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"Transnational Drug Enterprises: Threats to Global Stability and U.S. National Security from Southwest Asia, Latin America and West Africa"

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Chairman Tierney, Ranking Member Flake and members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on an issue that I believe is a true national security threat to the United States, as well as parts of Latin America and much of West Africa.

What we are seeing in the era of globalization, is that flexible criminal and terrorist pipelines --, where key facilitators are vital to the operations of both sets of actors -- are highly adaptable and forward thinking. These pipelines or recombinant chains of actors and commodities now have the ability to move goods, both licit and illicit, around the globe to wherever the environment is most hospitable and tolerant. While by far the most lucrative commodities in the pipeline are cocaine and heroin, the same pipelines serve weapons traffickers, human smugglers, fraud and contraband.[1]

The links in these chains are individuals, or facilitators, who are able to provide the necessary services--for fees in cash or in kind--to virtually anyone who needs to gain access to the pipeline to move illicit goods. While the cocaine pipelines from the Andean region in Latin America traditionally moved through the Central America/Mexico or Caribbean routes, West Africa has now become a new and extremely challenging part of the distribution network for U.S. and international counter-drug efforts.

The growth of truly transnational and transcontinental drug trafficking organizations and networks in recent years, with the demonstrated capacity to project their operations from Latin America to West Africa, is a sobering reminder of the wealth and creativity of these structures. It is also a reminder of the destructive power of these criminal enterprises and their ability to corrupt and co-opt already weak or failed states in West Africa. The profits of these illicit business ventures flow directly back to criminal and terrorist organizations in the Western Hemisphere, many who directly threaten U.S. national security.

There are several causes of particular concern for the United States in the new Latin America-West Africa cocaine nexus. The first is the documented presence of Mexican drug trafficking organizations, particularly the Sinaloa cartel, in West Africa. The second is the presence of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*-FARC), there. The FARC is a Marxist insurgency that has been fighting since 1964, when Lyndon Johnson was president and in the past decade, has morphed into one of the largest cocaine-trafficking syndicates in the world. Both the United States and the European Union have designated the FARC a terrorist organization.

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[1] Amado Philip de Andrés, "Organized Crime, Drug Trafficking, Terrorism: The New Achilles' Hell of West Africa," Commentary, Fundacion Para las Relaciones Internacionales y Dialogo Exterior (FRIDE), Madrid, Spain, May 2008. De Andrés is the deputy regional representative for West and Central Africa, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The presence of Mexican organizations and the FARC in the West African cocaine pipeline is dangerous because it means these groups can sell the drugs and repatriate their profits even if the United States were to make significant progress in reducing the flow of drugs across its own southern border. The market for the drugs may change, but beneficiaries of those illicit gains largely remain with Mexican, Colombian organizations and their allies in the region. The drugs transiting West Africa are a serious problem for Europe and other expanding markets such as Russia. But the Mexican and Colombian organizations who are using the West African pipeline and repatriating their profits, pose a direct threat to the security of the United States.

Under significant pressure from the Colombian military, the FARC has suffered a series of battlefield and intelligence defeats in the past 18 months, and its ability to move cocaine to the United States market has been severely curtailed. But, with the tolerance, if not complicity of the Venezuelan government, the FARC has managed to significantly reroute its cocaine movements through Venezuela to West African destinations such as Guinea Bissau, Guinea (Conakry), Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The money from the movement of this cocaine, ultimately destined for the lucrative European and Russian markets, has allowed the FARC to maintain a significant revenue stream to continue its war against the Colombian state and its associated campaigns of kidnapping, assassination intimidation. We will examine this in more detail further on.

Because they understand this revenue stream to the FARC and other Colombian and Latin American drug trafficking organizations has lethal consequences in their own countries, the Colombian and Brazilian governments are negotiating to establish their own police presence in West Africa, to work along side the local police forces.

Perhaps no country in the world understands the havoc these organizations can wreak on a society better than Colombia. And no country in Latin America has suffered as much as Brazil for developing into a key transit country, where payment is often made with drugs and not cash, thus creating a local consumption problem. Brazil is now the second largest consumer of cocaine in the world, after the United States.[2]

Another factor that I believe is very important is that ungoverned spaces in West Africa are providing a meeting ground for different criminal and terrorist groups to make new alliances.

