

Criminal Insurgency in the Americas and Beyond

BY ROBERT KILLEBREW

Even before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the global context for American security policy was changing. While the traditional state-based international system continued to function and the United States reacted to challenges by states in conventional ways (for example, by invading Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11), a cascade of enormous technological and social change was revolutionizing international affairs. As early as the 1990s, theorists were writing that with modern transnational communications, international organizations and corporate conglomerates would increasingly act independently of national borders and international regulation.¹ What was not generally foreseen until about the time of 9/11, though, was the darker side: that the same technology could empower corrupt transnational organizations to threaten the international order itself. In fact, the globalization of crime, from piracy's financial backers in London and Nairobi to the Taliban and Hizballah's representatives in West Africa, may well be the most important emerging fact of today's global security environment.

Transnational crime operates on a global scale, and the criminal networks that affect national security include actors ranging from Russian mafias to expanding Asian drug-trafficking organizations in U.S. cities. Without discounting their importance, this article focuses on illegal groups native to this hemisphere and particularly Latin America, those identified by the Department of Justice as posing the most significant organized criminal threat to U.S. security. Two factors related

Colonel Robert Killebrew, USA (Ret.), is a Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

to human mobility—demographics and geography—combine to make Latin American instability very close to us today. Latin American criminal cartels and their allies are not simply a crime problem anymore, but a growing threat that is metastasizing into a new form of criminal insurgency.

To be clear, the cartels and the criminal culture that accompanies them are not yet a direct national security threat to the United States. As one U.S. official put it, they are now a threat to the national *welfare*—but are spreading in such a way as to become a potential threat to national *security*. For other nations in the hemisphere, though, the cartels already constitute a direct security threat. Only Colombia has thus far begun to turn back the lawlessness and violence associated with the cartel insurgency.²

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Meeting the cartels' challenge will require, first, that we recognize the broad and varied scope of the new face of violent crime in this hemisphere, from Venezuela's support of narco-crime to gang recruitment in our own schools and neighborhoods. Second, we must see the problem for what it is: a criminal insurgency contrary to the foundations of our own society and those of states such as Mexico, Colombia, and others in between. "Profit" can now be added to motivations for insurgency, along with religion, ideology, nationalism, and other causes. Finally, we must step up, and shift the focus of, our decades-long "war on drugs" to lead

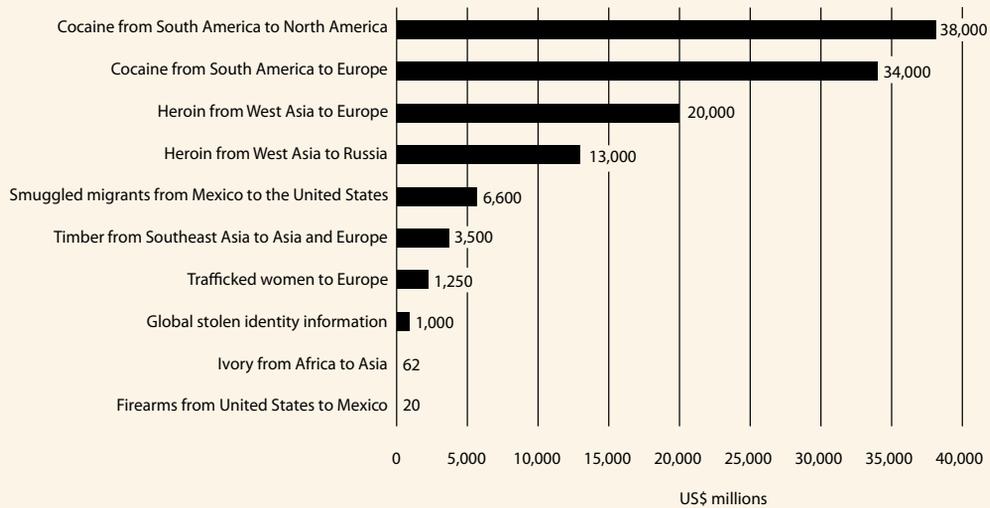
a broad-based, hemisphere-wide, and long-term effort focused on defeating the criminal cartels and their networks of gangs.

Organized Crime in the 21st Century

Crime is part of the human condition—crooks, pirates, and smugglers have always been around. However, the collapse of colonialism after World War II, the fall of the Soviet empire in 1991, and the simultaneous explosion of global networking technology have all supported a period of unprecedented expansion and transformation of international crime. New communications technologies have led to new criminal business models of widely distributed, constantly shifting networks of personal contacts and fleeting alliances to produce, market, transport, or distribute illegal trade—sometimes drugs, sometimes human beings, sometimes extortion, kidnapping, counterfeiting or whatever activity turns a profit. Although the majority of criminal networks are operated by thugs, they should not be underestimated; to survive, they have to be intelligent, clever, and ruthless. Their outreach also embraces white-collar criminals in banking or legitimate businesses throughout the world, including banks and other institutions in the United States. As a rule, the networks operate globally and clandestinely, laundering huge sums of illicit profits—virtually unlimited flows of cash—through the "black economy" in such large amounts that they can even threaten the stability of the international economic order. One expert has observed:

Ultimately it is the fabric of society that is at stake. Global illicit trade is sinking entire industries while boosting others, ravaging countries and sparking booms, making and breaking political careers, destabilizing some governments while propping up

Figure 1. Estimated Values of Selected Transnational Trafficking Flows, 2008



Source: UNODC

others. At one extreme are countries where the smuggling routes, the hidden factories, the pilfered natural resources, the dirty-money transactions can no longer be distinguished from the official economy and government. But comfortable middle-class lives in wealthy countries are far more connected to trafficking—and to its global effects—than most of us care to imagine.³

Fragile states struggling to control their territories, support the rule of law, and develop civil societies are in many cases losing. Worldwide, the number of fragile states is increasing. In 1996, for example, only 11 states were judged to be “failing” around the world. By 2006, the number had increased to 26, and the number of “not quite failing” states with weak governments and “ungoverned spaces” continues to grow.⁴ Douglas Farah has pointed out the contradiction between increased global trade and a trend toward growing social and political disintegration as weaker states buckle under the strain of corruption, illegal weapons, population pressure, and technology.⁵

The Globalization of Crime

The worldwide black economy is fluid and difficult to gauge accurately; practically all global criminal organizations shift from one illegal market to another as necessary to maximize profits and avoid law enforcement. Figure 1 estimates the magnitude of some of the most significant trafficking flows in 2008.

