

Colombia

Learning Institutions Enable Integrated Response

BY THOMAS A. MARKS

Current emphasis in irregular warfare highlights whole-of-government response and the imperative for “learning institutions.” Only by being the latter can the former engage in the timely, flexible mastery of constantly changing circumstances imperative for successful implementation of the “ends-ways-means” methodology. Few countries have worked harder or made greater steps in this direction than Colombia.

Though Colombian progress toward an acceptable steady-state has been much remarked upon,¹ especially several of the more spectacular Colombian special operations that have in recent years seriously damaged the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC),² there is much more that can be learned from Bogota’s experience.

Colombia as “New War” Battleground³

It seems almost ancient history to recall that little more than a decade ago, many analysts had all but written off Colombia as both a failed state and a lost cause.⁴ In the years before the turn of the millennium, an insurgency that had its roots in the aftermath of the bloody civil war—called simply “The Violence” (*La Violencia*), 1948–1958/1960—had grown to the point that massed FARC columns of multiple-battalion strength proved capable of overrunning or mauling army units of reinforced company strength and in seizing distant points, such as the most remote state capital in Colombia, Mitu, which was held for 3 days in mid-1998.

It was therefore a daunting situation that confronted the administration of President Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002), which took office even as such disasters began to take on momentum. Internal dislocation caused by the growing drug trade, U.S. efforts to “punish” Colombia during the Ernesto Samper administration (1994–1998) for inadequate cooperation in counternarcotics

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efforts, and mediocre senior military leadership had all combined to cripple a state response. A misguided Pastrana strategy of negotiations was to be enabled by military pressure, but there was no effective coordination between the two pillars of strategy.

Even as negotiations foundered because of FARC insincerity, one of the most effective and capable irregular warfare militaries in the world today was built. This was accomplished within the space of 4 years in the face of daunting odds and a profound shortage of means. Virtually every aspect of the military as an

so-called new socialism meshed with the more traditional strongman populism of an earlier, military-dominated era

institution was touched by a sweeping reform movement driven by Colombian officers. In the field, FARC efforts to move from maneuver warfare (using large units capable of fighting the military to a standstill) to “war of position” (liberating and holding the emerging counterstate) were soundly defeated.

Though FARC sought to project its strength through the usual tripartite division of Marxist-Leninist structure—a party (the Clandestine Communist Party of Colombia), an army (which FARC itself claimed to be, the “Popular Army,” or FARC–*Ejército del Pueblo*), and a united front (the Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia)—it was a “new war” phenomenon independent of external state aid. Instead, it relied upon exploitation of the drug trade (mainly cocaine), kidnapping, extortion, and criminality (cattle rustling and vehicle theft) for generating funds. This allowed it not only to exist but also to grow, regardless of societal shifts that increasingly shrank its social

base and encouraged insurgent behavior that appalled most potential supporters, domestic or international. Essentially, the combatants became the movement, but their independent funding profile allowed just enough connection with marginalized population fragments (such as migrant workers in the drug fields) that expansion was all but guaranteed.

Similarly, FARC ideology was illustrative of the new world order. Though communism itself had seemingly “collapsed” with the end of the Cold War, in reality, it was alive and well.⁵ Latin American regional context was considerably more favorable to left-wing approaches than one would have expected based on international circumstances. So-called new socialism meshed with the more traditional strongman populism (*caudillismo*) of an earlier, military-dominated era to morph into the neo-Marxism of “Bolivarianism” most prominently in Colombia’s neighbors, but especially Venezuela.⁶ This favorable context further enabled FARC by providing sanctuaries, secure supply lines, and state support, both overt (for example, at solidarity conferences) and covert (the Venezuelan but also the Ecuadoran effort).

Further assisting the FARC counterstate were traditional nonstate actors with non-Marxist ideologies, but ideologies nevertheless built upon a powerful sense of ideological-nationalist grievance. These groups sought force multiplication in Colombia through a meeting of minds and capabilities. The likes of the Provisional Irish Republican Army of Northern Ireland and *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* of Spain secretly sent numerous teams to work with FARC. In exchange for FARC solidarity, they offered funds, training spaces, and lethal contributions from their own violent repertoires, such as the mechanics of mass casualty bombing.⁷

To this traditional challenge was added a more nontraditional threat, “lawfare,” waged by parastates implacably hostile to the Colombian state itself.⁸ What Bogota had early on labeled the “human rights cartel” comprised international human rights groups, functioning in alliance with thousands of local cause-oriented groups (often with interlocking leadership directorates and processes), which claimed a certain sovereign immunity by virtue of the nobility of their cause (often termed the “halo effect”) to wage a sustained assault on state processes and legitimacy. They used publicity (invariably framed in legal and activist jargon), links to certain important members of Western political establishments, and the law itself in tactical and often noncontextual ways to challenge the right of the state to self-defense.

Indispensable for the successful use of lawfare was *shaping* the battlefield by a determined effort of framing and narrative; that is, the creation of a negative picture and accompanying storyline that cast the Colombian state as “the bad guys,” thus altering the very nature of the field of battle.⁹ The goal was to fill those virtual spaces of legitimacy that the state had simply never thought about or sought to fill. FARC’s struggle, then, was *framed* as quasi-legitimate rebellion by the oppressed and marginalized against an imperfect, brutal state (enabled by the usual suspects in the West). The *narrative* “described” the frame in various ways but always with the goal of portraying the Colombian state as both suspect and murderous, especially its security forces.

In reality, multiple, regular surveys in the period under discussion showed the Colombian security forces (the military and police) to be among the most positively viewed segments in the country, with the military invariably at the very top in popular esteem.¹⁰ Yet with processes

and funding that were neither transparent nor accountable, the parastates claimed to have a more accurate view of reality and worked tirelessly to eliminate or cripple the Colombian counterinsurgency, as well as its American assistance. They were supported by elements within the U.S. polity. Though such had also been the case during the Cold War, the “new war” environment saw the process accelerate as it was enabled by the extreme fragmentation of American foreign policy consensus and dwindling agreement on the economic, social, and political fundamentals toward which any society should work. Consequently, there was little empathy in some key circles of policy for the challenges of an emerging state such as Colombia. Ironically, the state was seen as legitimate by its own population, as could be discerned by any metric.