What I have observed repeatedly in two decades of following drug trafficking, transnational criminal organizations and non-state armed groups is that when they are able to meet in neutral territory they often form alliances that would not be possible under other circumstances. This is holding true in West Africa.

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[2] 2009 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Country Report: Brazil, United States Department of State, Feb. 27, 2009.

Already in Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Ghana, Sierra Leone and elsewhere we are seeing members of Mexican, Colombian, Venezuelan, Surinamese and European organizations operating in the same territory and plugging into the same pipeline. These groups are operating in tandem, and greatly strengthening local organized criminal syndicates, and could well be working with terrorist organizations.

Not only do these new actors in Africa bring a huge influx of cash, which can be used to buy or corrupt virtually any state institution. The Latin American cartel operatives also bring a whole new level of violence and sophistication to the illicit pipeline structures. Just as the "blood diamond" trade and illicit timber deals allowed groups like the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone to purchase advanced weapons on the international market and become a much more lethal force, the influx of cocaine cash will allow the criminal and militia groups in the region to acquire ever more sophisticated armaments, training and communications. At the same time, the weak host states have severely limited police, judicial or military capacity to confront these groups in any commensurate manner.

In West Africa, the consequences of a new illicit commodity flowing through the region are already devastating, as shown by the new wave of political instability and the creation of the continent's first true "narco-states," such as Guinea Bissau. As the trafficking grows, so will the havoc wreaked on weak states in West Africa--many of which are only now emerging from decades of chaos and unspeakable violence and are ill prepared to face the new challenges.

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) conservatively estimates that 40 to 50 tons of cocaine, with an estimated value of $1.8 billion, passed through West Africa in 2007, and the amount is growing.[3]

The Pentagon's Africa Command and other intelligence services estimate the amount of cocaine transiting West Africa is at least five times the UNOCO estimate.[4] Part of the reason for the discrepancy is that the overall amount of cocaine being trafficked through West Africa is unclear. Given the limited law enforcement capacities of many West African states, it is clear that only a small share of the cocaine trafficked through these countries is detected. In fact, the circumstances surrounding the best-documented seizures suggest that most are made by chance rather than resulting from police investigation. For example, in May 2007, the authorities in Noadhibou, Mauritania noticed a group of people unloading a shipment from a small private airplane. When they approached, the plane took off,

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[3] Presentation of Antonio L. Mazzitelli, regional representative, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, Regional Office for West and Central Africa, at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 28, 2009.

[4] Presentation of Peter D. Burgess, Counter Narcotics Project Officer, U.S. Africom, , at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 28, 2009.

leaving behind its load of cocaine. In May 2006, the Ghanaian authorities seized 1.9 tons of cocaine after searching a van during a routine traffic stop. A consignment of around 635 kilos of cocaine was intercepted by the Judicial Police of Guinea-Bissau near the capital Bissau in April 2007. However, the traffickers escaped with the remainder of the consignment (believed to total around 2.5 tons) because police did not have the manpower or vehicles to give chase.[5]

But even using the most conservative estimate, the magnitude of the problem for the region is easy to see. Using UNODC figures, the only legal export from the region that would surpass the value of cocaine is cocoa exports from Cote d'Ivoire. If the higher numbers are used, cocaine would dwarf the legal exports of the region combined, and be worth more than the GDP of several of the region's nations.[6]

As Antonio Maria Costa, the head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime wrote recently in an op-ed in the Washington Post, this epidemic of drugs and drug money flooding Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone and elsewhere has become a security issue. "Drug money is perverting the weak economies of the region…The influence that this buys is rotting fragile states; traffickers are buying favors and protection from candidates in elections."[7]

This staggering influx of illicit new revenue into the region is taking place in a broader and unhealthy context.

The changes across the globe have been swift and dramatic in recent years, as demonstrated in a snap shot drawn from three World Bank studies[8] and a recent survey by *Foreign Policy Magazine* and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.[9] Both sets of studies use metrics of economic development, state legitimacy, human rights, demographic pressures, public services and citizen security to determine where countries rank on a global scale.

Those nations at the bottom have become known as "failed states" or "fragile states," terms that have come into vogue to describe the growing areas of the world that lie beyond the control of central governments. In 1996, only 11 states were judged to be failing across the world. By 2003, a scant seven years later, the number had grown to 17, and by 2006 the number was 26. More than half of those, 18, are in

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[5] Andrés, op cit.

