Time to Listen:

Trends in U.S. Security Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean

The list grows longer: sitting Latin American presidents, including the United States' principal allies; past presidents; the Organization of American States; the Summit of the Americas; civil society leaders from all nations. The clamor for drug policy reform, including for a reformed U.S. drug policy in Latin America, is growing rapidly. But Washington isn't hearing it.

The Obama Administration's counternarcotics strategy has continued largely unchanged. In fact, over the past few years the United States has expanded its military, intelligence, and law enforcement agencies' direct involvement in counternarcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere. This has been particularly true in Central America, where it has had disturbing human rights impacts.

Aid numbers do not tell the whole story. In dollar terms, assistance to most Latin American and Caribbean nations' militaries and police forces has declined since 2010, as Colombia's and Mexico's large aid packages wind down. Today, only aid to Central America is increasing significantly. For its part, the Defense Department is facing cuts and turning most of its attention to other regions.

While the Pentagon's current approach to Latin America does not include major base construction or new massive aid packages, however, the United States is still providing significant amounts of aid and training to Latin America's armed forces and police. In addition to large-scale counter-drug operations, the region is seeing an increase in training visits from U.S. Special Forces, a greater presence of intelligence personnel and drones (while countries are obtaining drones, mostly not from the United States), and rapidly growing use of military and police trainers from third countries, especially Colombia.

Much of what takes place may not show up as large budget amounts, but it is shrouded by secrecy, poor reporting to Congress and the public, and a migration of programs' management from the State Department to the Defense Department. A lack of transparency leads to a lack of debate about consequences and alternatives, for human rights, for civil-military relations, and for the United States' standing in the region.

On human rights, the Obama Administration has been occasionally willing to raise tough issues with allies. It has encouraged trials in civilian, not military, courts for soldiers accused of committing gross human rights

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abuses, especially in Mexico and Colombia. It has supported the Ríos Montt genocide trial in Guatemala, and has sided with countries and human rights groups that seek to maintain, not weaken, the current Inter-American human rights system.

But too often, the human rights message is a negative one, as when the administration downplays drug-war allies' abuses or promotes a greater Colombian role in foreign training. The killing of civilians during joint U.S.-Honduran counternarcotics operations in 2012, as well as the lack of transparent accountability and mechanisms to ensure such abuses are not repeated, is deeply troubling. And of course, the United States' ability to stand up for human rights is undercut by its own flawed human rights record: the failure to close Guantanamo; the extensive surveillance programs; and a drone policy that justifies extrajudicial executions. These do not pass unnoticed by Latin America's press, governments and civil societies.

We have one overriding request of our government: It's time to listen. Time to listen to the call for a new drug policy for ourselves and for the region.

One very positive development is that the Obama Administration has welcomed and supported Colombia's peace process, the best possibility in decades for bringing Colombia's long conflict to an end. That commitment must continue. But overall, looking over the last few years of U.S.-Latin American relations, we have one overriding request of our government: It's time to listen. Time to listen to the call for a new drug policy for ourselves and for the region.

Escalating Calls to Rethink Drug Prohibition

Calls to rethink prohibitionist drug policies are gaining momentum throughout the Western Hemisphere. More than forty years after the "war on drugs" was declared, consumption of illicit drugs continues to rise, cultivation of coca, marijuana, and opium poppies remains high, violence and organized crime continue to spread, and imprisonment rates have skyrocketed. Since 2000, the United States has spent approximately $12.5 billion in Latin America to stop drugs at the "source."[1]

Yet drugs continue to flow from coca-producing countries in South America into the United States, the region's number one consumer, and increasingly into second-place consumer Brazil. This effort has had little effect on the prices or purities of drugs on U.S. streets: cocaine prices have risen, but only to early 1990s levels.[2] The estimated number of tons of cocaine produced in the Andes has been reduced from a decade ago but only to levels seen in the late 1990s (555 tons in 1998, 620 tons in 2012, according to U.S. estimates[3]). And since the United States first started estimating coca production in the late 1980s, the number of hectares of coca under cultivation in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia has decreased by only 8 percent (from 176,000 hectares in 1987 to 153,700 hectares in 2011[4]).

This modest progress has come at a great cost. Drug-related violence has killed thousands of security-force personnel, and many times more young, poor men and women. Existing policies have denied drug users access to treatment programs, targeted farmers with no other means of survival, caught citizens in the crossfire of confrontations with violent traffickers, crowded prisons with non-violent offenders, tolerated or fostered abusive police and military practices, and overwhelmed criminal justice systems.

Faced with these factors, a new debate is brewing throughout Latin America and the United States. The 2009 release of a "Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy" report opened up space for a new debate on drug policy in the region. Former presidents Cesar Gaviria (Colombia), Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Brazil), and Ernesto Zedillo (Mexico) called attention to the war on drugs' devastating consequences for Latin America.[5]

Presidents from across the region's political spectrum are now supporting calls to move away from prohibition and eradication policies, and move towards a public health approach while regulating illicit crops for legal uses. A number of Latin American countries currently do not criminalize possession of certain drugs for personal consumption. Uruguay is debating a bill that would regulate the production and distribution of marijuana; and two U.S. states, Colorado and Washington, voted in 2012 to legalize and regulate marijuana.

In the past year and a half, thanks to Latin American initiatives, drug policy has been on the agenda at the United Nations, Summit of the Americas and Organization of American States (OAS). In October 2012, three sitting presidents—Juan Manuel Santos (Colombia), Otto Pérez Molina (Guatemala), and Felipe Calderón (Mexico)—issued a statement to the United Nations calling for a meeting to debate global drug policy and discuss alternatives, saying an urgent review of the current approach was needed.[6] The presidents of Honduras, Costa Rica and Belize later added their support. The UN General Assembly voted in favor of the proposal in November and plans to hold the debate in 2016. "Alternative Strategies for Combating Drugs," meanwhile, was the theme of the OAS annual General Assembly meeting in Antigua, Guatemala in June 2013, where the Secretary-General presented a report, commissioned at the Summit of the Americas meeting in April 2012, on the results of drug policies in the Americas, and possible scenarios for reform. This cautious but thoughtful report found "it would be worthwhile to assess existing signals and trends that lean toward the decriminalization or legalization of the production, sale, and use of marijuana."[7]

For its part, the Obama Administration has reiterated that it does not support legalization and will continue to oppose marijuana initiatives at the national level. In response to the OAS report, a spokesman for the White House's drug czar said, "any suggestion that nations legalize drugs like heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine runs counter to an evidenced-based, public health approach to drug policy and are not viable alternatives."[8]

The "Declaration of Antigua," issued by the foreign ministers assembled at the June 2013 OAS meeting, while falling far short of any clarion call for reform, urged governments to "encourage broad and open debate on the world drug problem so that all sectors of society participate," emphasized "that drug abuse is also a public health problem and, therefore, it is necessary to strengthen public health systems, particularly in the areas of prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation," and underscored that "drug policies must have a crosscutting human rights perspective consistent with the obligations of parties under international law." The declaration also singled out the impact of firearms trafficking, declaring that "to reduce the levels of violence associated with the world drug problem and related crimes it is essential to implement and strengthen more-effective measures to prevent the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition, explosives and related materials and their illicit diversion to organized criminal groups."[9]

Over 100 victims of Mexico's violence drove in a "Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity" from Mexico throughout the United States, calling for a new approach to the violence that has claimed over 60,000 lives in their country.

More vocal calls for drug policy reform are also coming from civil society. In summer 2012, 110 victims of Mexico's violence drove in a "Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity" from Mexico through the United States, ending up in Washington, DC. They called for a new approach to the tragic violence that has claimed over 60,000 lives in Mexico. They asked for the United States to take responsibility for stopping the flow of assault weapons that arm the cartels; to end a "militarized" approach to drug policy; to pass comprehensive immigration reform; and to support policies that would protect their communities, not escalate the violence.

Changes in Drug Policy in Latin America

Colombia

In early February 2013, the Colombian government proposed expanding the scope of existing marijuana and cocaine decriminalization to include synthetic drugs like methamphetamine and ecstasy. Recent rhetoric signals a shift towards a public health-oriented approach and possible regulation of illicit crops grown for legal purposes. Although Colombia has been hailed by Washington as "the model" in the war on drugs, President Santos says current policies are "not working adequately."[10]

Bolivia

Bolivian President Evo Morales has rejected full-out legalization of drugs but has continued and expanded an "alternative model" to combat the drug trade that was first implemented in parts of the country in 2004. Under that approach, 20,000 hectares of coca may be grown across the country for legal uses of the plant. The policy has had measured success as coca cultivation has dropped,[11] but the country is still plagued by increasing quantities of cocaine produced and trafficked through the country from Peru.[12] In April 2013, President Morales expelled USAID from the country, ending U.S. support for alternative development programs. U.S. support for Bolivia's coca eradication program has dropped to near zero.

Uruguay

A bill that may pass this year would give the government regulatory control over production and distribution of cannabis. It would permit adults to purchase up to 40 grams of marijuana each month, allow for domestic growing of up to six plants, and permit cooperatives of 15 to 45 members to cultivate up to 99 plants.[13] Those who purchase and/or grow marijuana would be required to register with a government body that would monitor and limit consumption. Critics say that because organized crime in the country mostly stems from cocaine and crack, while marijuana is already decriminalized, the bill will have little impact. Proponents say it would allow the government to channel resources into treatment for addicts and into combating drug traffickers by separating legal and illegal markets and distinguishing "users from traffickers, marijuana from other drugs like heroin."[14]

Mexico

As a candidate, current President Enrique Peña Nieto pledged to change Mexico's unpopular war against the drug cartels, which has led to over 70,000 deaths. He asserted he would prioritize going after brutal crimes against ordinary citizens, rather than all-out war against the cartels, which he contended had led to unnecessary levels of violence. How much of a strategy change will actually take place has yet to be seen.

In 2009 Mexico decriminalized possession of small amounts of marijuana, cocaine, heroin, LSD and methamphetamine. While the law was in some ways an advance, the thresholds for determining personal possession were set very low, and the Mexican government remains focused on criminalization and incarceration as the main solutions to the country's drug problem. President Peña Nieto himself "is opposed to legalizing marijuana because it acts like a gateway drug."[15] Yet he has said that the ballot initiative results in Colorado and Washington "should at least encourage a debate."[16] The Mexican government is faced with trying to stop the smuggling of a product in heavy demand and considered illicit within its own borders, but legal in parts of the United States.

Latin American Presidents Call for Change on Drug Policy

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos: "If the world decides to legalize [drugs] and thinks that that is how we reduce violence and crime, I could go along with that."[17]

Guatemalan President Otto Pérez Molina: "My government has called for an open dialogue on global drug policy based on a simple assumption: we cannot continue to expect different results if we continue to do the same things. Something is wrong with our global strategy, and in order to know better what is wrong we need an evidence-based approach to drug policy and not an ideological one…. Moving beyond ideology may involve discussing different policy alternatives. Some people (not my government) may call for full-fledged liberalization of the drug market, as opposed to the current full-fledged prohibition scheme. I believe in a third way: drug regulation, which is a discrete and more nuanced approach that may allow for legal access to drugs currently prohibited, but using institutional and market-based regulatory frameworks."[18]

Uruguayan President José Mujica: "This law being attempted is a regulation. It's not 'anything goes.' It's to regulate something that already exists and that's in front of our noses, right there at the door of the schools, on the street corners. It attempts to snatch this market from the underground, identify it and expose it to daylight."[19]

Bolivian President Evo Morales: "We are not defenders of cocaine, nor do we support drug legalization although the so-called war on drugs has failed."[20] "The antidrug policy in the United States is a failure. Drugs are a double business for the United States; first, there's the drug business that moves money through the empire, and the other is the arms trafficking business: they provide us with the weapons and with the deaths."[21]

Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla: "If we continue doing the exact same thing, we will never be able to claim victory."[22]

More than 160 civil society organizations across the Americas, in a May 2013 open letter, called on their governments to create more constructive policies to address violence, noting that "while we recognize that transnational crime and drug-trafficking play a role in this violence, we call on our governments to acknowledge that failed security policies that have militarized citizen security have only exacerbated the problem, and are directly contributing to increased human suffering in the region."[23]

Drug legalization, regulation, or decriminalization is not a one-size-fits-all solution to the many problems, including crime and violence, associated with drug trafficking in Latin America. Legalization or regulation would likely bring new public health challenges. It is clear, though, that the current strategy is not working, and that the time has come for an international discussion that focuses on improving public health, reducing incarceration of non-violent offenders, eliminating criminal groups' exorbitant profits, developing community-based responses that reduce violence, and finding alternatives to a failing war on drugs. In the worldwide effort to spark this discussion, Latin America has taken the lead.