Nevertheless, in the pre-1998 years, FARC grew steadily in strength, filling the vacuum that was Colombian rural space, most particularly in the large area of the *llanos* and *amazonas*, the jungle and true jungle of eastern Colombia, with 60 percent of the national territory but only 4 percent of the population. Long before *ungoverned spaces* and *failed/failing states* became terms driving academic analysis,¹¹ Latin American realities dictated that almost any insurgent group could for a time find secure base areas in the hinterland. Che Guevara was

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perhaps only singularly unlucky in attracting both the notoriety and the competent response that led to his being hunted down and killed

in southeastern Bolivia in 1967. FARC experienced no such fate until the events of the Pastrana administration forced it to go on the strategic defensive.

Critical to this reversal was Colombian military abandonment of U.S. “military operations other than war” doctrine, with its division of conflict into “war” and “other than war.” The revised Colombian approach enabled the emergence of a new holistic approach to conflict.¹² It was built upon a correct assessment of the threat. Previously, FARC had been categorized as a problem of “public order,” which necessarily (and legally) involved a law enforcement response. Correctly recognizing that any struggle in which massed guerrilla units seized towns could hardly be equated with a struggle against criminals, the military reframed the battle as “war.” More accurately, it was a particular type of war, a Marxist-Leninist insurgency using People’s War doctrine to advance on multiple lines of effort with the ultimate objective of seizing power. Recruiting from a limited social base was accompanied by criminal fundraising, but the political project was the focus of all FARC strategic plans and efforts.¹³

This assessment stood in stark contrast to the U.S. strategic view during the Clinton administration (1992–2000), which it sought to impose upon the Colombians. In Clausewitzian terms, the United States saw the drug trade as the “center of gravity.” Counternarcotics, in fact, was the sole rationale for most assistance provided under “Plan Colombia” (an amount ultimately in excess of \$1 billion). The Colombian counterassessment argued that this confused an *operational* center of gravity with the *strategic* center of gravity—legitimacy, or the support of the people. Indeed, if funding was one operational center of gravity, argued the Colombians, a second

was “FARC structures,” the counterstate (that is, the clandestine infrastructure of Vietnam-era terminology) because by 1998 FARC’s combatants essentially were the insurgency. The mass base of FARC doctrine and ideology did not exist.¹⁴ The key to counterinsurgency, then, was security for the population.

It should not be surprising that this approach, articulated formally by the Colombians, is essentially that of U.S. irregular warfare best known through Field Manual 3–24, *Counterinsurgency*.¹⁵ Any irregular conflict that has progressed to the point Colombia had by mid-1998 (or Afghanistan today¹⁶) necessitates commitment of military power adequate to establishing security for the population, even as state reform addresses the roots of conflict.¹⁷ Colombian forces, of course, were on home ground, so they faced no language or cultural issues or lack of national will to prosecute the fight. There was no hostile diaspora to contribute to the insurgent cause. Instead, the central obstacle to success was strategic confusion.

This was ended by Álvaro Uribe, a third party candidate for the presidency in 2002, who tapped public frustration with Pastrana’s years of unsuccessful negotiations with FARC to sweep into power with a first-round electoral victory. When he took office in mid-year, Uribe quickly made good on his promise to proceed forcefully to the extent of moving beyond whole-of-government¹⁸ to what can only be labeled “whole-of-society” warfighting.

Conceptualizing Whole-of-Society Response

Uribe’s administration began even as the profound shock of 9/11 had led to a dramatic evolution away from the U.S. approach during the Clinton years. In effect, under President George W. Bush, the barrier that

had separated counternarcotics from counterinsurgency was dropped. Among the most significant new initiatives was the deployment of 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) personnel to embattled Arauca Department to train a new “infrastructure protection brigade.” Indeed, an indicator of just how seriously the Bush administration took the problems of Colombia was its issuing of National Security Presidential Directive 18, “Supporting Democracy in Colombia,” which called for the State Department to write and implement a U.S. political-military plan in direct support of a Colombian national security strategy.

With U.S. encouragement, Uribe, early in his administration, created a true counterinsurgency plan. Unlike Plan Colombia of the Pastrana/Clinton years (all but written by the United States), which had been a catalogue of national ills with proposed solutions beyond Bogota’s ability to operationalize or fund, the new *Democratic Security and Defence Policy* (officially released in June 2003) was intended as a course of action. As such, it was built upon three basic tenets:

- ❖ A lack of personal security is at the root of Colombia’s social, economic, and political ills.
- ❖ This lack of personal security stems from the absence of the state in large swaths of the national territory.
- ❖ Therefore, all elements of national power need to be directed toward ending this lack of national integration.

Addressing this assessment was the policy itself, the thrust of which is stated directly:

Security is not regarded primarily as the security of the State, nor as the security

*of the citizen without the assistance of the State. Rather, it is the protection of the citizen and democracy by the State with the solidarity and co-operation of the whole of society. . . . This is, in short, a policy for the protection of the population.*¹⁹

The policy stated that threatening the stability of the country and its citizens was an explosive combination of “terrorism; the illegal drugs trade; illicit finance; traffic of arms, ammunition, and explosives; kidnapping and extortion; and homicide.”²⁰ The hitherto intractable nature of Colombia’s security conundrum stemmed from the interlocking nature of these threats.

The strategic objectives of the *Democratic Security and Defence Policy* were therefore published as:

- ❖ consolidation of state control throughout Colombia
- ❖ protection of the population
- ❖ elimination of the illegal drug trade in Colombia
- ❖ maintenance of a deterrent capability
- ❖ transparent and efficient management of resources.

These, in turn, led to six courses of action:

- ❖ coordinating state action
- ❖ strengthening state institutions
- ❖ consolidating control of national territory
- ❖ protecting the rights of all Colombians and the nation’s infrastructure
- ❖ cooperating for the security of all
- ❖ communicating state policy and action.

Each of these courses of action had integral components. “Co-ordinating state action,” for instance, stated that a National Defence and Security Council would be established to ensure “co-ordinated and unified” action by all “state bodies.” No longer, in other words, was counterinsurgency a duty assigned by the state only to the security forces (mainly the army). “Regional authorities” were directed to set up similar bodies, with their membership left to local circumstances. A Joint Intelligence Committee was also established, and the Ministry of Defence was explicitly charged

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with coordinating the activities of both the armed forces and police (a statutory arrangement that had been largely ignored under the most recent pre-Urbe administrations).