Criminal Networks. Almost all of the illicit cartels and gangs discussed in this article organize in various forms of networks, facilitated by widely available communications technology and protected from interception by cellular structures, layered “cores” of leaders, intimidation, and other means. The various forms of network organization can range from semiformal, hierarchical models to handshakes and the exchange of cash or merchandise on the street. Cartel networks have extensive reach, crossing borders and jurisdictional lines with impunity. Two leading authorities in the field of network analysis and the theory of “netwar,” John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, argued in a RAND study in 2001:

The capacity to cross national borders creates several advantages for criminal networks. It enables them to supply markets where the profit margins are largest, operate from and in countries where risks are the least, complicate the tasks of law enforcement agencies that are trying to combat them, commit crimes that cross jurisdictions and therefore increase complexity, and adapt their behavior to counter or neutralize law enforcement initiatives.⁶

Criminal States. A relatively new development on the modern scene, different from weak or struggling countries, is the emergence of criminal states. These states are in effect descendants of the Barbary pirate states of old, acting in contravention of international law and supporting extremist organizations that attack other states. U.S. policy and law require the Department of State to designate “those countries that have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism” as state sponsors of terrorism, a status that includes a

number of legislated and regulatory restrictions and bans.⁷ Currently, Cuba, Iran, Sudan, and Syria are listed as state sponsors of terrorism. For decades, the State Department has labeled Iran as “the most active state sponsor of terrorism” because it routinely provides safe haven, resources, and guidance to terrorist groups allied with Iran’s foreign policy objectives.⁸ The designation, however, is subject to political calculations within the U.S. Government. North Korea, for example, despite clear evidence of support for terrorist activities, was taken off the list in 2008 as an inducement to negotiations. Venezuela, despite clear ties to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Hizballah, and Iran, is not designated.

Selected Theaters

The United States. As the largest drug market in the hemisphere, the United States is a magnet for the cartels and their allies. Mexican cartels dominate the wholesale distribution of drugs throughout the Nation, as recognized by the Department of Justice and summarized in the *Wall Street Journal*:

Mexico’s cartels already have tentacles that stretch across the border. The U.S. Justice Department said recently that Mexican gangs are the “biggest organized crime threat to the United States,” operating in at least 230 cities and towns. Crimes connected to Mexican cartels are spreading across the Southwest. Phoenix had more than 370 kidnapping cases last year, turning it into the kidnapping capital of the U.S. Most of the victims were illegal aliens or linked to the drug trade.⁹

So far, the violent impact of the cartels and gangs in the United States has not risen to

the level it has elsewhere in the hemisphere.¹⁰ American political culture supports honest law enforcement and does not tolerate the levels of corruption found historically in Mexico and other countries in the hemisphere. Public officials are more difficult to corrupt, the public less tolerant of lawbreaking, and the general culture unfriendly to the kinds of murder and intimidation the cartels employ elsewhere. Additionally, so far the more effective policing power of various U.S. law enforcement organizations—local and state police, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and others—has, by and large, deterred cartels and gangs in the United States from the kind of large-scale intimidation and criminality—kidnapping, extortion, murder—seen in Mexico and elsewhere.

The U.S.-Mexico border region has become a significant geographical flashpoint between the two countries. One resident reported: “One week before the murder [of an Arizona rancher] Bob and his brother Phil . . . hauled a huge quantity of drugs off the ranch that they found in trucks. One week before that a rancher near Naco did the same thing. Two nights later gangs broke into his ranch house and beat him and his wife and told them that if they touched any drugs they found they would come back and kill them.”¹¹

Accurate assessments of the magnitude of “spillover violence” are difficult, partly because of cartel and gang success in blending into local environments, and political pressures from local governments—some locals play down violence to avoid stigma, while others overplay it. The number of kidnappings in U.S. cities near the border has ballooned in recent years as large populations of immigrants have been infiltrated or targeted by cartels or splinter groups of small-time thugs.

Cartel operations have become so extensive, and associated gang culture has spread so rapidly in the Nation, that all major U.S. cities and most smaller cities are feeling the cartels’ impact as their influence spreads.¹² While few

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top cartel leaders travel to the United States because of fears of arrest, law enforcement personnel arrest hundreds of lower ranking cartel members every year. As an example, after a 2-year investigation that spanned three countries—the United States, Mexico, and Colombia—the DEA arrested 755 people in California, Florida, and Maryland, seized over \$59 million in cash, tons of assorted drugs, 149 vehicles, 3 aircraft, 3 maritime vessels, and over 150 weapons; the operation also disrupted Canadian cartel operations. The arrest of so many operatives indicates that foreign cartels are increasing their operations in the United States and linking up with local and transnational gangs here.

Transnational Gangs. The growth of transnational gangs in the United States, which act as the “retail” arms of the cartels, is a relatively new and dangerous phenomenon in American crime. The gangs represent networks of ruthless and sometimes random killers, deeply embedded in violent and amoral cultures that extend the reach of the cartels far into American civic society. For example, one Atlanta news organization reported:

*The brutality of the Atlanta drug trade has raised concerns that it is at the first step in a violent evolution that has already turned Phoenix into a major kidnapping capital. In that city, drug gangs are so well armed and trained in military tactics that witnesses have mistaken their attacks for police SWAT raids.*¹³

The big international gangs now on the scene are different from local gangs in their organization and inclination to violence outside their ethnic or economic group. They may include more traditional nationalist groupings such as the Russian mafia, but the particular gangs from the Western Hemisphere of interest here are the primarily Latino gangs such as

Latino gangs have an international reach, running from South and Central America into the United States and Canada

MS-13 (*Mara Salvatrucha*), the 18th Street Gang, and other groups such as the Mexican Mafia or its Texas branch, the Mexikanemi. MS-13 and 18th Street count an estimated 6,000–10,000 and 30,000 members, respectively, in the United States alone, with thousands more in Central America (primarily El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala), where they challenge local authorities for control of streets and towns.¹⁴ The Latino gangs are distinguishable by their closed natures and tight discipline, by body tattoos, and by frequent use of extreme violence. They have an international reach, running from South and Central America into the United States and Canada. Recruits in some cases have prior Central American military training or combat experience, and their criminal enterprises run the

gamut from illegal drugs, extortion, murder for hire, theft, and other activities. Beatings, rape, murder, and mutilation are commonly used to recruit gang members and to enforce discipline.