[6] Extrapolated by the author from UNODC and Africom data. As Andrés notes, the 2007 GDP of Guinea Bissau ($304 million) is equal to the wholesale value of about 6 tons of cocaine in Europe (p. 3).

[7] Antonio Maria Costa, "Cocaine Finds Africa," The Washington Post, July 29, 2008, p. A17, viewed at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/28/AR2008072802466.html

[8] "Engaging with Fragile States: An IEG Review of World Bank Support to Low-Income Countries Under Stress," The World Bank, September 2006, Washington, D.C., accessed at http://www.worldbank.org/ieg.

[9] "The Failed State Index 2007," Foreign Policy Magazine, Jul7-August 2007, pp. 54-63.

Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the 2009 Failed States Index of *Foreign Policy Magazine*, 19 of the 25 most fragile states in the world are in Sub-Saharan Africa.[10]

This trend is important because these growing areas that are either stateless or governed by states that are in practice are functioning criminal enterprises give rise to new hybrid organizations which make the traditional distinction between terrorism and organized crime, particularly drug trafficking, meaningless. I believe we will see the emergence of these hybrid organizations in West Africa in the very near future, and indeed they may already exist.

What draws terrorist and criminal organizations together, as overt state sponsorship for terrorism has been curtailed, are the shadow facilitators who understand how to exploit the seams in the international legal and economic structure, and who work with both terrorist and criminal organizations. Both groups use the same pipelines, the same illicit structures, and exploit the same state weaknesses, and are increasingly overlapping. Of the 43 Foreign Terrorist Organizations listed by the State Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration says 19 have clearly established ties to drug trafficking and many more are suspected of having such ties.[11]

One of the reasons for this dismal state of governance in West Africa is that since the early 1990s the region has suffered a series of conflicts centered on natural resources, particularly diamonds, timber, oil, and gold. Profits from these "honey pot" wars fueled the rise of the RUF in Sierra Leone with its child soldiers and unspeakable atrocities; fed the wars sustained by Liberia's Charles Taylor; and contributed to the rampant corruption and weak or failed institutions in almost every country. These natural resources, while valuable, pale in comparison to the money the cocaine trade generates. For example, at the height of the "blood diamond" trade in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the total value of the diamonds being smuggled out was less than $200 million. The potential to fuel conflicts over the cocaine pipeline, the most lucrative commodity so far and one whose profits are several orders of magnitude larger than those of diamonds, is truly chilling.

Terrorist and criminal organizations are masters at exploiting weak or criminal states,[12] and the existence of these regions in West Africa, as well as other macro trends in cocaine trafficking, explain the emergence of West Africa as an important transit area in recent years.

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[10] "The Failed State Index," Foreign Policy Magazine, July 2, 2009.

[11] DEA Chief of Operations Michael Braun at a July 18, 2008 speech to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, accessible at: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=411

[12] For a more detailed look at the criminal/terrorist pipelines and the different functions of failed and criminal states in their exploitation, see: Douglas Farah, "The Criminal-Terrorist Nexus and Its Pipelines," The NEFA Foundation, Jan. 14, 2008.

One of the primary developments is the growth of cocaine consumption in Europe, the former Soviet Union and other new and emerging markets.[13] Drug traffickers, like all good entrepreneurs, are constantly looking to diversify their markets and move to markets that provide greater profitability. While U.S. demand for cocaine has remained steady or declined in recent years, consumption in other parts of the world is growing rapidly. Moving drugs through Africa to Europe, while a circuitous route, is lucrative enough to draw many illicit organizations' involvement.

A second development is the growing ability to move cocaine from the Colombian production sites, largely controlled by the FARC or other non-state armed groups, through Venezuela with impunity. The government of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela has allowed the FARC, with whom Chávez has a deep and personal relationship,[14] to establish routes through his country that greatly lessen the threat and the cost of moving cocaine. According to a July 2009 U.S. Government Accountability Office study, the flow of cocaine through Venezuela has increased fourfold from 2004 to 2007, from about 60 metric tons to 260 metric tons. The number of suspect air flights leaving Venezuelan airspace during the same period increased from 109 to 178.[15]

The closeness of the Venezuelan government to the FARC was demonstrated in September 2008, when the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned three of Chávez's closest associates, including two intelligence chiefs, for aiding the FARC in the purchase of weapons and drug trafficking.[16] It should be noted that the FARC has a well-established network, including financial handlers, already established in Europe, particularly in Spain, where a good portion of the cocaine enters the European Union.[17]

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[13] According to recent data provided by U.S. agencies, the wholesale value of a kilo of cocaine in the United States is about $30,000, while the value in Europe is $47,000.