Other components in the policy further highlighted the Uribe administration’s awareness of the multidimensional nature of counterinsurgency. “Strengthening state institutions,” for instance, began with a discussion of the need to bolster the judicial system; moved on to analyze strengthening the armed forces, police, and intelligence; and concluded by examining ways to strengthen state finances.

If one course of action stood out as central to the whole, it was “consolidating control of national territory,” as mentioned above, as the indispensable element of any counterinsurgency. A “cycle of recovery” was detailed that evoked images of the approach used in successful counterinsurgencies such as those of Thailand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and

Peru.²¹ It further outlined precisely the strategic approach to be used:²²

- ❖ “The Government will gradually restore state presence and the authority of state institutions, starting in strategically important areas.”
- ❖ “Once the Armed Forces and the National Police have re-established control over an area, units comprising professional soldiers, *campesino* soldiers [that is, local forces] and National Police *carabineros* [police field force] will maintain security and protect the civilian population. This will enable state organizations and criminal investigation authorities to work in the area.”
- ❖ “Once a basic level of security has been established, the State will embark upon a policy of territorial consolidation, re-establishing the normal operation of the justice system, strengthening local democracy, meeting the most urgent needs of the population, broadening state services and initiating medium to long term projects aimed at creating sustainable development.”

Operationalizing the Plan

Necessarily, given the nature of the irregular threat, the security forces undertook the most prominent and difficult tasks. Though responsibilities were tasked to all state ministries and bodies, it was the security forces that were to provide the shield behind which restoration of legitimate government writ took place. Hence, it was the security forces that had to engage in institutional learning and adaptation beyond anything seen in nearly a century.

A small group of officers was dominant during the 8 years of the Pastrana (1998–2002) and first Uribe (2002–2006) terms. FARC's efforts to launch major attacks had been shattered by the commander of IV Division, Major General Carlos Alberto Ospina Ovalle, who worked intimately with his superior, *Comandante del Ejercito* General Jorge Enrique Mora Rangel, and *Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares*²³ (Commanding General [CG], Joint Command) General Fernando Tapias Stahelin. Mora eventually took the place of Tapias upon the latter's retirement when Uribe became president; Ospina became army commander. When Mora himself retired in November 2003, Ospina became CG Joint Command.

What these officers shared was both theoretical and practical maturity, significantly enhanced by force of character and personal bravery. Mora and Ospina were noteworthy for their close working relationship and the general esteem with which they were held throughout not only the army but also the armed forces. Both had proven themselves tactically time and again as they had advanced through the junior ranks, then operationally as more senior commanders. Ospina was apparently the most combat-decorated officer in the army at the time he became CG Joint Command, in addition to being generally regarded as the army's premier strategist, with a deep knowledge of insurgency and counterinsurgency. Together, working under Tapias, Mora and Ospina fashioned highly effective army annual campaign plans that, as they were instituted, forced FARC into the strategic defensive. Their correct appreciation of the situation, though, could not be translated into a true counterinsurgency, with a whole-of-society approach, until the election of Uribe.

Under the Ministry of Defence (*Ministerio de Defensa Nacional*, or MDN²⁴), the security forces prepared their own plans to implement

the *Democratic Security and Defence Policy*. Both the military's Joint Command and police (*Policia Nacional*) were subordinate to MDN and used as their guide the strategic document drawn up by the ministry. Their product was issued as a 4-year vision applicable to the entire Uribe first term (2002–2006).²⁵ The original five strategic objectives were reworked to seven (specific to the defense sector),²⁶ a total that returned to five in the Joint Command strategic guidance and command policy publication.²⁷ The army's objectives were for all practical purposes those of the Joint Command.²⁸

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Discrepancies were not serious²⁹ and became moot when considered in conjunction with explanatory material.³⁰ They apparently stemmed primarily from what was the near-simultaneous (though coordinated) preparation driven by the beginning of a new administration. The central elements remained “protection of the population” and “elimination of the illegal drugs trade in Colombia,” to be accomplished through the application of national will, resources, and power. As the premier element of national power in the internal war at hand, therefore, the military clarified its role further in a “general military strategy” issued by CG Joint Command, General Mora.³¹ This remained the key document for the application of military action to support the president's “democratic security” counterinsurgency approach.

Therein, the Joint Command's original five strategic objectives became six more

detailed “General Military Strategic Components and Objectives,” divided into two groups of three, offensive and defensive (see below). The defensive components had the objective of countering the “protracted war of the Narcoterrorist Organizations [ONTs].”³² The offensive components had the objective of implementing a “war of decisive action and rapid resolution” against these same ONTs. The final strategic objective, toward which both offensive and defensive components were directed, was to end the will of the ONTs to continue armed struggle. In turn, each component (or “campaign”) had a number of subcomponents. A foundation for the whole was provided by “support components.”³³ Thus:

Offensive Components: Implement War of Decisive Action and Rapid Resolution

- ❖ Neutralize ONT finances
 - ❖ implement Plan Colombia (that is, counternarcotics)
 - ❖ facilitate end of domination (in areas by ONT)
 - ❖ take action against kidnapping and extortion
- ❖ Exercise (establish) territorial control
 - ❖ dominate and control strategic areas
 - ❖ dominate mobility corridors
 - ❖ institute a neighborhood watch network³⁴
 - ❖ control population and resources
 - ❖ facilitate presence of the state
- ❖ Neutralize ONT plans and armed capacity
 - ❖ dismantle militias
 - ❖ attrite armed groups (through attrition, diminish armed groups)
 - ❖ capture leaders
 - ❖ neutralize informants
 - ❖ neutralize traffic of arms, munitions, and explosives.

Defensive Components: Counter Protracted War of the ONT

- ❖ Protect the population and human rights
 - ❖ establish units with mission of local security
 - ❖ engage in counterterrorist actions
 - ❖ guarantee security and mobility of population
 - ❖ enhance respect for human rights and international humanitarian rights

- ❖ Protect economic infrastructure
 - ❖ secure transportation infrastructure
 - ❖ secure energy infrastructure
 - ❖ secure communications infrastructure
- ❖ Strengthen deterrent capacity
 - ❖ stockpile strategic materials
 - ❖ stand up covering forces
- ❖ Support components
 - ❖ strengthen and modernize forces
 - ❖ conduct integral action (civic action)
 - ❖ conduct combined and special operations.

