

CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE

REVISITING RAND'S 1994 STUDY: THE MILITARIZATION, POLITICAL  
MANIPULATION AND CONTINUED FAILURE OF THE UNITED STATES' WAR ON  
DRUGS

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## Summary

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Many academic experts, political leaders, and economists have leveled the assertion that the United States' War on Drugs has failed. In this assessment, which to a large degree accepts and supports these assertions of the drug war's failure based upon the empirical evidence regarding the ineffectiveness of the programs that comprise it, we focus upon the reasons for the United States' continued implementation of drug-control policies (specifically, "supply-control" programs, which still represent two-thirds of our nation's drug-control spending) that have failed consistently over the past three decades, using a groundbreaking government-commissioned 1994 RAND study as the primary benchmark for assessing the efficacy and development of drug policy. Although trillions of taxpayers' dollars that have been spent in Latin America and Afghanistan to combat the drug trade, U.S. drug demand, consumption, and global production have remained stable, while drug production in countries in which the U.S. is involved in international drug-control has increased significantly. In South America, the "contradiction between U.S. counternarcotics policies and the economic tenets of neoliberal development"<sup>1</sup> remains obvious to objective observers, as the U.S. increasingly uses the War on Drugs as a politically-viable means of achieving a variety of non-drug-related military, strategic, and diplomatic goals (such as the establishment of a strong military presence in Colombia in response to a perceived threat of anti-U.S. elements, such as Venezuela's President, Hugo Chavez). In Afghanistan, where the U.S. is currently involved in a full-scale anti-insurgency occupation, we are seeing the inverse of the situation in South America; rather than being

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Lehman. "A 'Medicine of Death'? U.S. Policy and Political Disarray in Bolivia, 1985-2006," in *Addicted to Failure: U.S. Security Policy in Latin America and the Andean Region*, ed. Brian Loveman (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 131

implemented as a political tool for non-drug related agendas, in Afghanistan the War on Drugs has been encompassed by the “War on Terror,” and is actually being under-utilized as a political tool. Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the “War on Terror” has transcended the War on Drugs in terms of political popularity and public support – despite the empirical evidence demonstrating that drug-production in Afghanistan is directly related to the success and financing of terrorist and insurgent organizations (such as al-Qaida and the Taliban). While the War on Terror has caused a divergence in the formulation of foreign drug-control policy with regards to the Americas and Afghanistan, there are several common themes underlying the United States’ “War on Drugs:” the consistent absence of accountability, the lack of evidence-based policy formulation, and insufficient (or inexistent) actual concern for diminishing U.S. drug consumption. Overall, the United States’ War on Drugs has become an enormously powerful and politically-feasible vehicle for pursuing political goals, both drug- and non-drug-related, abroad. The United States’ failure and reluctance to respond politically to the findings of the 1994 RAND study illuminate the power of the War on Drugs as a political tool used to pursue a variety of goals and agendas, often unrelated to actually decreasing U.S. drug consumption, while operating on under the auspices of drug-control. While diplomatic and political measures being taken abroad to ensure the security of the United States are certainly well-warranted given the increasing threat posed by non-state actors (such as terrorist organizations), the deliberate use of the War on Drugs as a vehicle for achieving non-drug related goals is not only misleading and politically immoral, but also potentially dangerous, as the actual threats posed by the drug trade remain unaddressed and our failed policies and programs continue to be funded without question.

## **Introduction**

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### **U.S. Drug Control: Supply vs. Demand Programs and the 1994 RAND Study**

In this assessment, I will be examining the role and formulation of drug-control policy over the past two decades, specifically with regards to a groundbreaking (but widely ignored) study commissioned by the RAND Corporation in 1994 titled, “Controlling Cocaine: Supply Versus Demand Programs.” According to the study, all U.S. anti-narcotics efforts fall into one of two categories: “supply-control” programs and “demand-control” programs.<sup>2</sup> “Supply-control” programs, which seek to curtail the supply of drugs, aim to raise the costs to drug dealers by seizing drugs, assets, and making arrests. The resulting increases in production costs raise retail drug prices, and thus indirectly (and theoretically) reduce consumption.<sup>3</sup> The most prevalent “supply-control” programs employed by the United States are interdiction, source-country control, and domestic enforcement. Over the past fifteen years, “supply-control” programs have represented the bulk of our drug-control efforts; in 1992, these “supply-control” programs accounted for 93% of the estimated \$13 billion spent on drug control. “Demand-control” programs, on the other hand, aim to reduce consumption directly, without going through the aforementioned “price-mechanism.”<sup>4</sup> The two main “demand-control” programs employed by the United States are treatment and prevention, which in 1992 (treatment) received only 7% of the U.S.’ drug-control budget.

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<sup>2</sup> C. Peter Rydell and Susan S. Everingham. “Controlling Cocaine: Supply Versus Demand Programs,” (RAND Corporation Drug Policy Resource Center, 1994), xii.

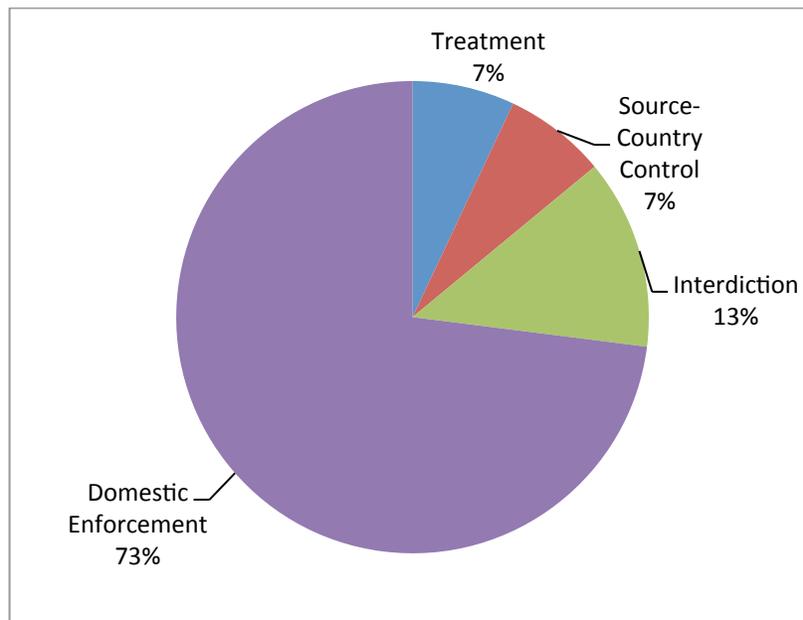
<sup>3</sup> (Rydell and Everingham 1994), xvi.

<sup>4</sup> (Rydell and Everingham 1994), xii.

**Figure 1: U.S. Drug Control Programs Assessed in 1994 RAND Study<sup>5</sup>**

	<b>Intervention Method</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Supply-Control</b>	Source-Country Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crop eradication</li> <li>• Seizures of narcotics components</li> <li>• Seizure of narcotics</li> </ul>
	Interdiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug seizures and asset seizures by the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Army, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement)</li> </ul>
	Domestic Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug seizures, asset seizures, and arrests of drug dealers and their agents by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies</li> <li>• Imprisonment of convicted drug dealers and their agents</li> </ul>
<b>Demand-Control</b>	Treatment of Heavy Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outpatient and residential treatment programs</li> </ul>

**Figure 2 U.S. Distribution of Annual Expenditure on Cocaine Control, 1992<sup>6</sup>**



<sup>5</sup> (Rydell and Everingham 1994), p. xii

<sup>6</sup> (Rydell and Everingham 1994), p. xiii

Overall, the RAND study asserted with confidence and empirical evidence that the U.S.’ War on Drugs expensive supply-control programs and policies, formulated during the twenty years prior to 1994, are wasteful and ineffective at best.<sup>7</sup> I will begin examination of the War on Drugs at this point in time primarily because this 1994 study produced some of the most objective and rational empirical analysis regarding drug-control to be commissioned by the U.S. government. By 1994, the ‘War on Drugs’ had to a great extent outgrown its nascent stage of infancy; our drug-control policies (and their failures) could no longer be attributed solely to a small handful of influential leaders, such as Nixon. Rather, by this point, the War on Drugs had become a twenty-year-old policy precedent, with consistent bipartisan support in all branches of government, and a high degree of public exposure. Though the War on Drugs has created externalities that politicians have been able to use for their own political benefit since its unilateral inception in 1973, by 1994, U.S. politicians’ and leaders’ experience and familiarity with the interplay of drug-control policy formulation and the achievement of political agendas had matured significantly. Unfortunately, this increase in our leaders’ experience regarding the politics of the War on Drugs has not translated into the implementation of more effective policies, let alone the overhaul or reassessment of failed or questionably-founded drug-control policies. In essence, the first twenty years of the United States’ War on Drugs were relatively unprecedented and highly experimental, and the (causes of) policy failures that occurred during the drug war’s infancy are far more obvious than the (causes of the) U.S. drug war’s more recent failures. Reasons for this include relative increases in accountability, government transparency, and cooperation with third-party institutions. As I will briefly address, the U.S.’ War on Drugs during its first twenty years of existence was a farce. Policy was formulated on the basis of irrational fear, racist ideology, and individual political considerations; empirical evidence and expert

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<sup>7</sup> (Rydell and Everingham 1994)

considerations had almost no bearing whatsoever. Examining the flaws and failures of the U.S.’ War on Drugs during this period is more appalling than insightful, as a very brief overview will sufficiently acquaint the reader with the drug war’s outlandish and tenuous foundations. Thus, examining the War on Drugs from 1994 onward will allow us to evaluate not only the effectiveness of our drug-control policies, but also the political considerations that have helped shape these policies, along with the alarming divergence between empirical evidence of drug-control effectiveness and actual policy formulation.

### **Background: The Nixon Administration and the Foundations of the War on Drugs**

Over the past four decades, the United States’ War on Drugs has become a firmly entrenched component of American domestic and foreign policy, representing over \$2.5 trillion in government spending.<sup>8</sup> Since the establishment of the Drug Enforcement Agency under President Nixon’s administration in 1973, American leaders have consistently embraced the precedents of federal “drug-control” spending set before them, despite blatant evidence that many of the foundational policies underlying the War on Drugs were formulated by individuals (such as President Nixon) on the basis of racist personal ideology or in pursuit of political gain:

*“Let’s look at strong societies. The Russians. God damn it, they root them [homosexuals and drug users] out...Dope? Do you think the Russians allow dope? Hell no. Not if they can allow, not if they can catch it, they send them up. You see, homosexuality, dope, immorality in general: These are the enemies of strong societies. That’s why the Communists and the left-wingers are pushing the stuff, they’re trying to destroy us...you know it’s a funny thing, every one of the bastards that are out for legalizing marijuana is Jewish. What the Christ is the matter*

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<sup>8</sup>Claire Suddath, “The War Drugs,” *Time Magazine*, March 25, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1887488,00.html> (accessed March 5, 2010).

