Directly after 9/11, there was an outpouring of sympathy for the United States from Latin American governments, media and civil society. The General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) issued a statement that “individually and collectively, we will deny terrorist groups the capacity to operate in this hemisphere. This American family stands united.” The United States, usually seen as a powerful and domineering force, was for once perceived as a victim in need of solidarity. Today, that sentiment has eroded, giving way to negative perceptions of the decision to go to war in Iraq as well as long-standing concerns over globalization. The way in which the Bush Administration has framed and implemented a “Global War on Terrorism” is not well-received by most Latin American governments, with the notable exception of Colombia. Polls indicate that public opinion in the hemisphere is sharply critical of U.S. policy.

Yet Latin American concerns over the war in Iraq and the Bush Administration’s particular packaging of the “Global War on Terrorism” do not imply a rejection or lack of cooperation on specific antiterrorism measures. Latin American governments cooperate actively with the United States regarding practical steps to track, investigate and prosecute terrorist activities. Such cooperation has increased since 9/11, according to the U.S. State Department. Where Latin American governments have perceived U.S. antiterrorism requests to be related to real concerns over international terrorism, they are generally responsive.

The history of the impact of September 11th on U.S.-Latin American relations is still being written. But certain trends can be observed which go beyond the frequent lament that Latin America fell off the U.S. radar screen following 9/11. First, 9/11 tapped into the tendency of the U.S. government to view Latin America through one all-encompassing and distorting lens. Second, it provided a new rationale for the existing bureaucratic trend of the United States to interact with Latin America on increasingly military terms, contributing to the growing primacy of military interaction and aid above diplomatic relations or development assistance. Third, it affected human rights, both by reinforcing the Bush Administration’s instinct to view human rights as of secondary importance, and by eroding the United States’ moral authority to critique other governments’ human rights practices. Fourth, it deepened U.S. involvement in Colombia’s internal conflict. Finally, it relegated to the back seat issues of great importance to Latin American governments—such as immigration reform for Mexico and a critique of globalization and its impact on poverty, a primary concern for many governments and civil society organizations throughout the hemisphere.
religious groups as well as members’ desire to maintain congressional oversight, scaled back this provision drastically to remove only the sanctions on Pakistan. In Latin America, the lifting of sanctions could potentially have affected Guatemala and Colombia. Guatemala had a ban on military aid in place since 1990, while Colombia had a certification process for human rights compliance attached to its military aid.

The White House accomplished more of its agenda in legislation funding the “Global War on Terrorism” through the FY2002 emergency supplemental spending bill. Again, the Bush Administration attempted to win blanket exemptions from human rights and other restrictions for such spending, liberally sprinkling the phrases “notwithstanding any other provision of law” and “on such terms and conditions as the Secretary of Defense may permit” throughout the massive spending bill. It also sought in this and subsequent legislation to cut many of the “reporting requirements” that required the Pentagon and State Department to submit reports that allowed congressional committees to carry out their oversight responsibilities.† Wisely, Congress did not agree to all of these attempts to limit oversight and provide the executive branch with maximum flexibility.

However, the Bush Administration succeeded in winning congressional approval for not just a specific, practical response targeting Al Qaeda and similar terrorist groups with designs upon the United States, but rather for an amorphous, all-encompassing “Global War on Terror.” In terms of Latin America, this permitted the administration to include substantial additional funding for the Colombian military as part of the emergency spending for this “Global War.”

The leaps in logic in the “Global War on Terrorism” is exemplified by an unrepentant August 2004 op-ed by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas Feith. In it, he explains why his September 20, 2001 memo suggested, as the 9/11 Commission noted with concern, “hitting terrorists outside the Middle East in the initial offensive, perhaps deliberately selecting a non-Al Qaeda target like Iraq. Since U.S. attacks were expected in Afghanistan, an American attack in South America or Southeast Asia might be a surprise to the terrorists.” Feith explained that President Bush believed that the “United States is at war, and that terrorism can no longer be treated primarily as a law enforcement problem.” “The term ‘war’ meant that the enemy could not be thought of as a set of individuals who had perpetrated a particular crime. Nor was the enemy necessarily a single distinct organization. Rather, the enemy was understood to comprise all those who contributed to the terrorist threat to the United States, of which Sept. 11 was just the most serious instance to date. The enemy was thought of as the network of individuals, groups, and

† To give a sense of how ambitious the Bush Administration was to obtain unchecked authority over spending, look at this phrase from the FY2002 emergency bill, one of many such provisions. “Notwithstanding any other provision of law, not to exceed $100,000,000 from appropriations available to the Department of Defense may be used to support foreign nations in furtherance of the global war on terrorism, on such terms and conditions as the Secretary of Defense may determine: Provided, That such support may include defense articles, services and training.” The Senate later scotched this provision, but it is illustrative of the administration’s overreach: $100 million for use for anything, anywhere, for any government, upon sole discretion of the Secretary of Defense.
states that committed or supported such acts of terrorism.”

Counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke’s insider look at the antiterrorism policies of four successive administrations, Against All Enemies, suggests that some action against Colombia’s guerrillas might have been briefly considered inside the White House right after 9/11. “On the 12th and 13th [when it was already clear the 9/11 attackers were al Qaeda] the discussions wandered: what was our objective, who was the enemy, was our reaction to be a war on terrorism in general or al Qaeda in specific? If it was all terrorism we would fight, did we have to attack the anti-government forces in Colombia’s jungles too? Gradually, the obvious prevailed: we would go to war with al Qaeda and the Taliban. The compromise consensus, however, was that the struggle against al Qaeda and the Taliban would be the first stage in a broader war on terrorism. It was also clear that there would be a second stage.”