Aerial Spraying in Colombia Reduced, but Continues

Colombia is the only country in the world that permits aerial fumigation [spraying drug crops from the air]. The Colombian government began

aerial fumigation in the 1990s and continued the practice with U.S. funding under Plan Colombia. Crops are fumigated with a powerful version of glyphosate, a chemical produced in the United States by Monsanto and marketed as Roundup. Since the outset, fumigation has had a negative impact on poor subsistence farmers, whose licit and illicit crops—often their only source of income and food security—have been destroyed, sometimes resulting in population displacement. Often the fumigation kills the legal crops surrounding coca plants, without even affecting the target. Populations, and some scientists, also claim that it does damage to the environment and human health by poisoning water supplies, livestock, and wildlife.

The amount of land cultivated with coca diminished during the years of heaviest fumigation (2000-2006), only to plateau at a still high level. Fumigation has proven to have little effect on cocaine production or the drug's price and availability in the United States. According to the UN, Colombia's Anti-Narcotics Directorate (DIRAN) sprayed a total of 100,549 hectares in 2012, which is similar to aerial spraying levels in 2011 (103,302 hectares) and 2010 (101,940 hectares), but a significant drop from 2006, when an all-time high of about 170,000 hectares were sprayed.[24]

Although the practice has scaled back since its peak in the mid-2000s, it continues to be employed, with devastating consequences. In January 2013 there were several reports of fumigation raids against legal crops, including one against a women's pineapple cooperative in the southern department of Putumayo, where pineapple fields were destroyed in a region with no visible coca. The women lost their livelihood and are now unable to pay back loans taken out to rent the land. This is a common story of those affected by fumigation, which often leaves farmers with no crops, no livelihood and few options.

Direct U.S. Involvement in Counternarcotics Operations

Over the past few years the United States has expanded its direct involvement in counternarcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere. The increase is most obvious in Central America, situated between Colombia and Mexico, where increased enforcement has pushed cocaine trafficking and associated violence into the isthmus.

Most of this activity has taken place on the high seas or in coastal waters. Once drugs are on land, U.S. personnel cannot confront traffickers, make arrests, or seize contraband on Central American countries' territory. That is the job of each country's security forces. But most of the region's coastal zones, especially along the Caribbean, are sparsely populated and have very little government presence, and in some cases the security forces that are present have been corrupted by traffickers. A number of U.S. counternarcotics operations in Central America in the past two years have been highly controversial.

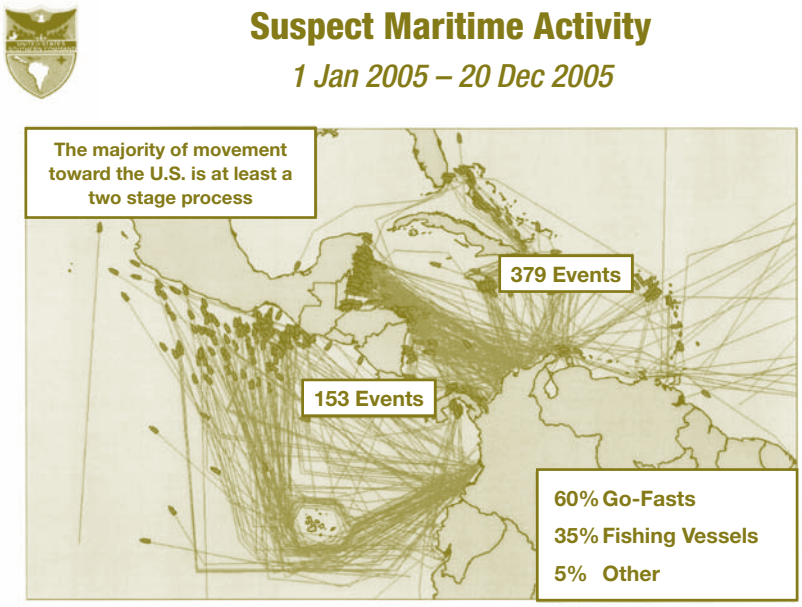
Operation Martillo. In January 2012 U.S. Southern Command, the regional combatant command that manages U.S. military activity south of Mexico and the Bahamas, launched Operation Martillo ("Hammer"), a surge of military, Coast Guard, law enforcement, and "partner nation" vessels, aircraft, soldiers, sailors, and police along Central America's Pacific and Caribbean coasts.

Defense officials launched Martillo in response to data showing that traffickers were increasing their activity on Central American territory. "The United States estimated that more than 80 percent of the primary flow of the cocaine trafficked to the United States first transited through the Central American corridor in 2012," reads the State Department's 2013 *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report.*[25] Gen. John Kelly, commander of U.S. Southern Command, provided a higher number: "an estimated 92-94 percent of cocaine destined for the U.S. still flows through Central America."[26]

Starting in 2005 or so, drugs transiting from the Andes to the United States began arriving in Central America in ever-greater amounts. This owed in part to increased U.S. interdiction making it difficult to bring the illegal product directly to Mexico or the eastern Caribbean,

and in part to Mexican cartels increasing their presence in Central America. The growth in traffic through Central America is evident in maps of suspect planes and boats produced by Joint Inter-Agency Task Force South (JIATF-S), a Key West, Florida-based component of Southern Command that gathers intelligence on drug and other trafficking in the region.

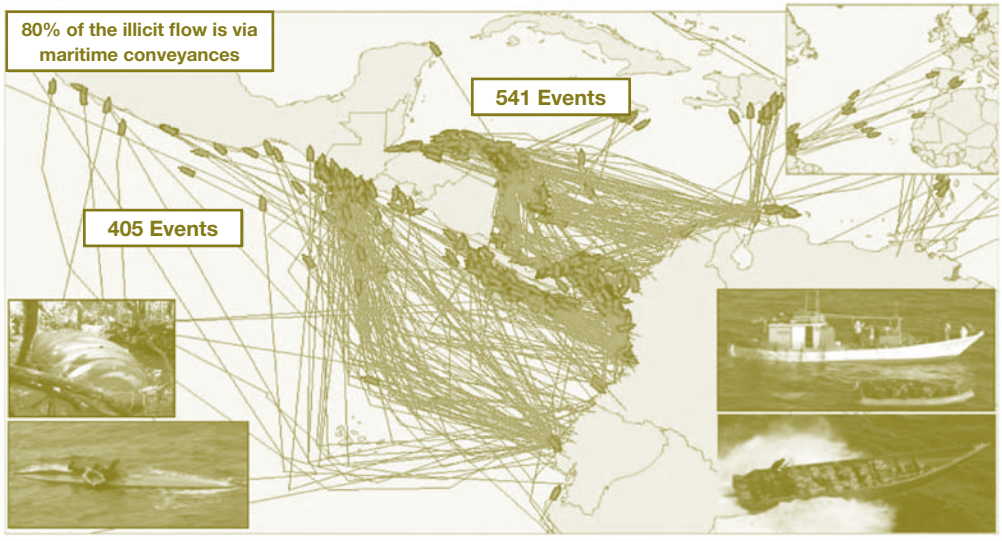
The Southern Command's components most involved are JIATF-S, the Honduras-based Joint Task Force Bravo, Naval Forces South (also known as the 4th Fleet), and Marine Forces South. Agencies from the Homeland Security Department include the Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The Justice Department's Drug Enforcement



Source: Department of Defense, Joint Inter-Agency Task Force (JIATF) South

2005: Few Boats are Detected Landing in Central America

Maritime Drug Transit through the Caribbean and Central America (2011)



Source: Joint Inter-Agency Task Force South, April 2012

2011: Most Boats are Detected Landing in Central America

Administration (DEA) plays an on-the-ground role. The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) assists Central American security forces through its Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). Southern Command portrays Operation Martillo as operating "in support of Department of State's Central American Regional Security Initiative."[27]

In addition to the seven Central American countries, Canada, Colombia, France, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom have participated in Operation Martillo. The cost of the program is not public, though it is likely well into the hundreds of millions of dollars given the number of assets employed.[28]

Operation Martillo has at least temporarily reduced trafficking activity around Central America. But the "balloon effect" that has bedeviled U.S. drug policy continues, and traffickers are adjusting by choosing other routes.

In 2012, according to Southern Command, Operation Martillo contributed to the seizure or "disruption" of 152 tons of cocaine.[29] (The State Department estimated that 765 tons of cocaine were produced in the Americas in 2011, though Southern Command gave a figure of 1,086 tons for that year.[30]) Southern Command also claimed to have disrupted 21.5 tons of marijuana and US$7.2 million worth of bulk cash shipments.

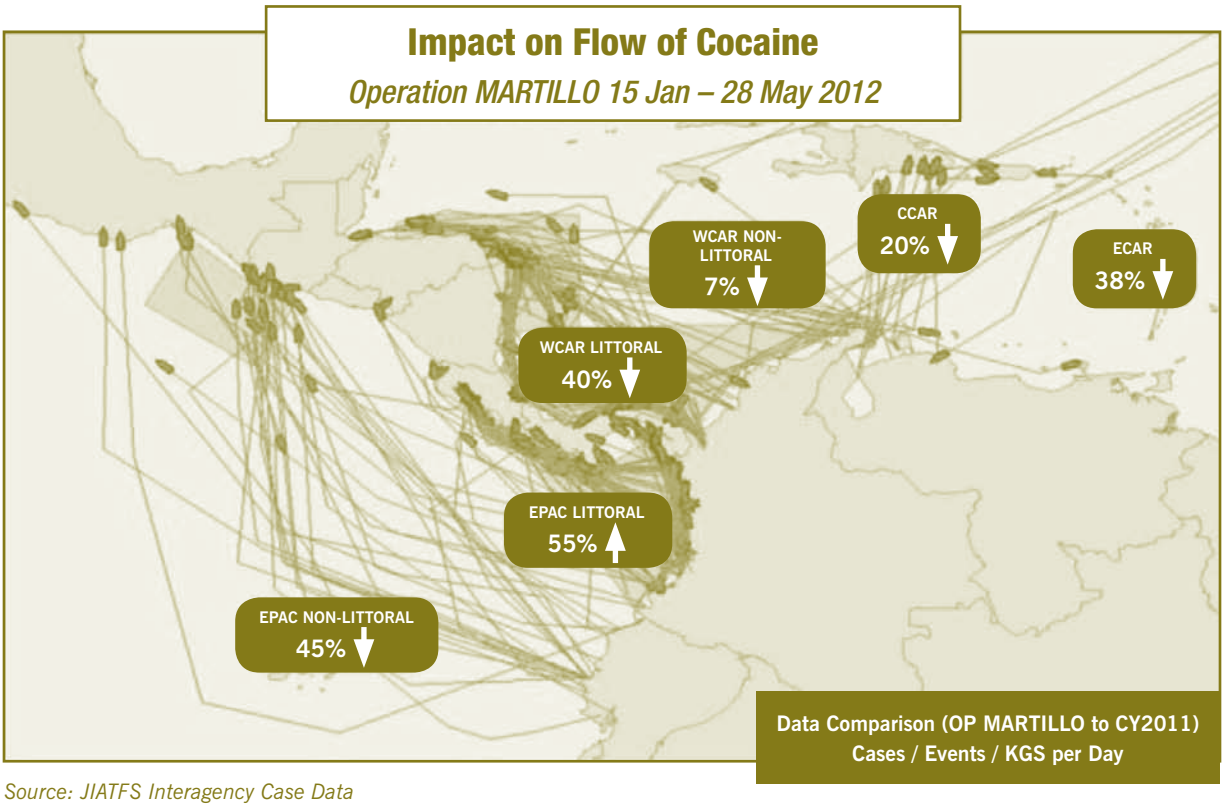
Operation Martillo has no publicly announced end date, but its intensity appears to be declining. This is largely due to budget cutbacks; the 2013 "sequestration" automatic spending cuts affected Southern Command more than any other regional U.S. combatant command.[31] A January 2013 memo from the Chief of Naval Operations indicates that, due to cuts, the U.S. Navy is contemplating "stopping all naval deployments to the Caribbean and South America." In his March 2013 *Posture Statement,* Gen. Kelly presented to Congress a chart indicating that, due to cuts, Southern Command would be likely to interdict 62 tons less cocaine in 2013 than in 2012.[32]

Southern Command's data indicate that Operation Martillo has decreased trafficking along Central America's coastlines. But the data also show increasing activity elsewhere. In the western Caribbean (near Central America) over 2012, Southern Command found the "tracks" of suspect boats decreasing 36 percent along the coasts and 38 percent in the open ocean. In the eastern Caribbean, though, traffic is increasing. "Known cocaine movement towards Hispaniola—mainly the Dominican Republic—appears to have increased by three percent to 32 metric tons in 2012."[33] In the Pacific, data showed a 71 percent increase in suspect boat "tracks" along the coasts in 2012, followed by a 43 percent drop during the first two months of 2013. Further out in the Pacific, suspect boat "tracks" jumped 12% in 2012 and 51% in the first two months of 2013.