*with the Jews, Bob [Haldeman, Nixon White House Chief of Staff], what is the matter with them?”<sup>9</sup> – President Richard Nixon, 1971*

*“We understood we could not make it illegal to be young or poor or black in the United States, but we could criminalize their common pleasure. We understood that drugs were not the health problem we were making them out to be, but it was such a perfect issue for the Nixon White House that we couldn’t resist it.”<sup>10</sup> – John D. Ehrlichman, Assistant to President Nixon for Domestic Affairs*

*“President Nixon emphasized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this fact while not appearing to.”<sup>11</sup> – H.R. Haldeman, Nixon Administration White House Chief of Staff*

*“If we hyped the drug problem into a national crisis, we knew that Congress would give us anything we asked for.”<sup>12</sup> – Egil “Bud” Krogh, Nixon Administration Aide Convicted in Watergate Scandal*

Even after twenty years of U.S. War on Drugs political experience and the surfacing of such appalling revelations regarding its foundations (and founders), our nation continued to wage the war on drugs as a political tool, with actual drug-use results preceding ideological agendas and foreign military considerations. During these twenty years since its inception, our nation spent the vast majority of its “drug-control” spending on “supply-control” programs, which are those that aim to decrease drug consumption by attacking drug producers and traffickers and

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<sup>9</sup> Dan Baum, "Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure," *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure*, August-September 1997, <http://sonic.net/~doret/k/Issues/96-08%20AUG/smokeanmirrors.html> (accessed 4 20, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> (Baum, *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure* 1996)

<sup>11</sup> Dan Baum, *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure* (Boston, Massachusetts: Back Bay Books, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> Edward Jay Epstein, *Agency of Fear: Opiates and Political Power in America* (London: Verso Books, 1977).

incarcerating domestic dealers and users. Contemporary scholars attribute these policies to a variety of causes. Some blame Regan's "predilection for supply-side strategies and tactics,"<sup>13</sup> and consider his decision to "get tough" on the war on drugs and label it an urgent "national security" issue as a means of garnering political support and attracting attention among counterculture-weary conservatives across party lines. Many others, however, see the policies of this era as more than just politically motivated; one scholar describes the U.S. War on Drugs policies during the Nixon and Reagan Administrations as "a stunningly comprehensive and well-designed system of racialized social control."<sup>14</sup>

### **The Ghost of Jim Crow: The Persistence of Racial Disparities in U.S. Drug-Law Enforcement**<sup>15</sup>

Although the subsequent U.S. Presidential administrations have become more tolerant and less bigoted, the effects of Nixon's racially-motivated drug-control policies have certainly lingered. In the words of Jamie Fellner, senior counsel with *Human Rights Watch's* U.S. Program, "Jim Crow may be dead, but the drug war has never been color-blind."<sup>16</sup>

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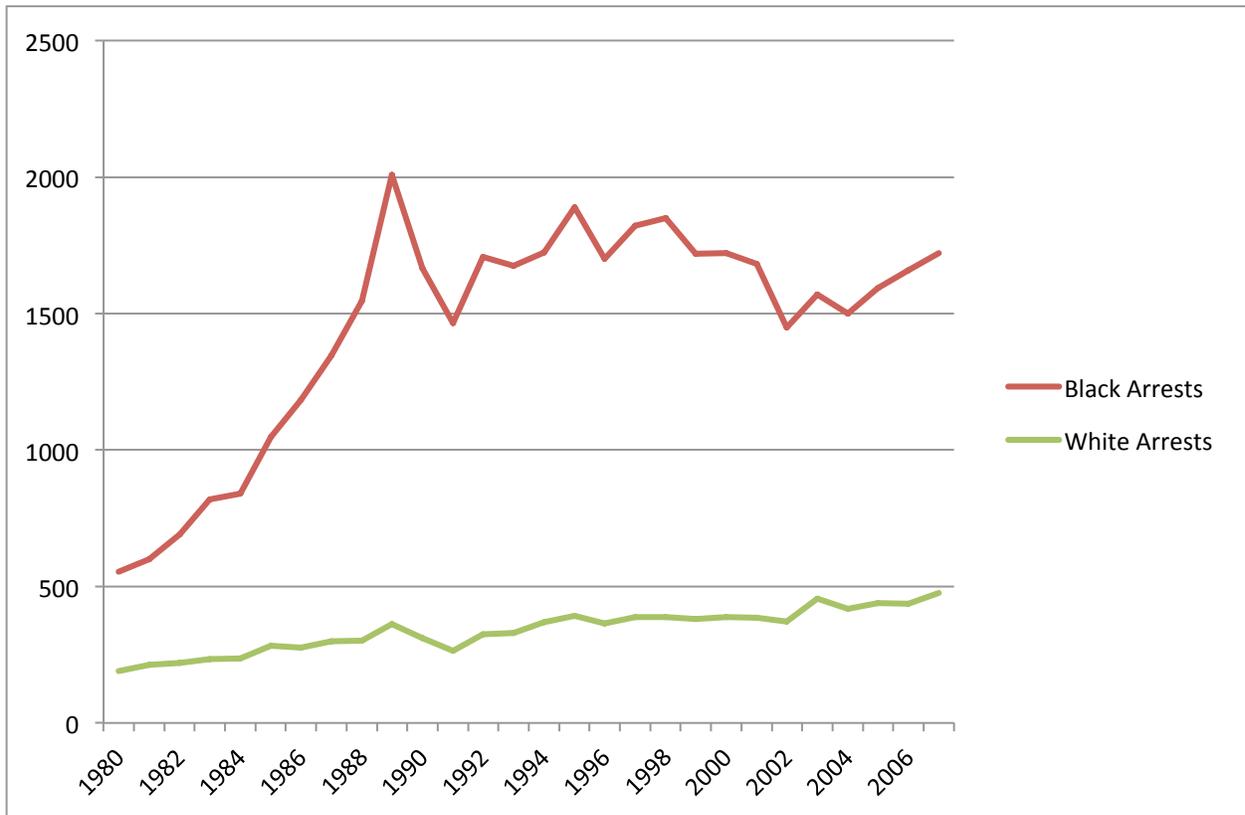
<sup>13</sup> Bruce Michael Bagley, "US Foreign Policy and the War on Drugs: Analysis of a Policy Failure," *Journal of Interamerican and World Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 2/3, 1988: 189-212.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, The New Press, January 5, 2010. Online Excerpt <http://www.theroot.com/views/new-jim-crow?page=0,2>

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Decades of Disparity: Drug Arrests and Race in the United States*, (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2009), 7.

<sup>16</sup> Jamie Fellner, interview by Human Rights Watch, , *U.S. Drug Arrests Skewed by Race*, Human Rights Watch (March 9, 2009).

**Figure 3: U.S. Rates of Adult Drug Arrests by race, 1980-2007<sup>17</sup>**  
 (rates calculated per 100,000 residents of each race)



These statistics demonstrate not only the detrimental and lasting effects of our nation’s racially-motivated foundational drug-control policies, but also the extent to which U.S. leaders have failed to address such inherent and blatant flaws as time progressed. By the twentieth anniversary of the war on drugs, “the U.S. was losing the war on virtually every front,” as illicit drugs of all types...were more readily available and cheaper in the U.S. in January 1989 than they had been at the outset of the Reagan presidency in 1981.”<sup>18</sup> By 1994, the United States was still consistently spending over 90 percent of its drug-control funding on the “supply-control” programs created and touted by Nixon and Reagan, despite the overwhelming evidence of their

<sup>17</sup> (Human Rights Watch 2009)

<sup>18</sup> (Bagley, 1988)

ineffectiveness and detrimental unintended consequences. By 2003, “relative to the population, blacks were 10.1 times more likely than whites to be sent to prison for drug offenses.”<sup>19</sup>

## **The Status Quo of the U.S.’ War on Drugs**

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Although trillions of taxpayers’ dollars have been spent in Latin America and abroad to combat the drug trade, U.S. drug demand, consumption, and global production have remained stable; “Marijuana, cocaine, and heroin are still widely available in the United States...and at lower prices than in previous decades.”<sup>20</sup> “In spite of our efforts [with regards to the war on drugs],” remarked a U.S. Congressman this year, “the positive results are few and far between.”<sup>21</sup> The detrimental and often unintended effects of the war on drugs, however, have recently proven infinitely more significant than any positive impacts our drug-control programs are having on U.S. drug consumption: In Mexico, for instance, drug-related violence has surged to unprecedented heights (with 7,000 drug-related deaths in 2009 alone<sup>22</sup>), despite increased levels of funding to Mexico’s military for drug-control over the past three years.<sup>23</sup> As even Secretary of State Hillary Clinton admitted that “decades of U.S. anti-narcotics policies have been a failure and have contributed to the explosion of drug violence south of the border,”<sup>24</sup> it is becoming increasingly clear that our historic drug-control policies are in dire need of reassessment. The parallels between our current situation and the conditions of the 1920s, when

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<sup>19</sup> (Human Rights Watch 2009)

<sup>20</sup> Teslik, Lee Hudson. “The Forgotten Drug War,” Council on Foreign Relations. April 6, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> “U.S. Policy Towards the Americas in 2010 and Beyond”, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, March 10, 2010. Statement of Subcommittee Chairman, Representative Eliot L. Engel (D-NY).

<sup>22</sup> O’Shaughnessy, Hugh. “US waves white flag in disastrous ‘War on Drugs’”, *The Independent*. January 17, 2010. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-waves-white-flag-in-disastrous-war-on-drugs-1870218.html>

<sup>23</sup> Mary Beth Sheridan, "Clinton: U.S. Drug Policies Failed, Fueled Mexico's Drug War," *The Washington Post*, March 26, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> (Sheridan 2009)

the U.S. Congress outlawed alcohol and effectively created a lucrative black market that enriched and empowered violent criminals like Al Capone, are increasingly difficult to ignore. In the words of one scholar, “After 40 years of defeat and failure, America’s War on Drugs is being buried in the same fashion as it was born – amid bloodshed, confusion, corruption, and scandal.”<sup>25</sup>

As the U.S. continues to fund these same programs (which include eradication, crop spraying, and military assistance), and we continue to see no significant change in U.S. drug consumption that can be accredited to our multi-billion dollar drug-control spending, it has become increasingly clear that our War on Drugs has expanded its reach far beyond the realm of narcotics and drug consumption. As our nation has recently become engaged in full-scale wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, focus and scrutiny have “naturally shifted away from the war on drugs,” with many experts asserting that “the mandate for counter-narcotics enforcement has become muddled.”<sup>26</sup> The clearest implication to be drawn from this shift is that transparency, accountability, and evidence-based policy formulation regarding the U.S. War on Drugs have diminished (or have simply failed to develop sufficiently alongside changes in leadership and increased evidence regarding the effectiveness of historic U.S. drug-control policies). Most Americans are far more interested in the outcomes of the economic recovery and the “Wars on Terror” in Iraq in Afghanistan than they are in the outcome of the War on Drugs. Given the past and current performance of the War on Drugs, however, the average American’s lack of interest in the war on drugs isn’t unwarranted – drug use in the U.S. has remained relatively stable over the past fifteen years, while narcotics production in countries where the U.S. is intervening militarily for drug-control purposes continues to grow. In a recent government report, the U.S.

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<sup>25</sup> (O’Shaughnessy 2010)

<sup>26</sup> (Teslik 2006)

Justice Department's National Drug Intelligence Center said that "overall, the availability of illegal drugs is increasing,"<sup>27</sup> and that "the overall threat posed by illicit drugs will not diminish in the near term."<sup>28</sup> To most Americans, the notion of someday declaring "victory" in the War on Drugs has increasingly become something of a pipe dream.

Capitalizing upon the lack of sufficient accountability and transparency regarding the War on Drugs, U.S. leaders have enjoyed extensive autonomy and impunity in their formulation of drug-control policy, demonstrated by the United States' continued funding of programs that have failed blatantly and consistently in the past and that continue to perpetuate a high degree of "racial disparities in U.S. drug-law enforcement."<sup>29</sup> As "broader foreign policy objectives have encompassed narcotics control,"<sup>30</sup> the War on Drugs has become a politically-feasible means for implementing policies (both drug- and non-drug-related) in any region where our leaders have decided that "drug production is posing a threat to U.S. security" – despite the fact that, increasingly over the past ten years, public opinion, foreign and domestic leaders, and expert findings asserts that the United States' War on Drugs has failed.<sup>31</sup><sup>32</sup><sup>33</sup> Though our nation has spent over a trillion dollars in "drug-control" funding since the War on Drug's inception, few positive results have been seen domestically and abroad.

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<sup>27</sup> National Drug Intelligence Center, U.S. Department of Justice. *National Drug Threat Assessment 2010*, February 2010. Executive Summary, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> (Human Rights Watch 2009)

<sup>30</sup> (Teslik, 2006)

<sup>31</sup> Cardoso, Fernando Henrique and Gaviria, Cesar and Zedillo, Ernesto. "The War on Drugs Is a Failure", *The Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2009. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123535114271444981.html>

<sup>32</sup> Kuzmarov, Jeremy. "The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure: From the Vietnam to the Afghan Quagmire," *History News Network*. July 20, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> "Feds: National Drug Intelligence Center Predicts Continued Failure in War on Drugs," *The Drug War Chronicle*, Issue #625, March 26, 2010.

## **“Controlling Cocaine” – Reassessment of the 1994 RAND Study Findings and the Sustained Divergence of U.S. Drug-Control Policy and Evidence-Based Research**

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### **Then and Now: The Cost Effectiveness of Supply vs. Demand Control Programs**

While the roots of the U.S.’ drug-control policy failures can be traced back as far as Prohibition and the Nixon Presidency, in this study we will examine our nation’s drug policies over the course of the past twenty years, relative specifically to a RAND Corporation study prepared for the Office of National Drug Control Policy in 1994 titled “Controlling Cocaine: Supply Versus Demand Programs.” According to the study, all anti-narcotics efforts fall into one of two categories: “supply-control” programs and “demand-control” programs.<sup>34</sup> “Supply-control” programs, which seek to curtail the supply of drugs, aim to raise the costs to drug dealers by seizing drugs, assets, and making arrests. The resulting increases in production costs raise retail drug prices, and thus indirectly (in theory) reduce consumption.<sup>35</sup> The most prevalent “supply-control” programs employed by the United States are interdiction, source-country control, and domestic enforcement. Over the past fifteen years, “supply-control” programs have represented the bulk of our drug-control efforts; in 1992, these “supply-control” programs accounted for 93% of the estimated \$13 billion spent on drug control. Today, these “supply-control” programs represent 65% of our nation’s \$14,844 billion Federal Drug Control spending (in 2009).<sup>36</sup> “Demand-control” programs, on the other hand, aim to reduce consumption directly, without

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<sup>34</sup> C. Peter Rydell and Susan S. Everingham, *Controlling Cocaine: Supply Versus Demand Programs*, Drug Policy Research Center, RAND (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994), xvi.xii.

