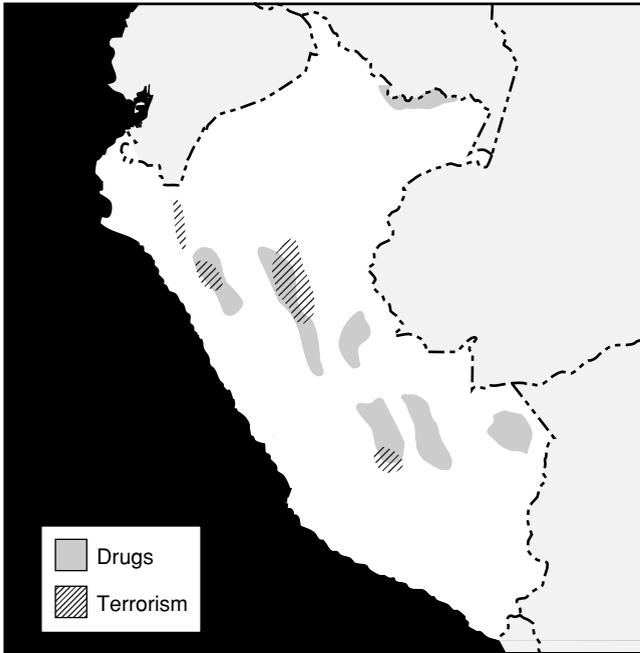


FIGURE 5
Colombia, 1998

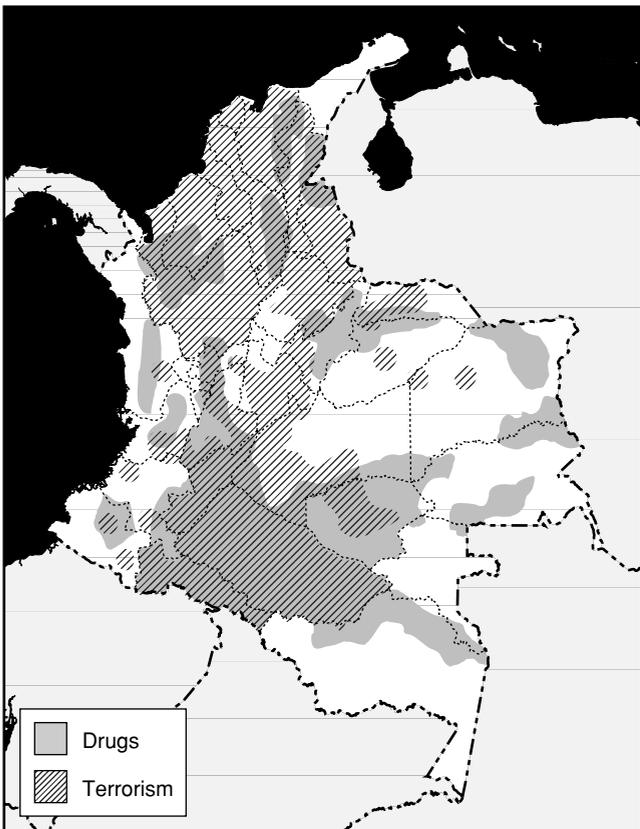


FIGURE 6
Coca area harvested
(thousands hectares)

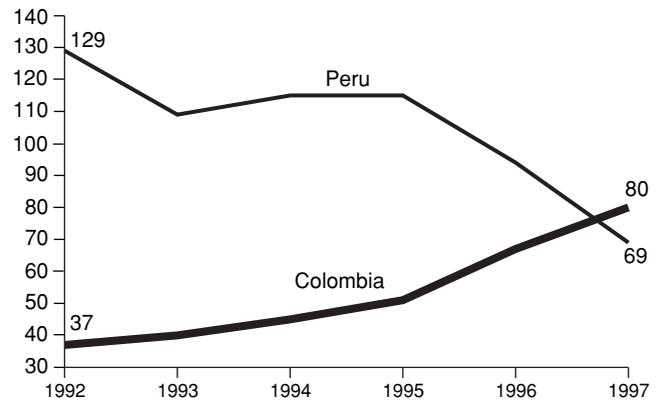


FIGURE 7
Coca area harvested, percentage of world total

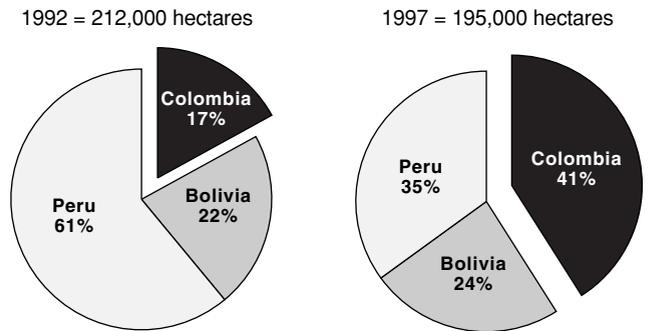
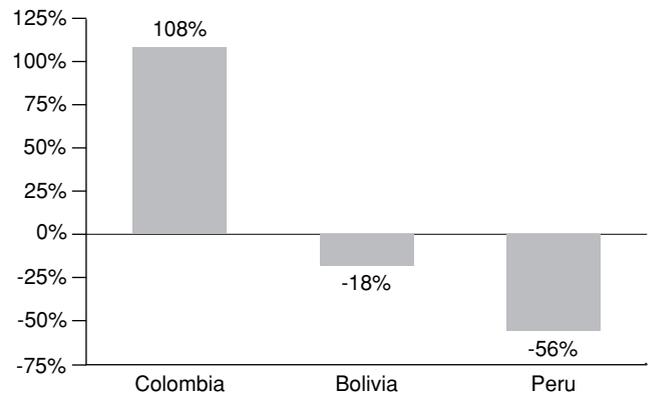


FIGURE 8
Cocaine production
(% change, 1992-97)



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adopted a *war-winning* strategy—as distinct from mealy-mouthed capitulation to the narco-terrorists and their international apologists—and has been willing to run *great risks*, personal, political, and military, when these were necessary to save the nation.