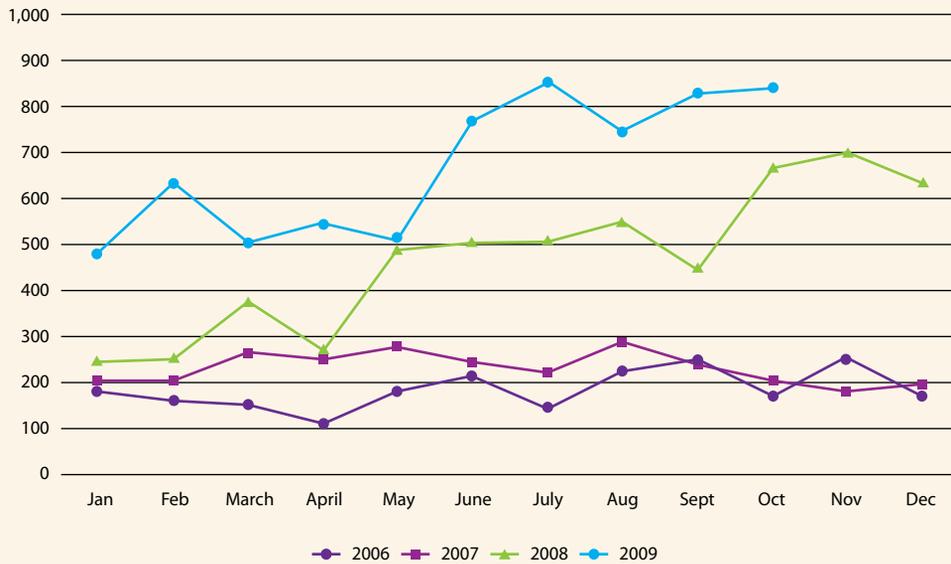
Large immigrant communities of Latin Americans, which for a variety of reasons may be reluctant to approach the police, inadvertently provide shelter for Latino gangs (and are often their first victims). A conference of law enforcement officers with extensive gang experience recently concluded that:

*The extensive pool of illegal immigrants in the country bolsters the influence of Latino gangs in the United States. Poor socio-economic conditions and reliance on strong social networks make gangs seem desirable. In addition, the current status of immigration law makes many immigrant communities fearful of cooperating with police, thus depriving law enforcement of critical human intelligence. Even when an individual is a legal immigrant, close ties to undocumented aliens raises fears of attracting attention to a particular community.*¹⁵

Mexico. No state in this hemisphere is more important than Mexico to the security of the United States. It is our second-largest trading partner (after Canada) and has strong ties to the United States; over 500,000 Americans live in Mexico, while over 11 million Mexicans, or Americans of Mexican origin, live in the United States, comprising 6.5 percent of the total U.S. population.¹⁶

Although a strong state otherwise, Mexico for decades tolerated high crime rates, particularly in Mexico City, and high levels of corruption in government circles, especially among law enforcement officials at the federal and local levels.¹⁷ The state's war against the cartels has

Figure 2. Drug-related Executions, 2006–2009



Source: EMPRA, based on statistics from *Milenio* newspaper

not only cost the lives of tens of thousands of Mexican citizens, but also has challenged Mexican law enforcement officials to find and weed out corrupt police at every level of government, from low-ranking policemen to cabinet-level law enforcement professionals. Partly for that reason, the Mexican army, which has heretofore enjoyed high levels of public respect and was regarded as less corrupt than the federal and local police forces, was deployed against the cartels in 2007. When deployed, the Mexican army had had little or no training in domestic policing or counterinsurgency as it would apply against the cartels. Results have been mixed, but may have bought time for the government to train or retrain special police forces.¹⁸ Cartel violence has affected everyone from high-profile government officials to innocent bystanders, who are increasingly caught in the crossfire. As a result, there have been more than 30,000 deaths tied to drug trafficking in recent years (see figure 2).

The narcotics industry is now a significant component of the Mexican national economy: estimates of annual profits from illicit drug sales range from \$25 billion to \$40 billion, or up to 5 percent of Mexico’s gross domestic product—twice the value of remittances by Mexican migrants.¹⁹ According to the U.S. Department of State, as of 2009, cartels and gangs employed about 450,000 people in the cultivation, processing, and sale of illegal drugs. Of this number, approximately 150,000 were directly involved in processing and selling. The remainder—approximately 300,000 persons—engaged in crop growing and harvesting.²⁰ Profits from drug cultivation far outstrip profits from legitimate agriculture; while a kilo of corn can sell for 40 cents, a kilo of opium can sell for \$1,000.²¹ Unemployment, public

sector budget cuts, and decreasing remittances to Mexico from immigrants in the United States increase monetary incentives for rural dwellers to participate in the drug trade.

But it is not only about drugs. Kidnapping, extortion, and other kinds of crime have long been staples of cartel operations, even reaching across the border into U.S. cities. Recent U.S. assistance to the Mexican government in the form of the Merida Initiative and the relative prosperity of U.S. businesses in Mexico and along the border increase the probability that cartels will be directed at U.S. targets.

The Mexican cartels in their present form are examples of 21st-century criminal insurgent movements, attacking the state from within through

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corruption and violence, and seeking to establish areas of influence in which they can operate without restriction. John Sullivan has pointed out:

Mexican cartels have employed psychological operations, fomented anti-government protests, attacked both police and military in infantry-style assaults, assassinated political officials, journalists, beheaded and maimed their victims, to amplify the strategic impact of their attacks, and co-opted and corrupted the military, police and political officials at all levels of government. The result is extreme brigandage, and a set of interlocking “criminal insurgencies” culminating in virtual civil war. As a consequence, some Mexican cartels, like La Familia, have embraced high order violence, religious and

*cult symbols, and political action to assert their control over the mega-turf they seek to dominate. They also seek community legitimacy, cultivating a folk perception that they are social protectors.*²²

Mexico’s criminal cartels are complex, networked organizations that combine flexible, task-focused sophistication with an inclination to family-based, almost tribal leadership structures. However, while they may still center on the same family group as they did a decade ago, the constant attrition of leadership has led over time to a more decentralized operational model.²³ Drug cartel membership is growing increasingly younger and is more horizontally organized. Cell phones, computers, and other technologies enable cartel members to rapidly transmit orders, organize and reorganize, and replace losses. As a rule, cartels are managed from “corporate offices” in countries where they are based, often in locations made secure with the complicity of local officials. Below corporate headquarters are command and control cells that manage daily activities. A certain group of unit members may deal specifically with the intimidation and coercion of rural populations to enlist them in the drug trade.²⁴ Another may focus on killings, as used to be the case with *Los Zetas*, the hired mercenary group of ex-military members at the service of the Gulf Cartel until they struck out on their own. Today, many of the cartels have a specific group of *sicarios* (hit men) on call to provide lethal services.

Colombia. The staunchest U.S. ally in the Andean Ridge, Colombia continues its successful fight back from the brink of becoming the world’s first narcostate even as it remains the primary source of cocaine in the world. The concept of narcoterrorism was born in Colombia in the 1980s and 1990s, when cocaine traffickers²⁵

began using terrorist tactics—car bombs, massacres of civilians, executions of political candidates, and other attacks against both law enforcement officials and civilians—to fight extradition of convicted drug traffickers to the United States.²⁶ At the same time, the FARC was making major gains in the countryside. For a time, Colombia seemed to be on the verge of anarchy; in 1999, for example, civilian deaths were averaging 20 a day, and kidnappings were occurring at a rate of 200 a month.²⁷ Today, while the major cartels have been defeated and the FARC driven back into the jungle, the government is moving on to the complex task of adapting its strategies to ensure gains remain permanent.²⁸

The United States has actively supported Colombia's struggles for decades. U.S. aid against drug cartels began in the 1990s, though with initial restrictions against its use to fight guerrillas, but these restrictions became moot as the FARC turned into a cocaine-producing narcoterrorism organization in the late 1990s and was classed by the United States as a terrorist organization.

