

Opening Statement
Chairman Mark Souder

“Disrupting the Market: Strategy, Implementation, and Results
in Narcotics Source Countries”

Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy
and Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform

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Good Morning. Because of our focus in the Subcommittee this year on the reauthorization of the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the President’s treatment initiative, this is the first hearing of the 108th Congress on drug supply and interdiction matters. There is certainly no lack of important issues for discussion, however, and I expect today’s hearing to cover a wide range of pressing questions.

As I often point out, around 20,000 Americans die each year of drug-related causes -- more than in any single terrorist act to date. It is important that we maintain vigorous efforts to control the sources of supply for narcotics and to interdict them from the United States. While we have recently begun to see real and tangible successes in some of our source country programs – most notably Plan Colombia – the federal government continues to face significant challenges with respect to interdiction programs caused by resource constraints and, in some cases, policy and political issues. Our witnesses today have some of the most significant responsibilities for operational matters relating to narcotics supply reduction

and interdiction, and I appreciate very much the opportunity to have them all on the same panel to survey the status of these critical programs.

First, we will review the status of implementation and recent successes of Plan Colombia. Chairman Tom Davis of the Full Committee and I returned from a visit to Colombia on Monday, which was the third Committee delegation this year. It is clear that we are beginning to see real and tangible successes, and both of us very much appreciate the continued strong support of President Uribe and Vice President Santos, with whom we had the opportunity to spend a significant amount of time. We also obtained a renewed sense of the many steep challenges Colombia and our source country programs continue to have. We met with soldiers who had lost limbs and eyes to the increasingly terrorist attacks of the FARC. We met with widows who were grateful for the opportunity to learn skills toward even a modest living by baking or sewing supported by the Agency for International Development.

Other serious issues must be considered relating to Plan Colombia. Three Americans continue to be held hostage by the FARC. The Attorney General of the United States has indicted members of both the FARC and the AUC for using drug proceeds to support their terrorism. Colombian heroin is becoming increasingly prevalent on the East Coast of the United States. And as our programs start to succeed in Colombia, we face increased attacks on spray planes and the real potential for spillover of the drug traffic, violence, and terrorism to other nations of the Andean region. We must also consider the failure of European nations to step up and provide assistance sorely needed to build communities and institutions at

this crucial time that those countries pledged to provide at the very beginning and have yet to contribute.

The second significant problem is the question of allocation of national resources to drug interdiction missions. Many of our most significant interdiction assets were moved into the new Department of Homeland Security. Committee staff received briefings last week at the Joint Interagency Task Force South in Key West and the U.S. Southern Command that suggest that the redirection of national resources from drug control missions to homeland security missions has begun to have a dire negative impact on drug interdiction. Some detection and interception programs have available only a miniscule proportion of the amount of resources that government experts have deemed necessary for an adequate interdiction program.

Based on information made available to the Committee, I believe as an example that more than 300 Metric Tons of cocaine that previously would have been detected and intercepted may have been allowed onto American streets last year because our resources had been diverted to other purposes. This is wholly unacceptable, and must be addressed vigorously and quickly by the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense. Today we will try to determine more precisely what has been the extent of the disruption, what steps can be taken to ensure the adequacy of interdiction resources, and whether resources will ever return to previous levels.

We will also want to examine closely related matters, including lengthy delays in resumption of the Airbridge Denial Program in Colombia and Peru and organizational issues at the Department of Homeland Security – especially the development of the Counternarcotics Officer position originally created in the Committee. Finally, we will also consider the response to rapidly emerging new threats, such as the resumption of large-scale heroin production in Afghanistan and what efforts are underway for its control, traffic in precursor chemicals from Mexico, Canada, China, and other nations, and the continued flood of Ecstasy to the United States.

Clearly, our plate this morning is very full, and I welcome our witnesses. From the Department of State, we have Acting Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Paul Simons. From the Department of Defense, we have Deputy Assistant Secretary for Counternarcotics Andre Hollis, who is making his first appearance here as one of many distinguished former Committee staff working in this area. From the Drug Enforcement Administration, we welcome Chief of Operations Roger Guevera. And from the Department of Homeland Security we welcome Counternarcotics Officer Roger Mackin, who concurrently serves as the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator, and is also making his first appearance here. I also note for the record that Dr. Barry Crane, Deputy Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, was invited to testify today but was unavailable – we look forward to receiving his testimony separately in the future.

Welcome to all of you, and I look forward to the discussion.