Practical Cooperation, but Not Unquestioning Support

As with foreign policy in general, the administration sought to place Latin America policy increasingly in the framework of a “Global War on Terror.” The Colombian conflict provided the most obvious parallels, and the White House moved quickly to use the War on Terror to deepen U.S. involvement. Talks about immigration policy with Mexico stalled completely, and plans to enforce security on the U.S.-Mexico border received renewed momentum. In other ways, however, the application of 9/11 to the Latin America context was not obvious.

One way in which the administration sought to make Latin America relevant in the terrorism context was to assert the dangers of “ungoverned spaces” on the continent. As Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said in a Latin American defense ministerial meeting in Santiago, Chile, “when terrorists are driven out of countries—as they were in Afghanistan—they often find haven in the world’s many ungoverned regions.... In this hemisphere narco-terrorists, hostage-takers, and arms smugglers operate in ungoverned areas.” The U.S. Southern Command’s increasingly colorful characterizations of a host of social and political issues as threats requiring a military response (see box on p.10) show a strained effort to fit Latin America into this terrorism framework.

Most Latin American governments were quite receptive to aiding U.S. efforts to track al Qaeda but did not endorse the Bush Administration’s broad definition of a “Global War on Terrorism.” Where the Bush Administration attempted to paint the “War on Terror” broadly, as encompassing threats ranging from the four-decades-old Cuban Revolution, Venezuelan populism, drug trafficking and the regional spread of the Colombian conflict, or used the “War on Terrorism” to expect unquestioning support and troop commitments for the Iraq war, it met certain resistance from a number of Latin American governments. However, where the United States sought specific, practical cooperation on international terror networks, it largely received such cooperation.

According to the State Department’s Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, in 2003 “countries in the region actively continued efforts to fortify hemispheric border and financial controls to prevent or disrupt terrorism-related activities on their territories to the greatest extent possible.” Moreover, the Organization of American States’ Committee Against Terrorism “continues to set the standard among regional institutions through its effort to institutionalize the long-term international campaign against terrorism.”

The Organization of American States was meeting in Lima, Peru, at the time of the September 11th attacks. The General Assembly immediately issued
a condemnation and expressed “full solidarity” with the government and people of the United States, resolving to “strengthen hemispheric cooperation to combat this scourge that has thrown the world and the hemispheric community into mourning.” Thirty of the thirty-four member states of the OAS lost citizens in the attacks. On September 21, the hemisphere’s foreign ministers adopted a resolution calling upon OAS member states to “take effective measures to deny terrorist groups the ability to operate within their territories.” The foreign ministers invoked the Rio Treaty of 1947, declaring that the 9/11 attacks “are attacks against all American states.” In 2002, the OAS drafted a Convention Against Terrorism, which was signed by 33 of the 34 member states and has begun the process of being ratified by member states’ legislatures. The OAS’s Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism has worked to propose specific cooperation measures on border security, customs controls, improvement of travel documents and financial controls that member nations can adopt to strengthen security.

In the last three years, the United States worked with Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay on the “Three Plus One” Counterterrorism Dialogue regarding border security and financial controls. The so-called “triborder area,” where Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay converge, “has long been characterized as a regional hub for Hizballah and HAMAS fundraising activities,” as well as for arms and drug trafficking, smuggling, money laundering, and document and currency forgery. The Three Plus One parties concluded that “available information did not substantiate reports of operational activities by terrorists” in the triborder region, although terrorist financing and money laundering remained a strong concern.

The State Department’s annual Patterns of Global Terrorism report for 2003 depicted Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, and Canada as largely or fully cooperative on counterterrorism measures. In the case of Brazil, the State Department notes that Brazil declined a request from Colombia to designate the FARC as a terrorist organization, stating that it did not maintain such a list of organizations and instead condemned specific activities.

Nonetheless, the State Department recognized that Brazil “extended practical, effective support to U.S. counterterrorism actions.” Besides Cuba, listed as a “state sponsor of terrorism” and discussed below, of all the Latin American and Caribbean countries mentioned in the report, only Venezuela’s cooperation “in the international campaign against terrorism” was listed as “inconsistent.” The primary complaint lodged against Venezuela was not regarding cooperation on Al Qaeda-style terrorist activities but rather Chavez’s “public recriminations against U.S counterterrorism policies” and the fact that the government was “unwilling or unable to systematically police” the Venezuela-Colombia border and the flow of some arms to Colombian terrorist groups from Venezuelan suppliers. Interestingly, the report does not mention policing the border against the rightwing AUC paramilitary group, which also frequently crosses the Venezuela border.
but which it could be presumed that
Chavez would not support. The State
Department included willingness to take
the specific actions requested by the U.S.
and Colombian governments against the
Colombian guerrillas as part of the litmus
test for counterterrorism cooperation.
However, not all Latin American
governments agreed with the specific
measures proposed.

The one much more enthusiastic
endorsement of the broad-brush “War on
Terror” framework championed by the Bush
Administration came from Colombia, where
the Colombian government skillfully used
the rhetoric of the War on Terror to draw the
United States more deeply into its conflict.

The Iraq War and Latin America
Many Latin American governments did not
readily accept the Bush Administration’s
portrayal of the Iraq war as the next logical
step in “Global War on Terrorism.” Both
Mexico and Chile, as members of the UN
Security Council, refused to support the
United States’ call for a second UN Security
Council resolution over Iraq. Most Latin
American governments criticized the U.S.
bombing of Baghdad, including Mexico,
Chile, Argentina and Brazil.13

