



Fact Sheet

Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
Washington, DC
April 11, 2006

Country Program: Colombia

Problem

Colombia is the source of over 90 percent of the cocaine and nearly half of the heroin entering the United States. It is also a leading user of precursor chemicals and the focus of significant money laundering activity. The presence of various illegal armed groups and foreign terrorist organizations in Colombia that are involved in narcotics trafficking compounds the problems confronting the Government of Colombia and its allies in the fight against the worldwide narcotics trade. Although Colombian authorities continue to make record progress against cocaine and heroin production and trafficking, cultivation of coca and opium poppy remains at unacceptably high levels, and drug profits continue to feed criminal gangs, erode civil society, and challenge government authority.

U.S. Counternarcotics Goals

- Eliminate the cultivation of opium poppy and coca leaf;
- Strengthen Colombia's capabilities to disrupt and dismantle major drug-trafficking organizations and prevent their resurgence;
- Destroy the cocaine and heroin processing industries and stop the diversion of licit chemicals into illicit channels;
- Implement alternative development projects where viable to encourage growers to voluntarily abandon their narcotics crops in favor of licit economic activities;
- Strengthen government institutions, support democracy, and establish public security in conflict zones; and
- Promote the rule of law, support judicial reforms, and increase access to justice.

U.S. Programs

The U.S. supports Government of Colombia (GOC) programs to confront every aspect of the drug trade and assists the GOC in re-establishing control and the rule of law in areas threatened by drug-related violence. Primary elements of this comprehensive assistance include illicit crop eradication, alternative development programs, interdiction operations, institution building, and justice sector reform. Aerial eradication efforts are aimed at preventing illicit cultivation, while convincing traffickers and growers that investment in illegal crops does not pay dividends. Alternative development and sustainable livelihood projects provide targeted assistance to communities willing to eradicate coca in exchange for infrastructure and food production programs.

The United States works with the Colombian Ministry of Defense, which includes the counterdrug brigade of the Colombian Army (COLAR), and the highly regarded Colombian National Police to affect a substantial net decrease in coca cultivation, cocaine production, and drug trafficking facilities. U.S. assistance programs continue to train and equip police and military units and support the aircraft that perform eradication, interdiction, and counterterrorism missions. Support is provided only to units that have been vetted for human rights violations under the terms of the Leahy amendment. Eradication and interdiction efforts have stopped a potential of billions of dollars of cocaine from reaching U.S. streets.

The United States continues to assist Colombia's alternative development efforts, which work to create permanent alternative income-generation opportunities for local populations. Democracy programs seek to modernize the criminal justice system, promote access to justice for disenfranchised Colombians, protect human rights, increase government transparency and accountability, and support peace initiatives. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) programs provide economic and social assistance to persons displaced by civil strife and violence, youth at risk of recruitment by illegal armed groups, and the communities in which they reside. U.S. programs in Colombia have helped over 2,800 child ex-combatants, over two million displaced persons, and almost 900,000 other vulnerable persons to date. An estimated 64,000 families have received assistance through alternative development programs and over 1,000 infrastructure projects have been built.

The United States also provides continued support for Colombian National Police operations aimed at the destruction of emerging narcotics trafficking syndicates through the arrest and prosecution of syndicate leaders, the confiscation of their assets, and discouraging illegal money-laundering activity. Similarly, funding supports projects designed to improve the efficiency of Colombia's court and prison systems. U.S. programs contribute to training for judges, prosecutors, and police; promotion of timely and effective investigations and prosecutions of human rights violations; and advancement of a culture of lawfulness through schools and police academies. They sustain Government of Colombia drug awareness and education programs and seek to dissuade Colombians from engaging in illegal drug use and trafficking.

For more information, please see the [website](#) of the Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá.