Specific responsibilities (taskings) were not enumerated in this document, such having previously become a matter of operational reality before publication, with the army's force dispositions and programs driving the whole. Predictably, when army strategic objectives were aligned with their Joint Command counterparts (as per above, they are essentially the same), the breaking out of subtasks and responsibilities did, in fact, become even more specific, though only to the extent of assigning missions to "operational units" or "Director of Operations."

The professional transformation of the security forces that had taken place during the Pastrana years meant that Uribe's approach required no substantial changes on their part. Instead, they could build on what existed. Some 600 local forces platoons were formed, based in medium and small towns and augmented by tens of thousands of "neighborhood watch" participants, extending permanent government

presence to rural areas. They were integrated within regular battalions for command and control purposes and manned by volunteers from the annual draft levy. The battalions themselves, the face of the much bigger ground forces (together with the marines), were also draftees, but the strike units were manned completely by volunteers. These counterinsurgent battalions, grouped into mobile brigades, conducted relentless operations that in the main task force area—the FARC "strategic rearguard" in the jungles of eastern Colombia—lasted for years (using block leave procedures to sustain permanent presence). The result was a relentless grinding down of FARC strength.

Units of all types were brought into the force structure according to plans predating Uribe but now funded: new counterinsurgent battalions and mobile brigades; urban special forces³⁵ (joining "rural special forces," the traditional mode of operation); special transportation network protection units (*Plan Meteoro*, or "Plan Meteor"); high mountain battalions specifically situated and equipped to block insurgent mobility corridors through hitherto

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inaccessible heights; strengthened infrastructure protection units; and local forces to provide security, in particular, for rural urban centers.³⁶ Simultaneously, from the same funding source, enhancement of individual effectiveness was to be improved by converting draftee slots to volunteers at the rate of 10,000 per year—an

expensive undertaking since it costs approximately 10 times more for a volunteer than for a draftee.³⁷

All components related to each other. Standing up local forces platoons, for instance, though intended initially as a step to enhance security of the population, was soon found to produce greatly enhanced information flow to the forces and thus served as the basis for more accurate and intense employment of regular and strike units. Greater activity in an area forced the insurgents to move, especially the leadership, presenting targets for enhanced special operations capability. Loss of leaders led to surrenders, which allowed psychological warfare units to exploit defections with a variety of innovative programs, from rallies to radio broadcasts. Fewer insurgents meant greater freedom of movement, and special units secured the transportation arteries, just as they did the critical infrastructure. Business picked up, the economy improved, kidnappings and murders dropped substantially, social tension diminished, and political participation increased.

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If there was one element in the approach that provided the missing link, it was the deployment of local forces. These were indispensable to establishing state presence in affected areas and neatly sidestepped legal objections (and fierce opposition from the parastates) by utilizing a 1940s era law, discovered still on the books, which allowed a portion of the national draft levy to opt for service in their home towns—in local defense units. Despite

its substantial agricultural sector, Colombia is classified as approximately three-quarters urban, and the troops—initially called *Soldados Campesinos* (“Peasant Soldiers”), a name they themselves disliked—were universally located in rural towns. Hence, *Soldados de mi Pueblo* (“Home Guards” would be the most useful rendering) came to be used simultaneously.

Local forces had all the more impact because the police, using the same approach as the *Soldados de mi Pueblo* program, systematically established presence in every *municipio* (county) in the country. Those areas from which they had been driven, or which historically had been considered too dangerous for police presence, were manned by what effectively was a police field force, though under regular police jurisdiction. They functioned in units of the same size and nature as the army local forces but were more mobile and often better armed. Where necessary, veritable forts were constructed to allow secure stations for the projection of state presence. Backing them up was a highly trained reaction force.³⁸

Such police involvement as an integral component of the counterinsurgency highlights a further development in adaptation: the increasingly joint nature of Colombian operations. Though answering to a CG Joint Command, the military services themselves had functioned together more as a matter of courtesy than command. This had not posed any insuperable problems, particularly given the army’s dominance, but it was not the ideal way to conduct counterinsurgency, where unity of command was crucial. It was especially the case that the police, under Pastrana, were not integrated at the national level in any of the counterinsurgency planning. This ended under Uribe.³⁹

Within the military itself, a clear trend toward greater jointness had emerged under

Tapias, as CG Joint Command had matured under Mora (during the Uribe administration) and then blossomed under Ospina. Plans to implement joint operational commands in place of the exclusively army divisional areas were tabled in summer 2004. They were met with fierce resistance in parochial circles but had the support of the president and began to be implemented in December 2004, when 1st Division became a joint command.⁴⁰

Learning Organizations

If this discussion appears unduly focused on military elements, it is because in Colombia circumstances dictated precisely what we see in the U.S. case: domination of operational and budget facets of internal warfighting by the defense establishment. In the field, however, the security forces in fact opened up the space for the invigoration and reform of Colombian democracy. In particular, Uribe, in his first 4-year term, held numerous 1-day “town hall” meetings in various parts of the country. In all cases, he was accompanied by key cabinet-level representatives to include agents from the military high command. A general session with a question-and-answer period featured not only the president and other national officials but also the local and state officials concerned. Democratic process was on display as government was shown to be transparent and accountable. Breakout sessions followed, devoted to development and security.

Reassembly saw courses of action tabled and acted upon on the spot by consensus of the whole. The impact of these sessions was substantial and led to astonishing levels of support for the president and his government (as measured by polls). Legitimacy was captured so completely that polls found such minimal levels of support (in any form) for FARC year after

year as to approach less than 1 percent (except for occasional 3 percent spikes among activist sub-populations, such as university students).

Building on this and still further security force enhancements, state presence was steadily expanded. All national territory and population were incorporated to an extent never seen in Colombian history, with the same perhaps true of the extent to which Colombian democracy reflected mass participation and the will of the electorate.