As it appears to wind down, Operation Martillo has at least temporarily reduced trafficking activity around Central America. But the "balloon effect" that has bedeviled U.S. drug policy continues, and traffickers are adjusting quickly by choosing other routes.

Elite, U.S.-Trained and Assisted Units. As the State Department's security assistance programs turn their focus from expensive equipment transfers to security capacity-building programs, partnerships between U.S. agents and local U.S.-trained and vetted special units will likely increase. State Department International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funds, military trainers, and DEA agents have helped to set up specialized military and police units and other elite, "vetted" bodies that operate in some isolation from the rest of their forces. They are supported by at least half a dozen small Guatemalan, Honduran, Nicaraguan and Panamanian bases built, or renovated, with Defense Department funds.

These partnerships appeal to U.S. policymakers as a low-cost way to maintain U.S. presence and influence in the drug war. Yet incidents such as those in Honduras, discussed below, bring into question the true costs of increasing



Source: JIATFS Interagency Case Data

(Graphic from the June 19, 2012 testimony of Rear Adm. Charles Michel, director of JIATF-S, before the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security http://1.usa.gov/Yoe5Yf.)

U.S. direct involvement in counternarcotics operations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

FASTs. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has begun using Foreign-deployed Advisory Support Teams, or FASTs, working alongside elite, usually U.S.-trained, Latin American counternarcotics units. FAST is a tactical assault program that deploys squads of approximately 10 military-trained DEA agents all over the world.

FASTs have been deployed at least 15 times to Latin America and have been present in five countries: Haiti, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Belize.[34] While they resemble military commando units, FAST units cannot make arrests, and may only open fire to protect themselves or partnering forces. However, as incidents in Honduras demonstrated, FAST agents can quickly go from overseeing an operation to playing an active, and sometimes highly problematic, role.

U.S.-Trained Sensitive Investigative Units. The DEA's Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU) program also has been increasing its reach in the region. SIUs are top-secret groups of elite agents, nearly always police, from the region that are equipped, trained, and vetted by U.S. DEA agents. Their members undergo background checks and regular polygraph and drug testing. These units, sort of a "police within a police," work more closely with U.S. counterparts than do agents of the rest of their countries' police forces. SIUs have access to the DEA's intelligence database. They differ from other counternarcotics units in that they primarily focus on difficult cases or targeting entire drug-trafficking organizations.

Currently, the United States supports 11 SIU programs worldwide. In the Western Hemisphere, they are known to operate in Belize, Panama, Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and the Dominican Republic.[35] Vetted police intelligence units, which don't get the same standard of intelligence-sharing but

still work with DEA, receive U.S. assistance in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

The DEA has more officials in Mexico than in any of its other foreign posts.[36] Currently, six or seven SIU units are backed by DEA, CIA and at least one other U.S. law enforcement entity.[37] However, an April 2013 *Washington Post* report revealed U.S. officials would no longer be welcome at intelligence fusion centers in the country.[38] This includes all DEA agents—meaning SIU teams as well—and all officials at the DEA-sponsored intelligence center in Monterrey. All U.S.-Mexico law enforcement contact will now go through a "single door," Mexico's Interior Ministry. [39] U.S. government officials said they are still figuring out what the change will mean for security cooperation. Without knowing to whom intelligence will be dispersed, U.S. agents will likely be reluctant to share sensitive information.

A raid near the village of Ahuas by Honduran police accompanied by DEA agents resulted in the deaths of four people described by witnesses as innocent passengers on a river taxi.

Congress continues to call for an expansion of the SIU program, especially in Central America and the Caribbean.[40] U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for INL William Brownfield asserts that, in many cases, vetted agents, such as SIUs, are U.S. counternarcotics' forces only allies in the region.[41]

Yet as with any training program in the region, if these highly trained units are to succeed, corrupt and weak institutions must be cleaned up and made functional. Putting highly trained and competent people in a corrupt system is not a long-term solution. Moreover, the lack of transparency surrounding these programs makes it difficult to measure if any existing SIU agents are themselves corrupt or abusive.

Controversies Mount in Honduras. The result of this more direct U.S. engagement in counternarcotics activities in Central America has been especially controversial in Honduras. From May through July 2012, three of the five joint interdiction operations carried out under Operation Anvil, a binational counternarcotics mission with the DEA and Honduran Special Forces, resulted in the shootings and deaths of trafficking suspects and innocent civilians by either DEA FAST agents or Honduran officers trained, equipped, and vetted by the United States.

A raid near the village of Ahuas by Honduran police accompanied by DEA agents on May 11, 2012, resulted in the deaths of four people described by witnesses as innocent passengers on a river taxi.[42] The victims were a fourteen-year-old boy, a twenty-one-year old man and two women, at least one of whom was reportedly pregnant.[43]

On June 23rd, a DEA agent killed a suspected drug trafficker during a raid, and on July 3rd, the pilot of a downed plane suspected of smuggling drugs was shot after "making a threatening gesture," according to a DEA spokesperson. The pilot later died. These operations in Honduras have been suspended, but FAST teams are still operating in other countries throughout the region.

The *New York Times* determined that Honduras never achieved clarity over where DEA authority ended and that of Honduran soldiers and police began. While the DEA commandos were officially trainers and advisors, the Times reported, "Members of the Honduran police teams told government investigators that they took their orders from the D.E.A. American officials said that the FAST teams, deploying tactics honed in Afghanistan, did not feel confident in the Hondurans' abilities to take the lead."[44]

Controversy intensified in July 2012 when Honduran Air Force personnel, acting on intelligence provided via JIATF-S, shot down two suspected drug-trafficking planes, killing all on board. (About 20 percent of cocaine is estimated to leave the Andes by air; of these flights, nearly 80 percent have gone to Honduras in recent years.) The incidents, regarded as violations of both due process and international law governing civil aviation,

triggered a freeze in U.S. cooperation with Honduras's air interdiction program. A week after a late August visit from the commander of Southern Command, the chief of the Honduran Air Force resigned. Radar intelligence-sharing began again in November after Honduras pledged not to shoot down aircraft.

Smaller but significant amounts of assistance continue to flow to the Honduran armed forces, principally through the Defense Department's counter-drug budget. Pentagon counter-drug accounts have paid for the construction of bases in Guanaja, Mocorón, El Aguacate, and Puerto Castilla.[45] During the second half of 2012, U.S. Naval Special Forces helped the Honduran Navy create its first Special Forces unit, a 45-man body known as the Fuerzas Especiales Navales or FEN.[46]

Every year, Congress requires the State Department to report licenses granted for private companies' arms sales to foreign countries (licenses do not necessarily result in sales). The report for 2011 includes an eye-popping entry for Honduras: US$1.388 billion transferred that year for "Military Electronics," a category that includes radars, electronic combat equipment, radios, surveillance equipment, and similar items. This amount dwarfs any other U.S. transfer to Latin America, and is equivalent to one-thirteenth of Honduras's annual GDP, but we have not been able to determine what it has funded. One explanation is that the report covers some transfers of equipment to be used *by U.S. personnel* in the recipient countries, but even then the amount involved is still very large. The Associated Press found in February that "neither the State Department nor the Pentagon could provide details" about the transfer.

U.S. Skirts Military Aid Ban in Guatemala. Southern Command helped to create a FEN unit in Guatemala's navy four years ago, to which it continues to provide "persistent, focused training."[47] Much U.S. assistance through CARSI has also gone to help reform and equip Guatemala's National Police force.

Due to human rights concerns dating back decades, State Department-managed programs in the foreign aid budget may not provide assistance to Guatemala's army. This restriction does not apply, however, to money in the Defense Department budget. The Pentagon's counter-drug budget provided nearly $26 million in aid to Guatemala in 2011 and 2012, much of it to the army, whose personnel also participate frequently in joint exercises.[48] U.S. funds are also supporting a new Inter-Agency Border Unit, also known as Joint Task Force Tecún Umán. This is "a battalion-sized element comprised of Guatemalan army soldiers who will work alongside police and Ministry of Justice personnel to execute security operations along the Mexican-Guatemalan border to counter transnational crimes and trafficking."[49] With a 169-man army infantry battalion working alongside 76 police and judicial-branch officials, the unit began operations in summer 2013.[50]

The Pentagon's counter-drug budget provided nearly $26 million in aid to Guatemala in 2011 and 2012, much of it to the army.

Along with the country's navy, air force and police, the Guatemalan Army has also been a full participant in Operation Martillo. Between August and October 2012, Guatemala hosted its largest contingent of U.S. military personnel in decades. One hundred seventy-one U.S. Marines "flew more than 250 detection and monitoring missions in support of Guatemalan law enforcement agencies and naval forces," according to a Marine press article.[51] Added the Southern Command-sponsored *InfoSurHoy,* "The U.S. military can't use its weapons unless it is under fire, so it's focusing on spotting suspicious boats, submarines and individuals and relaying their locations to Guatemalan forces, which handle all confiscations and arrests. The U.S. is keeping a close eye on Guatemala's coastlines and rivers."[52] Aboard the helicopters with the Marines were bilingual Guatemalan liaison officers communicating to the Guatemalan forces on the ground. U.S. Marines coordinated the two-month deployment from "operation centers" at three Pacific coastal bases.

The Central American Regional Security Initiative Expands

Because of the same drug-trafficking and security concerns that brought about Operation Martillo, Central America—along with perhaps Peru—is the only part of the hemisphere where U.S. security assistance is actually increasing, in dollar terms. We estimate that combined aid to Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama will total US$415 million in 2014, 34 percent (US$143 million) of it for these countries' security forces. That would be a 10 percent *overall* aid decrease from 2012 levels, but a 6 percent increase in *security* assistance.

Central America—along with perhaps Peru—is the only part of the hemisphere where U.S. security assistance is increasing.

The security increase owes to the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), the name given to a package of aid that the U.S. government has provided to the seven nations of the isthmus since 2008. Aid has not reached the levels that Central America's militaries saw during the 1980s, when its civil wars made the region a cold war battleground. Nor has CARSI come close to rivaling Plan Colombia or the Mérida Initiative in size.

The aid package began in 2008 as part of the initial appropriation for the "Mérida Initiative" framework of aid to Mexico, and was intended to provide a modest amount of assistance for Mexico's Central American neighbors. In 2010, as concerns mounted about violence, gangs, and organized crime's displacement into Central America, the Obama Administration and Congress split the region from the Mérida framework and gave the CARSI label to aid programs with the following goals:

1. create safe streets for citizens;
2. disrupt the movement of criminals and contraband;
3. support strong, capable, and accountable Central American governments;
4. establish effective state presence and security in communities at risk; and
5. foster coordination and cooperation between countries against security threats.

