

Strategy for Controlling the Drug Supply Illicit Crops and Alternative Development Policy Recommendations

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Abstract

Measuring the success of Alternative Development (AD) programs by the number of illicit crop hectares eradicated puts AD in an undesirable competition with aerial fumigation, which can reduce these areas in a much shorter time. Whereas alternative development can only obtain results over the long term, the political push to demonstrate immediate "successful" results has led to an imbalance in anti-drug aid coming from Washington, which is strongly weighted towards aerial fumigation. Nevertheless, the relevant question remains the political, social, and economic sustainability of the results obtained through the use of forceful eradication.

Likewise, alternative development policy for regions that produce illicit crops has suffered from changes in its focus over time, until today it has become situated squarely in the single conception that the sole purpose of illicit crops is to finance terrorist groups. By using this conception, the use of force - specifically, aerial fumigations using chemicals - is revealed as the foundation for decision making. This single criterion, therefore, affects programs that once recognized the social and economic roots of the problem of illicit crops. This paper seeks to examine and question those aspects of the current strategy for stopping the drug supply that appear secure. The paper aims to explore alternative strategies of eradication that take into account *who* makes decisions in this matter and on whose behalf said alternatives establish oversight of the ongoing advancement in drug policy.

Alternative Development in Crisis and the Use of Force

Definitions of Alternative Development

1. According to one of its most common definitions, Alternative development is conceived as a policy for complementing the enforced eradication of illicit crops. For example, such was the nature of this strategy in the Colombian experience between 1994 and 1998 or in the Bolivian case when the government used strict forced manual eradication between 1998 and 1999, which immediately led to decisions about economic alternatives for producers who depended on the cocoa leaf.

Defining alternative development in this fashion starkly emphasizes the difference between it and a policy of force. Force requires the prior destruction of illegal crops present in a region or locality. The political and military organisms responsible for carrying out such destruction employ dissimilar means. Thus the Colombian alternative development program defined its purpose in the following manner:

“...[alternative development] complements forced eradication campaigns of illegal crops and aims to contribute to the integral development of regions affected by the presence of illegal

crops....”² The same document makes explicit that “the Alternative Development Plan will be carried out as a presidential program, oriented to offering, **starting with the destruction of illegal crops**, an economic alternative to life, one within the law, for peasants, tenant farmers, and indigenous communities involved in that activity [illicit crop cultivation].”³

In this sense, alternative development proposes first to soften the profound social and economic crisis which the destruction of the illicit local economy based on the production of coca leaf, poppy or marijuana has brought about and second, proposes to make sustainable in the median and long term that which has been obtained through the use of force.

Under this political constraint, alternative development has to confine itself within extremely defined social and economic indicators. Among these are: the reduction of unmet basic needs; the support of local development strategies grounded in Environmental and Land Use Policy Plans; the expansion of available employment; the creation and increase of earning sources, and in general, an improvement in the living conditions of those who depended on illicit crops.

2. A second meaning of alternative development stands by itself - as a policy seeking to reduce the number or extension of regions where illicit crops are cultivated. Under this definition, successful alternative development objectives are always measured by the number of hectares that are effectively eradicated by producers of illicit crops. Alternative development gets stretched out over time, with its primary purpose being to make sustainable the achievement of reducing these illegal crop areas.

Usually, this definition involves references to the ancillary role that alternative development plays in relation to interdiction and eradication activities. In practice, alternative development is evaluated according to the number of hectares of crop areas eradicated. To give a recent example, the General Accounting Office, in its report to Congressional Requesters, February 2002, indicates in one of its recommendations for requirements:

“We also suggest that the Congress consider requiring that USAID demonstrate measurable progress in its current efforts to reduce coca cultivation in Colombia before any additional funding is provided for alternative development.”⁴

As can be observed, the definitions differ in important respects from each other, the first one emphasizing social and economic change, the other one the number of illicit crop hectares destroyed. The differences are of such a degree that they are reflected by the disparity of success indicators used for evaluating the policy.

² National Council on Narcotics: Colombian Commitment to the World Drug Problem (*Consejo Nacional de Estupefacientes Compromiso Colombiano Frente al Problema Mundial de la Droga*) Santa Fé de Bogotá, 1995

³ Ibid p.80

⁴ GAO Report to Congressional Requesters “DRUG CONTROL: Efforts to Develop Alternatives to Cultivating Illicit Crops in Colombia have made little progress and face serious obstacles”, February 2002, Washington, p.3

Today, the official documents of several important institutions providing material support for alternative development reflect this ambiguity. For example, on one hand, the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODCCP) defines alternative development as *complementing* the tasks of eradication, whereas USAID establishes goals for the reduction of illegal crop areas on its own. The ambivalence of the two definitions results in a difference of emphasis in implementing strategy.⁵

Nevertheless, policy proposals exist that in some way approximate these two definitions of alternative development. Their differing components thus create an unclear situation. The main focus of these proposals is eradication pacts with community or individual growers.

Manual Eradication Pacts

The commitment and focus of alternative development institutions relating to voluntary pacts of manual eradication constitute a modality that combines the reduction of cultivated areas (second definition of alternative development) with the provision of resources and support to social and economic projects (first definition of economic development).