If there was irony, it was that the spectacular levels of support displayed by the public for the state and its representatives throughout the entire 8 years of Uribe’s two terms were all but ignored in the approach and publications of the “human rights cartel.” The frames whereby the parastates assessed the conflict remained virtually unchanged, and in some cases, their narratives actually became more shrill in judging the Uribe years as little save an unmitigated disaster for the country. Unlike the past, though, the state did not simply cede virtual space to its attackers. Rather, both state and civil society aggressively defended national policies and strategies.

In constructing his own frame, Uribe was consistent in his portrayal of Colombia as a legitimate democracy challenged by illegitimate terrorism in the form of FARC, a group that had no mass following and had to sustain itself wholly through criminal activity that targeted the people themselves. The national narrative—which increasingly reflected the reality of reformed, enhanced democracy—was that the state and its security forces were at one with the population in resisting those who would oppress them. Significant effort went into facilitating access of (in particular) the Colombian media and to disseminating the state version of events.

Abroad, Colombian embassies pursued much the approach of the state at home, interacting regularly and often with important constituencies, especially in the United States. Uribe and his ministers were frequent visitors to Washington, where their own facility in English allowed them to engage with both supporters and critics. Enhanced cooperation led to further pressure on FARC's external links, which increasingly were forced to rely on the assistance of sympathetic governments in the newly declared Bolivarian states, especially Venezuela.

By the end of the first Uribe term, all patterns had been set that continued into

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the second term. New military leadership in 2006 ushered in a “Consolidating Democratic Security” plan, but there were no essential changes.⁴¹ What was enhanced was the special operations component of the original strategy because FARC no longer was capable (in most areas and circumstances) of massing forces. Thus, its smaller, fleeing units were followed relentlessly. It was within this special operations command that the Raul Reyes and *Jaque* operations occurred.⁴²

State presence and functions were normalized as FARC was driven from areas. Concerns that the civil component of the effort was not robust enough led to greater emphasis on impact efforts that would kick-start local governance. There continued to be apprehension about the degree to which progress in security, which was

considerable and relentless, was accompanied by incorporation. New coordination bodies were stood up with U.S. assistance and funding.

Other concerns were of equal moment, in particular explosive revelations that the pressure for “results” had caused certain military elements to cut corners and deliver “kills” by the subterfuge of “false positives” (that is, dressing vagrants or other innocents in combatant garb and killing them, then passing off the victims as dead insurgents). Until 2006, it is unlikely this would have been possible due to the relegation of killed-in-action/wounded-in-action insurgents to very low priority in the daily metrics tallies. Favored instead were indicators of initiative (for example, FARC initiation of major actions, such as attacks on towns) and security (for example, whether local officials were able to remain “in their towns overnight”). Changes in personalities and metrics, however, fostered a new dynamic that led to the scandal.⁴³

Yet it is the nature of the state's reaction that highlights how far both Colombia and its counterinsurgency forces have come. Investigation, prosecution, and enhancement of oversight mechanisms have occurred. Dramatically enhancing the legal means tasked with ensuring adherence to rule of law goes far beyond merely reacting vigorously to the alleged crimes. In but one prominent example, lawyers have now been assigned to battalion level in all ground forces.⁴⁴ Likewise, in other challenging situations, where circumstances could easily have led to more trouble, the security forces sought new legal means to enable their efforts. They thus avoided makeshift and problematic courses of action.⁴⁵ Such action is not the exception but generally the rule.

Even this brief discussion has highlighted the degree to which Colombia and its forces have engaged in a constant dialectic of



adaptation driven by the changing dynamic and context of the conflict. What has been stated above but bears emphasis is that the Colombians were fighting for and in their own country. Just as crucial, regardless of the prominence of U.S. aid—which remained overwhelmingly dedicated to counternarcotics throughout—Bogota had primacy in all matters of strategy and operational art. Indeed, as noted earlier, the Colombian leadership displayed a greater understanding not only of their own irregular war but also often of the principles of irregular warfare in general throughout the conflict.

Contributing still further to this process was possibly the most overlooked adaptation of the entire conflict: the transformation of Colombia’s civil-military relations. Tapias, Mora, and Ospina each contributed in his own way to the implementation of a balanced civil-military partnership that took the place of the previously separate spheres of conceptualization and execution. Ospina, in particular, demonstrated an astute understanding of an elected president’s needs. While focusing on the military domination of local areas and the pursuit of FARC into its base areas, he delivered “progress” in whatever form necessary to Uribe’s viability as a wartime leader.⁴⁶ Thus, even as FARC’s “people’s war” foundered, Colombian democracy emerged more vibrant than perhaps at any time in its history.

Conclusion

The preceding sentence, it could be argued, is just part of my own narrative that proceeds from an incorrect framing of the insurgency discussed herein. Certainly, a contending narrative continues to be put forth by some who remain bitter foes of all that the Uribe administration has attempted. This would seem to miss the mark. From a position of absolute weakness, the Colombian state and its institutions, notably the security forces, went through a process of learning and adaptation that culminated in implementation of what I have argued elsewhere can in many ways be seen as a textbook case of counterinsurgency.⁴⁷ Whether we use the terminology *whole-of-government* or *whole-of-society* to describe the *Democratic Security and Defence Policy* plan, it has been a masterpiece of ends-ways-means in action.

Has it been “perfect”? The query is misplaced. The “fog” of war, as Clausewitz would certainly observe, makes that impossible. Indeed, Colombia, though it has one of the leading economies of Latin America, remains but the equivalent of a middling U.S. state in its available fiscal resources—hence, in the mobilization it can effect in the face of a still dangerous enemy, FARC.

Faced with crushing defeat, the insurgents have sought to relocate to secure refuges where they can regenerate. These lairs have been both in marginal, difficult terrain within the country, such as high mountain territory, and outside Colombia’s borders. Simultaneously, FARC has dramatically upped its international effort to receive a legitimacy from fellow travelers that it has been unable to gain from Colombians themselves. It remains a major player in the narcotics industry and has apparently expanded its distribution networks to West Africa so as to facilitate movement of more “product” to the lucrative European market.