The Obama Administration does not consider all assistance to Central America to be "CARSI" aid. Development and health programs are excluded, as are military and police aid programs in the Defense Department's budget. CARSI is expected to total about US$665.5 million between 2008 and 2014.[53] Of this, we estimate that at least 60 percent has been destined for the region's militaries and police forces, with the vast majority of that going to police. The administration's CARSI request for 2014 is US$161.5 million, up from US$107.5 million in 2013.

Most CARSI aid comes from the State Department's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INCLE) aid program, the biggest source of assistance to all of Latin America. Much non-military aid comes from the USAID-administered Economic Support Fund (ESF), a multi-purpose economic aid channel. In 2008-2010, smaller amounts came from two military-police aid programs, Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR).

CARSI has paid for a long list of initiatives, most of which appear small when measured in dollars and spread across seven countries. Some of the principal military and police aid projects include the following:

In **Guatemala,** which has received the largest portion of CARSI funding, at least US$35 million has supported an aviation program, established in 2009 and set to end in 2013, that refurbished and maintained police and air force helicopters and planes, while offering training to air crews.

El Salvador's attorney general's office has received assistance for an Electronic Monitoring Center, which allows investigators to perform surveillance on the communications of gangs and organized crime groups. El Salvador also hosts the State Department-managed International Law Enforcement Academy, which

Table 3. Funding for CARSI, FY2008-FY2014

($ in millions)

Account	FY2008 (Actual)	FY2009 (Actual)	FY2010 (Actual)[a]	FY2011 (Actual)	FY2012 (Actual)	FY2013 (Request)[b]	FY2014 (Request)
ESF	25.0	18.0	23.0	30.0	50.0	47.5	61.5
INCLE	24.8	70.0	65.0	71.5	85.0	60.0	100.0
NADR	6.2	—	—	—	—	—	—
FMF	4.0	17.0	7.0	—	—	—	—
Total	60.0	105.0	95.0	101.5	135.0	107.5	161.5

Sources: U.S. Department of State, *Fiscal Year 2012 Congressional Spending Plan: Central America Regional Security Initiative*, June 19, 2012; *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2013*, April 3, 2012; and *Executive Budget Summary: Function 150 and Other International Programs, Fiscal Year 2014*, April 10, 2013.

Notes: ESF = Economic Support Fund; INCLE = International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement; NADR = Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, De-mining and Related Programs; and FMF = Foreign Military Financing.

a. In the 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 111-117), Congress appropriated "up to" $83 million for the countries of Central America "only to combat drug trafficking and related violence and organized crime, and for judicial reform, institution building, anti-corruption, rule of law activities, and maritime security." After consultations with Congress, the Department of State allocated an additional $12 million in ESF from funds appropriated to its Western Hemisphere Regional account to crime and violence prevention programs administered by USAID, bringing total FY2010 CARSI funding to $95 million.

b. Since Congress did not adopt a full year appropriations bill for FY2013 until March 2013, and foreign operations funding is subject to budget sequestration, it is currently unclear how much funding will be allocated to CARSI in FY2013.

Source: Peter Meyer and Claire Ribando, *Central America Regional Security Initiative: Background and Policy Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, May 7, 2013, http://justf.org/files/primarydocs/R41731.pdf.

trains hundreds of students per year on policing and investigative techniques.

In **Honduras,** CARSI has funded stumbling efforts to reform the country's national police force. It has supported commissions charged with guiding this reform, and has paid for a team of Colombian police experts to administer polygraph tests and background checks aimed at weeding out corrupt officers. So far, this program has failed, as few police have been dismissed and abuses continue. In early June, the United States announced that it had stopped funding for the failing reform program in March.[54] The Obama Administration and congressional appropriators have held up aid to Honduras several times during the troubled CARSI period, due to human rights and other concerns. Aid freezes have occurred after the June 2009 coup that deposed President Manuel Zelaya; after 2012 incidents involving plane shootdowns, DEA involvement in hostilities, and the deaths of civilians in counternarcotics operations; and after concerns emerged about the human rights background of the country's police chief.

Panama's national police force has received assistance to maintain maritime drug interdiction vessels, to guard the border with Colombia, and to improve its police academy.

Costa Rica has received boats to patrol its coasts, as has **Belize.** Though aid has been reduced due to concerns about the credibility of election results, **Nicaragua** has received training, spare parts, and communications equipment, and continues to allow military and police to train regularly with U.S. counterparts.

Regional CARSI programs. The U.S. government has carried out some CARSI projects in several countries simultaneously. With DEA support, the program has set up, or maintained SIUs or other vetted units. As noted,

these are less a police reform measure than a small, separate tool for carrying out intelligence-based operations against drug traffickers.

With FBI assistance, CARSI supports Transnational Anti-Gang Units (TAG teams), police units in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras that share information with each other on gang activity. Another project provides inspection equipment, and training for border guards in each country, especially in Panama, Costa Rica and Guatemala. A prison management program has devoted at least US$22 million to efforts to improve corrections processes—and combat gang activity—in the region's troubled prisons, especially in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

In some Central American countries, delivery of CARSI aid is slowed due to concerns that police or prosecutors are penetrated by organized crime.

A pilot project funds community policing through the creation of "model precincts" in Lourdes, El Salvador, Villa Nueva and Mixco, Guatemala, and San Miguel, Honduras. U.S. assistance to these precincts, mainly training and technical support, seeks to improve police relations and coordination with the general public, as well as with prosecutors. Measures for community outreach, police accountability, and ways to obtain information (like "tip lines") appear to be yielding some results, though the expense has raised questions about whether this model can be replicated across dozens or hundreds of precincts.

In the non-military, non-police sphere, CARSI funds programs to provide economic opportunity for at-risk youth, and has invested heavily in judicial reform. CARSI funding supports the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), a UN body with prosecutorial powers. CICIG has helped pave the way for significant, if still limited, progress in strengthening the judiciary and reducing impunity in Guatemala.

For the first few years of the CARSI program, Congress attached human rights conditions to the assistance. These held up 15 percent of INCLE and FMF aid until the Secretary of State certified that Central America's governments were establishing commissions to receive complaints about police behavior; implementing judicial reforms; and prosecuting security-force members alleged to have committed human rights violations. The State Department submitted these certifications. In 2012, these conditions disappeared from appropriations law and were replaced by a provision that only covered Honduras.[55]

It is too early to call CARSI a "success" or a "failure." Compared to Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative, it is small and scattered among seven countries and dozens of smaller projects. Delivery of assistance has been slowed by bureaucracy and the "absorptive capacity" of the governments receiving the aid. In some Central American countries, state institutions' corruption is an obstacle to aid delivery, due to concerns that recipient institutions (such as police or prosecutors) are penetrated by organized crime. Aid has also been slowed by questions about recipient governments' political will to confront corruption, undergo painful reforms, and—in countries with some of the world's lowest tax collection rates—to raise the revenue necessary to sustain a professional security sector.

CARSI's limited, but still visible, support for a military role in law enforcement in some Central American countries is another serious concern (see human rights section).

CARSI programs are set to increase modestly, at a time when Central America's criminal violence appears to be plateauing or even beginning to decrease. This is not due to institutional changes as much as to changes in the balance of power between trafficking organizations. In El Salvador and perhaps soon Honduras, a break in the relentless increase of common crime also owes to the brokering of fragile "pacts" between governments and the principal networks of criminal gangs. The U.S. government has made clear it does not support these pacts, arguing that they may not last and

that they weaken the rule of law, but it has not opposed them vocally.

In coming years, meanwhile, attention may turn to the Caribbean as U.S. monitors are finding more drugs flowing through Guyana and Suriname, the small islands of the eastern Caribbean, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and Hispaniola. A smaller version of CARSI already exists for the Caribbean called the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI). It is likely to get larger if even minor "success" in Mexico and Central America pushes the drug trade's violent center of gravity back to the Caribbean once again.

Human Rights and U.S. Security Assistance

The last three years have seen the following contradictory developments in how human rights standards are applied to U.S. security and counternarcotics assistance.

Country Human Rights Conditions. In FY2012, Congress added conditions on assistance to Honduras to the foreign operations appropriations law, which continued to include human rights conditions for Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia. The conditions for Mexico, Colombia and Honduras require the State Department to certify that certain human rights conditions are being met, or a percentage of security assistance will be withheld. The conditions focus primarily on investigating and prosecuting members of military and police forces against whom there are credible allegations of gross human rights violations. The Guatemala conditions, in contrast, bar assistance to the army, with some exceptions, until conditions are met in prosecuting human rights violations and disclosing military records from the armed conflict. The House of Representatives in 2011 and 2012 stripped out or severely weakened conditions, but the Senate prevailed and conditions were maintained. Nonetheless, these conditions' continuation remains precarious, as they are renewed each year in legislation, and the current chair of the House Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, Representative Kay Granger (R-Texas), has not been a fan of conditions.

While the conditions are rarely fully applied, they have a positive impact in encouraging the State Department to engage on human rights issues with these Latin American governments. Although the State Department only rarely decides not to certify, it does delay certification to apply pressure for human rights improvements. Moreover, the Senate Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee sometimes places a hold on a portion of military and/or police aid on the basis of conditions, until the subcommittee is satisfied that the State Department has raised the issues and the government in question is making advances. Human rights organizations, including ours, provide analysis and evidence to the State Department and Congress on how the conditions are being met. As shown below, this combination of Senate action and human rights advocacy can have an impact, although it is not sufficient and varies from case to case.

While human rights conditions on security assistance are rarely fully applied, they have a positive impact in encouraging the State Department to engage on human rights issues with these Latin American governments.

For example, listening to objections raised by human rights groups, the United Nations, members of Congress, and the State Department raised strong concerns with the Colombian government regarding a proposed constitutional reform that threatened to return cases of military human rights abuse from civilian jurisdiction to military courts. The draft legislation was somewhat improved, although the United Nations and human rights organizations fear that the final reform, passed at the end of 2012, may result in human rights cases, possibly including those of the well over 3,000 "false positive" extrajudicial executions, returning to or initiating in military courts and remaining in impunity.[56] The conditions continue to be a potential source of leverage over application of these highly problematic "reforms."

On Mexico, the State Department took a step forward by withholding a portion of security assistance pending a bilateral discussion of human rights priorities. In August 2012, the State Department issued its report to Congress on the human rights requirements. Unlike past years, the report's cover letter stated that the State Department intended to withhold 15 percent of FY2012 Mérida funds until U.S. and Mexican authorities had identified areas of collaboration to promote rule of law and respect for human rights. Examples of possible areas of collaboration provided in this letter included enhancing civilian authorities' capability to investigate and prosecute human rights abuse cases, advancing measures to prevent torture, and strengthening efforts to protect human rights defenders, issues raised in joint memos sent to the State Department by our organizations and other U.S. and Mexican NGO partners. The State Department is still working with the Mexican government to identify these areas of collaboration that would allow it to release the funds. As this State Department report was issued in the final months of the Calderón presidency, this served as a useful incentive to encourage the new Peña Nieto Administration to come to the table to discuss these key human rights issues.

While the State Department was reluctant to act, the Senate Foreign Operations Subcommittee placed a substantial portion of police assistance to Honduras on hold.

On Honduras, the State Department issued a perfunctory report in August 2012 stating that the conditions had been met, despite scant evidence to support this conclusion.[57] Indeed, in 2012 human rights groups and journalists documented serious cases of excessive use of force against demonstrators by members of the police and army as well as evidence of extrajudicial executions by police, among other grave violations, with little effective action to investigate, prosecute and punish abusers. In March 2013, the Associated Press reported that Honduran prosecutors had received "as many as 150 formal complaints about death-squad style killings in the capital of Tegucigalpa, and at least 50 more in the economic hub of San Pedro Sula."[58] While the State Department was reluctant to act, the Senate Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee placed a substantial portion of police assistance on hold during 2012 and 2013. The concerns underpinning the "hold" on police aid include the need to clarify the DEA and shootdown incidents, the slow pace of reform in a police force riddled with corruption, and allegations against Police Chief Juan Carlos Bonilla, who faced serious accusations (despite being acquitted) of past participation in extrajudicial killings. Congress is currently withholding substantial funding to Honduras over these concerns.