<sup>35</sup> (Rydell & Everingham 1994)

<sup>36</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy, “National Drug Control Strategy: FY 2010 Budget Summary,” (Washington, DC, 2009), 13.

going through the “price-mechanism.”<sup>37</sup> The two main “demand-control” programs employed by the United States are treatment and prevention, which in 1992 (treatment) received only 7% of the U.S.’ drug-control budget. In 2005, demand-control programs reached their peak of funding relative to supply-control programs, representing nearly 45% of the United States’ annual drug-control budget. Although these figures represent a slow yet consistent growth of funding for “demand-control” programs in relation to their “supply-control” counterparts throughout the 1992-1995 period, over the past five years we have seen this shift towards increased “demand-control” funding level off; in 2009, prevention and treatment received 35% of our nation’s Federal Drug Control budget, representing consecutive annual declines in demand-control funding during the latter years of the Bush Administration and the beginning of the Obama administration.<sup>38</sup>

The RAND study, which will serve as a benchmark for analyzing the efficacy and intent of drug-control strategy and policy since 1994, sought to determine the effectiveness of these different methods (principally “supply-control” programs versus “demand-control” programs) in terms of the “cost of a given reduction in U.S. consumption of cocaine.” The findings of the study were surprising: to achieve a one percent consumption reduction, the U.S. would have to spend \$783 million on source-country control, \$366 million on interdiction, \$246 for domestic enforcement - or \$34 million for treatment.<sup>39</sup> Thus, RAND found that in 1994, even the least costly supply-control program (domestic enforcement) “costs 7.3 times as much as treatment to achieve the same consumption reduction.”<sup>40</sup> Even when the study evaluated the effectiveness of

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<sup>37</sup> (Rydell & Everingham 1994), xii.

<sup>38</sup> (Washington, DC, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> (Rydell & Everingham 1994), xii.

<sup>40</sup> Rydell, C. Peter and Everingham, Susan S. “Controlling Cocaine: Supply Versus Demand Programs.” Published by RAND Drug Policy Research Center, 1994. Prepared for Office of National Drug Control Policy, United States Army. P xiii

supply-control and demand-control programs using different criteria, it found that “the cost-effectiveness ranking of the control programs... [was] the same whether one evaluates the programs in terms of their effects on consumption, the number of users, or societal costs of crime and lost productivity due to cocaine use... in all cases, the supply-control programs are more costly than treatment programs per unit accomplishment.”<sup>41</sup> Particularly shocking were the findings regarding the effectiveness of drug-control programs in terms of “reductions in the societal cost of crime and lost productivity:”

**Figure 4: Cost-Effectiveness of Supply-Control and Demand Control Programs, 1994<sup>42</sup>**

<b><u>Program Type</u></b>	<b><u>Program</u></b>	<b><u>Savings</u></b> (in terms of reductions in societal cost of crime and lost productivity) per dollar spent on Program (1994)
<b><u>Supply-Control</u></b>	Source-Country Control	\$0.15
	Interdiction	\$0.32
	Domestic Enforcement	\$0.52
<b><u>Demand-Control</u></b>	Treatment	\$7.46

**15 Years Later: An Assessment of Policy Shifts and Political Response to the 1994 RAND Study**

Throughout the past fifteen years since the RAND study was released, the U.S. has allocated more and more of its budget to demand-control programs; the U.S. currently spends

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p xv

<sup>42</sup> (Rydell and Everingham 1994)

one-third of its drug-control budget on treatment and prevention, as opposed to a mere 7% in 1992.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, in many regards the 1994 RAND study has failed to affect policy sufficiently, as we are still spending approximately \$5 billion annually on interdiction and international drug control operations,<sup>44</sup> which “have met with mixed success when considered as specific case scenarios, but represent an overwhelming failure taken as a whole.”<sup>45</sup> After so many years of failure in our efforts to stem the supply of drugs through interdiction and “source-country” control, it is obvious that there are certain underlying, non-drug-related motives for continuing to fund such ineffective programs. While such motives, such as political and economic gain and the establishment of key military alliances in volatile regions, are perhaps in our nation’s best interest, it is time to address the War on Drugs directly, reevaluate its strategies, and discontinue its use as a vehicle for legitimizing otherwise-infeasible political and military goals abroad. Even in regions where the intentions of U.S. drug-control policy are more transparent (such as Afghanistan, where the War on Drugs has become but a mere component of the broader War on Terror), we are seeing the use of our favored supply-control programs resulting in failure – and not just with regards to drug-control, but with regards to our broader, strategic interests such as stability and democratic peace.

While the majority of the current evidence and analysis regarding the effectiveness of supply-control programs versus demand-control programs in decreasing U.S. drug consumption suggests that supply-control programs are still (after the increase in allocation for these programs from 7% in 1992 to approximately 34% in 2009<sup>46</sup>) less cost-effective than demand control programs, some disagree. Not surprisingly, some of the strongest proponents of “supply-control”

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<sup>43</sup> McNulty, Paul; Samuels, Paul N.; Collier McColl, Jenny. “Viewpoints: Should the U.S. Spend More Money on Enforcement or Treatment?” *PBS Online*, <http://www.thirteen.org/closetohome/viewpoints/html/budg.html>

<sup>44</sup> “National Drug Control Strategy” FY 2009 Budget Summary. The White House, February, 2008. P. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Teslik, Lee Hudson. “The Forgotten Drug War,” Council on Foreign Relations. April 6, 2006.

<sup>46</sup> (The White House 2010)

programs as a means of decreasing the demand and consumption of illicit drugs in the U.S. are Congressmen or lobbyists. Paul McNulty, Chief Counsel of the Subcommittee on Crime of the U.S. House of Representatives, maintains that dedicating two-thirds of our nation's drug budget to interdiction and law enforcement and one third on treatment and prevention is "the appropriate ratio,"<sup>47</sup> arguing that, "the premise of treating drug prevention and drug interdiction as separate and comparable options is inherently flawed. Since too many of our fellow citizens will be tempted to abuse their bodies with illegal drugs, the best way to prevent drug use is to stop the flow of this poison to our streets...[the federal government] must remain focused on interdiction because that is the mission for which it is best suited and solely responsible."<sup>48</sup> His argument, clearly lacking tangible facts, suggests that supply-control programs deserve twice as much funding (and are thus twice as effective as demand control programs), "since too many of our fellow citizens will be tempted to abuse illegal drugs." Nowhere in Mr. McNulty's multi-paragraph response does he address actual U.S. drug consumption statistics, nor does he offer any comparative statistics regarding the effectiveness of supply-control versus demand control programs in decreasing U.S. drug consumption.

In comparison, the contrary evidence (that we are spending too much on supply-control programs) seems unassailable. "Source-country control" programs (those that attack production in the source countries), which have consistently represented hundreds of millions of dollars of our annual drug-control spending, have failed to have any significant impact upon U.S. drug consumption, regardless of the location. In this report, we will compare drug-control policy, spending, and programs with actual levels of drug cultivation and production primarily with

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<sup>47</sup> Paul McNulty, Paul N. Samuels and Jenny Collier McColl, "PBS Online," *PBS Online*, April 13, 2000, <http://www.thirteen.org/closetohome/viewpoints/html/budg.html> (accessed March 2, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> (McNulty, Samuels and McColl 2000)

regards to three major drug-producing regions: Central America, the Andean region of South America, and Afghanistan. As Rydell and Everingham pointed out in the 1994 RAND study, the purpose of “supply-control” counter-narcotics programs is to curb U.S. drug consumption and demand *indirectly* by raising the costs of cultivation, production and trafficking to suppliers (assuming that the increase in drug prices will lead to a decrease in U.S. demand for and consumption of drugs). Therefore, examination of actual U.S. drug consumption statistics will often be precluded, as the majority of recent evidence indicates that the U.S.’ “supply-control” anti-drug programs actually have no impact upon drug cultivation and thus the global supply of drugs, and in some cases actually lead to an increase in drug production and global supply.<sup>49</sup> While the theoretical foundations of our nation’s “supply-control” anti-drug programs may have appeared plausible in the past, it is now becoming increasingly evident that the relationship between U.S. drug consumption, global drug production, and costs to drug producers is far more complex than our policymakers would like to admit; domestic forces, such as rising prescription-drug abuse and a lack of treatment-based and demand-reduction programs, are largely ignored, while drug production abroad is painted by politicians as the real target (and threat to the U.S.) with regards to the war on drugs. Nevertheless, with each additional year of increasing “supply-control” spending (which ostensibly aims to ultimately reduce U.S. drug-consumption), we are seeing that the stable and largely unaddressed U.S. demand for drugs has far greater influence upon drug production and consumption abroad than all types of (U.S.) attacks upon the global narcotics supply chain; in Canada, for instance, “we recently observed that a 100-kilogram heroin seizure, Canada’s largest in history, had no impact on the supply of heroin”<sup>50</sup> in the

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<sup>49</sup> Cornell, Svante. “The Interactions of Narcotics and Conflict,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 42, No. 6. November, 2005, pp 751-760.

<sup>50</sup> Werb, Daniel; Kerr, Thomas; Montaner, Julio; and Wood, Evan. “The Need for an Evidence-Based Approach to Controlling Opium Production in Afghanistan,” *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 2008. Pp. 440.

country. Among a variety of other independent studies asserting the uselessness of supply-side drug-control programs, a recent World Customs Organization report found that, “even the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> security and drug-control measures have had a ‘negligible’ impact on the influx of illicit drugs into the U.S.”<sup>51</sup><sup>52</sup>

## **Close to Home: A Domestic-Level Examination of the War on Drugs and the Politics that Sustain It**

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The most recent evidence regarding domestic drug use is politically unaddressed to an appalling degree, and, like the evidence regarding our drug-control programs abroad, is blatantly inconsistent with our government’s drug-control funding decisions. While it may come as no surprise that prescription drug use is up among Americans, a recent West Virginia University study has found that hospitalizations for widely-abused prescription drugs (specifically, opioids, sedatives, and tranquilizers) in the U.S. have increased by 65% from 1999 to 2006.<sup>53</sup> “Deaths and hospitalizations associated with prescription drug misuse have reached epidemic proportions,” asserted the study’s lead author, Jeffrey H. Coben, M.D., pointing out that poisoning is now the second leading cause of unintentional injury death in the United States.<sup>54</sup> While the United States government is spending billions of dollars abroad to attack coca growers and foreign drug producers, under the pretense that this will ultimately cause a decline in U.S. drug consumption as the drug prices rise, it seems that our domestic pharmaceutical companies

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<sup>51</sup> Wood, E; Tyndall, MW; Spittal, PM; Li, K; Anis, AH; Hogg, RS; *et al.* “Impact of supply-side policies for control of illicit drugs in the face of the AIDS and overdose epidemics: investigation of a massive heroin seizure.” *CMAJ*, 2003, pp. 165-9.

<sup>52</sup> (Werb, et al. 2008)

<sup>53</sup> Johns, Amy. “Study from WVU School of Medicine shows poisoning by prescription drugs rising,” April 6, 2010. Press release (electronic), <http://wvutoday.wvu.edu/n/2010/04/06/study-from-wvu-school-of-medicine-shows-poisoning-by-prescription-drugs-rising>

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*

are stepping in to fulfill any unmet demand; in 2006, in a survey of teenagers, 62% said prescription pain relievers (such as the notorious Oxycontin) were “easy to get from their parents’ medicine cabinet,” while a similar analysis concluded that “admissions to federally-supported treatment programs for prescription opioid abuse increased 342% from 1996-2006 – a comprehensive problem that is also estimated to cost insurance companies tens of billions of dollars a year.”<sup>55</sup> Despite this grim and ominous increase in domestically-produced drug consumption, detailed heavily by the aforementioned studies regarding the decade-long period ended 2006, we have seen a consistent decrease in domestic- and demand-control drug funding in the four years that have followed.<sup>56</sup> Although widely-abused prescription drugs are posing an increasing threat to our nation’s well-being, and furthermore appear poised to fill any supply-shortage that may possibly (although thoroughly unlikely) be caused by the U.S.’ extensive supply-control programs abroad, our nation has decided to continue funding indirect and ineffective programs in countries like Colombia and Afghanistan rather than to actually address this increasingly pressing domestic narcotics threat. Between 2009 and 2010, U.S. Drug Control funding for prevention programs fell from \$1.815 billion to \$1.514 billion, while funding for international drug-control funding increased from \$2.082 billion to \$2.288 billion.