The Defense Department actively sought
Latin American participation in the
“Coalition of the Willing,” more for symbolic
effect than practical impact. However, only
a handful of small countries in Central
America and the Caribbean chose to
participate, and they did so in a limited
fashion. Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua
and the Dominican Republic sent troops
to Iraq (ranging from 115 to 380 troops
apiece), serving under Spanish command.
After the newly-elected Spanish socialist
leader Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero
announced the pull-out of Spanish troops,
Honduran President Ricardo Maduro
revealed that Honduras would not renew its
commitment when its troops finished their
mission in June 2004. While President
Maduro stated this was not influenced
by the Spanish pull-out the timing was
interesting. Nicaragua had already pulled
out its troops in February 2004, citing
budgetary reasons. Despite domestic
controversy over the issue, the Salvadoran
government decided to renew its mission in
Iraq, possibly betting that its support would
bolster its chances of receiving renewal
in March 2005 of temporary protected
status for Salvadorans in the United States,
crucial for the Salvadoran economy. But
the four Central American countries and
the Dominican Republic did not receive any
discernible payoff from the United States
in terms of increased military or economic
aid for FY04 and FY05. El Salvador, which
probably contributed the most to the Iraq
war, saw its economic aid decline from
$40.4 million in FY2003 to $28.89 million
in FY2005.14

Sending troops to Iraq was an unpopular
decision in Central America. Four out of
five respondents to a survey agreed with
the Honduran President’s decision to pull
out troops, while 76 percent of Nicaraguan
respondents in another poll disagreed with
their government’s decision to send troops
in the first place.15

Indeed, the war evoked unhappy memories
of U.S. intervention in Latin America.
According to a New York Times reporter,
“The result has been a burst of anti-
Americanism more intense than any in
recent years. Seeing American troops
patrolling Baghdad’s streets or raising their
flags stirs old and uncomfortable memories
here, as well as fears for the future.”16

Confirming the Worst View of America
While the decision to go to war in Iraq
was unpopular in Latin America, it was
the Abu Ghraib scandal that confirmed the
region’s skepticism of American foreign
policy. The United States’ disregard for the
Geneva Convention and other international
standards regarding prisoners had a
predictable and disturbing impact on the
United States’ ability to champion human
rights abroad, including in Latin America.
The Abu Ghraib scandal has a particular resonance in Latin America. A strong undercurrent of resentment persists regarding the United States’ support for repressive regimes and armies in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, and of the contra army in Nicaragua. The treatment of Iraqi prisoners is not a surprise, but a confirmation, for many Latin American critics of the United States, because it mirrors the behavior of many Latin American armies that the United States trained and supported for decades. It is also consistent with the inhumane techniques included in U.S. training manuals the United States used in training Latin American armies in the 1980s and created for the Nicaraguan contras. The pictures of Abu Ghraib played out on the front pages of Latin American newspapers, where the pictures provided a confirmation of a perspective of America as imperialist, racist and brutal—a perspective that coexists with other, positive images of American democracy and economic opportunity.

The U.S. passage of the Patriot Act, expanding the powers of the FBI to conduct surveillance and representing limitations on the right to privacy and other civil liberties, had a dampening effect on U.S. congressional efforts to support democratic rights, particularly civil liberties, abroad. For example, when nongovernmental organizations like the Latin America Working Group Education Fund sought to raise concerns about the Colombian government’s anti-terrorism statute, which gave the military broad police powers to wiretap, conduct searches and detain people, we found that congressional offices that generally championed civil liberties were now reluctant to take on these issues abroad. The Patriot Act’s limitation of civil liberties has at least temporarily moved the bar downward for the standards of civil liberties expected of other countries.

The prisoner scandal, the United States’ massive detentions of Iraqis, and the United States’ own curtailment of civil liberties have a particularly damaging impact in Latin America because they mirror specific problems faced in many Latin American countries. Arbitrary detention and mistreatment of prisoners have been common in Latin American history, while trying military officials accused of human rights crimes through the military justice system, which tends to dismiss charges against them, rather than civilian justice systems, is still a persistent problem. In Colombia, supporters of the government’s tough antiterrorism measures used the Abu Ghraib scandal to dismiss as mere hypocrisy U.S. congressional concerns with the Colombian army’s human rights record.

Dodging the International Criminal Court

One effort to skirt international law, the Bush Administration’s heavy-handed campaign to protect U.S. soldiers from prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC), has a particularly unfortunate impact in Latin America. After the Congress passed the American Servicemembers’ Protection Act, the Bush Administration sought to sign so-called “Article 98” agreements with countries that are party to the Rome Statute establishing the ICC. These agreements pledge that the country will not seek the prosecution of U.S. citizens in the International Criminal Court. The United States has conditioned military assistance to a number of countries upon compliance with this requirement.

This effort undercuts U.S. credibility in calling for Latin American security forces to face prosecution for human rights abuses—which continues to be one of the most important human rights issues in Latin America today. Historic cases in Guatemala and the Southern Cone are still being considered in domestic courts and international fora, while important contemporary cases are in play in Colombia, Bolivia and other countries.

Countries that are party to the Rome Statute establishing the ICC that refused...
to sign and ratify Article 98 agreements saw their U.S. non-counternarcotics military aid suspended on July 1, 2003. The State Department can issue a waiver allowing military aid to continue if determined to be in the national interest. Such aid was cut off to: Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominica, Paraguay, Peru, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Because so much assistance to the region is in the counternarcotics category, however, the practical impact of this measure was limited.¹⁷

In Bolivia, the United States Embassy was pressuring the Bolivian legislature to pass an Article 98 agreement in April-May 2004, just as the Abu Ghraib scandal broke and was covered on the front pages of Bolivian newspapers. Unfortunately, this military implicated in army-paramilitary collaboration and gross violations of human rights. The U.S. Embassy thus had the embarrassing task of pressuring for prosecutions of Colombian security forces at the same time that it was pressuring for a provision ensuring U.S. soldiers could not be sent to the International Criminal Court. The Colombian papers did not ignore the irony. In the end, Colombia signed an Article 98 agreement.