[14] The relationship is meticulously documented by the FARC leadership. The documents were captured from the computer of Raul Reyes, the FARC's second in command, on March 1, 2008, when Colombian troops raided Reyes' headquarters established on Ecuadoran soil. For more details, see: Douglas Farah, "What the FARC Papers Show Us About Latin American Terrorism," The NEFA Foundation, April 1, 2008, accessible at: http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefafarc0408.pdf.

[15] "Drug Control: U.S. Counternarcotics Cooperation with Venezuela Has Declined," Report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, United States Government Accountability Office, July 2009.

[16] The three are Hugo Armando Cavajál, director of military intelligence, described as providing weapons to the FARC; Henry de Jesus Rangél, director of the civilian Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services, described as protecting FARC drug shipments; and Ramón Emilio Rodriguez Chacín, who, until a few days before the designation was Venezuela's minster of interior and justice. He is described as the "Venezuelan government's main weapons contact for the FARC." The role of the three in closely collaborating with the FARC is described in some detail in the documents captured in the Reyes documents. See: "Treasury Targets Venezuelan Government Officials Supporting the FARC," Press Room, Department of Treasury, September 12, 2008, viewed at: http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp1132.htm.

[17] For details of the FARC European network, see: Douglas Farah, "The FARC's International Relations: A Network of Deception," The NEFA Foundation, Sept. 22, 2008, accessed at: http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefafarcirnetworkdeception0908.pdf

It is interesting to note that several of the largest cocaine busts in West Africa have come aboard aircraft that departed from Venezuela.[18] Since Chávez expelled the Drug Enforcement Administration from Venezuela in 2006 and has halted all counter-narcotics cooperations, U.S. officials describe Venezuela as a "black hole." Not only does the Venezuelan government's attitude encourage drug trafficking, but Venezuela's geographic proximity to West Africa make it an ideal launching pad. This is true for both maritime operations and the use of aircraft.

A third factor is the success of the Colombian government in dismantling the large cartels, leaving the field open to smaller groups that seek alternative routes and markets. This is particularly true of resurgent drug trafficking organizations in Bolivia and Peru. While the Colombian organizations were for years able to keep the Bolivian and Peruvian structures from participating in any significant manner in the production of cocaine hydrochloride (HCL), or refined cocaine, those restrictions have eased as the Colombian organizations have weakened.

Gen. Oscar Naranjo, commander of the Colombian national police, recently stated that Colombia, due to the weakness of the traditional groups, no longer produces 90 percent of the world's cocaine, as has been the case for most of the past two decades. Rather, he said, Colombia produces about 54 percent of the HCL on the world market "with the rest coming from Peru and Bolivia."[19] He noted that for the first time in two decades or more, there was no single drug trafficking organization that dominates, as the Medellín, Cali, Northern Valley, FARC and the right wing United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*-AUC) structures were able to. Rather, the landscape is now divided among many smaller groups, called "*Grupos Emergentes"* or Emerging Groups, such as the Aguilas Negras. These groups, in turn, are often made up of remnants of the former cartels, even ones that were mortal enemies at one time, such as the FARC and the AUC.

At the same time Mexican cartels are under increasing pressure inside Mexico, and U.S. interdiction efforts have raised the cost of doing business in the United States. This pressure has made a diversification to the European market, via West Africa, increasingly attractive.

This has direct consequences for West Africa. There is a consensus among U.S., UN and European monitors that the volume of cocaine flowing through West Africa is accelerating, and that the dramatic rise will not end any time soon. Among the

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[18] Among the largest was the May 1, 2007 seizure of 630 kilograms of cocaine aboard a Cessna aircraft in Nouhabidou, Mauritania. The airplane's GPS showed it had taken off from Venezuelan territory. See: "Cocaine Trafficking in Western Africa: Situation Report," UNODC, October 2007, pg. 9. In July 2008 another aircraft with 600 kilograms of cocaine and using a false Red Cross emblem on its tail, was seized in Sierra Leone.