INL Assistant Secretary William Brownfield has emphasized the United States does not directly fund Bonilla, but will fund those working "two steps below" him, despite an Associated Press report finding that the Honduran Constitution mandates that all units report to Bonilla.[59] In June 2013, 21 U.S. senators sent a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry indicating "serious questions regarding the State Department's certification" that Honduras met the human rights conditions necessary to guarantee U.S. aid for FY2012.[60]

On Guatemala, the U.S. government supported the courageous actions of Guatemala's judiciary, led by Attorney General Claudia Paz y Paz, to tackle some of the landmark human rights cases of the armed conflict. Notably, the U.S. ambassador to Guatemala attended the trial of former President Rios Montt, the first former head of state to be tried domestically for genocide. The U.S. ambassador-at-large for war crimes visited Guatemala in April 2013 to meet with the embassy, United Nations, and victims regarding the trial, lauding it as "historic."[61] Unfortunately, while the court convicted Rios Montt, the constitutional court overturned the verdict on procedural grounds and the case will reportedly be re-tried. The overwhelming majority of crimes committed during the armed conflict, in which 200,000 people were killed or disappeared, remain in impunity.

In terms of the human rights conditions, the U.S. government continued to skirt the existing ban on U.S. assistance to the Guatemalan Army by providing training and assistance through the Defense Appropriations law, as described earlier. The ban only applies to assistance via the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations law. The Pentagon counter-drug budget provided nearly $26 million in aid to Guatemala in 2011 and 2012, much of it to the Guatemalan Army.[62] A chief concern is the U.S. government's increasing assistance, mainly through Defense Department counter-drug funding channels, to the Guatemalan Army's notorious Kaibiles Special Forces unit. The Kaibiles, responsible for brutal abuses committed during the civil war years, have received U.S. assistance for a "shoot house" and "improvements" to its secretive base in Poptún, in Petén department, where in late 2012 the first U.S. military student in 25 years graduated from its grueling training course.[63]

Improvements to the Leahy Law. There were some important improvements in FY2012 to the "Leahy Law," which prohibits U.S. aid to specific military and police units that violate human rights with impunity. This differs from the country conditions in that it applies worldwide but only relates to behavior by specific units that receive U.S. training and assistance, rather than to the performance of the country's security forces as a whole. The Leahy Law establishes a crucial principle, that U.S. funding should not support security forces when abuses remain unpunished.

However, the law has been applied with varying degrees of rigor by U.S. embassies around the world. (For example, LAWGEF staff met with embassy staff in Colombia and Honduras in 2012 and found that while the U.S. Embassy in Colombia had a substantial system in place, the U.S. Embassy in Honduras's system was far less developed.) It is challenging for human rights groups to provide information for its enforcement, as it has been applied with little transparency and has been interpreted as requiring a degree of evidence regarding the identities of specific units that is hard to obtain.

Even in the Latin American country where it has received most scrutiny and attention, Colombia, and where the law has certainly been applied, the Leahy Law has failed to block assistance to many gross human rights violators. Military units receiving U.S. aid and training committed numerous extrajudicial executions, although so too did units not receiving aid. A detailed study by Fellowship of Reconciliation and U.S. Office on Colombia reveals that geographic areas where brigades received substantial U.S. aid and training coincided with areas that saw high levels of extrajudicial executions.[64]

Revisions to the Leahy Law aim to improve enforcement by the State Department and embassies.

The revisions to the Leahy Law attempt to address these concerns. The Secretary of State now needs "credible information" that "a gross human rights violation was committed" rather than "credible evidence" that "gross violations of human rights were committed." The revised legislation also aims to regularize and improve Leahy Law enforcement by the State Department and embassies by mandating that the Secretary of State:

> shall establish, and periodically update, procedures to—
>
> (1) ensure that for each country the Department of State has a current list of all security force units receiving United States training, equipment, or other types of assistance;
>
> (2) facilitate receipt by the Department of State and United States embassies of information from individuals and organizations outside the United States Government about gross violations of human rights by security force units;
>
> (3) routinely request and obtain such information from the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and other United States Government sources;
>
> (4) ensure that such information is evaluated and preserved;
>
> (5) ensure that when vetting an individual for eligibility to receive United States training the individual's unit is also vetted;

(6) seek to identify the unit involved when credible information of a gross violation exists but the identity of the unit is lacking; and

(7) make publicly available, to the maximum extent practicable, the identity of those units for which no assistance shall be furnished.

The State Department has been meeting with U.S. human rights organizations to explain the Leahy Law changes and to encourage them to submit information that can be used in vetting.

In response to concerns by human rights groups, the State Department established "high-level human rights dialogues" or human rights components within broader dialogues with Colombia, Mexico, and Honduras.

Ultimately, the vetting system will only be as good as the information placed in the database from each country. Some of the questions this raises are: Will U.S. embassies actively solicit information from in-country human rights groups? Can those groups provide that information confidentially? Is the database too reliant on scannable Internet sources, while human rights groups cannot safely broadcast all information publicly?

Bilateral Human Rights Dialogues. In response to concerns by human rights groups, the State Department established "high-level human rights dialogues" or human rights components within broader "high-level dialogues" with Colombia, Mexico, and Honduras. These are attempts by the Obama Administration to take an approach intended to be more proactive and collegial on human rights with key government partners. This effort to be at once proactive and more collegial can be contradictory, and the processes are not very transparent and thus are hard to evaluate. In our view, these dialogues must be supplemented by vigorous use of human rights conditions. However, it is indeed positive that the U.S. government is visibly placing human rights as a major theme in these bilateral relationships.

Direct U.S. Involvement in Human Rights Abuses in Central America. A major development has been more direct U.S. involvement in human rights abuses during counternarcotics operations in Central America. As noted earlier, from May through July 2012, three of the five joint interdiction operations carried out under Operation Anvil, a binational counternarcotics mission with the DEA and Honduran Special Forces, resulted in the shootings and deaths of trafficking suspects and innocent civilians by either DEA agents or Honduran officers trained, equipped, and vetted by the United States.

U.S. Support for Military Role in Law Enforcement? Central American governments in recent years have expanded the role of their military in domestic law enforcement. Several of the region's governments have argued that police reform will not protect citizens in the short term and have asked the U.S. government to provide more military aid in order to respond immediately to crime. Under President Felipe Calderón, Mexico vastly expanded the use of the military against drug trafficking violence and widespread human rights abuses followed, including forced disappearances and extrajudicial executions.[65] Yet the Obama Administration, like the Bush Administration before it, rarely objects to the use of the military for law enforcement in Central America or Mexico and has even agreed to provide modest support—much of it through Defense budget programs—for military units carrying out domestic law enforcement, like the FENs or Guatemala's Tecún Umán task force.

"The use of the military to perform civil law enforcement cannot be a long-term solution," reads the Defense Department's October 2012 *Western Hemisphere Defense Policy Statement.* "However, as other U.S. security cooperation efforts work to build the capacity of civil authorities and partner nation law enforcement, DoD will continue to support defense partners to give them the best opportunity to succeed in bridging these gaps."[66]

The practice of involving militaries in law enforcement functions has led in recent years to gross human rights violations. Yet while

U.S. officials contend they prefer civilian police assistance, the U.S. government continues to fund programs that draw the military into policing, sending a mixed message to the region at best.

For example, speaking of Honduras in March 2013, INL Assistant Secretary of State Brownfield said, "Although the national police may have its defects at the moment, it is the lesser evil."[67] However, the United States provides training and assistance to the Honduran Army's 15th Battalion, which has established military control over Bajo Aguán, an area affected by a rural land conflict where well over 60 people associated with campesino organizations, as well as some private security guards and bystanders, have been killed in the last three years.

In Guatemala, the State Department has not raised public concerns about the increasing use of the military in law enforcement, including the growing establishment of Army "Citizen Security Squadrons," through which at least 1,500 soldiers have been deployed to ensure "citizen security."[68] On October 4, 2012, Guatemalan soldiers shot into a crowd of indigenous protestors in Totonicapán, killing 6 and injuring 34 people. The colonel and eight soldiers involved in the killing are being investigated, though the original charges for extrajudicial executions have been reduced. The massacre offered a stark reminder of the risk of involving Guatemala's army, which has not been held accountable for tens of thousands of abuses committed during the country's 1960-1996 civil war, in an expanded internal security mission.

Promotion of Colombian Security Forces in Training. A further disturbing trend has been the U.S. promotion of the role of the Colombian security forces in exporting training, described on page 22.

What Do the Numbers Say? Trends in U.S. Assistance to Latin America

From 2008-2010, U.S. aid to Latin America and the Caribbean hit its highest level since we started our monitoring project in 1996, due to the "Mérida Initiative" package of aid to Mexico and Central America. A robust economic aid package to Haiti, after the country's devastating earthquake, sharpened the spike in 2010. However, since that period, the region saw a quick drop, followed by a gradual decline, in levels of both overall aid and security assistance, putting aid back where it was between 2004 and 2008.

The quick FY2011 drop in military and police assistance can be attributed to a decrease in U.S. assistance to Colombia, alongside a shifting of funding priorities in Mexico—away from large, expensive equipment and toward more institution-building and rule of law programs. Both Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative are winding down, and nothing has come along to replace them at a time of budgetary austerity.

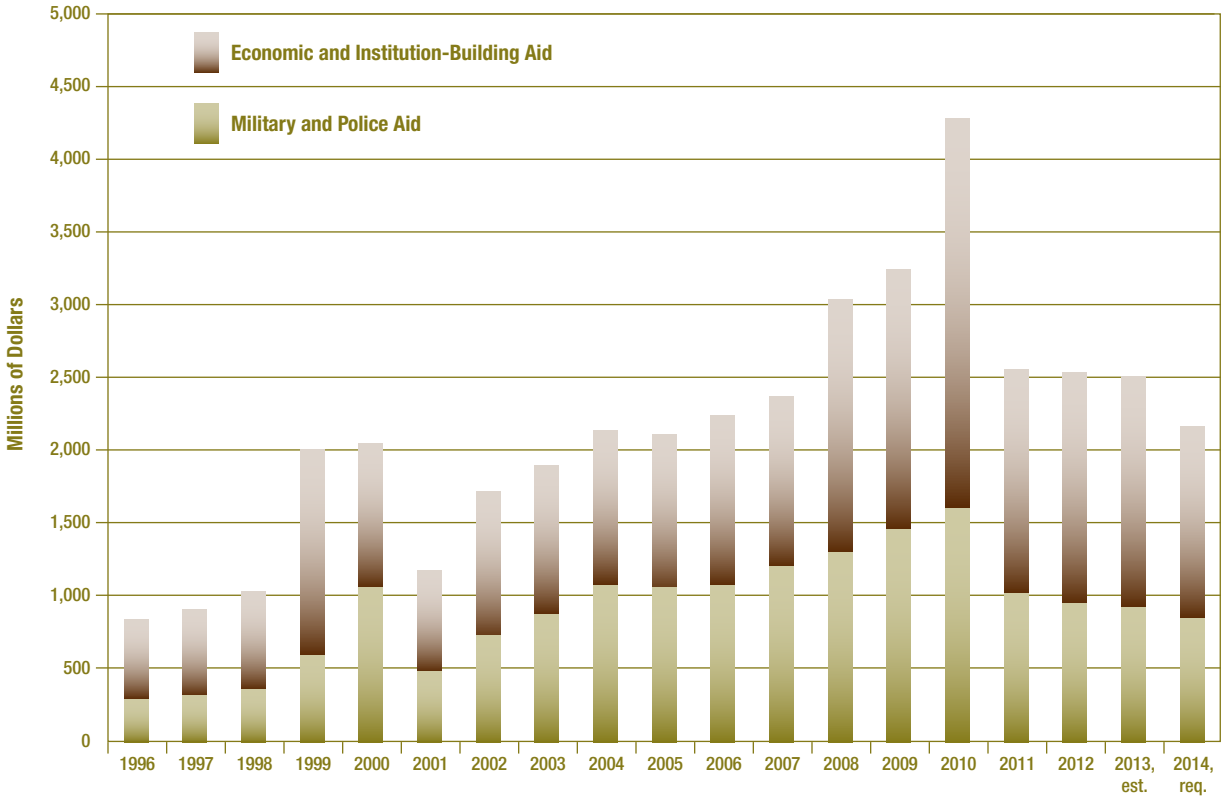
The U.S. government continues to fund programs that draw the military into policing, sending a mixed message to the region at best.