Latin America Views the United States
Polls reveal a negative view of U.S. foreign policy during this period in Latin America, although admiration for the United States’ democratic traditions and economic opportunities remained strong. A University of Miami/Zogby International poll of 537 Latin American business, academic, government and other leaders rated President Bush’s performance on Latin America as positive. Bush rated only a 2 percent positive rating in Brazil and 5 percent in Mexico. “This is part of the fallout over the war in Iraq,” commented pollster John Zogby, also noting that U.S. trade policy had an impact. “Not only (are we) not a good trade partner but we are also a country that’s willing to go it alone on a major venture and not try to win trust with out traditional allies.”¹⁹

Gallup International’s annual “Voice of the People” survey in 2003 found that South America and the Middle East shared the most critical perspective on U.S. foreign policy. Argentina and Uruguay were among the ten countries surveyed globally with the most negative opinion regarding the impact of U.S. policy upon them.
The 2002 annual survey showed Latin American respondents evenly divided over whether U.S. foreign policy has a positive or negative impact upon their country, a much better reaction than in European countries but slightly worse than in Africa. Argentina and Bolivia were among the top six countries in percentage believing U.S. foreign policy has a negative impact on their country, while in Colombia only 25 percent shared this view.

Importantly, the 2002 Voice of the People survey revealed that 25 percent of Latin Americans surveyed responded that poverty is the most important problem facing the world today. By comparison, in the United States, 21 percent see terrorism as the most important problem, while only 6 percent list poverty as the priority. Eighty percent of Latin American respondents believed that rich countries should make a greater contribution to poor nations.

In a Gallup International Post War Iraq Poll released in May 2003, in answer to the question, Do you agree or disagree with the following statement, “The U.S. is too keen to use military force in other countries,” 73 percent of respondents agreed in Uruguay, 68 percent in Argentina, 66 percent in Ecuador and 55 percent in Colombia (the only Latin American countries surveyed). On the narrower question of whether military action in Iraq by the U.S. and its allies was justified, 88 percent of respondents believed it was not justified, 82 percent in Uruguay, 71 percent in Ecuador, and 58 percent in Colombia.

A detailed survey of global attitudes at the end of 2001 provides some insights into the Latin American respondents’ critical views of the United States. Only 32 percent of Latin American respondents believed that ordinary people have a mostly unfavorable view of the United States, while 93 and 96 percent, respectively, of respondents replied that a major or minor reason people like the United States in their country is that “American democratic ideals are appealing” and “America is the land of opportunity.” However, “the growing power of American multinational corporations’ was seen by 78 percent of respondents as a reason for people not to like the United States, while 80 percent singled out U.S. policies that contribute to the growing gap between rich and poor, and 87 percent identified “resentment of U.S. power in the world” as a reason for dislike.

Even back in December 2001, 61 percent of respondents said the United States was “acting mainly on its own interests” rather than taking into account the interests of its partners in the fight against terrorism. Forty percent of Latin American respondents believe that most or many people in their country think that “the U.S. is overreacting to the terrorist attack,” a percentage that is less than the Middle East but more than in Europe. Fifty-eight percent of Latin American respondents believed that U.S. policies and actions in the world were a major or minor cause of the September 11th attack, considerably less than the 81 percent in the Middle East but much more than the 18 percent that shared this view in the United States. Only 46 percent of respondents in Latin America were prepared to say that most or many people in their country believed the United States “is doing the right thing for the world by fighting terrorism”—a surprisingly skeptical point of view for December 2001.

The Latin America Axis of Evil: Not Ready for Prime Time

While the War on Terrorism has permeated U.S. policy towards Latin America, the most blatant attempts to use antiterrorism rhetoric for an anti-left campaign have not prospered. In October 2002, Henry Hyde wrote President Bush to claim that a Latin American “axis of evil” was threatening the United States, formed by Venezuela, Brazil and Cuba. Initial U.S. efforts to derail Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez ran
U.S. policymakers have often viewed Latin America through a narrow ideological lens, which seriously distorts the region’s complex realities. For decades, this lens was the Cold War. Steeled by this vision, which allowed the United States to overlook the region’s stark inequalities and authoritarian governments’ limits upon democratic freedoms, the United States backed repressive dictatorships in the Southern Cone and then armed abusive militaries and the brutal contra army in Central America. The Carter Administration’s human rights policy provided a brief respite from this perspective.

In addition, for a few years in the early 1990s, spanning the end of the first Bush Administration and the beginning of the Clinton Administration, the combination of the success of the Central American peace accords and the end of the Cold War allowed a momentarily more peaceful vision to hold sway. During this transitional moment, the United States focused primarily on supporting peace accord implementation in Central America; declassifying U.S. files to aid Central American truth commissions; providing aid and disaster relief to address the devastation of Hurricane Mitch; and advancing a more corporate agenda through promotion of a free trade area of the Americas.

In the mid-1990s, anxious to maintain strong military ties with Latin America in a period without an over-arching framework that justified a military approach, the U.S. Southern Command abandoned its objections to increased military involvement in the so-called “War on Drugs.” Former U.S. Southern Command head Barry McCaffrey, then-Drug Czar, floated an ambitious plan to use the Colombian and other Andean militaries to combat drugs. Convinced that the threat from increased coca cultivation in Colombia was serious and wooed by Colombian President Andrés Pastrana’s promise to seek peace accords with the guerrillas as he increased military efforts, President Clinton won approval from the Congress for an enormous military aid package for Colombia and the Andean region. This package solidified a trend that had gradually increased from the late 1980s. In the late 1990s through 2001, the War on Drugs was the driving force for U.S. policy to the region. U.S. military aid began to ratchet upward once again.