Although the government now has momentum in its fight to restore the rule of law in the state, conflict in Colombia is far from resolved. While security was restored along the main population corridors, many Colombians are still at risk of armed violence.²⁹ According to the Colombian Defense Ministry, the conflict claimed the lives of 20,915 people between 2002 and March 2010, including 13,653 members of “subversive groups,” 1,611 members of “illegal self-defense groups,” 1,080 members of “criminal gangs,” and 4,571 members of Colombian security forces on duty.

The FARC remains the world's main cocaine-producing organization. It occupies a central role in the Western Hemisphere's drug trade, linking cocaine production in Colombia to cartels for onward movement to Mexico and

North America. The FARC became involved with high-profile crime and cocaine-trafficking groups during the 1980s to finance its fight against the Colombian state. After the defeat of Colombia's big drug cartels and the demobilization of the right-wing *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* in 2003, the FARC became the dominant player in illegal drugs.³⁰ The movement's original ideological motivation has receded over time. Although the leadership retains an ideological core and conducts periodic purges, the focus now is on drug profits to fund weapons, recruits, and corrupt officials that enable it to continue its perpetual struggle against the state. The FARC has also evolved from the traditional insurgent-guerrilla model to a highly decentralized, networked narcoterrorist organization. Today, there are approximately 7,000 to 8,000 armed combatants in the movement, in numerous geographically based “blocs” and “fronts” operating primarily out of the jungles of the southern and eastern regions of the country. At present, the FARC is no longer an existential threat to the Colombian state, but as it has withdrawn into the jungles and rest camps on the borders of Ecuador and Venezuela, it has become harder to finish off. In addition to cocaine production and shipment on an international scale, it is still capable of kidnappings, raids, and terrorist acts, such as the kidnapping and assassination of the governor of Caquetá in December 2009. The Caquetá killing led then–Defense Minister Gabriel Silva to caution that the FARC is “neither vanquished nor in its death throes.”³¹

The FARC has extensive international links with other narcoterrorist organizations, including Hizballah. Operation *Titan*, a 2-year investigative endeavor culminating in October 2008 and led jointly by U.S. and Colombian authorities, resulted in more than 130 arrests and the seizure of more than \$23 million and 360

kilos of cocaine.³² Of the individuals arrested, 21 were in Colombia, and 3 of these were of Lebanese or Jordanian descent.³³ Among them was Lebanese-born Chekry Harb, who under the alias “Taliban” led a money-laundering ring that funded Hizballah activities through a network of militants and drug traffickers extending from Panama to Hong Kong, and included the FARC as a primary producer and exporter.³⁴ The FARC’s Sixteenth Brigade in particular supplies cocaine to not only the Arellano Felix Organization in Mexico but also Brazilian cartels like the one run by Luiz Fernando da Costa.³⁵ According to Sergio Jaramillo, FARC finance chief Oliver Solarte acted as a primary linking contact for both organizations. In 2001, famous Brazilian kingpin Fernandinho Beira-Mar was arrested in Colombia as he attempted to execute a guns-for-cocaine transaction with the FARC.³⁶ At least one of the FARC’s “fronts” (the 48th) has connections with the Tijuana Cartel dating back to the 1990s, and the various FARC fronts and smaller Colombian cartels often engage in joint ventures. More recently, officials have uncovered cooperation between the FARC and traffickers belonging to al Qaeda in the Maghreb and other gangs in the Sahel region of Africa.³⁷ Other drug production and trafficking groups remain in Colombia, either as “mini-cartels” or as armed groups in lawless parts of the country. Some of these emerging groups are remnants of right-wing militias that did not demobilize when called on to do so by the government, but instead fell into organized crime; others include individuals with no previous relationship with the paramilitaries who joined criminal groups to profit from drug trafficking.

Venezuela. Hugo Chávez was elected president of Venezuela in 1998, was subsequently reelected in 2000 and 2006, and won a national referendum to lift term limits for the presidency

in 2009.³⁸ His confrontational and often erratic approach to relations with the United States, support of anti-U.S. governments in Bolivia and Nicaragua, and high-profile alliance with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran are parts of a campaign to raise Venezuela’s—and his—impact on the hemisphere and on global affairs. Some recent foreign policy initiatives, for example, included supporting the overthrown president of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, claiming sovereignty over Guyana, and joining Muammar Gaddafi to condemn the United Nations Security Council, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and other perceived manifestations of imperialism.³⁹

Even as its economy struggles, Venezuela has embarked on a significant arms buildup. Along with other South American countries, Venezuela recently increased defense spending so that it now ranks third in the region behind Brazil and Colombia. The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency estimates that Venezuela spent approximately \$4.3 billion on weapons between 2005 and 2007. Russian arms sales to South America increased by approximately 900 percent from 1999 to 2008, mostly as a result of increased transfers to Venezuela.⁴⁰ These transfers included 100,000 assault rifles, 15 helicopters, and a license to produce Kalashnikov rifles (AK-103s, similar to the AK-47 model) in Venezuela itself.⁴¹ In addition, Venezuela has acquired naval patrol units from Spain.⁴²

The relationships among Chávez, his advisors, and the FARC and cartels throughout the region are personal and complex and constitute some of the most important alliances in the region. He has long supported the FARC in Colombia, with which the Venezuelan state has had a number of long-running disagreements, though not until recently ones sufficiently serious to suggest war.

Chávez personally has had a long association with the FARC, particularly with Raul Reyes, a former deputy commander who was killed in a Colombian raid on a base in Ecuador in 2008. Computer material captured from rebels, reviewed by INTERPOL and intelligence agencies from various countries, spelled out what had long been rumored: deep collaboration between the FARC and high-ranking Venezuelan officials involved in providing weapons and resources. The “Reyes files” implicated Venezuelan officials at the highest levels of government who helped the FARC safeguard their operational areas, obtain weapons, and ship illegal narcotics through Venezuela to other destinations.