In 2013, military and police assistance to Colombia is at its lowest point ($279 million) since before the "Plan Colombia" aid package was implemented in 2000, despite Colombia's continued position as the number one recipient of U.S. military and police aid in Latin America and the Caribbean. Military and police aid to Mexico, while on the decline, is still the second highest in the region, at $154 million in 2013.

Since the 2008-2010 period, however, U.S. security assistance has placed greater focus on Central America. While military and police assistance to the rest of the region was declining or holding steady, assistance to Central America was on the rise due to the implementation of the Central American Regional Security Initiative. A smaller program, the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, is ongoing but has not brought a significant increase in aid to the Caribbean.

For many years, the division of military and police aid and economic/institution-building aid

U.S. Aid to Latin America and the Caribbean, All Sources



U.S. Military and Police Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Colombia	64,468,000	86,562,950	115,161,000	309,712,877	771,540,855	223,940,217	388,550,141	605,627,707	610,824,588	596,121,737
Mexico	42,568,447	75,244,000	27,567,000	27,636,136	20,110,891	30,256,064	48,911,196	19,673,473	41,530,303	43,085,121
Western Hemisphere Regional	61,687,000	63,579,000	70,118,000	82,429,000	59,765,000	76,752,000	64,821,000	52,401,000	118,722,000	147,717,363
Caribbean Regional	11,729,000	11,729,000	10,252,000	12,596,000	17,029,000	14,358,000	8,369,000	7,807,000	68,454,000	53,134,000
Peru	40,160,194	33,969,000	36,147,000	73,464,999	58,969,343	27,207,651	75,476,232	58,000,783	64,171,475	55,934,641
Bolivia	17,980,500	22,600,000	38,801,000	36,894,026	60,876,247	32,790,407	47,813,737	45,979,501	50,321,830	44,971,276
Ecuador	2,737,213	2,757,250	5,120,000	12,764,778	26,119,848	20,407,709	39,163,978	37,137,360	37,971,276	32,513,842
Central America Regional										
Haiti	250,000	500,000	940,000	550,000	522,000	193,849	519,992	583,000	884,000	551,650
Netherlands Antilles			125,000	277,000	131,000	373,000	300,000	247,000	15,106,114	16,672,000
Chile	735,545	507,000	17,478,050	1,568,183	1,055,157	2,929,528	1,655,597	3,011,507	1,982,946	1,804,902
Guatemala	2,268,000	2,158,000	2,796,000	3,009,089	2,982,171	3,258,477	3,194,213	2,504,666	2,994,852	3,467,462
Panama	2,384,000	2,384,000	2,591,000	3,458,280	6,160,436	2,280,680	11,327,048	7,248,327	8,171,359	6,337,250
El Salvador	707,000	621,000	783,000	827,325	1,324,908	3,191,818	9,240,546	4,724,112	13,031,571	10,441,468
Brazil	3,088,000	3,460,000	3,075,000	1,129,443	5,093,299	20,358,528	6,556,178	6,504,039	10,307,738	9,280,762
All Others	46,183,746	19,166,158	30,039,062	28,682,992	24,304,137	25,960,783	30,438,168	26,999,460	31,392,315	29,199,215

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Colombia	589,374,053	619,484,593	402,104,615	441,505,261	434,177,248	336,830,537	280,454,537	279,465,805	257,678,917
Mexico	44,846,915	56,046,844	437,011,270	422,804,999	507,794,694	117,217,892	165,751,892	154,432,797	126,951,621
Western Hemisphere Regional	121,084,000	72,509,000	107,036,000	97,949,000	138,643,000	135,022,000	70,435,000	70,435,000	70,435,000
Caribbean Regional	73,278,000	114,232,000	122,333,000	154,853,000	82,794,000	144,750,000	142,490,000	137,290,000	126,290,000
Peru	61,074,548	65,110,953	43,391,262	84,830,341	59,950,769	51,679,628	44,205,225	43,565,693	41,428,758
Bolivia	41,306,546	37,293,624	27,844,589	22,639,640	18,613,454	18,242,600	8,621,600	7,991,600	5,674,600
Ecuador	31,422,055	31,788,949	27,780,131	33,317,540	16,224,256	17,533,155	19,070,155	19,170,155	14,849,155
Central America Regional		2,225,000		51,825,000	51,618,000	64,248,000	73,655,556	76,526,984	90,031,746
Haiti	15,245,950	16,151,650	11,991,800	20,660,941	160,591,373	21,072,800	19,481,800	19,448,886	13,752,086
Netherlands Antilles	16,315,000	18,539,000	19,460,000	25,550,000	25,677,000	21,286,000	21,871,000	21,871,000	21,871,000
Chile	16,249,705	68,316,093	4,469,506	19,040,419	3,673,947	2,622,046	4,945,046	4,945,046	4,900,046
Guatemala	8,777,493	17,786,738	5,782,274	5,195,069	14,092,133	26,376,657	26,661,657	11,161,657	12,281,657
Panama	8,242,472	14,034,661	6,983,585	5,747,271	7,907,833	9,988,176	12,103,176	12,103,176	11,561,176
El Salvador	18,646,533	10,721,385	10,838,596	14,052,482	8,454,988	8,062,032	5,031,032	5,031,032	5,552,032
Brazil	7,496,439	6,173,235	2,998,824	3,672,536	3,312,558	3,159,833	5,654,833	5,832,333	3,021,833
All Others	37,609,015	68,883,958	73,758,065	57,173,748	69,274,248	49,336,708	50,030,708	50,155,708	54,589,708

to the region was close to 50 percent. However, with passage of a large, multi-year aid package to Haiti in 2010, that division shifted towards economic and institution building assistance. In 2013, military and police assistance makes up only 37 percent of total aid to the region, which shifts to 43 percent if assistance to Haiti is removed from the equation.

The Obama Administration's FY2014 aid request continues the downward trend in U.S. assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean, with an almost 13 percent drop in requested assistance to the region. Adjusted for inflation, military and police aid to the region in 2013 and 2014 is at its lowest level since 2001. Yet the upward trend in assistance to Central America continues.

A "Light Footprint": Military Engagement at a Time of Reduced Aid

Less aid does not necessarily mean less U.S. engagement with Latin America's militaries and police forces. But the nature of this engagement is changing. Instead of building bases, employing the Fourth Fleet, or launching "big-ticket" aid packages like Plan Colombia or the Mérida Initiative, U.S. military engagement is becoming more nimble and flexible, but even less transparent.

President Obama's defense guidance at the beginning of last year set forth new priorities for the U.S. military. Partly in recognition of budget constraints, the overall mission of the military would downplay investment in large-scale interventions with ground forces. The focus would, in fact, shift (or "pivot") largely to Asia. In Latin America, the Defense Department would instead turn to using smaller, more quickly mobilized capabilities, or a "lighter footprint" including the use of other tools such as drones, cyberattacks and Special Operations Forces.

This will probably affect Latin America in five ways:

More Special Forces deployments to the region. President Obama and his new appointees at Defense, National Security Council, and State share a fondness for Special Operations Forces: elite, highly trained, mobile military units used for non-traditional, often clandestine missions ranging from hostage rescues to hunting down wanted individuals to intelligence-gathering and "defense diplomacy." Special Forces are likely to see their numbers increase despite upcoming defense budget cuts, and as the Afghanistan drawdown proceeds, there will be even more of them available to carry out missions in Latin America.

This doesn't necessarily mean that Delta Force, SEAL Team 6, and other JSOC units will be carrying out clandestine mayhem in places like Venezuela and Cuba. Instead they will carry out what Linda Robinson, in a recent Council on Foreign Relations report, called "the indirect approach": training, advising, conducting civil affairs operations, and gathering information and intelligence. This is a political mission as much as a military one.[69]

> In the next few years, we are likely to witness an increase in Special Forces training missions in the region.

Recent conversations with Defense Department officials confirm that, in the next few years, we are likely to witness an increase in Special Forces training missions in the region. However, considering the way information is being classified, we are not likely to learn much about them. More teams will be in countries throughout the Americas teaching courses as part of Mobile Training Teams (MTTs), and organizing exercises, some of them through the Special Forces' Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program.

Such deployments fulfill more than just training missions. They allow Special Forces units to familiarize themselves with the terrain, culture, and key officers in countries where they might someday operate. And they allow U.S. personnel to gather intelligence on their host countries, whether through active snooping or passive observation.

A greater intelligence community presence is another likely consequence of a "light footprint" in Latin America. It is reasonable to expect fewer CIA assets in Afghanistan to mean more personnel focused elsewhere, including Latin America. Even more significant may be an increase in the presence of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Defense Department's spy agency. The *Washington Post* reported in December 2012 that DIA expects to roughly double the number of clandestine operatives that it deploys worldwide over the next few years.[70]

Colombia is now, and has been for all but one of the last 20 years, the Western Hemisphere's largest recipient of U.S. military and police assistance.

Greater use of drones and robotics. The Obama Administration has expanded the CIA and Defense Department use of armed unmanned aircraft to hunt down suspected terrorist targets. John Brennan, the new CIA director, is known for being involved in this practice, which is extremely controversial because of reports that the drone program may have killed hundreds of innocent people in Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere.

More emphasis on cyber-security. While it is unclear how this will play out in U.S. national security policy toward the Americas, it is reasonable to expect more resources devoted to cracking open the computer networks of countries or organizations that the U.S. government views as a threat.

Funding other countries to carry out training on our behalf. This practice is expanding rapidly in Colombia, as the next section explains.

A major concern for our organizations is that these changes may be very difficult to track due to the extent to which information is being classified. Reports to Congress on these topics—even lists of countries, topics of training, and dollar amounts—are either nonexistent, heavily classified, or submitted way past their deadlines. Where they exist, they require an enormous effort to obtain.

As the "light footprint" moves the U.S.-Latin American military relationship to the shadows, our work as citizen monitors grows harder.