The general principle for implementing this combined policy is that it must differentiate areas where the most obvious links can be established between the planting of illicit crops and social and economic problems at the social base. One of the structural flaws of this general principle is that in the Colombian case: (1) it has not been possible to develop social maps which securely outline this difference in terms of crops qualified as “commercial”, which have never been designed for alternative development projects, and, (2) it has not established whether a treatment based on forced eradication works.

This situation, together with the lack of an institutional framework clearly defined by the central State to manage the policy in keeping with local and departmental powers has meant that, in practice, this differentiation doesn't take effect. Compulsory eradication becomes the norm for all independent crop cultivation of commercial size, a reality that has been consolidated under President Uribe's current administration.

When this supposedly two-pronged policy has been put into effect (primarily under the preceding Pastrana administration), alternative development projects using the manual eradication modality establish their performance indicators by tracking results showing the number of hectares effectively eradicated. Alternative development is thereby converted into a complementary tool to various other strategy instruments used to reduce the drug supply. Thus, the previously mentioned social indicators are filtered out and, in turn, the sustainability of eradicated areas as well as the achievement of new eradications acquire more importance.

This approach to alternative development as it is defined, therefore presents several drawbacks:

⁵ See as examples of this emphasis the case of UNODCCP “Colombia: Coca Survey for 2002”, Preliminary Report, March 2003 and in the case of USAID, the definition of the Colombia Alternative Development project in CAD – Chemonics Internacional <http://www.fundacad.or.co>

1. It forces institutions to measure project performance by the number of hectares of illicit crops reduced, rather than by indicators that permit the establishment of social and economic project components through technical cooperation for development.
2. Usually, such requirements are made under tight time frames, to which the programs have to adjust in order to produce results in the very short term. Thus, the obligation to demonstrate the number of hectares destroyed makes this implication even more essential for programs in eradicated areas.
3. The policy as presently conceived incorporates a law enforcement component into alternative development. This component causes the mechanism for relating with communities to revolve around the promise producers make to eradicate their illicit crops or to supervise said eradication, while at the same time trying to avoid replanting those same crops. This compulsory promise creates a kind of *transaction* involving the termination of communities' relationships with illegal crop cultivation. It creates as well the necessity of compensating for, at least temporarily and partially, the loss generated by eradication. The transaction also demands more than one connection to local development in the region.
4. Recently, as a consequence of the above approach, alternative development has entered into an undesirable competition with other methods of eradication. Around these other methods a hypothetical cost-benefit relationship is established, which undermines this combined policy. We will address this point further in the next section.

Manual Eradication vs. Forced Aerial Eradication

The starting point for this side discussion is the US State Department document, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, March 2003*, which is based on an analysis of the Bush administration's endorsement of the time frame for implementing the antinarcotics strategy, especially its component relating to reducing the drug supply through a stronger emphasis on the use of force, mainly as a strategy for discouraging producers. Furthermore, and as will be seen presently, the State Department specifies illicit crop eradication as perhaps the main objective in its strategy for reducing the drug supply.

Consideration of the lessons learned through the experiences of institutions handling Peruvian and Bolivian cases reinforce the idea that crop elimination is the State Department's main objective. The knowledge gained in these cases can also be applied to the Colombian case. The considerations regarding both Bolivia and Peru, however, significantly extend beyond what is (or should be) an alternative development policy.

Alternative Development in Crisis: The Problem

According to the State Department document, anti-narcotics programs that seek to reduce the drug supply (of natural origin) have as their objective the first three links in the chain between the producer and user: cultivation; processing; and transit. The closer we can get to the source, says the State Department, the more likely we are to completely contain the flow of drugs. According to this document, **controlling cultivation represents the best cost-benefit relationship from among the range of existing methods for cutting the drug supply.** If the crops are destroyed or prevented from being harvested, they represent drugs that do not enter into the illegal economy. We are eliminating perverse growth, says the State Department, anticipating the metastasis that is seeking to reenter the system.

However, the State Department does call attention to various political consequences that unfold due to the strict application of a strategy based primarily on the use of force. The destruction of lucrative crops, when joined with critical economic conditions, creates very difficult situations for democratically elected governments. If the policy's mode of presentation is clear, it signals that there are undesired impacts that can affect other spheres fundamental to Washington's interests, such as threatening the political stability of allied governments. Thus, the document recognizes that the policy must be flexible, by which is understood the need for the application of diverse emphases according to the circumstances found in each setting.

Coca Reduction and the Emphasis of Current Strategy

According to the State Department: "Large-scale coca cultivation takes place in only three countries; Colombia, Peru and Bolivia."⁶

"Modern technology allows us to locate the growing areas precisely and attack them – a much less difficult task than trying to stop drugs once they are in the transport pipeline. It is easier to eradicate a stationary target such as coca field than to seek out and destroy the equivalent amount of finished cocaine distributed among trucks, boats and aircraft."⁷

The report places strong emphasis on illegal crop control policy. According to the State Department, it is here that the best cost-benefit relationship presents itself in terms of methods for cutting the drug supply. This explains the continuity of emphasis on interventions in this part of the supply chain. When the emphasis is placed on trafficking, much higher costs and limited evidence of success are alleged. The development of calculations for determining the potential for loss of production from the drug market once crops are destroyed has no parallel in other parts of the narco-trafficking chain. Thus, it is very difficult to determine figures for that part of the drug economy that leaves the circuit when a drug trafficker or a given number of illegal drug smugglers is captured.