Given the consistent lack of success regarding the U.S.’ drug control programs, the domestic political rationale behind the War on Drugs is somewhat unclear; considering the evidence, one might ask, why do we keep electing leaders in Congress and the White House who continue to fund historically-useless drug-control programs? As we will continue to discuss in our examination of the War on Drugs abroad, U.S. politicians have a variety of strategic and

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<sup>55</sup> Oregon State University. "Pain Management Failing as Fears of Prescription Drug Abuse Rise." *ScienceDaily* 5 January 2010. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/01/100104151929.htm> (accessed 17 April 2010)

<sup>56</sup> (The White House 2008)

diplomatic reasons for promoting drug-control policies that have proven to fail at reducing U.S. drug consumption and availability. The U.S. public, on the other hand, by-and-large has more to benefit from the implementation of successful drug-control policies, as the U.S. loses tens of billions of dollars per year in “societal costs” (from cocaine use alone), which can be defined as the “estimated cost of crime and lost productivity due to drug use.”<sup>57</sup> If this is the case, how is it that the American public hasn’t demanded comprehensive drug-control reform?

Perhaps the main reason that we haven’t seen a united and forceful grassroots-level movement promoting the reevaluation and reform of drug control laws is that drugs are a highly politicized, polarizing, and even taboo subject to many Americans. Among conservatives and proponents of civil obedience, many draw little or no distinction between “drug use” and “criminal activity;” this U.S. demographic is usually behind reform measures, such as President Reagan’s, which seek to “get tough” on drugs, by promoting measures such as harsher sentencing for drug-related convictions. This demographic was to a great extent behind the establishment of draconian laws for possession of crack cocaine, “which set a mandatory minimum five-year federal prison sentence for possession of only five grams”<sup>58</sup> of the substance (which many consider an inherently racist policy, as crack cocaine use is more prevalent among blacks, while powder cocaine use is more prevalent among whites<sup>59</sup>). Conversely, to receive the same five-year mandatory sentence, one must be in possession of 500 grams of powder cocaine.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> (Rydell and Everingham 1994)

<sup>58</sup> Smith, Phillip. “Senate Passes Bill to Reduce, But Not Eliminate, Crack/Powder Sentencing Phillip Smith, “Senate Passes Bill to Reduce, But Not Eliminate, Crack/Powder Sentencing Disparity,” *The War Chronicle*. Disparity,” *The Drug War Chronicle*, online article, March 18, 2010. <http://stopthedrugwar.org/taxonomy/term/174>

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*

<sup>60</sup> *ibid*

On the other hand, there is the more liberal demographic in the U.S., which favors more lenient drug-possession laws and decriminalization of marijuana – this demographic often cites the fact that thousands of Americans are currently in jail for the possession of a substance (cannabis) that has been proven to be less harmful than alcohol in practically every way. Thus, to a great extent, the issue of drug-law and drug legalization or decriminalization is a very divisive and polarizing issue to many Americans; this is a very clear impediment to quick and evidence-based drug-policy reform, as “pro-drug” advocates cite health-facts and evidence of structural racism within the framework of drug law, while “anti-drug” advocates often hold deep-seated, conservative views that associate drug use with criminal activity (and, given the destructive power of drugs like heroin and methamphetamine, have plenty of evidence to counter the evidence posited by liberals).

Overall, the grassroots-level political pressure required to implement significant reform to United States drug policy requires change in social norms and incentives. While the process of changing social norms takes time, it is possible; after decades of marijuana being illegal and thousands of people imprisoned and convicted for possessing marijuana, the U.S. is finally starting to see grassroots-level changes in political sentiment, often in direct defiance to federal laws, that represent the slow but steady change in social norms (such as in California, which has at the state level legalized marijuana use for medical purposes). Such development in social norms has created a powerful grassroots movement whereby a wide range of Americans, both poor and wealthy, are pressuring politicians to address their drug-policy concerns and implement their desired changes in drug-control policy. Such pressure can be applied in a variety of ways; direct funding of politicians in support of a given cause, by public demonstration, or by old-fashioned civil disobedience. This pressure, which can contribute the success or failure of a

politician in certain regions polarized by drug-control policy, has the potential to change politicians' incentives regarding drug policy – most members of Congress would rather adapt to changing social norms among their constituents than lose their seat to a more publicly-receptive competitor. Thus, we can attribute our nation's relatively stagnant and outdated drug-control policies to this dynamic between slowly-changing social norms and our leaders' political (and thus career-related) incentives; while more and more people are beginning to realize that our drug-control policies in South America have had almost no impact upon U.S. drug use and availability, it will take quite some time before social norms change to the extent that they begin to influence the incentives of our nation's leaders and policymakers.

### **South and Central America: Shadow Diplomacy, Unintended Consequences and the Militarization of the War on Drugs**

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In South America, the War on Drugs has to a great extent become a vehicle for U.S. shadow diplomacy and militarization. We continue to generously support Colombia, our strong diplomatic ally and oil exporter (in 2004, Colombia was the 15<sup>th</sup> largest supplier of oil to the U.S.<sup>61</sup>), which also happens to border the oil-rich and increasingly anti-American country of Venezuela. After a decade during which approximately \$8 billion dollars of U.S. “drug-control” funding went directly to Colombia, drugs are still being produced in the country at the same rate, but we now have a strong diplomatic and military alliance with Colombia.<sup>62</sup> While the drug-

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<sup>61</sup> “Top Suppliers of U.S. Crude Oil and Petroleum, 2004” U.S. Energy Information Administration, April 2006.

<sup>62</sup> Leslie Berenstein, "Can Mexico Learn from Colombia's Drug War?," *San Diego Union Tribune*, February 16, 2009.

production statistics (Colombia saw a 27 percent increase in coca production in 2009 alone<sup>63</sup>) represent a drug-control failure, “defenders of the drug war point out that the military-led strategy clawed back territory from armed groups and stabilized Colombia,”<sup>64</sup> suggesting that the War on Drugs nevertheless helped achieve a diplomatic and strategic victory for Colombia and the U.S. with regards to non-drug related agendas. In the words of Aldo Lale-Demoz, the head of the Bogota headquarters of the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime: “It’s not fair to say there has been no progress. We are not winning and we are not losing. We are controlling.”<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, the U.S.’s militarization of the War on Drugs for the achievement of both drug-control and non-drug related goals can have powerful unintended consequences as well. While our efforts in Colombia have led to a tangible increase in the nation’s stability and have diminished the power of the major cartels that once ruled the country, it seems that the U.S.’ war on drugs has simply pushed drug-trafficking (and the consequential empowerment and enrichment of ruthlessly violent cartels) into other countries; Mexico, for example, has seen a surge in its death toll from drug-related over the past three years (from 2,700 in 2007 to 5,600 in 2008 and 6,600 in 2009<sup>66</sup>). With the current situation in Mexico reminiscent of Colombia’s during the reign of Pablo Escobar in the 1980s and 1990s, former U.S. drug czar Barry McCaffrey recently stated that “Juarez [Mexico] is vastly more dangerous than Baghdad or Kabul... The Mexican Army has confronted the cartels, but often the police have been scared or bought off.”<sup>67</sup> According to experts and critics, this “balloon effect” can be explained by our heavily-funded efforts to disrupt supply chains; “this [supply-control funding] is not spent

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<sup>63</sup> Rory Carroll, "Cocaine production surge unleashes wave of violence in Latin America," *The Guardian*, March 9, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid*

<sup>65</sup> *ibid*

<sup>66</sup> Rosenheck, Dan. “The Long Game: The drug war – which some pundits call a quagmire – is not Mexico’s Iraq”. *Newsweek*, March 24, 2010. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/235362/output/print>

<sup>67</sup> Gomora, Doris. “Narco guerra, más peligrosa que Irak: McCaffrey,” *El Universal*, March 23, 2010.

effectively...because new suppliers will always pop up so long as domestic demand exists in the United States.”<sup>68</sup> In Afghanistan, where the U.S.’ War on Drugs has become inextricably intertwined with our war against the Taliban, al-Qaida and anti-Western insurgents, our supply-control policy precedents (notably eradication) have generated “vastly counterproductive effects with respect to not only counternarcotics efforts, but also counterinsurgency, stabilization, and state building.”<sup>69</sup> Overall, the United States’ War on Drugs has become an enormously powerful and politically-feasible vehicle for pursuing political goals, both drug- and non-drug-related, abroad. The United States’ failure and reluctance to respond politically to the findings of the 1994 RAND study illuminate the power of the War on Drugs as a political tool used to pursue a variety of goals and agendas, often unrelated to actually decreasing U.S. drug consumption, while operating on under the auspices of drug-control. While diplomatic and political measures being taken abroad to ensure the security of the United States are certainly well-warranted given the increasing threat posed by non-state actors (such as terrorist organizations), using the War on Drugs as a vehicle for achieving non-drug related goals is not only misleading and politically immoral, but also potentially dangerous as the actual threats posed by the drug trade remain unaddressed and our failed policies and programs continue to be funded without question.

### **Andean Region Favored-Nation Status: Rewarding Drug-Control Failure in Colombia**

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<sup>68</sup> (Gomora 2010)

<sup>69</sup> Felbab-Brown, Vanda. “U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy in Afghanistan”. *The Brookings Institution*. February 23, 2010.

In “a culture that looks to Tom Clancy for solutions to public policy problems,”<sup>70</sup> the use of military might has “always had a peculiar glamour and attraction” to U.S. policymakers, often preceding the analysis of empirical evidence. Compare, for instance, the recommendations made by Peter H. Reuter in 2001 with the drug-control policy decisions made in the following five years. In 2001, Reuter (the same author of the 1994 RAND study) asserted that “source-country programs for cocaine are doomed from the start because the price of coca leaf is a negligible fraction of the retail price of cocaine in the United States.”<sup>71</sup> While the retail price of a kilogram of cocaine (at the time) was \$150,000 in the U.S., the cost of the coca leaf required to produce one kilo cost only about \$300 in the source country.<sup>72</sup> Thus, even if “eradication efforts lead to a doubling of the price of coca leaf,” so that it now costs \$600 for the leaf required to produce a kilogram, “the change in retail price, assuming the cost is passed along, will be negligible. Indeed, leaf prices have varied enormously over the last decade, while the retail price of cocaine has steadily fallen.”<sup>73</sup> Now compare this expert, empirically-based policy assessment to the actual formulation of drug policy: Between 2001 and 2006, American spending on drug control increased 34.4 percent.<sup>74</sup> During this period, there was a 136.7 percent increase in U.S. drug-control spending abroad, and a 20.9 percent decrease in spending on domestic prevention programs<sup>75</sup> - a shift that starkly contrasts with the recommendations and findings of the 1994 RAND study. Experts said that these numbers “reflect a return to a ‘1980s-style’ model, where the bulk of spending was focused on international and interdiction programs; the U.S. government took a different angle, asserting in the Program Summary of the National Drug

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<sup>70</sup> Peter Reuter. “Supply-Side Drug Control,” (RAND Corporation, 2001), xi.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid*

<sup>72</sup> *ibid*

<sup>73</sup> *ibid*

<sup>74</sup> (Teslik, 2006)

<sup>75</sup> (Teslik, 2006)

Control Strategy that “Through eradication, interdiction, and alternative development the United States supports the fight against narcoterrorists and helps secure democracy, extend security, and restore economic prosperity in the region.”<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, by 2006, the consensus among experts appeared to have changed very little: “cracking down on drug supply is mostly useless until we learn to squeeze demand.”<sup>77</sup> According to a former senior adviser to four U.S. drug czars, “as long as there’s a demand, there will be a supply. People will figure out how to get this stuff in because it’s so profitable.”<sup>78</sup>

Today, source-control programs are still being funded, and are still failing miserably. Between 2000 and 2008, under “Plan Colombia,” the U.S. spent over \$4.5 billion in aid to the country.<sup>79</sup> While the plan sought to achieve several objectives, such as weakening the FARC, “neutralizing the drug economy,” “strengthening state presence and improving security,” and “fighting corruption,” “the counternarcotics and counterinsurgency focus dominated the U.S. assistance,” as training and equipment for Colombian armed forces and for drug eradication and interdiction lay at the core of Plan Colombia.<sup>80</sup> Though the Plan “succeeded in the counterinsurgency/security objectives,” it “failed in its stated counternarcotics goals.”<sup>81</sup> In 2000, at the start of Plan Colombia, 136,200 hectares of coca were cultivated in Colombia; its estimated cocaine hydrochloride production potential was 580 metric tons.<sup>82</sup> In 2006, “despite

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<sup>76</sup> (The White House, February 2008)

<sup>77</sup> Lee Hudson Teslik, “The Forgotten Drug War,” *Council of Foreign Relations*, April 6, 2006, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/10373/forgotten\\_drug\\_war.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/10373/forgotten_drug_war.html). (Interview with Mark Kleinman, director of UCLA Drug Policy Analysis Program)

<sup>78</sup> Lee Hudson Teslik, “The Forgotten Drug War,” *Council of Foreign Relations*, April 6, 2006, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/10373/forgotten\\_drug\\_war.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/10373/forgotten_drug_war.html). (Interview with John Carnevale)

<sup>79</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, *Plan Colombia: Drug Reduction Goals Were Not Fully Met, but Security Has Improved; U.S. Agencies Need More Detailed Plans for Reducing Assistance*, October 2008, pp. 15, 28.