In 2008, the U.S. Treasury Department indicted two senior Venezuelan officials, Hugo Armando Carvajal Barrios, director of Venezuela’s Military Intelligence Directorate, and Henry de Jesus Silva, Director of the Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services, and one former official, Ramón Emilio Chacín, for “materially assisting” FARC narcotics trafficking activities.⁴³ A statement by Treasury points out that these officials “armed, abetted and funded the FARC, even as it terrorized and kidnapped innocents.”⁴⁴

In December 2004, Rodrigo Granda was kidnapped by bounty hunters while attending the Second Bolivarian People’s Congress in Caracas. As FARC “foreign minister,” it had been Granda’s duty to liaise throughout Latin America, gathering support for his group’s activities. When he was taken, he had been living in Caracas for 2 years after having been granted Venezuelan citizenship by the Chávez government.⁴⁵

In July 2009, the government of Sweden pressed Venezuela to explain how Swedish-made weapons ended up in the hands of FARC rebels. As a clear violation of end-user licenses, the finding compromised the future of Swedish

weapons sales to Venezuela and further strained the already tense relationship between Caracas and Bogota.⁴⁶ More recently, an indictment by a prosecutor of Spain’s High Court implicated high-ranking members of the Chávez regime in cooperation between the FARC and Spain’s *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Homeland and Freedom) to exchange know-how in terrorist tactics and even plan abductions of officials like Colombia’s ex-President Andrés Pastrana.⁴⁷

Ties between Venezuela and Iran are gaining increasing attention as a potential threat to U.S. and regional security. According to Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, “Nobody is focused sufficiently on the threat of the Iran-Venezuela connection.”⁴⁸ Secretary of Defense Robert Gates also expressed concern in a January 2009 statement on Iranian international activities.⁴⁹ Chávez and Ahmadinejad are both vociferously hostile to the United States, invoking the need to “save humankind and put an end to the U.S. Empire.”⁵⁰

Lax Venezuelan-Iranian immigration controls have alarmed U.S. officials, who point out that Venezuelan passports are apparently widely available to all comers, and have been issued to a number of travelers from Syria, Yemen, Iran, and other Middle East states that have been known to harbor terrorists. In November 2008, Turkish authorities intercepted 22 shipping containers labeled “tractor parts” bound for Venezuela from Iran that contained bomb-making chemicals and laboratory equipment.⁵¹ “What they contained,” one Turkish official was quoted as stating, “was enough to set up an explosives lab.”⁵² Likewise, in September 2006, Rodolfo Sanz, the Venezuelan Minister for Basic Industries, announced that “Iran is helping us with geophysical aerial probes and geochemical analysis” in its search for uranium in a promising area near the border with Guyana.⁵³

The Venezuelan connection is useful to Tehran for a number of reasons. First, it provides an opportunity for Iran to break out of its increasing international isolation and to project power in Latin America. Chávez has facilitated growing Iranian commitments to other ideological partners in Bolivia and Nicaragua, where diplomatic openings have been swiftly followed by trade agreements and other ties.⁵⁴ Then—U.S. Director

Iran uses Venezuela to circumvent U.S. and United Nations economic sanctions and to launder illicit funds to support Iranian weapons programs, including its nuclear program

of National Intelligence Dennis Blair maintained in February 2009 congressional testimony that Venezuela “is serving as a bridge to help Iran build relations with other Latin American countries.”⁵⁵

Second, Venezuela’s entrepot to Latin America provides a base of operations located, as Ahmadinejad stated, at America’s backdoor. Iran’s support for terrorist or criminal organizations that attack or weaken the United States would be in keeping with the Iranian understanding of “asymmetric warfare”—and ours, too, for that matter. One expert has testified that “Iran has expanded its influence, albeit in a limited capacity, into the Latin American backyard of the United States. It is suspected of seeking to develop rudimentary retaliatory capability against the United States throughout Latin America should Iran be attacked or invaded.”⁵⁶

Since about 2006, Iranian military advisors have been serving with the Venezuelan army, joining a strong contingent of Cuban military officers.⁵⁷ The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, including members of the elite Quds Force, operates in Venezuela in both a

military and civilian role, managing a number of Iranian-owned and -controlled factories in remote areas in Venezuela.

Third, Iran uses Venezuela to circumvent U.S. and United Nations economic sanctions and to launder illicit funds to support Iranian weapons programs, including its nuclear program. In January 2008, Iran opened the International Development Bank in Caracas under the Spanish name Banco Internacional de Desarrollo C.A., an independent subsidiary of the Export Bank of Iran. In October of that year, the U.S. Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control imposed economic sanctions against both banks for providing financial services to Iran’s Ministry of Defense and its Armed Forces Logistics, the two military components charged with supporting Iran’s nuclear program.⁵⁸ In April 2009, the Iran-Venezuela Bank was established, with each country making an initial investment of \$100 million.⁵⁹ One expert stated that:

*All of this activity is designed to facilitate the funding of . . . terrorist organizations . . . and to circumvent financial sanctions imposed by the United States, the European Union and the United Nations. The Iranian Development and Export Bank has now opened a branch in Quito (Ecuador). The Treasury Department has sanctioned the Iranian banks and various individuals, but so far has not sanctioned any Venezuelan bank.*⁶⁰

Policies and Strategies

International. Essentially, the United States faces external and internal challenges in reorienting to more effectively fight the cartels and their allies. Refocusing U.S. policy from a “war on drugs” to a more comprehensive fight

against the cartels and gangs is essential if the United States and its allies are to prevail. Since the basis of the cartels' survival lies in the control of regions where governmental control is nonexistent and populations may be impoverished and alienated, successful counter-cartel strategies are fundamentally counterinsurgency strategies developed by the concerned states themselves and supported by the United States. Counter-cartel strategies must first be political strategies, integrating military and police activity into a broader political approach that emphasizes the rule of law as an alternative to the rule of force. Four aspects of a Western Hemisphere counter-cartel strategy follow.

First, step up the direct attacks on the cartels. Over the past decades, U.S. law enforcement professionals have developed successful operational techniques that cartel leaders fear: partnerships with effective local police (often with U.S. training), expertise with judicially approved wiretaps and electronic surveillance, rewards programs that make criminal bosses vulnerable to betrayal, and, above all, when local laws permit, extradition to U.S. courts and prisons. The United States and its allies should increase the capability for multiagency field operations in all these dimensions, as well as the professionalization of host country military forces for operations requiring holding ground while the rule of law is reinstated by other national agencies. DEA already operates throughout the region and has solid relationships with counterpart agencies; additionally, the agency has worked closely with U.S. combatant commands, notably U.S. Southern Command, where its powerful extraterritorial jurisdiction authority supplemented the military's own programs to help U.S. allies in the region. DEA should continue to advise and assist host country police and counternarcotics

forces, but the size of the agency must be greatly increased. With 5,500 agents spread over the hemisphere—including the United States—the agency that plays such a key role in the ongoing war with the cartels is spread too thin.

Second, the U.S. and its allies must continue to attack the cartels' financial networks and money-laundering capabilities—a key strategy that requires more resourcing at Treasury. Cartel leaders fear U.S. indictments and extradition to American courts; extradition, exposure, and seizure of “dirty” money from criminal operations are all effective strategies that identify kingpins and threaten them with trials in U.S. courts and long terms in U.S. prisons. The United States has learned to use financial analysis and indictments as weapons against the cartels, even when they are beyond the immediate reach of U.S. law. Their use should be expanded.