⁶ US State Department Document, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, March 2003*, page 6

⁷ US State Department document, page 6

Therefore, the State Department report concludes that eliminating coca on the ground has high cost efficiency. The bases for making this connection are various studies put forth by institutions in the United States, Peru, and Bolivia in the early 1990s. Coca production in these countries showed a high level of alkaloids in the leaves. This level indicated that every 200 to 250 hectares of coca put out of production deprived drug commerce, on average, of a metric ton of refined cocaine. From this perspective, even manual eradication makes some difference. Under this measurement, the report continues, the estimate of 12,000 hectares manually eradicated in Bolivia, combined with the estimate of 7,000 hectares eliminated in Peru, is equivalent to approximately 76 to 95 metric tons of cocaine that have remained outside of the economy.

We add to this information from the State Department by pointing out that the breaking of historical production averages in Bolivia began to be significant 1998. The average exceeded 46,000 hectares in 1997 and lowered to 38,000 the following year. From there it continued to go down until it reached its lowest level of 14,600 hectares in 2000. This means that it took four years to be reduced by 31,400 hectares, an amount translatable into the tonnage that was taken out of the drug circuit. In Peru's case, historical averages start falling in 1996, from 115,000 hectares in production down to a figure of 95,000 in 1995. This tendency stabilized in the year 2000 at 34,100 hectares, a process that took 5 years to complete.

It is important to remember that the sum total of aid to Peru from 1996 to 2000 added up to 616 million dollars⁸. This does not represent a significant amount when compared to Colombia. Over a four year period (2000-2003), Colombia received 2.5 billion dollars, achieving a reduction of 25,350 hectares between 2001 and 2002, which lowered cultivation from 169,800 hectares to 144,450 hectares. As can be seen, the State Department argument for comparing what happened in Peru and Bolivia to the Colombian case is still not clear.

However, based on the above considerations of the cost-benefit relationship, the report concludes categorically:

“High-speed agricultural spray aircraft, however, are many times more efficient than other forms of eradication. If those planes that have been spraying Colombian coca fields had unobstructed access to all the principal coca plantations, they could destroy a large percentage of the coca crop in a matter of months, using environmentally safe herbicides.”⁹

The reference to *other forms of eradication* alludes primarily to the manual technique agreed to by the affected communities, as well as to forced eradication, as in the Bolivian case.

This line of argument amplifies the use-of-force model and becomes highly worrisome when it is compared, with little precision, to the cost-benefit relationship between manual eradication (the alternative development method) and aerial spraying.

⁸ See Coletta Youngers “Deconstructing Democracy: Peru under President Alberto Fujimori,” WOLA February 2000, Washington.

⁹ US State Department document, page 6

Thus, alternative development is limited to remaining as one more technique for reducing the drug supply, comparable and measurable in terms of cost-benefit as well as centered on the single indicator in which it has been trapped: the number of hectares of illicit crop areas reduced.¹⁰

The argument in favor of aerial fumigation in Colombia, in addition to asserting its efficiency in the short term, is based on the use by antinarcotics authorities of *an active ingredient (glyphosate)* that is known and has been tested, thereby allowing Washington to denounce those illicit growers who employ a range of highly dangerous chemicals whose use is restricted. Among these are *paraquat* and *endosulfan*, used as pesticides and which have been classified by the EPA as highly toxic. Their sale is restricted in the US and Colombia.

On the one hand, the argument about the harm caused by the growers' intensive use of chemical elements to protect illicit crops or to enhance the processing of cocaine paste (*Pasta Básica de Cocaína - PBC*) can be viewed as valid. Yet, on the other hand, the debate over an active ingredient such as *glyphosate* does not recognize the difference between its use in its most common commercial formulation (Roundup), which is portrayed as supposedly innocuous, and the mode of its use in Colombia, where aerial fumigation uses a commercial formulation (Roundup Ultra) that varies considerably in doses and concentration from the "standard" use of glyphosate. According to one document that analyzes this issue:

“One truly alarming aspect of the fumigation process is found in the manner in which the criteria for the levels of concentration in the commercial product have been handled. Monsanto, the local producer of the glyphosate used in fumigation, recommends the application of 2.5 liters/hectare of the product with a concentration of 2.5 grams/liter, resulting in an application of 7.5 grams/hectare, if the recommendations from the production laboratory are followed. The US State Department, for its part, speaks of a product with a concentration of 147 grams/liter and the National Police mention a product with a concentration of 158 grams/liter and indicate that they apply 23.65 liters/hectare. This dosage is the equivalent of an application of 3,700grams (3.7 liters) per fumigated hectare. The figure corresponds to almost 500 times the dose recommended by the laboratory. What kinds of toxic effects can be expected from such concentrations?”¹¹

In this last case, the EPA has recognized that it cannot contradict the State Department, given the absence of research tests that would conclusively show the environmental and health effects of the "new" formulation for destroying illicit crops.