<sup>80</sup> Felbab-Brown, Vanda. Brookings Institution, “The Violent Drug Market in Mexico and Lessons from Colombia,” Policy Paper, Number 12, March 2009. P. 10.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid*

<sup>82</sup> U.S. Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR)*, March 2008 <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/102583.pdf>, p. 129.

the largest aerial spraying ever and increasingly substantial manual eradication,”<sup>83</sup> 157,200 hectares of coca were cultivated in Colombia, and the country’s estimated cocaine production potential was 610 metric tons.<sup>84</sup> The statistics for 2007 demonstrate “an even greater failure to achieve the stated goals and make a significant dent into Colombia’s drug production and trafficking.”<sup>85</sup> Despite the progress (in terms of stability) that has been made within Colombia’s borders, “little effect has been had on the overall drug war – due to the persistence of American demand, other countries, namely Peru and Bolivia, have moved to fill the supply vacuum.”<sup>86</sup> Despite having spent \$11.3 billion to fight drugs in Latin America and the Caribbean between 1980 and 2008, good outcomes have been “few and far between,” as “drug trafficking and addiction in the U.S. have not dwindled and drug-related violence in Mexico and Colombia is on the rise.”<sup>87</sup> In 2006, as the U.S. continued allocating millions of dollars in federal drug-control funding to Colombia for its consistently-failing supply-control programs, a United Nations study found that “the level of overall cocaine production [in Colombia and the Andean Region] is practically unchanged from the levels of a decade ago.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> (Felbab-Brown 2009), P. 10.

<sup>84</sup> (U.S. Department of State 2008) p. 129.

<sup>85</sup> (Felbab-Brown 2009)P. 10.

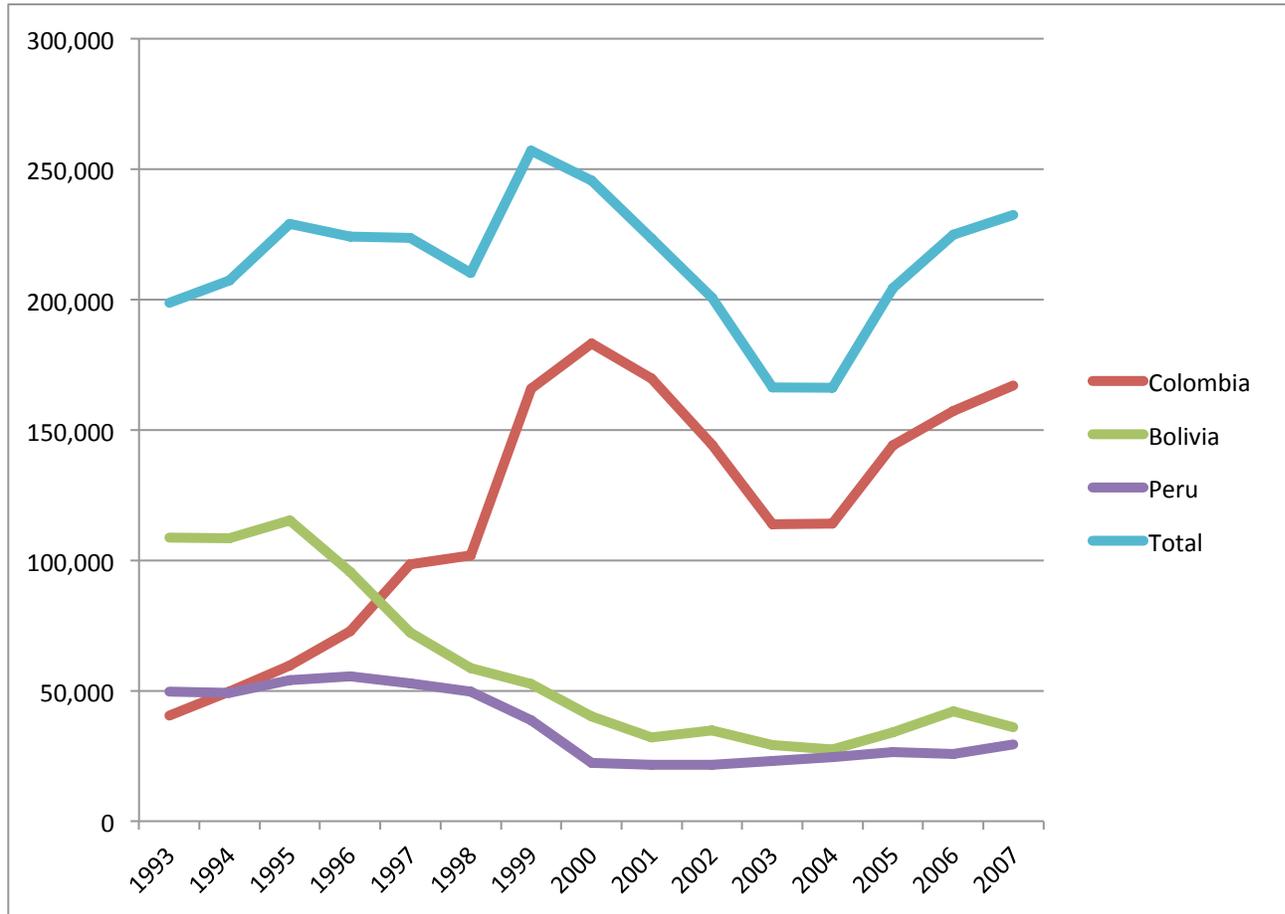
<sup>86</sup> (Teslik, 2006)

<sup>87</sup> “US lawmakers see drug trafficking program review” AFP, December 8, 2009.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gLCP5aw4Dgtn-FpbOz81WMnRf6tQ>

<sup>88</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “World Drug Report 2006, Volume 1: Analysis” (United Nations, Vienna, Austria, 2006), p. 82.

**Figure 4: Estimated Annual Coca Cultivation, Andean Region, 1992-2008<sup>89</sup>**  
(in Hectares)



<b>Estimated Annual Coca Cultivation (in hectares)<sup>90</sup></b>				
	<b>Colombia</b>	<b>Peru</b>	<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1993</b>	40,493	108,800	49,597	<b>198,890</b>
<b>1994</b>	49,610	108,600	49,158	<b>207,368</b>
<b>1995</b>	59,650	115,300	54,093	<b>229,043</b>
<b>1996</b>	72,800	95,659	55,612	<b>224,071</b>
<b>1997</b>	98,500	72,262	52,826	<b>223,588</b>
<b>1998</b>	101,800	58,825	49,621	<b>210,246</b>
<b>1999</b>	165,746	52,500	38,799	<b>257,045</b>

<sup>89</sup> (U.S. Department of State 2008)

<sup>90</sup> (U.S. Department of State 2008)

<b>2000</b>	183,200	40,200	22,253	<b>245,653</b>
<b>2001</b>	169,800	32,100	21,600	<b>223,500</b>
<b>2002</b>	144,450	34,700	21,600	<b>200,750</b>
<b>2003</b>	113,850	29,250	23,200	<b>166,300</b>
<b>2004</b>	114,100	27,500	24,600	<b>166,200</b>
<b>2005</b>	144,000	34,000	26,500	<b>204,500</b>
<b>2006</b>	157,200	42,000	25,800	<b>225,000</b>
<b>2007</b>	167,000	36,000	29,500	<b>232,500</b>

**The Politics of Failure: Unintended Consequences of the Political Manipulation of the War on Drugs in Colombia, 1994 - Present**

Although the majority of evidence indicates that the U.S.’ war on drugs is funding supply-control programs proven to fail time and time again, it is not my argument that our increasing military presence in South America and Afghanistan is necessarily a “failure” or an absurd policy decision; using the War on Drugs as a political tool to pursue non-drug related security interests can sometimes have positive results. Rather, I assert that our nation’s Congress and leaders must stop spending \$15 billion per year on “drug-control” unless they actually plan to fight the problems our country faces that are caused by illicit-drugs and drug-related crime and homicide; the first step in doing so would be to acknowledge that our “supply-control” tactics have failed to produce any tangible evidence of succeeding in decreasing U.S. drug consumption, regardless of strategic or national security objectives that have been fulfilled as a result. Some of the “positive” impacts of U.S. military and counter-drug aid are certainly clear, especially when viewed from the broader U.S. national security perspective. When “Alvaro Uribe first took office, in 2002, Colombia was overrun by leftist rebels, right wing paramilitary groups, and drug lords.”<sup>91</sup> Between 2000 and 2008, the U.S. gave Colombia over \$4.5 billion in military and

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<sup>91</sup> “A setback for Uribe” *The Week*, March 12, 2010. Volume 10, Issue 454. P. 8.

counter-drug assistance. Today, Colombia is “now relatively stable and safe,”<sup>92</sup> and negotiations are currently underway between the U.S. and Colombia to “establish at least seven [new] U.S. military bases in Colombia.”<sup>93</sup> Given these recent developments that have arisen at least partially from the U.S.’ drug-control policies, it is now more so than ever blatantly evident that broader, non-drug-related U.S. political goals and interests impact our policy and spending decisions with regards to the supply versus demand drug control.

On the other hand, a recent evaluation of U.S. aid to Colombia asserts that neither American nor Colombian interests were well-served by U.S. military and counter-drug financing. The authors find that “rather than bringing stability, increases in military aid caused spikes in violence from Colombia’s infamous paramilitary organizations and had no impact whatsoever on coca production.”<sup>94</sup> In this elaborate study, economists Oeindrila Dube and Suresh Naidu “analyze how conflict and cocoa production were affected by the level of U.S. military aid during the years 1988-2005,”<sup>95</sup> comparing regions with and without military bases, and incorporating overall U.S. foreign military funding trends across the globe to reflect “broader American foreign policy objectives rather than reactions to Colombia-specific events.”<sup>96</sup> The results further support the notions that the U.S. foreign drug-control policy has failed and continues to do so, and that drugs are no longer the main focus of the infamous “War on Drugs.”

According to the study, “U.S. military aid leads to differential increases in attacks by paramilitaries (who collude with the military), but has no effect on guerilla attacks. Aid increases

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<sup>92</sup> (The Week 2010)

<sup>93</sup> Moira Birss, "Seven New Military Bases in Colombia is Hardly a Move to the Left," *CommonDreams.org*, August 7, 2009 (<http://rogerhollander.wordpress.com/2009/08/08/seven-new-us-military-bases-in-colombia-is-hardly-a-move-to-the-left/>, accessed March 13, 2010)

<sup>94</sup> Fisman, Ray. “We’re Blowing It: A new paper suggests U.S. military aid does nothing to reduce drug production in Colombia.” February 3, 2010. [www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com)

<sup>95</sup> (Fisman 2010)

<sup>96</sup> (Fisman 2010)

also result in more paramilitary homicides [in areas with Army bases] during election years”<sup>97</sup> – but not in regions without bases, where the study found that increases in U.S. military aid cause “no significant effect upon guerilla attacks.”<sup>98</sup> The economic-political analysis in the study suggests that the “average increase of 92% in military aid to Colombia is associated with 138% more paramilitary attacks per year in base regions, relative to non-based regions,” based upon “highly disaggregated conflict data” from the period between 1988 and 2005.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, despite the “explicit focus of [Plan Colombia] aid on reducing drug production,” Dube and Naidu “found an actual *decline* in anti-narcotics operations by the Colombian military in response to greater U.S. aid, with coca production continuing unchanged.”<sup>100</sup> The study even finds evidence that “voter turnout falls more in [U.S. Army] base municipalities when U.S. military assistance rises,” interpreted as a “consequence of increased military capacity to intimidate voters and reduce electoral participation.”<sup>101</sup> Thus, U.S. source-country (supply-control) programs in Colombia have not only failed to curb narcotics production, but have additionally undermined Colombia’s democratic political institutions and contributed to the “well-documented collusion between the Colombian military and paramilitaries,” despite the U.S.’ knowledge of the paramilitaries’ strong record of horrific human rights abuses in Colombia. In a similar but unrelated study regarding the interaction of narcotics and conflict, experts found empirical evidence suggesting that, “where a pre-existing drug production exists, the conditions of armed conflict boost narcotics production and enable insurgents to become involved in the drug trade to finance their struggle, thereby increasing their capabilities and the challenge they pose to states. In some cases, involvement in the drug trade also seems to affect the motivational

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<sup>97</sup> (Dube and Naidu 2010), p.1

<sup>98</sup> *ibid*, 26

<sup>99</sup> *ibid*

<sup>100</sup> (Fisman 2010)

<sup>101</sup> (Dube and Naidu 2010), p. 26

structures of insurgent groups, creating an economic function of war and vested interests in the continuation of armed conflict.”<sup>102</sup> Therefore, not only should the U.S. consider diminishing its use of supply-control programs abroad due to their ineffectiveness, but additionally because of their documented contribution to violence and political corruption within nations in which the U.S. is ostensibly trying to achieve democracy and stability.