Third, help our neighbors build more functional state institutions, particularly courts, and stimulate economic growth. In terms of the U.S. role and our assistance to allies, our understanding of security assistance must be broadened to include effective assistance to police and courts. For example, as part of Plan Colombia—a Colombian-developed counter-cartel strategy—the United States provided the Colombian National Police (CNP) with telecommunications-intercept equipment and, working through the Department of Justice, helped the CNP build a judicial process to support wiretap investigations. The result was a powerful tool that assisted indictments against cartel leadership and extraditions to the United States for prosecution. Likewise, assisting host nations to build strong, noncorrupt judicial systems is critical to assisting or restoring stable governments in areas threatened by cartel or other insurgent violence; courts, appellate courts, and efficient prisons are key pieces.

Other U.S. agencies and contractors can provide other materiel assistance, training, partnership, and, when authorized, direct help in specified areas such as the collection of certain kinds of strategic intelligence. The U.S. Department of Defense can provide advisors and trainers on the Colombia model to supplement local military and law enforcement efforts, and occasionally direct aid in the form of helicopter transportation and naval support.⁶¹

U.S. efforts should have a minimal footprint appropriate to political considerations in the area. Models are the U.S. assistance effort in the Philippines and long-running Special Forces advisors in Colombia. U.S. military planners should consider other kinds of low-key integration of military advice and capabilities into host country security systems, and—in light of likely future challenges worldwide—consider updating present counterinsurgency doctrines to include the selection and training of military advisors.

Domestic. The domestic response to the challenge of the cartels and gangs falls into two categories. The first is the challenge to public order posed by the cartels themselves and their associated gangs; they must be confronted, indicted, and prevented from consolidating their criminal “businesses” as they do farther south. Second, the United States must prosecute simultaneous campaigns to reduce drug consumption as a way to attack the gangs, treat abusers, and roll back the effects of local gangs on communities and, importantly, recruitment in schools.

Enhance support to local law enforcement. Local police departments, backed up by state and Federal assistance, are the front line against cartels and gangs. Many police departments have already adapted to the gang challenge in inventive and effective ways. Most urban departments now have detectives and policemen who either specialize in gangs or

have been sensitized to them. Most have some form of intelligence staff that focuses on gangs, though those staffs may ebb and flow depending on local tax dollars and Federal grants. Cross-jurisdictional coordinating bodies and local information-sharing arrangements are common among police departments.

But intelligence-sharing among various law enforcement organizations has been a key issue. Progress has been made, but more work is required. On the front lines, local police departments struggle to exchange and analyze data on a regional and national basis, competing with criminal cartels and gangs that have no practical limit on funds, mobility, or access to modern electronics. Federal legislation passed after 9/11 mandated the development of a law enforcement “information-sharing environment” and an Information Sharing Council, which in turn led to the establishment by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security of a nationwide network of 58 “fusion centers” to synthesize and share law enforcement–related information and intelligence to agencies that voluntarily participate. Some feedback from the field, however, is that fusion centers remain underfunded and undermanned—and participation is voluntary across jurisdictions.

Also, in addition to information-sharing, local police departments need access to better analysis of data, either produced by their own analysts in their own departments, or aggregated data pushed down to the cop on the beat from Federal levels. DEA and FBI assistance is invaluable, but more can be done. The Department of Justice’s El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) has the potential to become a national “super” fusion center, although its analysis capability at present is uniquely specific to certain areas. EPIC analysis capability should be expanded, and it should be joined to

an enlarged and more inclusive national fusion center network. Access to the Homeland Security Data Network should be expanded, and continued progress in standardizing data processing languages and programs should be encouraged and Federally resourced.

Support community knowledge-sharing of counter-gang strategies. While police and other law enforcement agencies are the “thin blue line” that deals with the substance of crime, widespread community effort is needed to prevent or moderate gang-related culture in local neighborhoods. Federal assistance to communities in the form of knowledge-sharing, gang analysis, and community development should also be available on an as-needed or lessons-learned basis. A Federally facilitated program to help communities and towns learn lessons from others who have successfully defeated gangs would be valuable to establish networks of towns and cities—and even rural counties—hostile to the establishment of gang infestation.

Provide treatment for drug abusers to reduce the level of illicit drug use. One of the ironies of the Nation’s struggle with illegal drugs is that it already knows how to decrease drug use. In fact, under one U.S. President, drug use was actually reduced; in 1972, Richard Nixon established a national program that combined enforcement and effective treatment centers that lowered drug use nationwide.

However, the picture of drug abuse as a public health problem rather than as a criminal act eventually eroded in the political wars that followed the Nixon resignation. As drug use became more widespread, a backlash against treatment grew—and endured—among the voting public and their representatives. The Obama administration’s recently published National Drug Control Strategy seeks to restore the general balance of treatment

and punishment, as well as other shifts, and a national drug treatment program, open to abusers at all levels and ages, should be started as a necessary part of the war against the cartels.

Begin a consistent, long-term national campaign to reduce the attractiveness of gang culture, including illegal drug use, to American teenagers. Often, there is an absence of elite leadership in programs to discourage the connected pathologies of gang culture and illegal drug use. In fact, it sometimes appears that elite

gangs of all types actively recruit in public and private schools using a variety of techniques—positive incentives, Facebook and other social media, and intimidation

opinion finds both activities to be exciting and fashionable. At one of the conferences supporting this article’s findings, an experienced police officer specializing in gangs stated, “We have national campaigns to stop smoking and to use our seat belts. Why can’t we have a national campaign to get our kids to stop thinking gangs are cool?”⁶²

Fight for our schools. Gangs of all types actively recruit in public and private schools at all levels—high, middle, and elementary schools—using a variety of techniques—positive incentives, Facebook and other social media, and intimidation. Despite various state laws against recruitment, gangs continue to attract students at increasingly younger ages. A 2009 survey by the National Gang Crime Research Center reported that over a third of public schools surveyed reported gang recruitment in the previous year.⁶³ Gang recruitment of the next generation of American children should be addressed as a national challenge.

Federally finance local “drug courts.”

Many states now operate unique and highly effective drug courts that bring together intervention teams of treatment, education, law enforcement, and court probation personnel to aggressively deal with first-time offenders. Under the direction and close supervision of a drug court judge, a person arrested on drug possession charges passes through a rigorous court-managed intervention program that typically lasts for several months. If the subject successfully completes the intervention program, charges are dismissed, and the arrest record is expunged. When used, these courts have low recidivism rates.⁶⁴ These programs are subject to the pressures of local budgets, competing with schools, police departments, and other municipal services for funding. With their detailed intervention programs, drug courts are relatively expensive—and effective.