The Colombian case, thus, stands out in a context where both the doses and level of concentration of *glyphosate*, the active ingredient used in aerial fumigation, have multiplied

¹⁰ This is what is meant by the concept of alternative development in crisis, which is how we titled this side discussion.

¹¹ Grupo Interdisciplinario Política y Ambiente “Los éxitos del desacierto”, (*Interdisciplinary Group on Politics and the Environment, “The Successes of Mistakes”*), Acción Andina Colombia, September 2003, Bogotá. (*Interdisciplinary Group on Politics and the Environment, “The Successes of Mistakes”*)

in recent times. Starting in 1993, the dose in liter per hectare has gone through a series of increases. Since 2000, the concentration in grams per liter has also been stepped up incrementally. These increases continue today. Results showing a reduction in illicit crops, a reduction produced “in a matter of months,” as the State Department document declares, demonstrate the impact of these dual increases in *glyphosate* amounts and concentrations.

Even if the relevance of this scenario is accepted, where manual and aerial eradication methods are placed in competition, the comparison is not consistent. In effect, the official figures for areas of reduction have been presented as if all crop reduction were obtained by aerial fumigation. However, the differences between the two methods are well known (see table 1).

Table No. 1
Aerial Eradication vs. Actual Eradication in Colombia in 2002

Period	No. of Hectares Sprayed	Total hectares eradicated (all methods)	No. of hectares reduced by spraying (according to US)	% of total acres eradicated by spraying	Proportion of hectares fumigated / eradicated
Jan 02 -Dec 02	130,364	25,350	9,797	38.64	13.30/1

Source: Based on figures from the Colombian Antinarotics Police and the US State Department

Of a total of 9,797 hectares eradicated by aerial spraying, the actual effectiveness in terms of its results is discouraging: to eradicate 1 hectare it is necessary to fumigate 13.3 hectares, making for significant deficiency in terms of cost.

On the other hand, USAID and Chemonics International show a total of 16,023 hectares eradicated manually between January and December of 2002, which surpasses the level of effective eradication achieved by aerial means (see table 2).

Table No. 2
Manual Eradication in Colombia

Period	No. of hectares eliminated manually	Total hectares eliminated	% compared to total eradicated
Jan 02 – Dec. 02	16,023	25,350	63.20

Source: Based on figures from Colombia Alternative Development (CAD) www.fundacad.org.co

In other words, manual eradication contributed a significant 63.20% of the total eradication of illicit crops in 2002, compared with a modest 38.64% for aerial spraying. From this perspective, the affirmation of the effectiveness of aerial fumigation is incomprehensible.

Policy Recommendations Derived from this first section:

1. Propose a reformulation of alternative development so that it better aligns with objectives related to development indicators for the areas where projects are implemented, and simultaneously reducing the importance of criteria and indicators which measure the success of programs based on the number of hectares of illicit crop areas eradicated.
2. As a consequence, alternative development should not be compared to other eradication methods as if their objectives were its primary purpose. To reestablish its purpose of seeking economic, social, political and cultural sustainability as alternatives for local communities, criteria and indicators for evaluating its effectiveness should be varied correspondingly, on the basis of development indicators taken primarily from local and regional realities. The achievement of these goals should be the grounds for considering new aid.
3. Aid should be targeted to communities in municipalities that effectively progress towards compliance with manual eradication agreements, based on international oversight. This recommendation would make agreements with the Colombian government possible. For those regions that show a willingness to seek socioeconomic alternatives to illegal single crop farming, aid should lean towards efforts that protect regions from elements that are socially, economically and environmentally disruptive, such as aerial fumigation. This recommendation goes much further than the overall, inconsistent condition for the presence of alternative development programs at the departmental level in regions slated for fumigation.¹² Rather, it proposes creating the minimum environment or criteria necessary for establishing programs at the municipal level, as well as verifying the actual opportunity that communities slated for fumigation have had to participate in alternative development programs prior to the spraying.
4. The Colombian government should be asked to design a policy that favors the manual eradication method, based on valid procedures to be used by any community that decides to develop an agreement along these lines. In other words, in order to attain effective development of the strategy it should not just be the exclusive and unilateral will of the central Colombian government that decides who can participate in an alternative development program. Rather, a general procedure that is both neutral and valid should be developed for any community that decides to adopt it. Manual eradication also has the advantage of guaranteeing a better medium and long term perspective, as long as well administered crop substitution pacts are put forth that are transparent in their application and compliant with commitments by the State.
5. The Colombian government should be required to develop reliable estimates of the number of families dependent on illicit crops, for coca as well as for poppy. It is impossible to establish a serious policy that will address the social causes of the

¹² As outlined in the Kenneth M. Ludden Foreign Operations Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2002 (P.L. 107-115)

problem without knowing which dimensions are being talked about in this modality of the policy's problematic issues. Thus, while project estimates taken from the UNODCCP's Integrated System of Illicit Crop Monitoring (*Sistema Integrado de Monitoreo de Cultivos Ilícitos, SIMCI*), based on concentration levels in the coca parcels, is an important effort, these estimates are not reliable given the difficulty of corroborating data from the field, which are obtained by satellite.