Yet Colombia has proved equally adaptable. Whether in doctrinal shifts or rapid changes in individual course content, the security forces have kept pace with their foes. The very attraction of Colombian society has served to create a hemorrhage of defectors from FARC’s ranks, even as the state has continued to mature in incorporating its physical and popular elements. It is possibly more cohesive and more representative than at any time in its history.

Most decisively, the Colombian case demonstrates that even in a “new war” battleground, certain fundamental principles of counterinsurgency continue to hold. The strategic goal is legitimacy; the operational goal is the neutralization of the insurgent counterstate; the tactical goal is the domination of human terrain (that is, the security of the people). In reaching this last goal, the Colombian case is noteworthy because the population has demonstrated extraordinary support for the administration throughout the Uribe years, even as the assault by the parastates discussed above has continued unabated. The lesson is sobering, as states ranging from Israel to Sri Lanka have discovered.

Beyond traditional modes of adaptation such as we have seen carried out by Colombian forces and the state, therefore, there must be an appreciation that irregular warfare in today’s world-historical context and moment faces an alignment of foes that extends far beyond the immediate battlefield. The intangible dimension that is virtual space is balanced in importance with the effort to establish facts on the ground. And the foes in that intangible dimension are every bit as lethal as a FARC is in the tangible dimension that is physical space. Dealing with both dimensions requires careful consideration and planning if adaptation and integrated response are to be effective. Colombia has demonstrated that this is possible. **PRISM**

Notes

¹ My most recent contribution to this literature is “Regaining the Initiative: Colombia Versus the FARC Insurgency,” in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, 2^d ed., ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (New York: Osprey, 2010), 209–232. See also Robert D. Ramsey III, *From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998–2008*, Occasional Paper 34 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, December 2009), available at <www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA514131&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>.

² Best known are the March 2008 precision guided munitions killing of FARC second-in-command, Raul Reyes, inside Ecuador, and the July 2008 rescue, inside Colombia, of the most high-value hostages held by the

insurgents. Benefit from the Reyes strike went far beyond his elimination because the subsequent sweep of the ground by Colombian special operations personnel resulted in the capture of what essentially were FARC's electronic master-files, the exploitation of which continues. The rescue effort, Operation *Jaque* ("Checkmate"), ended FARC's most concerted effort to use prisoners, who included three Americans, to force concessions from the government. Widely available on the rescue (in Spanish) is Juan Carlos Torres, *Operación Jaque* (Bogota: Planeta, 2009); from the American viewpoint of the three hostages, see Marc Gonsalves et al., *Out of Captivity: Surviving 1,967 Days in the Colombian Jungle* (New York: William Morrow/HarperCollins, 2009).

³ Extant theory sees what were once simply termed "internal wars"—as opposed to traditional state-versus-state wars—as "new" due to the manner in which they are embedded in the post-Cold War global context, which has unleashed a host of forces that revolve around an individual and group search for identity. What once was local now invariably becomes international, and normally can only be dealt with through a marshaling of multifaceted international response. Furthermore, the means, especially funding, are drawn from nontraditional sources such as criminal activity. Necessarily dealing with "new wars" calls for skill sets that extend beyond kinetic action. See Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, 2^d ed. (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2007). This may be usefully supplemented by Donald M. Snow, *Uncivil Wars: International Security and the New Internal Conflicts* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996); Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Jan Angstrom, *Rethinking the Nature of War* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005); and Herfried Münkler, *The New Wars* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2005). On groups themselves, see Querine Hanlon, "Globalization and the Transformation of Armed Groups," in *Pirates, Terrorists, and Warlords: The History, Influence, and Future of Armed Groups around the World*, ed. Jeffrey H. Norwitz (New York: Skyhouse, 2009), 124–134.

⁴ The subject of "failed/failing states" has generated a body of literature perhaps more voluminous than that of new wars. Another post-Cold War concept, it holds that there are states that fail on any number of metrics and consequently do not perform as stable states. Whether a state has failed or is merely failing depends on the metrics chosen, on which there is no agreement (Colombia is invariably listed as either failed or failing). There are cases, though, such as Somalia, where there is acceptance that the state has "collapsed." Useful references, mercifully devoid of histrionics, include I. William Zartman, ed., *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995); Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Rotberg has edited a collection of case studies in *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003). Valuable is his introduction, "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators." Pre-Urbe administration Colombia is specifically discussed in Harvey F. Kline, "Colombia: Lawlessness, Drug Trafficking, and Carving up the State," 161–182.

⁵ This was especially the case in South Asia, where a Maoist upsurge has produced a failed state in Nepal and has been deemed by India's prime minister as the greatest threat to that country's security. For details, see Thomas A. Marks, "Return of the Nightmare," *India and Global Affairs* (New Delhi) 2, no. 2 (April–June 2009), 78–85.

⁶ For a sympathetic treatment of this synthesis, to which (it can be argued) FARC aspires, see Sujatha Fernandes, *Who Can Stop the Drums? Urban Social Movements in Chavez's Venezuela* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁷ The Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) even attempted to impart to FARC the mechanics of using poison gas in shells launched from improvised mortars, ramplas, the firing mechanism for which PIRA itself had originally been responsible, but which had made its way to Colombia in perfected form via the FMLN (*Farabundo Martí* National Liberation Front) of El Salvador. Indeed, FARC warfighting doctrine was essentially borrowed from the FMLN, which had taken it from the Vietnamese. At least twice, Vietnamese personnel trained their “fellow Marxists,” FARC, inside Colombia.

⁸ Use of the term *parastate* has moved beyond original reference to any substate challenge, legal or (more often) illegal, to an existing state. It is now more widely used for organizations that have taken unto themselves many of the attributes of states but exist in a parasitic or (forced) symbiotic relationship with the host state or states. Structural examples would be organized crime or major international human rights organizations, which can exist as both tangible and intangible (virtual) phenomena. International human rights organizations, for example, are often as much virtual as physical realities. Parastates, then, differ from *counterstates* in that they do not seek the overthrow of the state but cohabitation or even domination (as in the case of organized crime in Mexico). In contrast, counterstates advance a rival new order that seeks to replace the old order. Intriguing for analysts is the situation of numerous (especially but not solely) African *quasi-states*, variants of the failing (for example, Congo) or failed (Somalia) category discussed earlier. Quasi-states are those lacking one or more key attributes that allow them to be true states (such as a resource base or a functioning government possessing a monopoly of violence). The critical distinction between them and failing/failed states may be that the inadequacies are structural, thus little amenable to remediation through human agency. See Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁹ *Frames* create the boundaries within which an event is interpreted, while *narratives* provide the plot. The concept has leaped to our present official consciousness through the ongoing discussion concerning “winning the battle of the narrative.” See, for instance, Akil N. Awan, “Success of the Meta-Narrative: How Jihadists Maintain Legitimacy,” *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 11 (November 2009), 6–8; or Dutch National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives* (January 2010). For a general treatment, see Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just, eds., *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government, and the Public* (New York: Routledge, 2003). Background on concepts may be found in Karen S. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing: Constructing Political Reality* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

¹⁰ The easiest way around this reality was to attack the credibility of the surveys themselves and to claim they were part of the state’s assault on the legitimate representatives of the revolution, FARC.

