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“U.S. – Andean Security Cooperation”
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Chairman Feinstein, Co-Chairman Grassley, and Senators, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss U.S.-Andean security cooperation.

No region of the world has a more direct relationship with the security of the United States than does the other countries of the Western Hemisphere. While much of the public’s attention on crime and drug issues in the region is currently focused on the critical efforts being undertaken in Mexico under the Merida Initiative, a simple truth remains that virtually all of the world’s cocaine supply comes from the Andes, specifically from the countries of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. I am especially grateful for this opportunity to discuss what we are doing with our partners throughout the Andean region to stem the flow of illegal drugs and improve regional security, the gains that are being seen, and my thoughts on what’s to come.

The Current Situation

Throughout the hemisphere, basic public safety remains a challenge. We must continue to promote the rule of law in order to provide a foundation for all other efforts to succeed. We continue to work with judicial systems to provide more responsive and transparent justice systems, supporting prosecutors in case management. In Colombia, we are supporting that country’s efforts to counter the rising threat of the Criminal Bands (bandas criminales or “BACRIM” in Spanish) and to introduce police to rural areas. We, with our U.S. government partners, help host nations with technical expertise on issues such as money laundering and demand reduction so that they can better understand the corrosive nature of the underlying threats and develop programs and legislation to address their country-specific needs. Without the framework provided by an underlying respect for the rule of law, it is all but impossible for our counternarcotics programs to have a sustained effect.

Eradication is a fundamental element of our collaborative efforts in all three of the coca producing countries – Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia – and relies heavily on the logistical support we provide. This is particularly true in Peru and Bolivia, which operate only manual eradication programs that require substantial resources to transport and equip manual eradication teams in the field. In Bolivia, eradication efforts are a highlight of a sometimes difficult bilateral relationship and actually exceeded the 2010 target of 8,000 hectares. These efforts appear to have stopped the expansion of coca cultivation as indicated by a survey by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) that showed a one-year increase of only 200 additional hectares in production in 2010. Those findings are reinforced by the U.S. estimate that actually showed a 500 hectare decrease in land under coca cultivation. In Peru, eradication efforts also exceeded target figures in 2010, removing some 13,000 hectares from production, translating into roughly 20 percent of the Peruvian coca total. And in Colombia, the numbers are even more impressive, with the eradication of 146,000 hectares through a combination of manual and aerial

eradication efforts in 2010. The eradication of crops is just one programmatic element of our broader security cooperation with our partners, but it is an important public statement of those governments' commitment to resist criminal drug organizations.

The importance of that broader security cooperation cannot be overstated. Plan Colombia was predicated on the idea that eradication, interdiction and alternative development would complement each other. And while it succeeded, particularly in addressing public security concerns, it also underscored the need for still broader engagement. That lesson informed the creation of Colombia's National Consolidation Plan (PNC) with the goal of creating a more robust state presence in areas where it had been absent. This goes beyond a security presence to include community and economic development, land titling, and civic engagement. Through Embassy Bogota's Colombia Strategic Development Initiative (CSDI), U.S. assistance has likewise evolved into a whole-of-government approach. These efforts, which rely on close coordination so that security, law enforcement, and development efforts can be properly sequenced, are proving successful in Colombia and provide a new model for implementation elsewhere.

Our investment in the region is paying dividends in other areas as well. Through the provision of law enforcement training and equipment including computers and more than 400 vehicles, U.S. assistance is enabling Ecuador's efforts to interdict illicit drugs and chemicals, and dismantle cocaine-producing labs. The canine unit we support, for example, accounts for some 25 percent of seizures in the country. In addition to the increased capacity this creates, our assistance promotes effective information sharing among agencies and between the United States and Ecuador, ultimately making for more effective operations and building a sustainable framework to counter the threat of drug trafficking and transnational crime. In Bolivia, U.S. assistance, including support for training and canine programs, has resulted in Bolivian seizures of coca leaf that are 19 times higher than they were a decade ago. In Colombia, where security forces combine to seize more than 200 metric tons of cocaine every year, the benefits are even greater. Capitalizing on their experience and their understanding of the critical nature of a cooperative approach, the Colombian National Police have trained more than 9,000 law enforcement personnel from 22 other countries in Latin America and West Africa since 2009 in tactical and investigative methods. These efforts have the added benefit of multiplying the impact of U.S. assistance efforts, reducing the U.S. footprint in such programs and building a self-sustaining basis for further international cooperation in the region. In Bolivia, we see, and support, greater cooperation on counternarcotics issues with Brazil. Centrally located, Peru routinely hosts training for law enforcement personnel from all of the region at the regional training center.