Without adequate awareness of the size of the social dimension to the illicit crop problem, the targeting of aid resources is the result of capricious and arbitrary decisions. Therefore, it is insufficient to use the fumigation of an area as the sole criterion for directing resources to alternative development projects, especially since little is known on the ground about the demographic, social, economic and cultural characteristics of the areas in which the eradication has taken place.

Force as a Dissuasive Element for Producers and Security

One of the most outstanding conclusions in the General Accounting Office document, based on evaluations of the Peruvian and Bolivian experiences, is the necessity of guaranteeing the use of force so that producers will accept alternative development programs:

"Without interdiction and eradication as disincentives, growers are unlikely to abandon more lucrative and easily cultivated coca crops in favor of less profitable and harder to grow licit crops or to pursue legal employment. Further, alternative development, interdiction, and eradication efforts must be carefully coordinated to achieve mutually reinforcing benefits"¹³

The general principal of this affirmation turns out to be valid. Doubts arise about the medium and long-term sustainability of a policy that begins with a wide and permanent deployment of force, as happened in Colombia. If the Bolivian case is observed, it is clear that the number of hectares of illicit crops was reduced – by forced manual eradication – to 13,400 in 2000. However, the new trends that resulted after success was proclaimed must be analyzed in-depth to determine how these significant reductions were obtained. These trends indicate that:

- a. The growth trend of new coca crops from this date reaches averages up to 50% between 2000 to 2001 and 2002.
- b. The presence of a political movement based on coca producers that has almost overcome the Bolivian presidency should be recognized as an eloquent manifestation of failure or at least of the un-sustainability of the policy that was affirmed by the use of force.

Out of this several questions arise: Was it valid to proclaim success in Bolivia given the development of these aforementioned scenarios demonstrating problems with sustainability

¹³ General Accounting Office, GAO, Ibid. p. 5

and political legitimacy? At what exact moment can the strategy's "success" be proclaimed? Similarly, in the Colombian case, the beginning of the end of narco-trafficking was recently announced, based on the information yielded by figures from between 2001 and 2002 that show a 25,000 hectares reduction at a cost of 2.1 billion dollars, which represents the amount spent on the use-of-force component in Plan Colombia (2000-2003).

The sustainability of such a downward trend should be established not only at the economic level, as the General Accounting Office (GAO)¹⁴ rightly indicates, noting again the lack of a clear definition of indicators that surpasses the cold calculation of reduced illicit crop areas. Sustainability should also be established in political terms, an area which encompasses the debate over the poor quality of economic and environmental proposals in Colombia that include alternative development components.

The reality is that the inclusion of this hegemonic policy as part of Colombian State security does not cover today's security demands for affected communities; a situation which encompasses the same controversy over the economic, social and environmental effects of fumigation. This failure of coverage has been corroborated by the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights (*Defensoría del Pueblo*) and the Administrative Court of Cundinamarca in its recent finding in favor of a Popular Initiative (*Iniciativa Popular* – legal resource of civil society to protect against the possible loss of collective rights). High costs for state legitimacy in the medium term are also manifest there. The complexity of matters in penal policy in this situation contrasts with the excessive simplification with which the Colombian government is currently unveiling its illicit crop policy, undervaluing the economic and social dimension of the problem. Without adequate treatment of this dimension, it is not possible to guarantee long-term sustainability for the policy.

In other words, the nature of the illicit crop policy is not being contrasted with the most significant challenges that would determine the foundation for the strategy's sustainability. It continues to operate with an unrefined pragmatism that superimposes short-term results (the number of hectares of eradicated crops) while leaving out those challenges that are only measurable in the medium and long term, but whose foundation can be evaluated right now. And it is here that the strategy of the United States government, while clearly coinciding with the policy of President Uribe, fails to signal a secure and sustainable path.

Experiences USAID has taken from the Peruvian and Bolivian Cases and the Policy Perspective in Colombia

One of the most important challenges Washington must face is related to the security of regions where alternative development programs are being implemented at the same time as fumigation strategies:

“With the shift of the bulk of coca cultivation into the rebel-controlled zones in Colombia, our aircraft have faced a more difficult situation. The dense

¹⁴ See GAO Report to Congressional Committees, June, 2003, Ibid.

concentrations of coca cultivation in a geographically confined area give the planes a better target; the planes are also exposed to a level of hostile gunfire for which they were not designed."¹⁵

In light of this challenge, the following is proposed:

- Governmental control and security in regions where projects are implemented.

Without a doubt, the security of regions targeted for alternative development projects is fundamental to guaranteeing adequate results based on the indicators outlined above. However, some elements related to the topic of security should be made clear.