## **Unintended Consequences: The “War on Terror” Overshadows the War on Drugs in Afghanistan, 1994-Present**

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In Afghanistan, which in 2006 accounted for 92% of the world’s supply of heroin, we are seeing a similar degree of failure with regards to U.S. supply-control drug programs. Despite consistent U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan since 2001, over the past “five years, the Afghan opium harvest has accounted for as much as 50 percent of the country’s GDP, and provided the prime ingredient for over 90 percent of the world’s heroin supply.”<sup>103</sup> During this same period, opium cultivation has supported 500,000 Afghan families, representing nearly 20 percent of the country’s estimated population.<sup>104</sup> In addition to opium cultivation, with which Afghanistan has long been associated, Afghanistan has recently surpassed Morocco as the world’s largest cannabis (marijuana) producer; in 2009, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimated Afghanistan’s annual cannabis cultivation at 10,000 to 24,000 hectares.<sup>105</sup> Examining these facts in conjunction with the U.S.’ allocation of its multi-billion dollar drug-control budget, Afghanistan’s meteoric increase in drug production appears hardly surprising:

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<sup>102</sup> (Cornell 2005, 751-760)

<sup>103</sup> McCoy, Alfred. “Calling Afghanistan what it is: A drug war,” *Salon.com*, Tuesday, March 30, 2010. [http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2010/03/30/afghanistan\\_as\\_drug\\_war](http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2010/03/30/afghanistan_as_drug_war) (accessed April 9, 2010)

<sup>104</sup> (McCoy 2010)

<sup>105</sup> *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, “Afghanistan cannabis survey 2009,” April 2010. Pp. 6 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2010)

although Afghanistan has become the world's largest supplier of both heroin and cannabis, the U.S. annual drug-control funding request for "Afghanistan Counterdrug Support" programs in 2009 was a mere \$336 million, compared to the \$601.9 million requested to continue supporting our failed "Andean Counterdrug Programs" in South America.<sup>106</sup> Over the past five years, Afghanistan has maintained (and furthered) its position as the world's largest producer of opium, and has also become the world's largest producer of cannabis and hashish; total U.S. drug-control funding to Afghanistan during this period, however, has represented less than 20 percent of our nation's international drug-control spending.<sup>107108</sup>

Just as in South America, the complex history of past U.S. involvement in the region makes the current situation (especially with regards to narcotics) in Afghanistan extremely difficult to address. Over the past 30 years, three major conflicts have occurred in Afghanistan that have elicited U.S. military intervention: "the CIA covert warfare of the 1980s, the civil war of the 1990s (fueled at its start by \$900 million in CIA funding)," and our counterinsurgency involvement and occupation since 2001.<sup>109</sup> "In each of these conflicts," writes one scholar, "Washington has tolerated drug trafficking by its Afghan allies as the price of military success – a policy of benign neglect that has helped make Afghanistan today the world's No. 1 narco-state."<sup>110</sup> It should hardly come as a surprise that, in terms of public support and perceived importance, the "War on Terror" in the Middle East quickly transcended and overshadowed the War on Drugs in the Middle East after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. With regards to U.S.-Middle Eastern foreign relations in general, contemporary Americans are more interested in hearing about the U.S. military death toll, the status of the war on terrorism, or the tangible

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<sup>106</sup> White House, *National Drug Control Strategy – FY 2009 Budget Summary*, February 2008. P. 5

<sup>107</sup> (The White House 2008)

<sup>108</sup> White House, *National Drug Control Budget: FY 2011 Funding Highlights*, February 2010. P. 10

<sup>109</sup> (McCoy 2010)

<sup>110</sup> (McCoy 2010)

threats posed by al-Qaida and other fanatical groups. In Colombia, the “militarization” of the war on drugs was more of a conscious choice on behalf of our policymakers,

Notably, the relationship between drug-production and conflict has proven indissoluble: during the latter part of the 1990’s, the Taliban, “which had taken power in most of the country, lost any chance for international legitimacy by protecting and profiting from opium – and then, ironically, fell from power only months after reversing course and banning the crop.”<sup>111</sup> Since the inception of U.S. military intervention in 2001, the dramatic increase in narcotics cultivation and production (with regards to opium and cannabis) “has corrupted the government in Kabul while empowering a resurgent Taliban whose guerillas have taken control of ever larger parts of the Afghan countryside.”<sup>112</sup> Thus, no matter how much money the U.S. spends on the “War on Terror” and capturing al-Qaida militants, Afghanistan will never achieve our nation’s desired level of political stability unless U.S. policymakers acknowledge and address the nation’s utter dependence upon narcotics cultivation.

As in Colombia, the unintended consequences of the war on drugs in Afghanistan have in many regards proven far more detrimental than our leaders could have ever fathomed; given that the current National Drug Control Strategy is still devoted to the same supply-control programs that have failed over the past twenty years, it is obvious that our leaders are not formulating policy solely on the basis of empirical evidence and expert findings. As the “War on Terror” has essentially pushed the Afghan War on Drugs out of the political and public spotlight, we are seeing U.S. drug-control programs being operated and orchestrated militarily with near impunity. In a country where “the high rate of return on investment from poppy cultivation has driven an

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<sup>111</sup> McCoy, Alfred. “Calling Afghanistan what it is: A drug war,” *Salon.com*, Tuesday, March 30, 2010. [http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2010/03/30/afghanistan\\_as\\_drug\\_war](http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2010/03/30/afghanistan_as_drug_war)

<sup>112</sup> (McCoy 2010)

agricultural shift...from growing traditional crops to growing opium poppy,” the U.S. has employed a strategy similar to that of the war on drugs in South America, which consists of the following “five pillars: alternative livelihoods, elimination and eradication, interdiction, law enforcement and justice reform, and public information.”<sup>113</sup> Not surprisingly, the majority of funding for our nation’s “five-pillar” strategy in Afghanistan has gone towards supply-control programs such as eradication, elimination, and interdiction<sup>114</sup> - incredibly similar to our multi-faceted supply-control strategies (with minimal funding for demand-control programs) employed in Colombia.

<b>Figure 5: “Five-Pillar” Drug-Control Spending in Afghanistan, 2005<sup>115</sup></b>			
<b>Department of State and USAID</b>	<b>\$532 million</b>	Alternative Livelihoods	\$180 million
		Elimination and Eradication	\$258 million
		Interdiction	\$65 million
		Law Enforcement and Justice Reform	\$24 million
		Public Information	\$5 million
<b>Department of Defense and DEA</b>	<b>\$250 million</b>	<i>DoD and DEA funds focused primarily on elimination and eradication<sup>116</sup></i>	
<b>Total Spending:</b>	<b>\$782 Million</b>		

<sup>113</sup> *Afghanistan Drug Control: Despite Improved Efforts, Deteriorating Security Threatens Security of U.S. Goals*, Washington DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, November 2006. P. 6.

<sup>114</sup> John A. Glaze. “Opium and Afghanistan: Reassessing U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, (U.S. Army War College, October 2007), 14

<sup>115</sup> (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2006), pp. 2-5

<sup>116</sup> (Glaze 2007)

Just as our extensive funding of supply-control programs in the Americas has done little to curb source-country drug production (let alone U.S. drug consumption or demand), the counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan “has been ineffective in curbing opium cultivation and production in [the country].” The parallels between our drug-control spending in the Americas and Afghanistan continue further, as politicians proudly point to large figures of drug seizures and eradication, while ignoring the overall trend of increasing production in the country despite these efforts. In 2005, the Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA), working together with the DEA, succeeded in seizing 47.9 metric tons of opium and 5.5 metric tons of heroin; the Afghan Special Narcotics Force (ASNF) destroyed 100 metric tons of opium and 30 tons of heroin in the same year.<sup>117</sup> Overall, while 15,300 hectares (approximately 10 percent) of Afghanistan’s opium crop was eradicated by counternarcotics forces, “the overall levels of opium poppy cultivation, opium production, and heroin processing still dramatically increased in 2006 and 2007.”<sup>118</sup> Another recent study has not only affirms these findings, but offers empirical economic analysis regarding the ineffectiveness of our war on drugs eradication campaigns in Afghanistan: “The [study’s] results also imply that, all else being equal, the cessation of crop eradication would result in only modest increases in opiate production (with estimates ranging from 1.6 percent to 9.6 percent).”<sup>119</sup>

**U.S. Allocation of Drug-Control Funding, 1996-2008**<sup>120</sup>

Fiscal Year	U.S. Federal Drug-Control Spending, Total (millions \$)	% of Total Drug-Control Spending Spent on Supply-Control Programs	% of Total Drug-Control Spending Spent on Demand-
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<sup>117</sup> M. Jelsma; T. Kramer; and C. Rivier, 2006. *Losing Ground: Drug Control and War in Afghanistan*. TNI Briefing Series No.2006/5, Transnational Institute, Amsterdam. p. 28

<sup>118</sup> U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime, “Opium Situation in Afghanistan as of 29 August 2005,” August 29, 2005. p.1.

<sup>119</sup> Clemens, Jeffrey. “Opium in Afghanistan: Prospects for the Success of Source Country Drug Control Policies,” *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 51, No. 3. August, 2008. Pp. 407-432 (Clemens 2008)

<sup>120</sup> (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics 2005)

			Control Programs
1996	6,274.1	-	-
1997	7,531.2	-	-
1998	7,628.0	49.9%	50.1%
1999	9,209.1	-	-
2000	10,151.5	56.7%	43.2%
2001	9,823.8	-	-
2002	10,891.9	-	-
2003	11,397.0	-	-
2004	12,082.3	-	-
2005	12,133.0	55%	45%
2006	12,400.0	61%	39%
2007	13,844.0	64.6%	35.4%
2008	13,655.0	63.5%	36.5%
2009	14,114.4	65.2%	34.8%

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## **Beyond Drug-Control: U.S. Political Motivation for Continued Funding of Ineffective and Harmful Supply-Control Programs in Colombia's War on Drugs**

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Perhaps the most blatant example of how the U.S. government has used the War on Drugs as a vehicle for achieving strategic diplomatic alliances and military strength abroad is our relationship with Colombia, which receives hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. drug-control funding annually. Between 2000 and 2006, following the creation of "Plan Colombia," the U.S. gave over \$3.8 billion to the Colombian government for military and counter-narcotics

<sup>121</sup> "National Drug Control Strategy: FY 2009 Budget Summary. The White House, February 2008. <http://www.libraryindex.com/pages/2392/National-Drug-Control-Strategy-FEDERAL-DRUG-BUDGET.html>

operations.<sup>122</sup> During that same time period, however, cocaine production in Colombia increased 4 percent,<sup>123</sup> and the “decline in [U.S.] illicit drug use....since the mid-to late-1990s leveled off.”<sup>124</sup> Despite the blatant ineffectiveness of our drug-control efforts in Colombia, and extensive evidence that “cracking down on drug supply is mostly useless until we learn to squeeze demand,”<sup>125</sup> the U.S. continues to give the Colombia hundreds of millions of dollars in aid for the same programs. Thus, the role of politics is undeniable; while it has become increasingly clear that the billions of dollars in military aid to and spending in Colombia has had almost no impact upon U.S. drug consumption and the associated societal costs, funding Colombia appears to be a politically lucrative investment, as negotiations are now underway to establish at least seven U.S. military bases in the country.<sup>126</sup>

While the Obama Administration’s stated goals for the proposed military facilities in Colombia are to expand counter-narcotic operations in the region and to “fill...the gaps left by the eventual cutting of [military] aid in Plan Colombia,”<sup>127</sup> there are clearly other considerations involved that raise serious questions about our supposed “drug-control” strategy. For example, none of the locations of the bases under negotiation are on the Pacific Ocean, an area where drug traffic has shown a significant recent rise.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, three of the bases “are clustered near each other on the Caribbean coast, not far from existing U.S. military sites in Aruba and Curacao – and closer to Venezuela than to the Pacific Ocean. Why are U.S. negotiators apparently

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<sup>122</sup> “Erasing the Lines: Trends in U.S. Military Programs with Latin America”, Joint publication from the Center for International Policy, the Latin America Working Group Education Fund, and the Washington Office on Latin America. December, 2005. (Center for International Policy 2005)

<sup>123</sup> Peter H. Reuter. “Assessing Changes in Global Drug Problems, 1998-2007” et al. (RAND Europe, 2008), xi.