No subject is liable to be more controversial than the question of whether to legalize drugs in the United States. The often repeated belief that legalization would defeat the cartels breaks down on the data. As stated previously, the drug cartels have reached a stage of development that would ensure their continued operation during any transition to legalized drugs on the part of the United States and beyond. It is highly unlikely that the legalization of drugs—some or even all drugs—in the United States would end the threat from these organizations. The cartels and other drug trafficking organizations are multifaceted criminal enterprises dedicated to making profits from any activity that brings in money. Although the majority of their income comes from illicit drugs, they also engage in other violent and white-collar crimes. The assorted cartels—the Mexican cartels, the FARC, and other organizations—are a new kind of transnational criminal organization,

taking advantage of the global black economy not only to move drugs, but also to support human trafficking, prostitution, identity theft, arms trading, illicit financial transactions, and so forth. They have powerful state sponsors in a global network of illicit commerce. For the United States to turn to legalization as a *primary strategy* against the cartels would be a shot in the dark, particularly when other strategies to decrease drug use have been effective.

Pass immigration reform. The large population of illegal immigrants in the United States provides unwitting cover for narcogangs and cartels. The overwhelming number of illegal immigrants living in the United States have proven to be law abiding and focused on making a living for themselves and their families.⁶⁵ Since the economic crisis, the Department of Homeland Security reports that over 1 million undocumented aliens have departed, leaving the United States with a remaining population of around 10 million.⁶⁶ The illegal immigrants who remain cannot safely return to their home countries, nor can they seek the protection of the law when preyed upon by gangs or cartels. Setting aside arguments regarding their contributions to society and to the national economy, stripping away the protective cover that their communities unwillingly provide is necessary to isolate and attack cartels and gangs who both lodge with, and prey upon, Latino immigrants. The presence in the Nation of a permanently alienated Latino community represents a serious strategic vulnerability that should be addressed by reform and assimilation as rapidly as possible.

Reform prisons. In a sense, prisons have become the “graduate schools” of gang life, and prison gangs play active roles in recruiting members and managing territories. Younger first-timers are often recruited into gangs while serving alongside more hardened offenders,

prisons often lack education or job training, and former inmates are released with little or no prospects for reentering society.⁶⁷ Lowering recidivism is dependent on training and education programs in detention facilities as well as effective reintegration of inmates into society, including securing a job or job training, an education, and so forth.⁶⁸ Finally, the ability of cartel and gang leaders to control their activities from prison should be curtailed, either by geographical space or some other method to prevent their communication with their organizations.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, I quoted Moisés Naím, the author of *Illicit*, who stated that ultimately, it is the fabric of society that is at stake in the struggle against global corruption. With no intent of sounding alarmist, I believe him to be correct—certainly, residents of Guatemala City, Tegucigalpa, Managua, or Barranquilla would agree.

The Mexican and Colombian cartels, and the corrupt government officials who export the FARC's products under the once-proud flag of Venezuela, though, are just the first wave of criminals to take advantage of the displacements of the early 21st century. There are now others around the globe; the Ukrainian and Russian mobs, Hizballah, and the Taliban are symptomatic of transnational criminal networks that weave in and out of states and governments, enabled by the latest technologies and unrestrained by laws or decency. The same forces that fight international drug cartels are also the forces that fight ideologically based terrorism and insurgents as well. Crime, terrorism, and insurgency differ mainly in scale, and distinctions are becoming less meaningful.

While the threat of war between states will always exist as long as there are states—and we need to keep strong forces in the field, aloft, and afloat to deter such a possibility—the field of major conflict now includes large-scale crime, or criminal networks that challenge the authority of states at the most basic levels—wholesale corruption, neighborhood intimidation, murder of government officials and candidates for public office, kidnapping of citizens.

To defeat the cartels threatening our neighbors and us, we must use our existing operational advantages as building blocks for new regional strategies. We have effective, paramilitary, global antigang forces in the DEA and some other agencies, and they know what to do. We know how to assist our allies when they request help, as in the case of Colombia. We know how to root out the cartels' minions in the United States, how to make our cities and schools unattractive to gangs, and how to decrease drug use in the United States. We have done it in the past. We know how to assimilate new immigrants and win them to lawful citizenship. We have done that, too. Now, the question is whether we, as a government and people, can put these things together to defeat the cartels that threaten security in the region. **PRISM**

Notes

¹ See Walter Wriston, *The Twilight of Sovereignty* (New York: Scribner, 1992), for an elegant discussion on this point.

² Definitions have been a problem because of the variety of networked criminal organizations. In economics, the term *cartel* refers specifically to an enterprise's conspiracy to fix prices, limit production, or both. The early Colombian drug cartels were proper cartels; current criminal drug organizations no longer strictly fit

the definition. Although law enforcement organizations in-house prefer the term *drug trafficking organizations* (DTOs), popular usage has stayed with cartels and so does this article, although DTO does appear from time to time.

³ I am grateful to Moisés Naím for these and other insights. See *Illicit* (New York: Random House, 2005), 33.

⁴ See “The Failed States Index,” *Foreign Policy* (July–August 2007), 54–63.

⁵ Douglas Farah, *The Criminal-Terrorist Nexus and Its Pipelines* (New York: Nine Eleven Finding Answers Foundation, January 2008), 3.

⁶ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 78. Though dated, this paper is fundamental for understanding theories of criminal networks.

⁷ U.S. Department of State, *State Sponsors of Terrorism*, available at <www.state.gov/s/ct/c14151.htm>.

⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2009).

⁹ David Luhnow and Jose de Cordoba, “The Perilous State of Mexico,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 21, 2009, available at <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123518102536038463.html>>.

¹⁰ Though in some jurisdictions, particularly in Southern California, antigang policing has come to resemble counterinsurgency. See, for example, Paul Harris, “Gang Mayhem Grips LA,” *The Guardian*, March 18, 2007, available at <www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/mar/18/usa.paulharris>.

¹¹ Correspondence with rancher on border, May 2, 2010.

¹² Emilio San Pedro, “Atlanta Vice: A New U.S. Drugs Hub?” BBC News, May 2, 2009, available at <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8014833.stm>>.

¹³ “Atlanta Reeling Under Mexican Drug Cartel Violence,” March 10, 2009, available at <www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/atlanta-mexico-drug-gangs/2009/03/10/id/328722>.

¹⁴ Celinda Franco, *The MS-13 and 18th Street Gangs—Emerging Transnational Threats?* Congressional Research Service (CRS), RL34233 (Washington, DC: CRS, January 30, 2008).

¹⁵ Comments by gang-experienced law enforcement professionals at Center for a New American Security (CNAS) workshop, December 10, 2009.

¹⁶ See <<http://names.mongabay.com/ancestry/Mexican.html>>.