1. In some regions in Colombia, such as Putumayo, the relative roll-back of conditions empowering insurgency groups is due more to paramilitary groups' ability to employ an excessive use of violence than to the State's effectively putting in place the legitimate use of force. To give just one example, in the majority of municipal capitals in Putumayo, the power of the paramilitary is maintained in spite of the fact that a significant part of the military component of Plan Colombia has been concentrated in this region.
2. The continuity of this paramilitary power favors structures that parallel local institutions, so that a framework of governance is not strengthened. Such a strengthening should be one of the fundamental proposals of alternative development, yet to the contrary it remains weakened. At the same time, the lack of the conditions necessary for a governance framework contributes to the accentuation of para-institutional mechanisms of power.
3. The lack of visibility of this type of problem at the local level is another issue that gets lost, which is evident in the nature of evaluations put forth by different agencies and bodies that control aid to Colombia from the United States. That is, this dimension of the problem is replaced by evaluations centered on figures of forced eradication. These figures are used to weaken the context that gives sustainable alternative development its indispensable political role, as in the case of establishing a governance framework.
4. In order to preserve the State's power based on transparency, responsibility, efficiency and effectiveness in the exercise of its exclusive monopoly on violence - above all violence directed against the paramilitary groups that operate in the region, as well as power based on respect for human rights - priority should be given to an alternative development program primarily aimed at creating conditions for the exercise of a framework of governance. This framework should center on the terms of the ground rules and procedures to be superimposed on the eventual management of legal and illegal private powers.

¹⁵ US Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, March 2003

A limited vision of security, confined to increasing military aid and capacity so that the State obtains territorial control, is insufficient if it is not applied to strengthening conditions that guarantee the exercise of a framework of good governance and local democracy.

5. Against this, fumigation continues to be thought of as the primary action employed by the State, focusing on obtaining figures of "hectares eradicated." In the meantime, insufficient efforts are made to ensure the strategic political conditions fundamental to alternative development.

Policy Recommendations on the Use of Force as a Dissuasive Element for Growers and as the Foundation for Obtaining Territorial Control

1. To rescue Alternative Development as a policy inserted into the creation of socioeconomic conditions constituting an alternative to illicit crops (the first part of these recommendations), a political dimension must be stressed that proposes good governance through transparency (accountability) and through the strengthening of a participative democracy. This dimension must be strategically based on the formation of the basic political conditions (political framework) necessary for the exercise of local government. This objective should be translated into indicators that serve as the basis for evaluating its achievement.
2. A governance framework must go hand-in-hand with strengthening the justice system, above all at the local level. This component must also be evaluated using indicators that determine the levels of change in conditions of impunity: awareness of punishable cases compared to the number of occurrences presented; the quantity and quality of verdicts that conform to law; detention and punishment of those responsible, etc; as well as the full and effective exercise of justice.
3. These objectives, to reference two important dimensions in the exercise of territorial control, are the ones that the State should develop in its search for legitimate territorial control. Achieving territorial control should not be distorted by the process of strengthening military structures, which weakens the governance framework and the application of the justice system. Strengthening the framework of governance and effectively exercising the justice system are decisive conditions for the sustainability of drug policy.
4. One serious problem that emerges from recognizing the connection between drugs and armed conflict is a diminished perception of the social nature of the problem. As a consequence, actions founded on the unbalanced use of force for reducing the high or exclusive dependency of local communities on the drug economy are generating a profound crisis in alternative development policies. The ecosystems affected, among others, by the irrationality of single crop farming, deforestation, the intensive use of agrochemicals and the motor that drives the cycle of pillaging, (i.e., the fumigations of illicit crops), require a decision-making process where the perspective of affected communities, and local and regional powers must be integrated into a framework of rational management and use of the resources of the territory.

The institutional problem and alternative development in Colombia

1. Lack of State control over the most remote territories in Colombia, such as the Amazon region or the jungles that form part of the bio-geographical region Chocó, is due in the first place to the absence of a recognition of these regions as a constitutional part of the country, and in the second place to the lack of will to govern through the application of development policies capable of affirming the State's sovereignty and legitimacy at the local and regional level.
2. The presence of the State has been sporadic, selective, and more in keeping with extractive economies where a region possesses natural resources such as petroleum. Currently, the State is not exercising greater control over these goods that have represented extraordinary income to some territorial institutions, such as the departments. In general, the State has been incapable of safeguarding these extractive resources because the benefits of this activity are not adequately supported with resources of regional development. Furthermore, the State often has little functional governmental control over the regions where these resources are situated. Thus, conditions have been created that allow for the spontaneous occupation of these territories, without planning or foresight of the future for these areas and their occupants, undermining important resources for the regions.
3. As a consequence, the existence of these dynamics, in some cases prior to the presence of coca, leads to unrestricted proliferation of illegal phenomena, without the necessary conditions for managing and orienting development through public institutions and under the adequate guidance of the State. In the absence of guidelines for social control under State direction, private groups engaging in armed disputes create systems of control over these areas. Ground rules are thus established on the basis of the power of arms. When these ground rules become privatized and when those who represent State security act as accomplices in supporting such private rules and organizations, they generate disorder and dissolution of the points of reference for what constitutes legitimacy and expression of the public interest.
4. Under these conditions a context for disorder arises, which is aggravated by the absence of justice and respect for human rights that should be embodied in the State and its institutions. In this environment of disorder different powers, in some cases representing large narco-traffickers, emerge and develop, more recently attracting to coca producing areas large migrant populations who see in the illegal economy a way out of difficult economic conditions.
5. The expansion of insurgent groups in these areas and the paramilitary reaction against them has resulted in undermining the vestiges of the construction of a sovereign State. This dynamic emerged with the coca economy and was aggravated by its direct connection to the funding of armed groups. These groups initiated a process of establishment of institutions under their own control in war settings by: imposing informal tax systems; compelling the illegal sale of natural resources in certain and

determined sites in order to facilitate the appropriation of the surplus value of the small producers; establishing authoritarian control over the population; and destroying any attempt at autonomous organization by local communities, forcing them to become part of the war.