U.S. Agencies "Outsource" Military and Police Training to Colombia

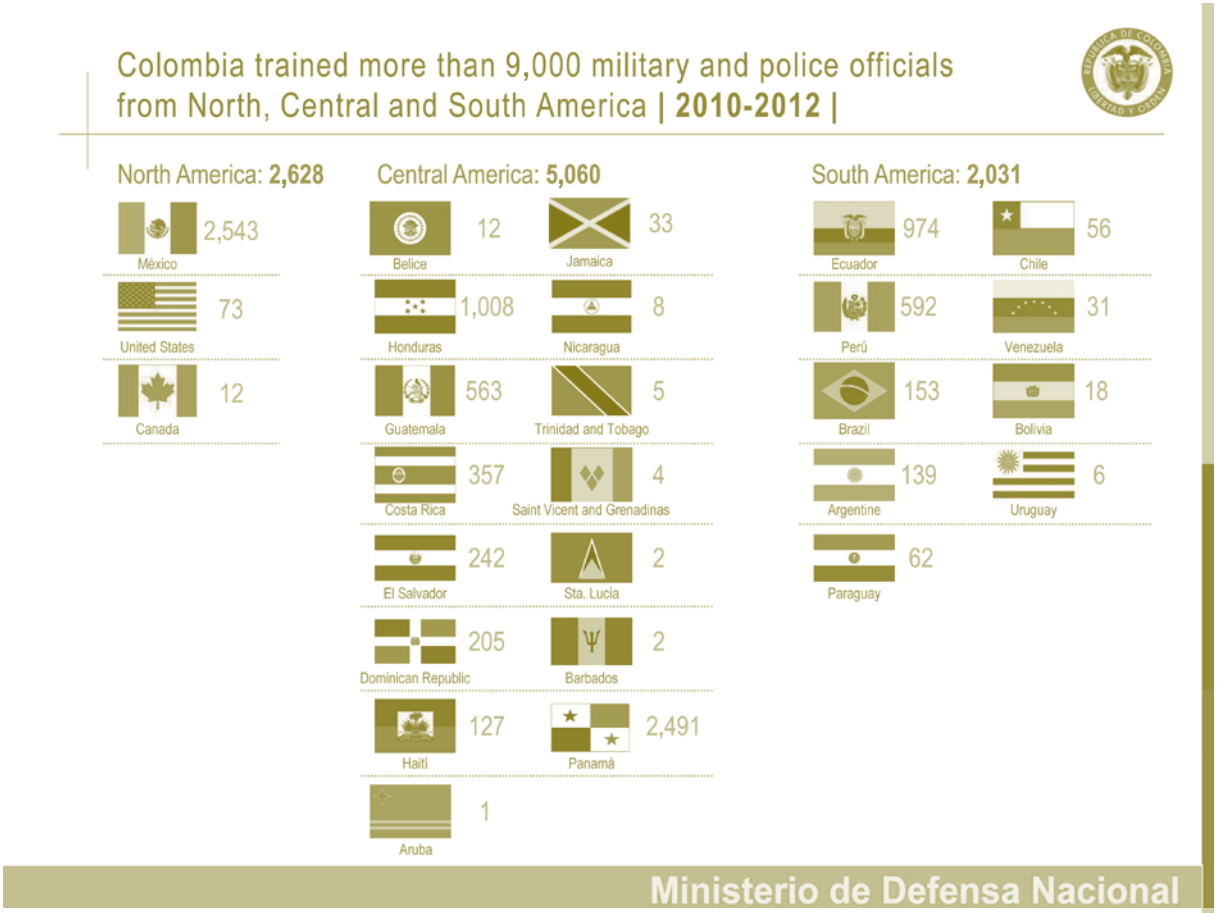
The Obama Administration praises Colombia as a "security exporter."[71] "Once on the brink of falling to a powerful insurgency," reads the Southern Command's 2013 *Posture Statement,* "Colombia is now a leader in counterinsurgency tactics and provides training to West African and Central American counterparts."[72] Added a June 2012 Defense Department release, "Colombia now serves as a regional training base to help other nations in their counterdrug efforts."[73]

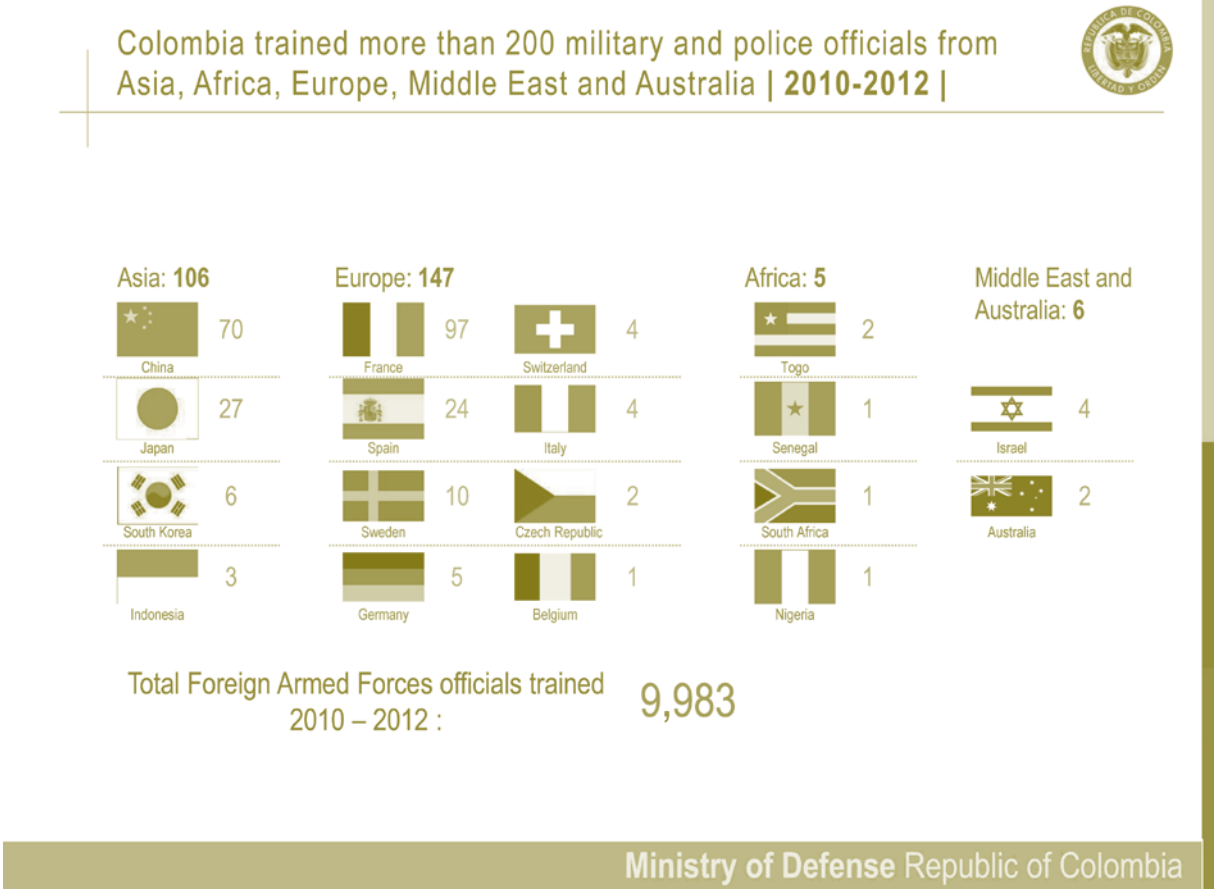
Colombia is now, and has been for all but one of the last 20 years, the Western Hemisphere's largest recipient of U.S. military and police assistance. Its security forces are also training and advising those of third countries. "Colombia…, offers capacity-building assistance in 16 countries inside and outside the region, including Africa," reads an April 2012 Defense Department news release.[74] Colombian Defense Minister Juan Carlos Pinzón told the *Miami Herald* in October 2012 that his forces had trained more than 13,000 individuals from 40 countries since 2005.[75]

An April 2013 PowerPoint slideshow from the Colombian Ministry of Defense shows the 9,983 recipients of Colombian training from 45 countries between 2010 and 2012.

This trend is accelerating. As part of an ongoing "High Level Strategic Security Dialogue," in early 2012 the U.S. and Colombian governments developed an "Action Plan on Regional Security Cooperation," through which they intend to coordinate aid to third countries. According to the joint press release:

> Both countries will develop complementary security assistance programs and operational efforts to support hemispheric and international partner nations afflicted by effects of transnational organized crime. Increased coordination of U.S. and Colombia defense


Colombia trained more than 9,000 military and police officials from North, Central and South America | 2010-2012 |
North America: 2,628
México 2,543
United States 73
Canada 12
Central America: 5,060
Belice 12
Jamaica 33
Honduras 1,008
Nicaragua 8
Guatemala 563
Trinidad and Tobago 5
Costa Rica 357
Saint Vicent and Grenadinas 4
El Salvador 242
Sta. Lucia 2
Dominican Republic 205
Barbados 2
Haití 127
Panamá 2,491
Aruba 1
South America: 2,031
Ecuador 974
Chile 56
Perú 592
Venezuela 31
Brazil 153
Bolivia 18
Argentine 139
Uruguay 6
Paraguay 62
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional


Colombia trained more than 200 military and police officials from Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East and Australia | 2010-2012 |
Asia: 106
China 70
Japan 27
South Korea 6
Indonesia 3
Europe: 147
France 97
Switzerland 4
Spain 24
Italy 4
Sweden 10
Czech Republic 2
Germany 5
Belgium 1
Africa: 5
Togo 2
Senegal 1
South Africa 1
Nigeria 1
Middle East and Australia: 6
Israel 4
Australia 2
Total Foreign Armed Forces officials trained 2010 – 2012 : 9,983
Ministry of Defense Republic of Colombia

> and security support activities . . . will support whole-of-government strategies and produce a greater effect throughout the hemisphere and West Africa.[76]

We don't know the full extent of these "defense and security support activities," or what portion of them are funded by the United States. U.S. officials praise them as a way to multiply the impact of U.S. security assistance programs. At a time of U.S. budget cuts, Colombian trainers cost a fraction of what U.S. trainers would cost.[77]

With funding from CARSI, Colombia's National Police participate in a Central America Regional Police Reform Project, funded mainly through the State Department's INCLE program. "[T]he Colombian National Police provides training and assistance in such topics as community policing, police academy instructor training, and curriculum development in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Panama," reads the April 2012 joint press release. "To complement this police training by Colombia, the United States trains prosecutors in these countries."[78] Colombian police personnel have played a prominent role in this program's struggling effort to reform the Honduran police force; among other roles, they administer polygraph (lie-detector) tests designed to weed out corrupt cops.[79]

Colombia's training relationship with Mexico is extensive. It has included the instruction of thousands of Mexican policemen.

The practice of U.S.-supported Colombian training personnel is now moving beyond State Department-funded training of civilian police. The head of the U.S. Southern Command stated that the Department of Defense would begin funding some "capacity-building activities" with Colombian military personnel in Central America starting in April 2013.[80]

Colombia's training relationship with Mexico is extensive. It has included the instruction of "thousands of Mexican policemen," the *Washington Post* reported in January 2011.[81] "Colombian service members have trained more than two dozen Mexican helicopter pilots" as of April 2012, a U.S. defense official said in a Pentagon news release.[82]

Sixteen Mexican students—15 federal police and one army soldier—participated in the grueling 19-week course given by the Colombian National Police's (CNP) elite *Jungla* commando unit between July and December 2011.[83] Also taking part in the course, at the *Jungla* base in Tolima department, were about 58 students from ten other Latin American countries: Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and Paraguay. "This Colombian initiative is supported by the U.S. Embassy through its Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) and the DEA," read a U.S. Embassy press release. "Since 2007, the NAS-financed CNP National Training Center in Pijaos has trained nearly 300 international students. NAS has allotted nearly 8 million dollars in the construction of the training center's initial phase, inaugurated in 2008."[84]

The U.S. government has encouraged Peru to work more closely with Colombia. "The United States stands ready to work with Peru on joint planning, on information sharing, trilateral cooperation with Colombia to address our shared security concerns," said outgoing Defense Secretary Leon Panetta during an October 2012 visit to Lima.[85]

Sources reveal several multi-country training events. The Colombian Army's *Lancero* Special Forces unit, similar to the U.S. Army's Rangers, now offers an international course at the Tolemaida base. Colombia's armed forces report that 581 trainees from 18 countries have taken the *Lancero* course including, in December 2012, 15 graduates from Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, and Peru.[86]

In June 2012, Colombia—which has more Special Forces personnel than any other Latin American military—hosted *Fuerzas Comando,* an annual competition between Latin America's Special Forces sponsored by U.S. Southern Command.[87] Those competing

at the Colombian National Training Center in Tolemaida included the Bahamas, Belize, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, and Uruguay. Southern Command has canceled the 2013 *Fuerzas Comando* exercise "due to budget uncertainty and possible sequestration cuts."[88]

Colombia's security forces' augmented training of other countries' militaries and police was a chief topic when top officials from both countries met in Bogotá in November 2012 to continue the U.S.-Colombia "High Level Strategic Security Dialogue." An unnamed Defense Department official said in October, "we're building a detailed action plan where we and the Colombians will coordinate who does what … so we leverage … the resources and capabilities we have to effectively do capacity building and training and other things in Central America and in other places."[89]

The human rights implications of exporting the Colombian model. While Colombia has a lot of experience with the type of operations that police around Latin America must carry out today—organized crime investigations, drug interdiction, efforts to arrest kingpins—the expansion of its training raises grave concerns, especially when the U.S. government is footing the bill.