<sup>124</sup> “Nationwide Trends” National Institute on Drug Abuse, January 2010. P. 2. (National Institute on Drug Abuse 2010)

<sup>125</sup> Teslik, Lee Hudson. “The Forgotten Drug War”, Council on Foreign Relations. Interview with Mark Kleiman, Director, UCLA Drug Policy Analysis Program. April 6, 2006.

<sup>126</sup> Birss, Moira. “Seven New US Military Bases in Colombia is Hardly a Move to the Left” CommonDreams.org, August 7, 2009. <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2009/08/07-6>

<sup>127</sup> (Birss, 2009)

<sup>128</sup> (Birss, 2009)

forgoing Pacific sites,” one expert asks, “if counternarcotics is still part of the U.S. military mission?”<sup>129</sup> Further casting doubt upon the veracity of stated U.S. drug-control goals and the effectiveness of our South-American anti-drug spending is a recent Government Accountability Office report (commissioned by then-Senator Joe Biden), which concluded that the “Plan Colombia failed to meet its goal of halving illegal narcotics production in the Andean region.”<sup>130</sup> Today, the United States remains the world’s largest consumer of cocaine, Colombian heroin, and Mexican heroin.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, in the 2009 National Drug Control Strategy Budget Summary, the U.S. Department of State requested \$406.8 million in funding for Andean Counterdrug Programs, representing an increase of \$86.9 million compared to 2008.<sup>132</sup> If the U.S. Government Accountability Office acknowledged in 2008 that the “source-country” supply-control programs implemented in Colombia had blatantly failed, why is the Department of State requesting a 27 percent increase in supply-control funding for the Andean Region of South America?

There are a variety of legitimate answers to this question, most of them regarding the United States’ use of the War on Drugs as a politically-viable vehicle for pursuing non-drug-related strategic national military and security interests. At the center of a more recent sign that U.S. “supply-control” anti-drug strategy will continue to pour cash and military aid into Colombia’s coffers for such non-drug-related security interests (regardless of their known ineffectiveness in combating drug production), are the recent allegations leveled by a Spanish judge that Venezuela “helped [the] Basque separatist group ETA and Colombian rebels’ plot to

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<sup>129</sup> (Birss, 2009)

<sup>130</sup> (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2006)

<sup>131</sup> “Field Listing – Illicit Drugs” *CIA World Factbook*, 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2086.html> (C.I.A. World Factbook 2009)

<sup>132</sup> (The White House 2008)

kill Colombia's president Alvaro Uribe in Spain."<sup>133</sup> In a case based "largely on information found on the computer of Raul Reyes (the FARC's former second-in-command who was killed in Ecuador in March 2008 during a Colombian military operation)", Spanish High Court Judge Eloy Velasco alleged "Venezuelan government cooperation in the illegal collaboration between FARC and ETA" with regards to an assassination plot coordinated between the FARC and ETA that sought to kill Colombian President Uribe and other Colombian officials while in Spain.<sup>134</sup> According to Judge Velasco, the focal point of this "cooperation was ETA member Arturo Cubillas Fontan, who was named to a post in Venezuela's agriculture ministry in 2005 and whose Venezuelan wife, Goizeder Odriozola Lataillade, is an official in the leftist government of President Hugo Chavez."<sup>135</sup> Given the United States' strong diplomatic and mutually-beneficial relationship with Colombia, the security threat posed by Venezuela indicated in the article offers all the more reason for U.S. militarization of the War on Drugs in Colombia – the chances of the Congress appealing to the American public to engage in yet another openly-militarized conflict are slim at best.

At this point, it should be clear that the United States' drug-control policy has been and is being formulated to suit or promote a variety of non-drug-related political and diplomatic objectives. Although the War on Drugs as we know it has become somewhat farcical, it is undeniable that anti-American sentiment is growing in the Andean Region (excluding, for the most part, Colombia) of South America. Venezuela's President, Hugo Chavez, conveys open hostility towards the United States, and has even severed diplomatic ties with Colombia in response to a U.S. deal with Bogota allowing U.S. forces to run anti-drug operations from

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<sup>133</sup> AFP, "Spain Accuses Venezuela over assassination plot," *Yahoo! News (report from AFP)*, March 1, 2010.

<sup>134</sup> (AFP 2010)

<sup>135</sup> (AFP 2010)

Colombian bases.<sup>136</sup> Throughout history, the U.S. has often involved itself in the relations of oil-rich countries, and Venezuela is no exception; a nation run by an openly anti-American, volatile, and totalitarian president is certainly on the United States' security radar. Although our serious military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq comprise the majority of open political discussion regarding the use of military funding abroad, there are ostensibly a variety of reasons why the U.S. would benefit from "militarizing" the war on drugs to attain certain non-drug related political and diplomatic achievements; the most (and perhaps only) politically-feasible means of ensuring our military presence and dominance in the region at this point is by using the War on Drugs as a political guise.

### **Rewarding Failure, Punishing Success: The U.S. War on Drugs in Bolivia**

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Over the past fifteen years, Colombia has enjoyed "favored-country" status in the Andean region. One prominent example of this unusually and often-unwarranted generosity towards Colombia is shown by U.S. relations between both Bolivia and Colombia. By the mid-1990s, "Bolivia had become a showcase of Washington Consensus orthodoxy; democracy seemed well-established, inflation was low, and growth was solid."<sup>137</sup> In 1997, Bolivia elected as president Hugo Banzer Suarez, an individual who had clearly demonstrated to the U.S. "his desire to remove Bolivia from the coca/cocaine circuit."<sup>138</sup> Through Banzer's "Plan Dignidad," announced in early 1998, Bolivia was able to achieve unprecedented successes in the eradication of coca cultivation and cocaine production, as Plan Dignidad offered tangible economic incentives to coca farmers such as *coca por desarrollo* (coca in exchange for investment in alternative

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<sup>136</sup> (Birss 2009)

<sup>137</sup> Lehman, Kenneth. "A 'Medicine of Death'? U.S. Policy and Political Disarray in Bolivia, 1985-2006," *Addicted To Failure: U.S. Security Policy in Latin America and the Andean Region*, 2006. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, Maryland. Edited by Brian Loveman. pp. 131-133

<sup>138</sup> (Lehman 2006)

crops).<sup>139</sup> This program, however, was based heavily on outside funding, primarily from the United States, and was (in theory) conditional upon Bolivia's drug-control performance. Given the Banzer Administration's success with *Plan Dignidad* and programs like *coca por desarrollo*, "Bolivia had... become one of Washington's most compelling success stories in the perennially frustrating war on drugs." During the four years of his presidency, his campaign had reduced illegal coca production by 40,000 hectares and substituted 115,000 hectares of alternative crops.<sup>140</sup> Thus, it Banzer was quite confident that Bolivia would receive the \$21 million in funding the U.S. had agreed to conditional upon the success of his coca-eradication strategy.

Strangely enough, however, in the same year, Banzer found out that his \$21 million in funding for the successful and promising program had been halved to \$12 million (the \$11 million in funding stripped from Bolivia's Plan Dignidad instead was used to provide Colombia, our favored nation in the Andean Region, with two brand new Blackhawk helicopters, despite Colombia's failure to effect any diminishment in cocaine cultivation and production).<sup>141</sup> From this point on, the United States had solidified its position regarding source-country control and the U.S. foreign drug policy in general: drug use, production, availability, and consumption are not the main focus of the War on Drugs.

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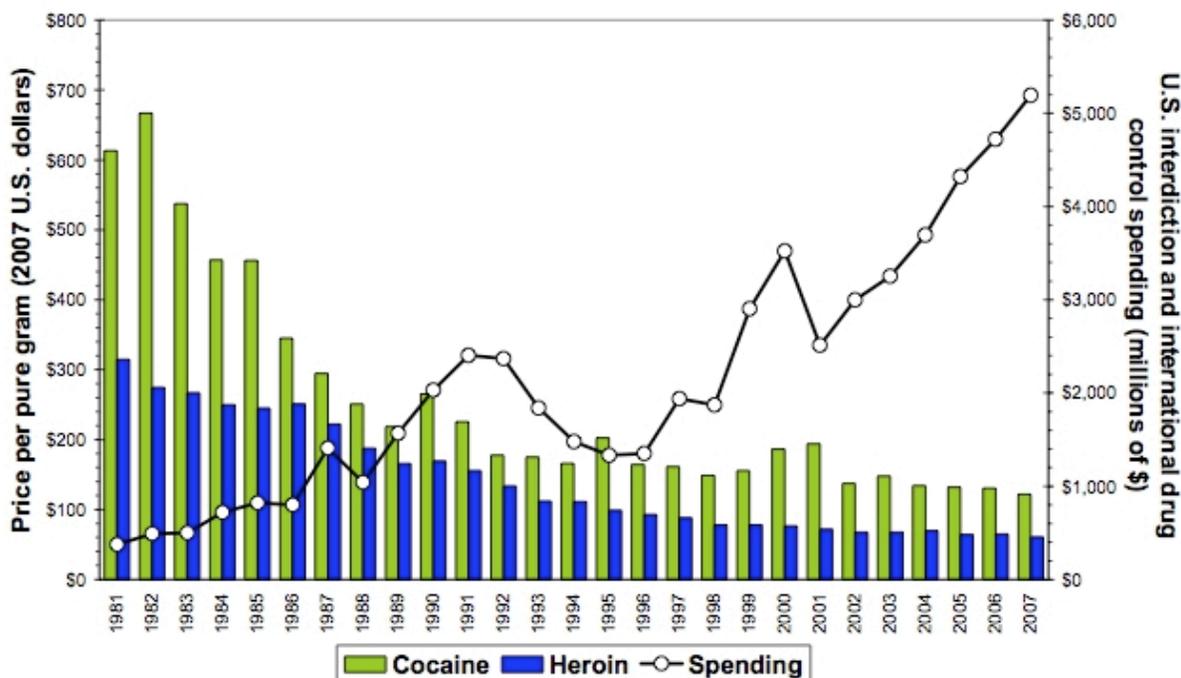
<sup>139</sup> (Lehman 2006)

<sup>140</sup> U.S. Department of State. "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: South America – 2000," [www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2000/833.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2000/833.htm)

<sup>141</sup> (Lehman 2006)

**Figure 6: U.S. Spending on International Drug Control Rising, Street Prices of Cocaine and Heroin Falling<sup>142</sup>**

**FIGURE 3: U.S. Spending on International Drug Control Rising, Street Prices of Cocaine and Heroin Falling**



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## Conclusion

The global drug trade has recently been called the “most important” of all world “agricultural” markets, worth over \$320 billion per year on the street.<sup>144</sup> While it is a global issue, however, the United States plays a disproportionately large role in driving and paying the costs of the overall drug trade. According to Congress, the United States accounts for five percent of

<sup>142</sup> Walsh, John M. “Assessing U.S. Drug Policy in the Americas: Time to Revisit Goals and Strategies,” Washington Office on Latin America, October 15, 2009. P. 7

<sup>143</sup> (Walsh 2009)

<sup>144</sup> UN Office of Drugs and Crime: Drug Trade Cash Saved Banks. *Executive Intelligence Review*, January 27, 2009. [http://www.larouchepub.com/pr\\_lar/2009/lar\\_pac/090127drugs\\_saved\\_banks.html](http://www.larouchepub.com/pr_lar/2009/lar_pac/090127drugs_saved_banks.html)

the world population, but is home to 17.5 percent of the world's drug addicts,<sup>145</sup> and in 2006 accounted for 60 percent of the world's demand for illegal drugs.<sup>146</sup> One might find this surprising, as the U.S. government has spent over one trillion dollars on the War on Drugs since it was declared as such by President Nixon, and today spends approximately \$15 billion per year in overall federal drug control spending.<sup>147</sup><sup>148</sup> However, upon closer examination of the underlying causes of the booming drug trade, the findings of independent (and government-commissioned) studies, and our nation's anti-drug spending decisions, it becomes clear that the vast majority of U.S. drug control spending has been misused, if not entirely wasted. Over the past 15 years, specifically, U.S. policymakers have consistently allowed our government's international and domestic political agenda to dictate our counter-narcotic strategies at home and abroad, as we continue to pour billions of dollars into supply-control programs and international drug-control operations shown to have no significant effect upon domestic drug demand, consumption, and global drug production.<sup>149</sup> Our nation's leaders have even used the War on Drugs as a political guise to further establish a global U.S. military presence and create strategic alliances abroad; in Colombia, for example, the U.S. has spent billions in military and drug-control aid, yet Colombia's (and South America's total) cocaine production has steadily increased.<sup>150</sup> Overall, the existing evidence and analysis of our drug-control spending suggests that we should be spending less on supply-control programs and more on demand control

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<sup>145</sup> "US lawmakers see drug trafficking program review" AFP, December 8, 2009.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gLCP5aw4Dgtn-FpbOz8lWMnRf6tQ>

<sup>146</sup> (Teslik, 2006)

<sup>147</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy, "National Drug Control Strategy: FY 2010 Budget Summary," (Washington, DC, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>148</sup> Lunhow, David. "Saving Mexico" *Wall Street Journal*, December 26, 2009.

