

Statement of Senator Dianne Feinstein
“U.S. – Andean Security Cooperation”

October 19, 2011

We are here today to explore ways to deepen our counternarcotics cooperation with the countries of the Andean region – Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela.

While violence caused by Mexico’s brutal drug trafficking organizations splashes across the headlines, we cannot neglect the problem of drug production in the Andean region which ultimately feeds this violence. In spite of the impressive security gains made in Colombia, the country still produces over 90 percent of the cocaine seized in the United States.

First and foremost, we must ensure that the security assistance that Congress appropriates for the Andean region is delivered. Unfortunately, I understand that Defense Department counternarcotics funding is in jeopardy since certain Defense Department authorities were not renewed in the recently passed Continuing Resolution. These programs are important in the Andean region, but also have an impact in

Afghanistan, Mexico and countries throughout the world. Yesterday, I spoke with Senator Levin, the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee. Senator Levin's pending Defense Authorization bill includes the renewal of these authorities. Furthermore, Senator Levin plans to include these expired authorities in the next Continuing Resolution. I will work with Senator Levin to ensure that this happens, and I hope that my Co-Chairman Senator Grassley – who is also very concerned about this issue – will join me in doing this.

I believe that Plan Colombia has been remarkably successful in dismantling Colombia's largest drug trafficking organizations and reducing violence. According to U.S. government estimates, 100,000 hectares of coca were cultivated in 2010. While coca cultivation is high, it has decreased dramatically from the 167,000 hectares of coca cultivated in 2007.

In neighboring Peru, coca cultivation increased from 40,000 hectares in 2009 to 53,000 hectares in 2010. In recent years, the Shining Path – an illegal armed group that

terrorized Peru in the 1990s – has become deeply involved in drug trafficking. The good news is that Peru’s newly inaugurated President Ollanta Humala has referred to the United States as a “strategic partner” in combating illegal drug trafficking. With increasing coca cultivation and the revival of the Shining Path, it is essential that the Obama Administration focus on deepening our counternarcotics relationship with Peru.

Of course, coca eradication alone will be insufficient. With limited resources available, we must support alternative development programs that help bring poor farmers out of poverty. Without effective alternative development options, the millions of dollars spent on eradication will be rendered useless.

In September, President Obama stated that Venezuela and Bolivia had “failed demonstrably” to meet their international counternarcotics obligations. This was the seventh year that Venezuela was decertified and the fourth

year for Bolivia. The only other country to join them in this distinction was Burma.

I am concerned by actions taken by both Bolivia and Venezuela on counternarcotics. In Bolivia, I was disappointed when Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents were expelled in 2009. In Venezuela, 14 individuals – including six government officials – have been sanctioned by our Treasury Department since 2008 for acting on behalf of the FARC in support of narcotics and arms trafficking activities. At the end of the day, nobody wins when we are unable to cooperate with our neighbors on counternarcotics. I would like to hear from the witnesses today on how we can improve our counternarcotics relationships with Venezuela and Bolivia.

I am also increasingly concerned by the use of semi-submersible and fully-submersible submarines to smuggle cocaine from the Andean region to the United States. While traffickers have used semi-submersible submarines for over a decade, the use of fully-submersible submarines is relatively new. Three fully-submersible submarines were seized at their

construction sites over the past year: one in Ecuador in July 2010 and two in Colombia in February and September of this year.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how we can strengthen our security cooperation with the Andean countries. I now turn to my Co-Chairman, Senator Grassley, for his opening statement.

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