EIR founder Lyndon LaRouche has repeatedly referred to the historical case of Germany's von Schlieffen, as contrasted to that of the young Moltke, to draw attention to just such qualities of leadership. Von Schlieffen's superiority over the young Moltke, LaRouche has explained, resides in the former's willingness to incur great risks in pursuit of victory. To make the broader political point, LaRouche told a Washington audience on March 18:

"Can we summon the leaders, and the leadership, to do what many people, still, at this moment, would consider unthinkable? To maximize the risk, rather than spreading and minimizing it? And, by maximizing the risk, as the great commanders in warfare, to win the war, whereas those who minimize the risk are sure to lose it."

The chronology of events which we publish below, traces the course of Fujimori's high-risk command decisions, taken in close alliance with the country's military, from the April 1992 suspension of Peru's congress and judiciary, to the audacious 1997 commando raid to retake the Japanese ambassador's Lima residence from the MRTA terrorists who had seized it. Fujimori has consistently acted like a von Schlieffen—and more often than not has had to do so against wilting domestic and international pressure, including that of the U.S. State Department, especially during the Bush years.

All the more politically significant, therefore, that the Southern Command's General Wilhelm invited the head of the Peruvian Armed Forces, Gen. Nicolás Hermoza, to address a Miami conference of military leaders from across the Americas, on Peru's successful operation to retake the Japanese compound. Wilhelm introduced General Hermoza by remarking that the hostage-rescue operation, for which Hermoza shares credit with Fujimori, "was one of the few resounding victories against world terrorism in the last 20 or 30 years." Hermoza told his colleagues, "I am not exaggerating when I say that, in 1991, Peru was bordering on extinction." He added the crucial insight that it was Fujimori's willingness to assume "political risks," which allowed his country to stop the advance of the insurgents.

The U.S. role

The Miami event points to the second key factor in Peru's relative success in its war against narco-terrorism: that viable U.S.-Peruvian cooperation has been put in place by the Clinton administration, after the fiasco of George Bush's pro-drug approach. For example, the United States has shared with the Peruvian military real-time radar intelligence regarding drug flights, which has permitted the Peruvians to shut down, by and large, the air bridge from coca plantations in Peru's jun-

gles to cocaine laboratories in Colombia (drug flights were cut from 752 in 1992, to 96 in 1996). This has been followed up with a U.S. program to train Peruvian Navy forces, so that they can now move against the river drug traffic which the cartels have now resorted to.

In general, the United States has provided Peru with information, technology, and training, and has avoided the pitfalls of either direct U.S. military involvement, multi-lateral "peace-keeping" forces, or any other abridgment of Peruvian sovereignty. Such an approach would only play into the hands of London's narco-terrorist organizations across the continent, who would like nothing better than to be able to raise the flag of "narco-nationalism" against the "Yankee invaders"—as the FARC is already doing.

The depth of current cooperation between the United States and Peru was highlighted April 21, when U.S. White House Drug Policy Adviser Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.) was decorated by President Fujimori with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Sol, an honor reserved for foreign persons who have provided support to Peru. Such cooperation inevitably produces real rage in London. The International Institute of Strategic Studies, for example, complained in its 1997 annual review that, not only are Peruvians "tolerant of Fujimori's authoritarian tendencies," but that "Fujimori found another important ally in the United States, when he became a willful participant in Washington's war on drugs."

The Bedoya option for Colombia

There are three relevant candidates running for President of Colombia in the May 31 elections—perhaps the country's last chance to pull back from the abyss. Horacio Serpa is narco-President Samper's hand-picked successor; if he wins, Colombia is lost. Andrés Pastrana presents himself as the only viable opposition to Serpa and Samper's narco-corruption, and he is viewed as such by many in Washington. But Pastrana has thus far shown a devastating flaw: He has repeatedly stated his commitment to negotiating and compromising with the FARC and ELN narco-terrorists, up to and including demilitarizing entire regions of the country in order to encourage "peace talks"—just as Samper has done. Such a non-confrontational, "low-risk" strategy guarantees that the war will be lost.

The only Presidential candidate who has thus far shown the potential to become Colombia's "Fujimori," who is prepared to fight to win, is Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.). Many in official Washington, however, consider the Bedoya option "too risky," in that it would allegedly open the door to a greater role for the armed forces across the continent. And that, of course, goes against London's "democracy" dogma.

Thus, Washington is today trying to replicate the successes of Peru, in neighboring Colombia, but with partners who are, in fact, unwilling to fight. This approach will not work. Let us hope, however, that the axiomatics underlying this blunder will be jettisoned, in time to prevent the entire continent from falling to London's narco-terrorist hordes.