This is not to say either that our work is done or that our course is set. Serious challenges remain. The disruptive presence of dangerous Sendero Luminoso elements in the Upper Huallaga, Apurimac, and Ene River valleys of Peru require careful attention. We must also deal with the political and policy fluctuations inherent when working to support sovereign democracies. Furthermore, drug trafficking organizations are dynamic, adaptable businesses that continue to present new challenges as they try to stay ahead of law enforcement efforts. We need not look any further than the proliferation of custom-built submersible vessels. The first known use of a semisubmersible was in 2006, but over the next three years we've seen more than

150 known instances of attempts or uses of these vehicles. Today, that threat has evolved even further, with the discovery and seizure of fully submersible vessels, first in Ecuador in 2010 and this year in Colombia. While these seizures are clear successes, they also underscore both the determination of the trafficking organizations that seek to use them and the need for continued vigilance to confront these and other emerging threat tools.

Evolving Challenges

Traffickers often respond to our advances by simply moving to areas where law enforcement is weaker and the political climate is more conducive to their free operation. History bears this out. We began working with Peru and Bolivia in the 1980s and the traffickers shifted operations to Colombia. The success of Plan Colombia led to a trafficking shift to Mexico. The Caribbean-based routes of the 1980s have also been replaced by routes that bring product to the United States up through Central America and Mexico. Our experience in the Andean region and throughout the Western Hemisphere has shown that it is a question of when, not if, the traffickers will shift again and where will they go next.

The evolving nature of the threat posed by drug trafficking organizations and transnational criminal organizations underscore the importance of staying engaged and maintaining strong bilateral partnerships with all our willing partners throughout the region. When cooperative efforts break down or are interrupted, capability gaps appear that traffickers are all too eager to exploit. We have seen this, for example, in Venezuela, where counternarcotics cooperation today only occurs as the exception to the rule instead of as the rule itself. As a result, cocaine trafficking has more than tripled there in less than a decade.

We are, I think, at a historic point in the struggle against drug trafficking. With our partners, we have succeeded in establishing a certain capacity to confront drug trafficking organizations. It is imperative that we take advantage of this opportunity to think about the future of our engagement, rather than simply continuing with what has worked in the past. As we look towards the future, we must be willing to make realistic assessments and adjust our engagement to the situation on the ground in our host countries, both in terms of the nature of the threat and the willingness of host governments throughout the Andean region to collaborate in meaningful ways. In Colombia, this has meant a gradual nationalization of mature program elements, such as the Colombian Army Aviation, the Counterdrug Brigade and Air Bridge Denial programs. In Peru, we hope to build on the success of programs in San Martin, where eradication and development programs have been closely linked, and reshape a broadened engagement strategy to help our partner implement a whole of government approach to address the coca cultivation and trafficking problems there.

In closing, I'd like to commend our partners in the region for their outstanding work on these issues. Throughout the growing region, eradication programs continue to be a powerful and very public expression of government opposition to criminality. Local law enforcement officials, now better equipped and trained, are more capable of conducting intelligence-driven operations to more effectively strike at criminal organizations. More importantly, we increasingly see the countries of the region working together against these common foes. There is undoubtedly more progress to be made and we look forward to continuing to work with them

for the improved security of their citizens and ours. To make that progress, we need to build on the very real gains that our collaborations in the region are already producing. And we must be willing to adjust our engagement as needed to better counter the changing tactics of the highly-motivated criminal organizations. By continuing to work with our committed partners in the region, we can do that.

Thank you Chairman Feinstein, Co-Chairman Grassley, and other distinguished Senators for your time. I will do my best to address your questions.