¹¹ Excellent on the general subject are Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas, eds., *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

¹² For a discussion of this process by one of its central figures, ultimately commanding general of first the army, then the armed forces themselves, see Carlos Ospina Ovalle, “Insights from Colombia’s ‘Long War’: Counterinsurgency Lessons Learned,” *Counterterrorism* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2006), 26–33. His key observation is: “We were using American doctrine, where we conceptualized the continuum as ‘war’ and ‘other than war.’ This was absolutely incorrect. There is only war, with the enemy fielding different mixes of the elements of war” (29). U.S. doctrine in question may be found in Joint Publication 3–07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, June 16, 1995).

¹³ The information upon which Colombian intelligence was based was voluminous and all-source. Necessarily, it was primarily drawn from human sources, which meant that it was strongest precisely where U.S. capabilities were (and remain) weakest.

¹⁴ Activists, as well as cause-oriented and solidarity groups, deny that this is so. See, for example, the quite different analysis contained in James Petras, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia: The Origin and Direction of the FARC–EP* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010). Interestingly, the parastates, while hostile to the Colombian state, generally do not go so far as to support an analysis such as that of Petras, who sees Colombia on the verge of a revolution with FARC in the lead. Nevertheless, the parastates make quite clear that they see state agency as the heart of Colombia’s woes as opposed, say, to structural issues or the dislocation caused by the insurgents themselves.

¹⁵ Most easily available is the version published by the University of Chicago Press in 2007. Unfortunately, the reality that politics, armed or otherwise, can only take place among the populace has given way in the U.S. military to an often acrimonious debate on the varied interpretations of the short-hand label “population-centric.” See Gian P. Gentile, “A Strategy of Tactics: Population-centric COIN and the Army,” *Parameters* (Autumn 2009), 5–17. The United States (principally the Army) is increasingly faulted as having allowed physical protection of the population to overshadow necessary kinetic action. Of more importance, perhaps, is the obvious conflation of “economic development” with “governance” in virtual negation of the central strategic role political development plays in counterinsurgency.

¹⁶ A comparison of the Afghanistan situation now to that of Colombia during the period under discussion may be constructed by exploring two current references: Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror: How Drugs, Thugs, and Crime Are Reshaping the Afghan War* (New York: Picador, 2010); and Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

¹⁷ Though discussed, the personal and professional experiences that prepared General David Petraeus for successful command in counterinsurgency have not been explored in depth. It would seem logical to examine course content at West Point while Petraeus was a cadet (1970–1974) since the relevant handouts and readings were universally focused upon balancing kinetic and nonkinetic facets of response. The same could be said of the U.S. doctrinal approach to counterinsurgency in El Salvador, which at one point was under the command of U.S. Southern Command commander and Petraeus’s mentor, General Jack Galvin. Petraeus spent 6 weeks with Galvin and his command between his first and second years as a social sciences instructor at West Point. For details, see David Cloud and Greg Jaffe, *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009), 60–67. For the metanarrative, see David Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009).

¹⁸ Whole-of-government is simple in theory but has led to rather less discussion in fact. The most tangible expression of what whole-of-government means is the application of the “instruments of national power.” The instruments are most commonly equated in the U.S. construction with the acronym MIDLIFE, indicating military, intelligence, diplomacy, law enforcement, information, finance, economics. This is a formulation perhaps appropriate for the United States in expeditionary mode but necessarily incomplete for a state fighting within its own boundaries. There, a more accurate approximation of the instruments of national power might be government ministries and the elements of civil society that can be called upon in the struggle. This was the Colombian interpretation.

¹⁹ Presidency of the Republic/Ministry of Defence, *Democratic Security and Defence Policy* (Bogota: Ministry of Defence, 2003), 13–14 (English version). The original Spanish version, *Politica de Defensa y*

Seguridad Democrática, requires slightly more pages for its presentation but is identical to the English edition in all other respects.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 23–30.

²¹ For details, see Thomas A. Marks, *Maoist People's War in Post-Vietnam Asia* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2007).

²² Colombian strategic documents are normally unclassified and accurate in their presentation of plans, courses of action, and particulars. They are quite straightforward in approach and abundant in detail. For the three quoted elements that follow, see *Democratic Security and Defence Policy*, 42.

²³ Literally, “Commanding General of the Military Forces,” which accurately defines the authority and responsibility inherent to the position. It is rendered as “CG Joint Command” to facilitate the analysis presented here.

²⁴ Recent official documents drop “national” in their translations.

²⁵ See Presidencia de la Republic/Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, *Sector Defensa: Una Vision, Una Mision—Plan Estrategico 2002–2006* (Bogota: Ministry of National Defence, undated), in Spanish only.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 50–51.

²⁷ Comandante General Fuerzas Militares (Jorge Enrique Mora Rangel), *Direccionamiento Estrategico y Politicas de Comando 2003* (Bogota: Joint Command, undated), 2₆ [sic]; in Spanish only. An outline chart comparing the three sets of strategic objectives—national, defense, and military—is found at 4₈ [sic].

²⁸ Comandante del Ejercito (Carlos Alberto Ospina Ovalle), *Guia Operacional y Politicas de Comando 2003* (Bogota: COLAR, undated), 22–23; in Spanish only. The “strategic alignment of the objectives” for all levels discussed thus far—national, defense, military, and army—is found at 34–35.