Recommendations concerning the development of a local institutional framework

1. Considering the aforementioned conditions, linking alternative development interventions to international cooperation becomes indispensable, and such interventions should be directed primarily to strengthen institutional framework building. The process of medium and long-term regional development requires a complete restatement of the entire policy on illicit crops, a policy that should center on the effective reinforcement of local and regional institutional frameworks. This aim should be founded on land use policy and community participation, which inevitably require the creation of policies to promote the enhanced organization of socializing institutions (strengthening the education system, the family structure, and the overall social fabric). As has already been stated and in order to establish these goals, priority must be given to solidifying an efficient justice system safeguarding the fundamental rights of the population.
2. Even if President Uribe's National Plan for Development encourages a debate that seeks to reconsider the status of alternative development as a plan for assistance in times of emergency and recovers its focus on regional development, that plan is contradicted by the mode of operation of alternative development projects, including several models implemented by USAID. In effect, a distinct process unfolds under the transactional formula that has as its base the anticipated eradication of illicit crops, rather than the goal of being the primary support for local development plans or for improving the Land Use Policy and Environmental Plans at the local level. When aid supporting the transaction formula of early eradication prevails, indispensable conditions for institutional sustainability and alternative development policy are left out. In general, the issue is about acknowledging that regions must overcome their dependency on illicit drugs and that indicators for the means used to reach this objective must be measurable. The problem presents itself when the immediate zeal for eradication is substituted for the creation of solid foundations that would make this intention truly sustainable on economic, social and political levels.
3. Links must be established between alternative development programs and policies related to the processes of local and regional autonomy. Such links would tend to stabilize the role municipalities must play in the development process, strengthening new models for inter-institutional cooperation and promoting social equality by giving support to the poorest sectors of the population. Decentralization programs should be very serious about proactively facilitating the devolution of responsibilities to municipalities, generating a more stable basis of resources, and including new social actors.

4. In the preparation of land use policy and development plans, emphasis should be placed on the close relationship that must exist between mayoralties and governorships. Land use policy should be one of the fundamental areas of activity of mayoralties as well as of governorships and communities, and land use policy should also be a subject for international dialogue.

In procedures that intervene with local communities relationships must be established that revolve around communities treated as builders of local development and not as simple "beneficiaries." Likewise, contracts with municipal governments should be prioritized within the framework of strengthening their ability to manage and govern locally. As part of the policy of strengthening institutions at the local level, Local organizations such as the Municipal Councils on Rural Development (*Consejos Municipales de Desarrollo Rural*), and the ability to call public meetings should be reestablished, with the purpose of opening spaces of participation and reaching agreements with organized communities. Such targeting of institutional power at the local level should be accompanied by the strengthening of local organizations.

In general, more than an individualized power management, what local regions in Colombia need is the reinforcement of clearly defined institutions and management procedures, where verifiable achievements are rooted and the exercise of local power is institutionalized under community oversight. One of the main roles for the State is safeguarding the security of community leaders, as well as those journalists who are seeking to strengthen citizen control over resource management. It is precisely here where one of the main faults in the State's current role can be found. In general, the right to life and security must be guaranteed for those who supervise the development of good governance.¹⁶

Summary of proposals for a policy of cooperation grounded in the construction of democracy and the defense of the Rule of Law in Colombia

1. Decisions about cooperation in alternative development should be based on **State policies** for the management of illicit crops. On balance, the last decade of alternative development in Colombia demonstrates the prevalence of short-term public policies, which shift every 4 years with the election of a new president, rather than well-conceived, long-term State strategies. This situation entails serious problems of uncertainty and confusion for communities, local and regional authorities, and in general for the parties involved in creating alternatives to the problems that face them.
2. Cooperation should have an **institutional support in Colombia** so that minimum guarantees of order, transparency, ground rules and the possibility of access to resources by regions and localities are provided. A problem related to the predominance of short-term governmental policies, is that institutions are often created, altered or even abolished during the 4-year presidential term, as a

¹⁶ As is well known, Colombia is the country in the hemisphere with the highest number of assassinations of journalists. Many of the victims are reporters who work in the regions. These murders are, in large measure, associated with denouncing corruption cases.

consequence of presidential power rather than of serious evaluation processes consistent with an in-depth institutional framework for pursuing these ends.

3. International cooperation must seek **visibility, dialogue and the development of programs with parties, organizations, and processes at the local and regional level**. These must be framed by the search for state legitimacy and peace, based on the strengthening of civil society in these areas. In regions where indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities have autonomy rights, their territorial institutions must be respected; a respect that promotes the strengthening of local organizations.