By 2002, U.S. policymakers once again found a new lens for U.S. policy towards Latin America: the global war on terror. And this lens fit comfortably with the traditionally military approach towards the region.

aground in an embarrassing manner when U.S.-encouraged coup leaders jettisoned democratic institutions and ran afoul of the OAS, leading to a restoration of Chavez’s authority. The renowned cold warrior Constantine Menges (a former Reagan Administration intelligence and national security official then working at the Hudson Institute) depicted “the southern threat” that would emerge if Lula da Silva became a “democratically elected radical” leader of the populous country of Brazil. Menges warned that Lula’s election could “cause as many as 300 million people in several countries to fall under the control of anti-American dictatorships [and] could
U.S. Southern Command: Upping the Rhetorical Ante

Evolving attitudes and programs of the U.S. Southern Command (Southcom), the U.S. military command focused on the Western Hemisphere, can be evaluated through the annual “posture statements” by the head of the Southcom. These are the testimonies through which the Command’s annual budget request is presented to the armed services committees in Congress.

In 2001, prior to September 11th, Southcom Commander General Peter Pace emphasized positive trends in Latin America and used the region’s commonalities with the United States, from market opportunities to the growing Hispanic population in the U.S., rather than threats, to bolster the case for growing U.S. military support for the region. “During the past twenty years, we have seen a positive trend as nations adopted democratic principles and institutions, subordinated their military to civilian leadership, instituted the rule of law, and promoted respect for human rights... Although several age-old border disputes still provide ample opportunity for disagreement between neighbors, this region does not have an arms race or a ‘shooting’ war between nations.” He identified the greatest threats as “illegal migration, arms trafficking, crime and corruption, and illegal drug trafficking.” Interestingly, the only mention of terrorism in the posture statement is that in the context of the attacks on the USS Cole, U.S. troops stationed in Latin America must be protected from such attacks. Support for the Colombian military, already extensive in 2001, is explained solely in the counternarcotics framework.

By March 2002, the Southern Command’s posture statement stressed the command’s implementation of “the Global War on Terrorism.” It emphasized that the “Southern Command recognized a viable terrorist threat in Latin America long before September 11th,” which “if not further exposed and removed... poses a serious potential risk to our national security.” This statement emphasized the transnational terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah alleged to be operating in the Argentina-Paraguay-Brazil triborder region, went back in time to recall the bombings at the Jewish-Argentine Cultural Center in 1994 and the Tupac Amaru revolutionary movement in Peru in the mid 1990s, and then focused on the FARC, ELN and AUC in Colombia. The statement, however, was balanced by the recognition that “without a clear or imminent external threat, Latin American and Caribbean nations are essentially at peace with their neighbors,” and “nations of our hemisphere have made substantial progress toward achieving peace through democratically elected governments, economic development, and the subordination of the military to civilian authority.”

In April 2004, the posture statement of Southcom Commander General James T. Hill to the Senate Armed Services Committee considerably upped the rhetorical ante. This statement sought to assure the committee that “the men and women of our command are making enormous contributions to the War on Terrorism and the defense of this country on a daily basis.” General Hill intended to convince the committee that Latin American developments posed “an increasing threat to U.S. interests.” “Colombia’s considerable progress in the battle against narcoterrorism is offset by negative developments elsewhere in the region, particularly in Haiti,
Bolivia, and Venezuela.” Disturbingly, Hill pinpointed not only “traditional” threats such as those “from narcoterrorists and their ilk... urban gangs and other illegal armed groups, and a lesser but sophisticated threat from Islamic radical groups in the region,” but also “an emerging threat best described as radical populism.” Here, in a marked departure from the posture statements for 2001 and 2002, Hill was characterizing populist governments and movements in Bolivia and Venezuela as security threats. Hill also claimed, “Terrorists throughout the Southern Command area of responsibility bomb, murder, kidnap, traffick drugs, transfer arms, launder money and smuggle humans.”

In his testimony, General Hill offered a mish-mash of threats ranging from populist political leaders to ordinary criminals, from drug traffickers to Hamas followers and street gangs—all of which, presumably, required some kind of response from the Southern Command. The primary thrust of the testimony was to depict the Southern Command as much more central to the Global War on Terror than it might otherwise appear; and to seek congressional approval of two measures to escalate U.S. military involvement in Colombia, changing the “cap” to permit an increase in U.S. troops in Colombia and reprogramming an additional $50 million in Defense Department funds for the Colombian military offensive. Very little time was spent in the testimony on the most legitimate link to international terrorist activities similar to al Qaeda, the activities in the triborder region.

Perhaps due to a lack of adequate specific threats to the region, the Defense Department and Southern Command have begun to focus on a slippery concept of “effective sovereignty.” In this concept, the U.S. military should help Latin American governments assert “effective sovereignty” over “ungoverned spaces.” This emphasizes the real problem that there are extensive areas in Latin America without adequate state institutions and state control – underserved areas without sufficient civilian government presence, police or judicial institutions. In the Pentagon and Southern Command’s view, such areas could become safe havens for terrorists. Disturbingly, this viewpoint focuses primarily on the extension of military rather than civilian government control over such areas, and can be used to justify a generalized expansion of military control over domestic territory, rather than a response to specific external threats suitable for military response or internal threats suitable for police action. The ungoverned territory thesis is also useful in that it can be applied indefinitely—exactly when will Latin American territories be sufficiently governed, and how would anyone prove that such ungoverned territories no longer exist?

The most problematic aspect of the war on terrorism rationale—like the Cold War and the War on Drugs before it—is that it promotes the general goal of strengthening, arming and equipping Latin American militaries without careful attention to the specific roles that military should adopt. The 1970s-1980s in the Southern Cone and Central America were followed by hard-fought movements by civil society and civilian governments attempting, bravely, to define less expansive roles for their militaries, and to carve specific divisions of labor between military and police forces. In most of Latin America, besides the case of Colombia where an insurgency rages, terrorist threats are a relatively small problem which should be dealt with largely by police forces. Yet U.S. policy actively promotes a blurring of the line between military and police roles.
also increase dramatically the threat of terrorist attacks in the United States.”

Lula was indeed elected, and such fears were proven groundless.