[19] "Colombia: Amid Signs of Progress, Warning of a Cartel War," Latin American Security & Strategic Review, January 2009.

reasons are the rapid shifts and increasing fluidity within the overall world drug trade.

A significant portion of the Bolivian (and to a lesser degree Peruvian) cocaine shipments move by air to Venezuela, in part because of the alliance and friendship between Bolivian president Evo Morales and Chávez that makes the transportation relatively easy and safe. The cocaine is then often shipped onward to Europe, via Africa. But the majority of the Bolivian and Peruvian product is moved through Brazil, a nation with growing consumption, and then onward to Africa. There are linguistic as well as geographic reasons for this. Angola and Guinea Bissau, two of the most active transshipment hubs, are former Portuguese colonies, and the official languages there is Portuguese, making communication easier for Brazilian traffickers.

This trend is creating the conditions for the convergence of these groups in new and dangerous ways, affording them not only the opportunity to reap enormous profits, but the chance to share "lessons learned," best practices and the latest technology in areas that are largely beyond state control.

There is a broader potential danger that must be kept in mind as we see assess emerging trends in West Africa. I spoke earlier about the "hybrid" criminal-terrorist organization, of which the FARC is a leading example. In West Africa, it is Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based Shiite Islamist group, designated a terrorist organization by the United States, that has long maintained an operational presence and has had a significant role in the blood diamond trade and many other illicit activities. In addition, many in the Lebanese Diaspora community in West Africa, numbering several hundred thousand, pay a portion of their earnings to support Hezbollah in Lebanon, with the knowledge and acquiescence of the host government.[20] The importance of this revenue stream was revealed when a charter flight bound for Beirut from Cotonou, Benin, crashed on takeoff on Dec. 25, 2003. On board was a Hezbollah "foreign relations" official carrying $2 million in contributions raised in the region. The money was said to represent "the regular contributions the party [Hezbollah] receives from wealthy Lebanese nationals in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Benin and other African states."[21]

Given the prominence of the Lebanese Diaspora community and its members' control of most of the existing pipeline to import and export illegal commodities, it is inevitable that those organizations and the drug trafficking groups will encounter each other and mutually benefit from each other because each has something the

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[20] See: Edward Harris, "Hezbollah Extorting Funds From West Africa's Diamond Merchants," Associated Press, 29 June 2004.

[21] Hamid Ghiryah, "Hezbullah Officials Carrying Donations Reportedly Killed in Lebanese Plane Crash," al-Siyasah (Kuwait), Dec. 29, 2003. For a broader look at the role of the Lebanese diaspora in West African illicit trade activities, see: Lansana Gberie, *War and Peace in Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Corruption and the Lebanese Connection,* The Diamond and Human Security Project, Occasional Paper 6, January 2003.

other wants and needs. The Lebanese networks control the decades-old contraband networks and routes to Europe, while the drug traffickers offer a new and lucrative product for the existing pipeline. Violent clashes may take place, but the history of both groups indicates they will cooperate where useful.

Given Hezbollah's long-established presence on the ground in the region and the closeness of its operatives to that community, it is also reasonable to assume that Hezbollah and the drug traffickers, operating in the same permissive environment, will cross paths. It is precisely this type of environment that allows for the otherwise unthinkable alliances to emerge. Most are short-lived, centering on specific opportunities and operations that can benefit both groups, but others are longer lasting and more dangerous.

Figure 1: Hezbollah Office in Freetown, Sierra Leone

There is a long history of outside terrorist actors, particularly Hezbollah, being active in Latin America. The most egregious documented cases of Hezbollah and Iran's direct involvement in terrorist activities are the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires and the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish center the same city.

But there are other instances that merit mentioning. The FARC has a long history of reaching out to other terrorist groups, notably the Provisional Irish Republican Army (P-IRA) and the ETA Basque separatists, for training and exchanges. There are documented visits in the late 1990s to the Tri-Border Area by Hezbollah's chief of logistics Immad Mugnyiah (now deceased), and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the

architect of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, currently held in Guantanamo. [22] There is the possible presence of Osama bin Laden in the region in 1995, as reported by the Brazilian, French and U.S. media.[23] Given the security with which these senior operatives would have to move it is unlikely they would visit the region unless there were adequate security arrangements and infrastructure to allow them to operate. It is also unlikely they would travel there if there were no compelling reason to do so.