¹⁷ Barry McCaffrey, “After Action Report: Visit to Mexico,” U.S. Military Academy Department of Social Sciences, December 29, 2008, 6.

¹⁸ Mica Rosenberg, “Drug War Abuses by Mexican Army Rise Sharply,” December 8, 2009, available at <www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE5B804H20091209>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ U.S. Department of State, *2009 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, February 2009), available at <www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2009/index.htm>.

²¹ Jorge Fernandez Menendez and Victor Ronquillo, *De Los Maras a Los Zetas: Los secretos del narcotráfico, de Colombia a Chicago* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 2006), 66.

²² John Sullivan, “Counter Supply and Counter-Violence Approaches to Narcotics Trafficking,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, March 12, 2010, 190.

²³ See, for example, John Bailey and Roy Godson, *Organized Crime and Democratic Governability: Mexico and the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 300.

²⁴ “Narco echa raíces en tierras ociosas,” *Excelsior* (Mexico City), September 24, 2008.

²⁵ Coca is not a native plant to Colombia, but was “exported” when the Colombian cartels and FARC seized land and expanded their operations in the 1980s and 1990s.

²⁶ See the first report by the Colombian National Commission on Reparations and Reconciliation, *Disidentes, rearmados y emergentes: Bandas criminales o tercera generación paramilitar?* (August 2007).

²⁷ Patricia Bibes, “Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism—Colombia, a Case Study,” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 17, no. 3 (August 2001), 250.

²⁸ See, for example, International Crisis Group, “Ending Colombia’s FARC Conflict: Dealing the Right Card,” *Latin America Report* No. 30, March 26, 2009.

²⁹ Comments by Adam Isacson at CNAS roundtable, February 25, 2010.

³⁰ The *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* was a bigger cocaine producer than the FARC from approximately 1999 to 2003. See Douglas Farah, *Money Laundering and Bulk Cash Smuggling: Challenges for the Merida Initiative* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 2010).

³¹ “Kidnappers Slit Colombian Pol Luis Francisco Cuellar’s Throat; FARC Eyed in Assassination,” Associated Press, December 23, 2009.

³² Chris Kraul and Sebastian Rotella, “Colombia Drug Ring May Link to Hezbollah,” *Seattle Times*, October 25, 2008, available at <http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2008309259_drugring25.html>.

³³ Ray Walser, *What to Do about Hugo Chavez: Venezuela’s Challenge to Security in the Americas* (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, February 2009), available at <www.heritage.org/research/latinamerica/bg2243.cfm>.

³⁴ Kraul and Rotella.

³⁵ Phil Williams, *Violent Non-State Actors and National and International Security*, International Relations and Security Network (Zurich: Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, November 2008).

³⁶ Steven Monblatt, “Terrorism and Drugs in the Americas. The OAS Response,” *OAS E-zine*, February–March 2004.

³⁷ Tim Gaynor and Tiemoko Diallo, “Al Qaeda Linked to Rogue Air Network: U.S. Official,” Reuters, January 14, 2010.

³⁸ Chávez won the referendum with a 54 percent to 46 percent victory.

³⁹ Benedict Mander, “Chavez and Gaddafi Urge Redefining of ‘Terrorism,’” *The Financial Times*, September 29, 2009, available at <www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5a429ac8-ad0e-11de-9caf-00144feabdc0.html?ncklick_check=1>.

⁴⁰ Mark Bromley et al., *Recent Trends in the Arms Trade*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Background Paper (Stockholm: SIPRI, April 2009), 3, available at <<http://books.sipri.org/files/misc/SIPRIBP0904a.pdf>>.

⁴¹ Martin Sieff, “Defense Focus: Venezuela’s Kalashnikovs,” UPI, August 15, 2007, available at <www.upi.com/Security_Industry/2007/08/15/Defense-Focus-Venezuelas-Kalashnikovs/UPI-12731187204944/>.

⁴² Douglas Farah, “The Growing Terrorism Challenges from Latin America,” International Assessment and Strategy Center, February 18, 2007, available at <www.strategycenter.net/research/pubID.149/pub_detail.asp>.

⁴³ U.S. Department of the Treasury, press release, September 12, 2008.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Juan Forero, “Capture of Rebel Divides Latin American Neighbors,” *The New York Times*, January 23, 2005.

⁴⁶ “Swedes Quiz Venezuela on Weapons,” BBC News, July 27, 2009, available at <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8171580.stm>>.

⁴⁷ Indictment by Judge Eloy Velazco of the Spanish High Court, March 2010.

⁴⁸ “Venezuela Called the Critical Link in Iran Plan to Duck Sanctions,” *World Tribune*, September 22, 2009.

⁴⁹ Ann Scott Tyson, “Gates Predicts ‘Slog’ in Afghanistan,” *The Washington Post*, January 28, 2009, available at <www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/27/AR2009012700472.html>.

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⁵² “The Teheran-Venezuelan Nuclear Axis,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 15, 2009, available at <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704869304574595652815802722.html>>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “Ahmadinejad Bolsters Iranian Ties with Nicaragua,” *The New York Times*, September 28, 2007, available at <www.nytimes.com/2007/09/28/world/americas/28iht-iran.1.7670213.html>.

⁵⁵ Mark P. Sullivan, “Iran’s Growing Influence in Latin America,” April 24, 2010, available at <www.speroforum.com/a/31543/Irans-Growing-Influence-in-Latin-America>.

⁵⁶ Moshen Milani, testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, October 27, 2009.

⁵⁷ “Iran-Venezuela Ties Serve Strategic Aims,” UPI, August 14, 2009, available at <www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2009/08/14/Iran-Venezuela-ties-serve-strategic-aims/UPI-91201250266165/>.

⁵⁸ Robert Morgenthau, “The Link between Iran and Venezuela: A Crisis in the Making?” briefing at the Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, September 8, 2009, 3.

⁵⁹ Milani, 7.

⁶⁰ Norman Bailey, testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia, October 27, 2009.

⁶¹ In Central America in the early 1990s, military helicopters were not permitted to come within small-arms range of suspected narcotics trafficking bases, leaving U.S. law enforcement agents to hoof it overland thousands of meters to bases where suspects had been long gone. Those antiquated rules of engagement still pertain today. The U.S. Defense Department should be more engaged.

⁶² Comment by law enforcement official at CNAS workshop, December 10, 2009.

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⁶⁶ Steven A. Camarota and Karen Jensenius, *A Shifting Tide: Recent Trends in the Illegal Immigrant Population* (Washington, DC: Center for Immigration Studies, July 2009), available at <<http://www.cis.org/illegalimmigration-shiftingtide>>.

⁶⁷ A good perspective is offered at <www.thenation.com/doc/20040105/tuhudubrow>.

⁶⁸ Mason Brooks and Drew Miller, “Inside the Detention Camps: A New Campaign in Iraq,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 52 (1st Quarter, 2009), 132.