Why didn’t the “Latin American Axis of Evil” thesis advance further? The Bush Administration may have been so engaged elsewhere in the world that this never developed into a full-fledged public relations effort. But more importantly, da Silva, Argentina’s Nestor Kirchner, Chile’s Ricardo Lagos and a number of other leaders pegged as radical leftists have proven themselves to be calmer pragmatists. According to a Los Angeles Times analysis, “Most of the continent’s ‘suspect’ leaders, even those with radical backgrounds, have proved themselves to be pragmatists willing to stick to orthodox economic principles and play by accepted international rules. Although some may advocate European-style social democracy instead of unfettered U.S. capitalism, their actions reflect none of the extremism predicted by doomsayers.”

Chavez’s government received an important boost from winning an August 2004 recall referendum that international observers ruled fair and the State Department accepted. Moreover, these governments cooperated in practical measures aimed at al Qaeda and similar groups. In the face of their actual records, the depiction of a dangerous trend in radicalism, not to mention an “axis of evil,” seemed, the words of John Hopkins University political scientist Margaret Keck, like “a silly hand-wringing exercise.”

Follow the Money: Trends in Military and Development Aid

Did 9/11 affect not just rhetoric and diplomacy but actual U.S. military and development spending in Latin America? U.S. military aid to Latin America has trended steadily upward in the last decade. Since FY1997, military aid has tripled while social and economic aid is only 1.5 times what it was in 1997. In FY1997, economic and social aid was more than three times the quantity of military aid, but by FY2005, military aid almost equals economic aid. The largest spike in aid came not as a reaction to 9/11 but with the Clinton Administration’s decision to provide an enormous, predominantly military aid package to Colombia and other Andean nations as part of the war on drugs.

But the reaction to 9/11 has continued a gradual upward push on military aid. Military aid increased by 24 percent from FY2000-01 to FY2005, while economic aid increased by 12 percent. While much of the increase has been for Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, military aid has increased to most
countries in the region, with particularly large increases for Mexico, mainly due to increased aid for border security.

The most dramatic jump observable after 9/11 is not in military aid figures but in numbers of soldiers trained. The United States trained 22,821 Latin American soldiers in 2003, a 52 percent increase over 2002. Nearly all of the increase was in a doubling of the number of Colombian soldiers trained. This reflected a switch in U.S. policy that was propelled by the aftermath of 9/11. In FY2002, the administration requested and Congress granted an expansion of the U.S. mission in Colombia from counternarcotics alone to a combined counterdrug and counterterrorism mission. This permitted a direct role for the United States in advising and providing logistical and intelligence support to the Colombian government’s offensive operations against the guerrillas. In 2004, the White House requested a doubling of the number of U.S. troops permitted in Colombia.

Of the 22,855 Latin Americans trained by the U.S. military in 2003, most were trained in standard military courses; few received specific counterterrorism instruction. The greatest number, 5,506, took Light Infantry, which teaches such traditional basic military skills as small-unit tactics, operations in difficult terrain, and marksmanship. Some 1,650 Bolivian police took a civic action course, while 1,234 soldiers from a variety of countries learned riverine skills, applicable to both counternarcotics and counterinsurgency.30

Two programs specifically dedicated to antiterrorism are used in Latin America: Anti-Terrorism Assistance, a relatively small program in the foreign aid budget, and the newly created Counterterrorism Fellowship program managed and funded by the Defense Department. The vast majority of Anti-Terrorism Assistance for Latin America from FY2002-05 went to a $30 million anti-kidnapping program in Colombia—a response to a serious problem, but one not related to al Qaeda. In FY05, $3.9 million in Anti-Terrorist Assistance for the region is again slated for Colombia’s anti-kidnapping program, while the remaining $1 million is aimed at the triborder area Paraguay shares with Brazil and Argentina, which reflects U.S. concerns about reported Islamic terrorist financing activities in this zone.31 Of the 433 people trained under the Counterterrorism Fellowship program in 2003, the overwhelming majority—358 from Colombia and 55 from Peru—were from countries dealing with internal conflicts and domestic terrorism rather than international terrorist groups with global reach. In contrast, only 17 were from Paraguay, part of the triborder area where international terrorist financing activities are suspected.32

Major increases in aid to Mexico are largely attributable to counter-terror efforts, particularly U.S. homeland security: enhanced border security, especially X-ray and other border security equipment; computer systems; and training for Mexican customs and immigration officials. This Northern Border Security Infrastructure program began with $25 million in the FY2002 supplemental spending bill and received another major boost of $20 million in FY2004.33 It can be argued that these measures are more geared toward screening...
out economic migrants than terrorist suspects, but they are certainly a response to 9/11. Smaller quantities of port security, coast guard and airport security funding for other countries, as well as programs to track terrorist financing and money laundering, also reflect U.S. homeland security concerns.

In dollar terms, however, these programs represent only a small portion of the overall military training and aid flows to Latin America. The bureaucratic quest for additional resources provides motivation for both State and Defense Department to justify budgets in terms of national priorities, in this case the “Global War on Terror,” even if the funds simply continue existing programs. The box on page 10 shows the Southern Command’s increasingly imaginative use of the war on terror to justify spending. The State Department’s efforts in this regard are more subtle than the Pentagon’s, but it has increasingly woven antiterrorism initiatives into its congressional presentation documents justifying annual spending. This ranges from understandable—focusing on antiterrorist activities in the triborder region, or increasing emphasis to track terrorist funds through money laundering—to the fanciful—“Foreign Military Financing will train Dominican forces capable of responding to terrorism threats.” But this “antiterrorist” packaging does not necessarily indicate an actual change in kinds of assistance provided.