More worrisome is the recent evidence of Chávez's direct support for Hezbollah, including the June 18, 2008 OFAC designations of two Venezuelan citizens, including a senior diplomat, as terrorist supporters for working with the armed group. Several businesses also were sanctioned. Among the things the two are alleged to have been conducting on behalf of Hezbollah were coordinating possible terrorist attacks and building Hezbollah-sponsored community centers in Venezuela.[24]

Given Iran's ties to Hezbollah and Venezuela, Venezuela's ties Iran and the FARC, the FARC's history of building alliances with other armed groups, and the presence of Hezbollah and other armed Islamist groups in Latin America and on the ground in West Africa, it would be dangerous and imprudent to dismiss the possibility of an alliance of these actors. The history of these groups indicates that they will take advantage of the ungoverned spaces and corrupt and weak states of West Africa to get to know each other, work together, learn from each other and exploit areas of mutual interest. Unfortunately, the primary area of mutual interest is a hatred of the United States.

Given that most of the cocaine passing through West Africa is destined for Europe, and given the limited resources of the United States for protecting its strategic interests around the world, one might ask why any of this of pressing concern for us on a strategic level.

There are multiple reasons. The first is that the West Africa cocaine trail directly strengthens drug cartels that exercise great power and pose a direct threat to the

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[22] For a comprehensive look at possible radical Islamist activities in the region, see: Rex Hudson, "Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border (TBA) of South America," Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, July 2003. For more recent Hezbollah ties, as related by Colombia authorities, see: "Colombia Ties Drug Ring to Hezbollah," *Reuters* News Agency, as appeared in the *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 2008.

[23] "El Esteve no Brazil," *Veja* on-line, no. 1,794, March 19, 2003; "Bin Laden Reportedly Spent Time in Brazil in '95," *Washington Post*, March 18, 2003, p. A24.

[24] One of those designated, Ghazi Nasr al Din, who served as the charge d'affaires of Venezuelan embassy in Damascus, and then served in the Venezuelan embassy in London. The OFAC statement said that in late January 2006, al Din facilitated the travel of two Hezbollah representatives of the Lebanese parliament to solicit donation and announce the opening of a Hezbollah-sponsored community center and office in Venezuela. The second individual, Fawzi Kan'an is described as a Venezuela-based Hezbollah supporter and a "significant provider of financial support to Hizbollah." He met with senior Hezbollah officials in Lebanon to discuss operational issues, including possible kidnapping and terrorist attacks. The OFAC statement can be accessed at: http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp1036.htm

United States and its allies in the Western Hemisphere. The money generated by the cocaine trade largely flows back to the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil and Peru, greatly increasing the power of non-state criminal organizations to challenge the state.

We see daily the threats posed by the transnational Mexican drug organizations on and across our borders. We have spent significant resources to aid Colombia in its costly wars against the drug cartels and the FARC in recognition that these groups posed a direct challenge to our national security and the stability of areas of vital strategic interest in our hemisphere. The movement of drugs through West Africa to Europe produces enormous revenues for these groups, allowing them to survive, morph, reconfigure and continue to wreak havoc.

Just as importantly, the drug trafficking in West Africa also directly strengthens those who seek not only to harm the United States but also to strangle the struggling liberal democracies in Latin America. These include Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, his allies in Iran, the FARC and Hezbollah. As noted above, the circumstances in West Africa are ideal for allowing many of these non-state criminal and terrorist organizations to greatly expand their cooperation. The money raised from the cocaine on the West Africa route brings all these threats closer to the United States.

A second reason to engage on this threat is that the infusion of drugs and drug revenue into West Africa--one of the poorest and most corrupt regions of world with a history of violent conflict centered on commodities and resources--will inevitably bring a new wave of violence and instability to the region. Apart from the very legitimate humanitarian concerns, about 18 percent of the oil[25] and 14 percent of the natural gas (LNG) imported by the United States each year comes from the region,[26] and these amounts are estimated to rise significantly in coming years. By 2015, Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to supply about 25 percent of U.S. oil and LNG imports, the vast majority of that from West Africa.[27] Africa remains one of the most promising regions of the world for future oil production. Proven reserves increased by 56 percent between 1996 and 2006, compared to 12 percent for the rest of the world.