<sup>149</sup> "Health, United States, 2008" National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. P. 300, table 66.

<sup>150</sup> Carroll, Rory. "Cocaine Production surge unleashes wave of violence in Latin America". *The Guardian*. March 9, 2009. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/mar/09/cocaine-production-united-nations-summit>

programs, as supply control programs have failed consistently to diminish U.S. drug consumption.

While the vast majority of the evidence gathered over the past 20 years suggests that supply-control and military programs have no impact upon drug production and cultivation in the Andean region and Afghanistan, the U.S. government continues to promote these programs, often without even mentioning demand-control programs or addressing the historic ineffectiveness of supply-control programs. Notable politicians and leaders often openly acknowledge this conundrum; in March of 2009, when asked about her views on U.S. drug policy, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton responded, “Clearly, what we’ve been doing has not worked,” adding that the United States’ own “insatiable demand for illegal drugs fuels the drug trade.”<sup>151</sup> While this statement acknowledges our failed policies, it also subtly continues to promote them. First of all, U.S. demand for drugs is far from “insatiable;” “it’s relatively stable and predictable.”<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, while Secretary Clinton admitted that “U.S. policies on curbing drug use, narcotics shipments and the flow of guns have been ineffective,”<sup>153</sup> she made these statements during a trip to Mexico, the entire point of which was to continue supporting the same policies that she admitted had failed: later that week, in Mexico, Clinton announced that “the Obama administration is seeking \$66 million in new funding for extra helicopters for the Mexican police,” and also “pledged further unspecified steps to block the movement of guns.”<sup>154</sup> While Secretary Clinton implied that the U.S. will be employing new strategies (as opposed to

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<sup>151</sup> Sheridan, Mary Beth. “Clinton: U.S. Drug Policies Failed, Fueled Mexico’s Drug War” *Washington Post*, Thursday, March 26, 2009. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/25/AR2009032501034\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/25/AR2009032501034_pf.html)

<sup>152</sup> Gillespie, Nick. “Drug War: Yet Another Failed Conflict the U.S. Must Continue, Says Clinton” *Reason.com*, March 26, 2009. <http://reason.com/blog/2009/03/26/drug-war-yet-another-failed-co>

<sup>153</sup> Sheridan, Mary Beth. “Clinton: U.S. Drug Policies Failed, Fueled Mexico’s Drug War” *Washington Post*, Thursday, March 26, 2009. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/25/AR2009032501034\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/25/AR2009032501034_pf.html)

<sup>154</sup> *ibid*

past, “ineffective” policies), her solution is the same as her predecessors’: more supply-control and military programs. Secretary Clinton’s (and many other policy makers’) fatal error in judgment is attributing the violence of the drug trade as a direct consequence of the U.S.’ demand for drugs; in reality, the violence stems “not from the demand itself, but from the idiotic and counterproductive war on drugs.”<sup>155</sup> Throughout history, the illegalization or prohibition of a good with a consistent demand creates a black market for the good, which can only be enforced through violence and illegal activity. The prohibition of alcohol in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, while short-lived and morally-guided, spawned an entire era of gangsters who made millions of dollars bootlegging alcohol.

Given the overwhelming evidence, the U.S. government understands the ineffectiveness and failure of our supply-control drug policies in South and Central America. Nevertheless, the U.S. has decided to continue funding such programs for political and strategic reasons. In Afghanistan, where the War on Drugs has largely become encompassed by the broader War on Terror in the region, the U.S.’ political and diplomatic goals are certainly more transparent than they are with regards to the Andean Region, yet we continue to see U.S. implementation of the same ineffective and detrimental programs (such as eradication) that have failed historically across the globe. Domestically, the U.S. ostensibly seeks to curtail drug-use and its associated harms, as funding for demand-control programs has increased to approximately one-third of the national drug-control budget, compared to seven percent in 1994. Furthermore, the strategy of formulating drug-control policy to promote and enforce racial inequality is one our nation would like to say it has abandoned, as racial equality and tolerance appear to have increased significantly during this period (our nation recently elected its first non-White President, for

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<sup>155</sup> Gillespie, Nick. “Drug War: Yet Another Failed Conflict the U.S. Must Continue, Says Clinton” *Reason.com*, March 26, 2009. <http://reason.com/blog/2009/03/26/drug-war-yet-another-failed-co>

example). Nevertheless, our government continues to spend the majority of its drug control resources on supply-control programs (primarily domestic law enforcement and interdiction), despite these programs' historic inability to decrease drug consumption, and despite the undeniable evidence that these programs continue to promote alarming "racial disparities in U.S. drug-law enforcement" (the ratio of black adult drug arrests per 100,000 blacks to white adult drug arrests per 100,000 whites in the U.S. was 3.6 in 2007, compared to 2.9 in 1980).<sup>156</sup>

Despite these regional disparities in the transparency and intent of U.S. drug policy, however, our nation's collective drug-control policy (both domestically and abroad) represents a continuous underlying theme of the U.S. War on Drugs: the consistent lack of evidence-based policy formulation with regards to controlling drugs and their associated harms. As the U.S. foreign drug-control strategy has remained relatively unchanged since the mid- to late- 1980s,<sup>157</sup> it has become the norm, a staple of our annual budget; as such, it enjoys an unusual degree of political feasibility and government discretion. Although the United States' militarization of the War on Drugs blatantly contradicts the tenets of economic neoliberalism that experts such as Reuter have advocated, our nation continues to pursue policies in Mexico, Afghanistan, and the Andean Region that have failed miserably with regards to drug-control in the past. Furthermore, as our nation's strategic military considerations have become increasingly intertwined with the U.S.' war on drugs, we are witnessing a growing amount U.S. drug-policy formulation based upon non-drug-related goals and agendas (such as attaining military strength in the Andean Region in response to perceived threats from countries such as Venezuela and Bolivia). In Afghanistan, as the War on Terror has transcended the drug war in terms of importance and attention, the results of our failed drug-control strategies receive utterly insufficient scrutiny and

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<sup>156</sup> (Human Rights Watch 2009)

<sup>157</sup> Walsh, John M. Statement of.

attention; far more importantly, as our involvement in Afghanistan has become an official military conflict (as opposed to the “militarization” of the War on Drugs as we have seen in South and Central America), our leaders, while perhaps well- and clearly-intentioned, have dramatically failed to acknowledge, let alone address, the undeniably crucial link between Afghanistan’s drug production and the funding of anti-Western insurgent groups. “You can’t win this war [in Afghanistan],” said one U.S. Embassy official familiar with the country’s opium-producing regions, “without taking on drug production.”<sup>158</sup>

In Mexico, which has recently witnessed an alarming and unprecedented surge in drug-related violence reminiscent of Colombia in the 1990s, U.S. and internal military funding has seemed to only make matters worse. It is true that the militarization of the war on drugs in Colombia certainly contributed to improvements in the nation’s stability, despite the fact that it blatantly failed to impact drug production and U.S. drug consumption, adding further credibility to the empirically-supported “balloon” theory of drug production. While U.S. policymakers are perhaps hoping that the war on drugs in Mexico will work similarly as in Colombia (to ultimately increase stability and diminish the power of narcotraffickers), however, it seems as if the U.S. has reached the end of the “balloon;” we have pushed drug-trafficking and the consequential empowerment of powerful cartels out of Colombia northward along the route to the U.S., squeezing the balloon from the bottom up - and the problem has arrived at our nation’s doorstep, literally (Juarez, the current capital of drug-related violence and lawlessness in Mexico, is less than 50 miles from the U.S. border). In Colombia, the power and wealth of the drug lords wasn’t diminished because drug production declined, but rather because our nation’s intense military pressure made it easier and less costly for traffickers to operate in countries along the

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<sup>158</sup> (McCoy 2010)

U.S. drug-corridor that didn't have a U.S.-backed military presence like Colombia. As we continue to fund the militarization of the war on drugs in Mexico, it seems as if U.S. leaders actually believe that Mexico is the "end of the balloon," ignoring the absurdity of the assumption that U.S. drug demand will decline if the Mexican drug lords are finally overpowered. As long as the U.S. continues to largely ignore domestic demand and the forces that drive it, our nation will be ensuring the enrichment of foreign criminals and businessmen who step in to fill the demand in place of Mexico - just as the Mexican cartels did after increased militarization of the drug war in Colombia allowed them to step into the insanely-lucrative drug-trafficking industry.

In conclusion, with regards to the United States' War on Drugs, the establishment and maintenance of strategic military alliances (in countries like Colombia) and the assertion of military power in potentially-unstable or threat-perceived regions (such as Afghanistan and Mexico) has to a great extent become more important than actually decreasing U.S. drug demand and consumption. Unfortunately, as we have seen in Afghanistan, the complete "militarization" of the War on Drugs can not only have negative unintended consequences, but it can completely lead us astray from the main purpose (even if the main purpose is not reducing drug consumption or production); no amount of troops, guns, or military funding will solve the volatile situation in Afghanistan until we call it what it is: A Drug War.<sup>159</sup> Despite its blatant failure to actually impact drug use and global cultivation, the War on Drugs is still being waged because it has become a politically-feasible means of exerting U.S. dominance and promoting national security and diplomatic interests abroad; thus, although "demand-control" spending has crept up over the past two decades, it is clear that our nation's drug-control policy remains as inefficient, illogical, and contradictory as it was in 1994, when the RAND study asserted that "supply-control" and

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<sup>159</sup> McCoy, Alfred. "Calling Afghanistan what it is: A drug war," Salon.com, March 30, 2010. [http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2010/03/30/afghanistan\\_as\\_drug\\_war](http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2010/03/30/afghanistan_as_drug_war)

“source-country” drug-control programs are essentially useless. Moreover, as the war on drugs approaches its 40th anniversary, it has far outgrown its “experimental” and developmental stage; drug-control policies that once seemed arbitrary are appearing increasingly deliberate, yet to a great extent still fail to address U.S. drug use and its associated harms. Furthermore, as more and more evidence becomes available regarding our War on Drugs tactics, it has become clear that many of our supply-control programs are not only useless, but counterproductive and detrimental as well. Eradication, for instance, has proven to be not only useless in terms of decreasing drug production, but has also been shown to cause serious environmental damage and the alienation of populations that we are seeking to establish closer ties with (such as the opium farmers in Afghanistan) in order to preclude the strengthening of terrorist or drug-trafficking organizations.

The United States’ failure and reluctance to respond politically to the findings of the 1994 RAND study illuminate the power of the War on Drugs as a political tool used to pursue a variety of goals and agendas, often unrelated to actually decreasing U.S. drug consumption, while operating on under the auspices of drug-control. While diplomatic and political measures being taken abroad to ensure the security of the United States are certainly well-warranted given the increasing threat posed by non-state actors (such as terrorist organizations), using the War on Drugs as a vehicle for achieving non-drug related goals is not only misleading and politically immoral, but also potentially dangerous as the actual threats posed by the drug trade remain unaddressed and our failed policies and programs continue to be funded without question.



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