The overall message the United States conveys by promoting Colombia's role in security training, especially by Colombia's army or intelligence forces, is disturbing. Colombia's armed forces were responsible for grave human rights abuses, including as many as 4,716 alleged extrajudicial executions of civilians.[90] Many of these were so-called "false positive" cases in which soldiers detained or even purchased people, often young men, from criminal recruiters. They then killed them in staged battles, dressed them up in guerrilla uniforms and claimed them as enemy dead. The vast majority of these abuses, most committed between 2004 and 2008, have not yet been brought to justice. The International Criminal Court prosecutor's office has expressed interest in examining the pattern of extrajudicial executions in Colombia, as "there is sufficient reason to believe that [these acts] were committed due to a policy adopted at least at the level of certain brigades of the armed forces which constitutes a policy by a state or organization to commit such crimes."[91]

In addition, Colombia's Department of Administrative Security (DAS), the intelligence agency under the presidency, conducted illegal surveillance of national and international human rights organizations and activists, journalists, judges, and opposition party members. DAS officials were also involved in dirty tricks and threats against human rights defenders and journalists, and even targeted assassinations.[92] While the DAS agency was disbanded, it is likely some unpunished abusers remain in Colombian intelligence agencies.

The overall message the United States conveys by promoting Colombia's role in security training, especially by Colombia's army or intelligence forces, is disturbing.

At the same time, there are some lessons from the Colombian experience that could have a beneficial human rights impact. For example, the U.S. government has encouraged some exchanges regarding Colombia's innovative protection program for human rights defenders.

The following are more specific concerns about the impact of Colombian training.

The human rights messages that Colombian trainers might be conveying, inside and outside the classroom. Both in private and in Colombia's press, the country's military officials do not conceal their disdain for, or outright anger at, the judicial system and human rights defenders, and their institution recently pressed successfully to reduce civilian courts' jurisdiction over them in human rights cases.

The inappropriate use of an armed force involved in war in training security forces in countries at peace. It is problematic that Colombia's armed forces, which have been engaged in a fifty-year-long war, and have acted in place of a police force in many areas of the country, are acting as trainers for security forces in Central America and elsewhere which are experiencing drug-related violence but are not in a situation of armed conflict. Indeed, some of these governments attempted to limit the role of their armed forces after the conflicts of the 1980s, and are now reversing direction.

While the State Department and Southern Command assert that Leahy Law vetting will be applied to both Colombian trainers and recipients of such training when it is U.S.-funded, it is difficult to see how this can be successfully overseen.

The difficulty of obtaining information about courses given, recipient countries and units, identities of trainers, number of trainees, and overall cost. Training by U.S. officials generally shows up in the State Department's annual Foreign Military Training Reports, but the work of U.S.-funded Colombian trainers rarely, if ever, appears in these reports. This raises a critical transparency issue.

The potential use of outsourcing to evade human rights conditions. While the State Department and Southern Command have asserted that Leahy Law vetting will be applied to both Colombian trainers and recipients of such training when it is funded by the U.S. State or Defense departments, it is difficult to see how this can be successfully overseen. This vetting also does not apply to training the United States promotes in a general way, but does not fund. Outsourcing training to Colombians, without sufficient reporting, makes it impossible to ascertain that the units and individuals giving and receiving training are clear of allegations of abuse.

Drones in Latin America

The use of unmanned aerial systems, or "drones" as they are more often called, has increased at a remarkable rate around the world over the past several years. Most countries that use them do so for intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance, while others, especially the United States, have employed more controversial weaponized versions.

In Latin America, a few U.S. defense officials have confirmed to us recently, the U.S. military is not using weaponized drones, though it is employing some surveillance drones to detect suspected trafficking activity, particularly (but not only) above international waters. All officials have insisted that U.S. drones are not used extensively in the region, as they are costly to operate. However, as assets are drawn down from Afghanistan and as costs continue to drop rapidly, it is reasonable to expect the Obama Administration to use them more frequently in the Americas.

U.S. Drones on the Border. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), now has seven Predator B drones deployed along the U.S.-Mexico border used in the detection of illegal border crossings. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has criticized the effectiveness and cost of the program, but political pressure has kept the program in place and with prospects for even more robust funding.[93] The United States has also obtained permission from Mexico to operate drones over Mexican airspace, and has been engaged in limited surveillance operations there since 2009, with some of the UAVs actually launched from within Mexico.[94] The Department of Homeland Security hopes to double the amount of border being patrolled by drones over the Caribbean.[95] The Department of Defense is now considering the use of blimps tethered to the back of ships.[96]

DHS has had mostly disappointing results from the testing it has carried out over the past two years, especially considering the expense of operating the platforms, which GAO reports has reached $3,234 per flight hour.[97] Nonetheless,

the Senate version of immigration reform legislation would up the tempo. It includes authorization for four additional drones to be used by CBP along the southern border, and requires that their fleet of drones be deployed in such a way that would provide continuous coverage of the border on a 24-hours a day, 7 days a week basis.[98]

Drone Proliferation in Latin America. In Latin America, at least eight countries have drone programs. The most often-cited purpose for the programs is surveillance, both for security and for detection of illicit activities. Other uses include surveying areas for agricultural purposes and for the detection of damage to the environment.

The United States provided the Colombian government with six Boeing ScanEagle drones, a small, catapault-launched surveillance drone, in early 2013, but has otherwise stayed out of the Latin American unmanned systems market. This could change soon, however, as General Atomics recently received permission from the State Department to sell unarmed Predator B drones to the United Arab Emirates, and hopes to market them to Latin American countries soon.[99]

Brazil has the lead in the purchase and manufacturing of unmanned aerial systems in Latin America. Brazil has two Israeli Hermes drones, and in 2010 spent $350 million for the purchase of 14 Israeli Heron drones to be delivered over four years.[100] It has also entered into joint manufacturing agreements with Israeli firms to produce drones at home. Most of their use has been designated for surveillance along Brazil's extensive borders, but with both the World Cup and the Olympics coming to the country, Brazil has also tested using the systems to detect criminal activity in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. In one two-week operation last year along the borders with Peru and Bolivia, Brazil reportedly deployed drones that aided in the seizure of 1.1 tons of cocaine and the arrest of several traffickers.[101]

Bolivia is purchasing Israeli UAVs for use in the detection of drug traffickers. Bolivia has also worked with Brazil to use drones for the detection of illegal coca plantations.

Venezuela has two Iranian Mohajer drones and, with the help of Iran, Russia and China, has developed UAV manufacturing capability in its military-industrial corporation, Cavim. [102] It has announced their intended use for defense, reconnaissance, and the monitoring of pipelines, forests and roads.[103]

Argentina, Mexico and Peru have developed their own UAV programs. Aside from the efforts to detect the activities of criminal organizations, Mexico is said also to want tactical UAVs for use in homeland security missions and for its navy.

Colombia has begun a program to develop drones, investing over $14 million in 2012, and is said to be investing up to $50 million for Israeli Hermes UAVs. The United States supplied Colombia drone capability during a hostage crisis involving U.S. citizens in 2006, and Colombia has since been in negotiations with the United States for the purchase of drones.

In Latin America, at least eight countries have drone programs. The most often-cited purpose for these programs is surveillance, both for security and for detection of illicit activities.

Chile has also purchased UAV capability from Israel and has announced that it will begin manufacturing its own drones. Chile intends to have 18 drones available to its air force by early 2014, primarily to patrol borders with Peru and Bolivia.[104] Ecuador and Uruguay also have begun programs that employ UAVs.

It appears that most of the UAV technology rapidly developing in Latin America is intended for defensive purposes, for efforts to detect and monitor criminal activity, or for peaceful purposes connected with agriculture and the environment. But as we have seen in the United States, the leap from defensive to offensive weaponization of drones is not only possible, but may be probable in years to come. Without a robust effort to establish protocols or diplomatic agreements on the use of these technologies, the advent of drones in Latin America may lead to increased instability in the region.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

The U.S. government should:

- **Open a serious dialogue on U.S. counternarcotics policies in Latin America.** The Obama Administration should develop strategic consultations with governments and civil society throughout the region and in the United States. The government agencies involved should not be limited to counternarcotics offices, foreign ministries and public security agencies, but should include those parts of government that deal with public health, education, community development and youth. The clamor from governments and civil society alike to change U.S. and Latin American counternarcotics policies has become too deafening to ignore. It is difficult for the U.S. drug policy bureaucracy to adapt. The U.S. government needs to start by building ways to listen.
- **Greatly improve transparency over assistance programs so that citizens and legislators can participate in an informed debate.** The "light footprint" approach presages a greater role for Special Forces and intelligence mechanisms in the U.S. security relationship with Latin America. This means that little will be within the public realm. Transparency should be a standard part of U.S. military programs with Latin America, especially as the United States promotes "partnership" with the region. The promptness, quality, and public availability of Defense Department reporting to Congress about military assistance must improve dramatically. These programs are too risky to proceed without careful oversight.
- **End all U.S. support for a military role in public security, and consistently oppose through U.S. diplomacy such a role for partner militaries.** State and Defense Department official statements assert that police, not militaries, should conduct law enforcement, yet through specific funding programs and weak diplomatic messages, the U.S. government sends a dangerously mixed message. U.S. policy should adapt its practice to its stated theory.
- **Maintain, and rigorously enforce, all human rights conditions on military, police and counternarcotics assistance,** including "country" conditions to Colombia, Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala, and the Leahy Law. Defense Department programs should not be used to skirt conditionality.
- **End funding and diplomatic support for efforts to "export" Colombian security training of other nation's police and military.** There are some valuable lessons from Colombia, such as its human rights defender protection program; but the U.S. government should not promote training by security forces that have yet to address widespread violations of human rights.
- **Emphasize assistance, especially within the frameworks of CARSI, CBSI, Mérida, and in countries affected by drug violence, that builds communities and "social fabric," as well as strengthening judicial systems.** Resilient communities and strong judicial systems help to reduce the power of organized crime.
- **In Colombia, be prepared for a major reorientation of assistance if the peace process succeeds.** U.S. assistance played a pivotal role in post-conflict transitions in Central America in the 1990s, following a decade of heavy military aid. If talks bring Colombia's long internal conflict to a close, the United States must stand ready to shift from aiding war to aiding peace, helping Colombia comply with commitments made at the negotiating table. Needs will include land tenure guarantees, protection programs in consultation with returning communities, assistance rebuilding livelihoods for refugees and internally displaced persons, rural development assistance, attention to victims, support for truth mechanisms and the justice sector, demining, and demobilization and reintegration. The U.S. government must adjust flexibly to accommodate reforms to drug policy that emerge from the negotiations.
- **End the aerial spraying program in Colombia,** emphasizing rural development programs developed in consultation with small farmers instead.

- **Close the Guantanamo prison and either prosecute the detainees in civilian courts or release them.** While Guantánamo has not been a focus of this report, its existence continues to undermine U.S. messaging on human rights to the region, especially the region's security forces. While this is a "heavy lift" in the U.S. domestic political climate, there is much that can be done in the interim. For a start, the United States Southern Command should move the detainees who have been cleared for release out of the detention facilities and into humane living quarters, granting them privacy, freedom of movement, communication and association.

- **Encourage and support a regional debate about the use of drone technology, with the aim of promoting new protocols and diplomatic agreements.** The United States' use of drones to strike countries with which it is not at war sets a poor precedent for the use of weaponized drones, a technology that threatens to begin proliferating, in Latin America and elsewhere, in the coming years. The region's governments, civil societies, and inter-state bodies need to have a conversation now about the risks drone technology will carry for sovereignty, and civil liberties. Such a conversation, possibly leading to agreements and commitments to restrain this technology's use, would be in the U.S. interest.

Endnotes

[1] See "Grant U.S. Aid Listed by Program, Counter-Narcotics Programs, Entire Region, 2000-2013," *Just the Facts* http://justf.org/All_Grants_Program?year1=2000&year2=2013&funding=Counter-Narcotics+Programs&subregion=Entire+Region&x=73&y=10.

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