Cooperation should **support proposals directed towards guaranteeing community resistance to war**, while respecting the communities' own reasons for resistance. Such resistance, however, should not affect Bogotá's autonomy in imposing security policies, in spite of a need to rely on experience or support from local powers in the management of the conflict. These local communities often have conceptions and interests different from the State's for supporting civil resistance. Cooperation must clearly specify these differences and support conflict management dynamics which contribute to the constructing of local autonomy.

In restating community resistance against violence and in the search for alternatives to the distortions generated by dependency on illegally cultivating single crops, one of the most important proposals is **food and nutritional autonomy**. Cooperation must strengthen local processes aimed at energizing the nutritional autonomy, together with other actions related to guaranteeing the life and security of the local people.

4. Likewise, international cooperation on alternative development should establish clear goals for the **strengthening of human rights, good governance, and the ground rules for local and regional power**. These goals should incorporate requirements for community participation.
5. **International cooperation should condition its policy and aid resources using scientific evaluation to determine the impact of aerial fumigation or the eventual use of a biological method, as well as employing primary methods for guaranteeing the forced eradication of crops with illicit use.** Points to consider include:
 - a. During President Uribe's term, a policy framework for establishing clear, neutral and consistent ground rules for the **manual eradication of illicit crops** has not existed.
 - b. Aerial fumigations are **seriously impacting the environment, the health of residents living in affected regions, and the alternative crops** supported by the State and international cooperation agencies as has been repeatedly stated by the Colombian Human Rights Ombudsman Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*). Aerial fumigation promotes the **rapid displacement of illicit crops** to regions without previous intervention, increasing environmental damage due to new

plantings (resulting in deforestation) and crop management based on the intensive use of agrochemicals.

- c. Fumigation has been forced upon the backs of public opinion without full disclosure of the knowledge produced by existing research, and in general, without awareness of the following:
 - the transparent and consistent scientific tests carried out on the properties of the fumigant used;
 - the levels of concentration of the active ingredient, *glyphosate*;
 - the dosage used when spraying;
 - the required follow-up to be completed by the country supplying the fumigant *Roundup*, as part of the technical requirements mandated by national legislation; and
 - the environmental monitoring that is being conducted.

Furthermore, the important principal of *precaution* has been lost in Colombia, as is seen by the proved absence of serious field studies on the actual impacts on the environment and public health caused by fumigation.

6. Although the cultivation of illicit crops and other aspects of the narco-trafficking economy are viewed as a source of funding for armed groups, **the exclusive treatment of these crops in the context of a national security perspective has resulted in serious underestimation of the economic and social dimensions of the problem.** International cooperation should focus on finding a way to address this problem so that the fundamental causes of illicit crop cultivation continue to be recognized, constituting a source of legitimacy for alternative development programs.
7. The policy of cooperation should favor a **preventive strategy** for crop control, which means evaluating the nature of the programs instead of resorting reflexively to eradication. Furthermore, this policy should help peasants and indigenous communities achieve progress. Many local economies without illicit crops suffer profound crises, which often leads to involvement in illicit activities.
8. Policies of cooperation should favor strategies related to prevention, reduction of impacts (from eradication), and the creation of alternative management strategies for problems associated with fragile ecosystems. These ecosystems are an important base for providing services, resources and a healthy environment. Currently, in an attempt extend its national security strategy while at the same time claiming to protect the environment, the Colombian government grants a subsidy to a small number of communities, selected by the Uribe administration, that have committed to reforesting logged areas and stopping all coca leaf cultivation¹⁷. Clearly, **President Uribe's "forest protection" policy does not fully take into account the true complexity of the environmental situation.** Even less does it recognize the range of complementary issues arising when forest conservation is once again reduced to short-term schemes offering simplistic solutions to environmental damage, caused, *inter alia*, by illegal economies. Support to basic research, the systematization of

¹⁷ *Familias Guardabosques* program.

information, pedagogical processes and the overall development of State policies on matters of environmental protection and management should be considered.

9. Empowering the authority of municipalities, departments and autonomous local authorities (community councils and Indigenous Territorial Units (*Entidades Territoriales Indígenas*) to manage armed conflict. Rethinking the role of localities and regions in processes and mechanisms of conflict management.
10. International cooperation must ask the Colombian government to design an alternative development policy that targets territories seized by narco-traffickers and over which there has been a loss of the right of dominion. This cooperation constitutes a true starting point for rolling back power from a social sector that today attempts to legalize itself by profiting politically from negotiations with paramilitary groups. As is well known, the paramilitary have modified the land tenure structure through drastic and illegal land concentration in favor of large landlords who maintain links with narco-traffickers. As a result, structural conditions have been created which accelerate the expulsion from the land of large masses of the agrarian population, along with deepening poverty and unemployment in big cities. Today the displaced people and the urban poor make up a risk group that those who control illegal activities can take advantage of. All of these related actions and reactions have created a distorted society in which the illicit drug economy continues to reproduce itself and expand at multiple levels.

The Colombian government must send a strong and clear signal that its political will is not with those who have benefited financially from this degrading war. One of the clearest ways of sending this signal must be the sure and gradual establishment of an alternative development policy for those lands that shall be returned to expropriated communities. Such a preventive policy would generate solid foundations for confronting the drug economy at its various levels.

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