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[25] Statement of John R. Brodman, deputy assistant secretary for international energy policy, office of policy and international affairs, U.S. Department of Energy, before the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, July 15, 2004

[26] Statistics from the U.S. Department of Energy: http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/pet/pet_move_impcus_a2_nus_ep00_im0_mbbl_a.htm. Nigeria is the fifth-largest source of oil for the United States, produces some 2.5 million barrels a day, and supplied the United States with a total of 413 million barrels of oil in 2007. Angola was next, with a total of 185 million barrels of oil sold to the United States, followed by Chad (28.4 million barrels), and Cameroon (10.8 million barrels).

[27] National Intelligence Council, "Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future with Nongovernment Experts," December 2000, accessed at: http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_globaltrend2015.html#link13e

A third reason is that we have already witnessed--and I have spent considerable time in the war zones of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea documenting--the horrendous human tragedies of resource wars in West Africa. These range from the campaigns of mass amputation and systematic rape by the RUF and the brutality of the Taylor regime to the millions of displaced refugees and the destruction of civil society across the region. The revenue stream derived from cocaine will make past wars pale in comparison to what will come. In addition, if history is any guide, the traffickers will work to create internal consumption markets in the countries where they operate. Having seen first hand the damage done by child soldiers in drug-induced hazes already, it is clear that easier access to cocaine will give rise to a whole new level of violence.

The United States has already taken important steps to engage in this theater. Africom, the DEA and State Department each are devoting considerably more resources to drug issues in West Africa than they were a year or two ago. But by any measure it is not enough, and certainly has not slowed the flow of cocaine through the region. Compartmentalization, stove-piping of information, and the continued focus on delimited geographic territories, continue to hamper the effectiveness of counter drug programs. It is no longer a useful model to look at the old, static model of Latin American drug trafficking organizations because the new organizations operate on multiple continents rather than a single country or region. Hence, information sharing across regions and across U.S. government agencies is vital to beginning to significantly improve the situation.

As the DEA knows well, the key to identifying, mapping and dismantling drug trafficking organizations is human intelligence. The DEA is working to identify and target "shadow facilitators," or those individuals who service a variety of organizations, both criminal and terrorist. A prime example of this type of individual was Viktor Bout, the Russian weapons merchant who is currently in prison in Thailand, awaiting a ruling on whether he can be extradited to the United States to stand trial.[28]

However, U.S. agencies cannot work effectively in the region without local allies. One of the keys to success in Colombia and elsewhere has been the establishment of effective vetted units within a local police or military force, where information can be exchanged with less fear of leaks or compromise. Given the linguistic and cultural complications across West Africa, and the fact that they vary from country to country, the ability to work in some fashion with at least a segment of the national law enforcement community is vital.

Finally, our European allies, particularly the French, British and Belgians, must be brought into the process in a much more robust way. This is true not only because

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[28] For a more complete look at Bout and his transnational operations see: Douglas Farah and Stephen Braun, Merchant of Death: Money, Guns, Planes and the Man Who Makes War Possible, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 2007.

most of the cocaine ends up in Europe. These countries have deep colonial histories in various countries in the region, and have a much deeper historic knowledge of the traditional criminal and smuggling networks that operate. For example, the Belgians have followed the blood diamond trade for decades and understand and have mapped the Lebanese family and clan networks involved in the trade. This type of information and understanding would take years for U.S. agencies to develop, but can be put to good use in combating drug trafficking in the region. These nations also have many more levers of "soft power," through trade and aid, than the United States does, and hence have more tools with which to engage the region on this issue.

I am not optimistic about the possibility of avoiding a wholesale disaster in West Africa that will have direct spillover effects in Latin America and the United States. The cancer of cocaine trafficking is far advanced in a host body that is weak and unable to fight back without a great deal of help and significant structural changes. Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas and other terrorist organizations have an operational presence across Sub-Saharan Africa. They are increasingly using the same pipelines and facilitators as transnational criminal groups. These pipelines will grow and spread with the infusion of cocaine and drug money, accelerating the corrosion of already weak states. But the consequences of allowing the cancer to spread unabated --and the direct threat that will pose to the United States -- means we have no choice but to increase our efforts to stem the tide.