²⁹ Though not always persuasive: for instance, as extracted from the national document, “Consolidation of state control throughout Colombia” is combined in the Defence document with “maintenance of a deterrent capability” to “establish security force presence throughout the country” (*lograr presencia fuerza publica en todo territorio nacional*). Though a discussion accompanies the conflation (52), it does not clear up the combining of these “apples and oranges.”

³⁰ In the Defence document, this discussion takes the form of “strategies [for implementation],” *Sector Defensa*, 52–55; for the joint forces, discussion forms the entirety of *Direccionamiento Estrategico 2003*.

³¹ Fuerzas Militares de Colombia, *Estrategia Militar General 2003* (Bogota: Joint Command, undated); in Spanish only.

³² Use of the label *narcoterrorist organizations* (ONT) stems from two sources: first, Colombia’s long-standing desire to find a viable term for the insurgents, such as the “CT” (communist terrorists) used by the British during the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960); and second, Bogota’s awareness that its terminology needed to be in harmony with that of its principal benefactor, the United States. If, in Washington, “insurgents” were to be called “terrorists,” Bogota was willing to go along tactically—while operationally and strategically it sought to avoid the analytical confusion that appeared at times to bedevil the U.S.-led “global war on terror.”

³³ The six components and their relationship to the political objectives of “democratic security” and the national interests are on page 20. They appear again on pages 12–13 as part of the framework under discussion here. The version used here is from pages 12–13, since it is self-evidently the more correct. The translation is intended to convey the sense in which the elements are understood by the Colombian forces, rather than proceeding literally (verbs, for instance, are often absent in the original Spanish version).

³⁴ This is not the most literal translation, which is “institute a network of those who cooperate,” also rendered as “institute an informant network.” Yet “neighborhood watch” is closest to what is desired by the concept and is the term used in English by CG Joint Command.

³⁵ Urban security was singled out for special consideration in *Democratic Security and Defence Policy*. While recognizing that local authorities themselves had to take the lead, the same principles were emphasized that inform the document as a whole: coordinated, appropriate action. The innovative, highly successful “Local Security Front” initiated by the Bogota mayor was used for illustration. For details of the Bogota effort, see John Marulanda, *Plan Maestro Defensa Ajustado*, support package prepared in the course of implementing the Bogota Local Security Front.

³⁶ This was not as straightforward as it should have been, because, upon taking office, the Uribe team discovered that the previous administration’s borrowing from “next year’s budget” to “pay this year’s expenses” had created a serious defense deficit. This had a stunning impact on Plan de Choque because the division of the \$670 million windfall from the one-time “war tax” had been calculated to be spread over the 4 years of the Uribe presidency. The 2002 shortfall had been \$138 million, but the 2003 budget structurally included an additional \$109 million deficit. Thus, the 2002 *Plan de Choque* expenditures of \$118 million, combined with the 2003 Plan costs of \$149 million, used up more than three-quarters of what was intended to last 4 years. This could only be made good by appropriating funds from the regular budget or relying on unrestricted U.S. aid.

³⁷ To illustrate: The lowest rank in COLAR, *Cabo Tercero* (C3), equivalent to a U.S. private, E-1, had a monthly base pay of pesos 538,060, or ~\$207 (at the August 1, 2004 exchange rate of pesos 2,600/U.S. \$1). An entry level draftee historically made slightly less than 10 percent of that figure.

³⁸ For details on the program (but not the reaction force), see *Policia Nacional, Direccion Operativa, Programa Escuadrons Movils de Carabineros*, PowerPoint presentation, undated.

³⁹ A fascinating illustration of just how far matters have progressed is provided by the situation in 3^d Division area, centered on Cali, Colombia’s third largest city. There, in March 2010, Colombian air force officials noted that 80 percent of their missions were being generated by police intelligence and participation—a sea change, as the air force officials concerned were quick to note.

⁴⁰ This transformation alone would have been enough to produce a measure of turmoil within the military, regardless of the myriad other changes inherent to the reform movement. Even the existence of a special task force, *Fuerza de Tarea Conjunta*, dedicated solely to dominating FARC’s critical base areas, its “strategic rearguard,” had generated disquiet in some circles, particularly as it became clear that it was a model of what was to come. Now, as still ongoing plans are pushed through, the individual services will become more “service providers” in the U.S. sense, while CG Joint Command will exercise operational control of joint forces that resemble U.S. combatant commands (for example, U.S. Southern Command, which supports Colombia’s effort). Such a development would be entirely logical in waging counterinsurgency but is a considerable change in the way Colombian services have functioned throughout their history.

⁴¹ See *Policy for the Consolidation of Democratic Security* (Bogota: Ministry of National Defense, 2007), available at <http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/Colombia_English-2007.pdf>.

⁴² The operations are placed in the context of the rapid and complex developments of the time in John Otis, *Law of the Jungle: The Hunt for Colombian Guerrillas, American Hostages, and Buried Treasure* (New York: William Morrow/HarperCollins, 2010). Its gaudy title notwithstanding, the volume is a solid examination of the subject.

⁴³ By late March 2010 (my most recent visit to Colombia), the number of individuals under investigation numbered roughly a thousand, though the count of alleged murders was smaller. This stemmed from unit action, for which all implicated members were charged as accessories.

⁴⁴ As an illustration, Marine battalions have two lawyers assigned, one to handle operations, the other to look after disciplinary matters. At the brigade level (the highest level for the Marines), there are four lawyers, the same two as listed for the battalion plus a general legal advisor and a human rights advisor.

⁴⁵ This is well illustrated by the prominent role played by the navy in passing legislation needed to address the widespread use of submersibles by FARC (and other illegal armed groups) for moving drugs. Scuttling of the craft upon discovery confronted the intercepting units with a rescue mission and a complete lack of evidence for prosecution. Thus, laws had to be passed that made illegal certain specific actions, such as owning and operating a submarine, which could be prosecuted using eyewitness testimony.

⁴⁶ Indispensable for a general treatment of this subject—“an elected president’s needs in wartime”—is Herman Hattaway and J. Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

⁴⁷ See, for example, Thomas A. Marks, “A Model Counterinsurgency: Uribe’s Colombia (2002–2006) vs. FARC,” *Military Review* 87, no. 2 (March–April 2007), 41–56.