The level of economic funding for the region has increased slightly from 2001 to 2005 largely due to alternative development aid to help farmers switch from illicit crops. Traditional aid programs to help poor populations in Latin America, however, declined recently. The development assistance, child survival and Inter-American Foundation accounts for the region declined 10-12 percent from FY04 to FY05. Latin America and the Caribbean scarcely benefits at all from the largest source of increased development funds available, the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). Only Bolivia, Nicaragua and Honduras are deemed eligible to compete for the MCA in 2004, although it is likely only one or none will actually receive MCA funds. In the post 9/11 context, as in recent years, traditional Latin America development aid is not seen as a priority and is vulnerable to budget cuts.

The major impact of 9/11 on U.S. spending and military training commitments in Latin America has been to increase the intensity of U.S. involvement in Colombia’s conflict and to cement an upward trend already well underway in traditional military programs in the region.

Border Security

Border security is an important domestic concern in the United States in the aftermath of September 11th. Though all of the terrorist hijackers entered the country through airports with visas, there is a legitimate concern that U.S. borders could
be easily breached by terrorists seeking entry. As a result, security along the U.S. border with Mexico received increased scrutiny and funding.

**Canada vs. Mexico.** In December 2001, the United States and Canada signed a 30-point Smart Borders agreement to increase security and cooperation along the common border. A 22-point Smart Borders agreement was signed with Mexico in March 2002. The Mexican agreement includes additional provisions to deal with migrant smuggling, contraband interdiction, combating fraud, and basic infrastructure development along entry points. While the agreements share many points in common—increased intelligence sharing, secure flow of goods, easing traffic at ports of entry—there are significant differences in how the United States perceives and treats each border.

The Canadian agreement focuses on increased intelligence sharing and official border crossings. There is little attention to areas between these entry points, which comprise the vast majority of the 4,000+ mile U.S.-Canadian border. U.S. resources along the Canadian border pale in comparison to the Mexican border, where 85 percent of Border Patrol resources are dedicated. Instead, much of the Canadian agreement aims to strengthen existing information sharing and the use of technology to better screen and process border crossers at official points of entry.

While operations along the U.S.-Canadian border have proceeded in the spirit of increased bilateral cooperation, the U.S. continues to pursue unilateral security policies that increasingly militarize the Mexican border. If the main rationale for tightening border security were terrorism, the two borders would be treated more consistently.

**Militarization of the Border.** Policies to militarize the U.S.-Mexico border began under the Clinton Administration in an attempt to control undocumented migration. The policy involved sealing urban areas to unauthorized traffic with fencing, 24-hour lighting, motion sensors, remote surveillance cameras, and increased foot and motorized patrols. Though this policy was successful in limiting migration through urban areas, most of the migrant flow was redirected to hostile stretches of desert in eastern California and Arizona. Though the number of migrants entering the country did not decrease, the number who died attempting to enter skyrocketed. In 2002, the Immigration and Naturalization Service revised its estimates of the number of undocumented workers entering the United States from 250,000 to 375,000 per year.

After 9/11, the Bush Administration was under intense pressure to fortify the nation’s borders. However, rather than develop a focused antiterrorist strategy for the southern border, the administration decided simply to redouble the militarization begun under Clinton. The budget for the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection has increased by 33 percent—to $6.7 billion—from 2002 to 2004. This policy is substantially different than plans enacted for the U.S. border with Canada, where little militarization has taken place.

In a review of numerous post-September 11 infrastructure construction and Border Patrol expansion documents, the LAWGEP found little difference in the scope and nature of border security proposals from pre-9/11 plans. These documents continue
to stress the efficacy of these projects in deterring migrants from the immediate project area. However, they include little discussion to date of how these plans can effectively deter terrorist crossings. Rather, Border Patrol rhetoric has begun to lump migrants in with terrorists as one general threat, thus justifying infrastructure and staffing expansions.

“The priority mission of the BCBP [Bureau of Customs and Border Protection] is to prevent terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States. This extraordinarily important priority mission means improving security at our physical borders... In sum, the BCBP’s missions include apprehending individuals attempting to enter the United States illegally, stemming the flow of illegal drugs and other contraband; protecting our agricultural and economic interests...; protecting American business...”

The Smuggling Threat. The administration is taking aim at smuggling organizations that profit from taking migrants through the obstacle course the Border Patrol has set up along the Southwest border, increasing both the level of rhetoric and prosecution. But, as with the security policies, targeting smugglers provides a convenient scapegoat at the border without addressing the actual terrorist threat.

The administration fails to recognize that the trend towards organized smuggling has arisen in response to the need for migrants to be guided through treacherous desert routes as a result of current border policies. Ten years ago, before the Clinton Administration stepped up border enforcement, there was very little organized smuggling along the U.S.-Mexico border. Because crossings took place mainly in urban areas, guides were not necessary. As migrants were pushed into desert areas and patrols were stepped up, migrants needed smugglers to guide them into the U.S. As crossings became more difficult, smugglers charged more for their services. Once prices began to skyrocket, organized crime saw the benefit of becoming involved in the enterprise.

Public Relations Success, Humanitarian Disaster. The American public perceives increased border enforcement as an important security measure. According to March 2004 poll, “citizens view tighter border security and information systems that share data across agencies... as the best steps to strengthen homeland security.” The Bush Administration continues to rely on highly visible projects aimed at assuring the American public that they are reinforcing the Mexican border against terrorists—without, however, creating a comprehensive plan for adequately handling security.

While the administration is addressing public fears, these policies have sparked a humanitarian crisis on the southwest border. Because of the shift in migrant flows from urban areas to isolated stretches of desert, migrants’ lives are increasingly at risk. Beginning in 1998, the Border Patrol began to keep statistics on migrant deaths due largely to heat exhaustion, dehydration, and drowning. To date, over 2,500 migrants have died since 1998 attempting to enter the United States. On average, one migrant dies per day crossing the Mexico-
U.S. border. In summer months, the Border Patrol routinely recovers three or more bodies per day in the deserts of Arizona.

**Smart Borders?** A comprehensive reform of U.S. immigration laws would be a major step towards addressing the massive undocumented flow of people across the southern border, allowing the Border Patrol to better focus its work on preventing terrorism. However, political pressure within the Republican Party has derailed attempts by the Bush Administration to pursue serious immigration reform. The administration has offered guidelines on immigration reform that do not address real security concerns or the economic logic behind migration. In a January 2004 plan, President Bush declined to endorse the permanent legalization of 8-10 million undocumented workers in the country or the concept of providing migrants with a path to permanent legal status in the United States. Without these provisions, migrants are likely to remain in the shadows and continue to enter the country illegally. Until there is political recognition that security along the U.S.-Mexico border is inextricably linked to immigration reform, we will continue to follow failed strategies that put thousands of migrants at risk of death every year.

**Cases of U.S.-Latin America Counterterrorism Cooperation**

**Colombia**

More than any other Latin American nation, U.S. policy towards Colombia has been shaped by the so-called “War on Terror.” While stark inequalities and political exclusion contributed to the rise of the armed conflict, Colombia’s brutal leftwing guerillas, the FARC and the ELN, regularly employ terrorist tactics. These tactics include systematic kidnapping of civilians for profit, extortion, threats, indiscriminate bombings, and extrajudicial killings. Not just Colombia’s current government, but broader public opinion, perceive the guerrillas as terrorists.

Yet saying that the FARC and ELN commit terrorist actions, or are terrorists, does not mean that they represent a threat to the United States that is comparable to the threat posed by al Qaeda. The FARC has killed and captured several Americans within Colombia, and declared U.S. soldiers targets after the United States started arming, training and equipping the Colombian army on a large scale. Nonetheless, it has never attacked or threatened to attack the United States within its borders. U.S. policymakers tend to use the label of “terrorist” as if the FARC and ELN posed an equal danger to the United States as al Qaeda.

One central contradiction blocked U.S. policy from becoming one-dimensional after 9/11: the existence of an even more “terroristic” insurgent group on the right: the paramilitaries or self defense groups, AUC, allied with elements of the U.S.-funded Colombian military. The ties between the army and paramilitary forces have been carefully documented by the State Department, the United Nations, and international and Colombian human rights groups; the only debate regards how pervasive and systemic such ties are. On September 10th, 2001, under pressure from human rights groups, the United States added the AUC to its official list of terrorist groups, joining the FARC and the ELN. This inconvenient fact has permitted the U.S. policy debate on Colombia to retain a limited, more complex focus on human rights despite the existence of a terrorism framework that would otherwise lead to unquestioned support for Colombia’s military forces.

September 11th, however, allowed the United States to shift the rationale for U.S. support for Colombia from the shaky rationale of the War on Drugs to the more expansive combined war on drugs and terror. When the Congress approved Plan Colombia in 2000, the Clinton Administration, facing congressional unease over an open-ended commitment to a military with a poor human rights record,
THE FINAL FIGHT
Peruvian novelist and columnist Mario Vargas Llosa, September 20, 2001

We knew it for a long time—the bad Hollywood movies had foreshadowed with precise details—but now, in the smoking ruins of Manhattan’s Twin Towers and Washington’s Pentagon, and the thousands of corpses buried under the ruins caused by the worst terrorist attack in the history of humanity, we have the proof: the twenty-first century will be marked by the confrontation between terrorism of fanatical movements (nationalist or religious) and free societies, just as the twentieth century was the fight to the death between free societies and fascist and communist totalitarianism.

....If the governments of democratic societies coordinate their actions and information, and internationalize justice, they can deal strong blows to terrorist organizations, dismantling their military structure, their supply sources and sending their leaders to court... If all the democratic countries worked for this, dictatorships would be reduced in a dramatic manner... and the world would be infinitely more secure.

[One obstacle would be] that a number of governments, beginning with the French naturally, would oppose this joint action in order not to seem to be under Washington’s sway. We live in a time in which the satanization of the United States doesn’t just belong to the extreme left or right.... What indignant screeching the world would hear if there was put in place, headed up by the United States, a mobilization of all democratic countries for the final fight... against the remaining dictatorships.”

ABU GHRAIB, GAZA
Mario Vargas Llosa, June 3, 2004

It isn’t an exaggeration to say that [the images of Abu Ghraib and Gaza] have done more damage to the United States and Israel than all the bombs and the suicide attacks of the Islamic extremists in the last few months. What credibility can the affirmation of President Bush or Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld that the United States is in Iraq to bring liberty and law to the Iraqi people have, compared with the photos of these naked prisoners, forced to masturbate and sodomize, submitted to electric shock or the fangs of fierce dogs before the smug imbecility of their guards?

AMERICA LOOKS AT ITSELF THROUGH HUMANITY’S MIRROR
Chilean-American playwright and poet Ariel Dorfman, September 21, 2001

I have been through this before. During the past 28 years, Sept. 11 has been a date of mourning, for me and millions of others, since that day in 1973 when Chile lost its democracy in a military coup, that day when death irrevocably entered our lives and changed us forever. And now, almost three decades later, the malignant gods of random history have imposed on another country that dreadful date, again a Tuesday, filled with death.

The differences and distances that separate the Chilean date from the American are considerable. The depraved terrorist attack against the most powerful nation on Earth will have consequences that affect all humanity. It may constitute, as President Bush has suggested, the start of World War III. It is probable that it will be branded in the future as the day when the planet’s history shifted forever. Few people today, however, could remember or identify what happened in Chile.

And yet, from the moment when I watched on television here in North Carolina that second plane exploding into the World Trade Center’s south tower, I have been haunted by the need to understand the enigmatic coincidence of these two Sept. 11s. For me, this is enigmatic and personal because it conjoins the two foundational cities of my existence: the New York that gave me refuge and joy during 10 years of my infancy and the Santiago that protected my adolescence under its mountains and made me into a man.

...The resemblance goes well beyond the facile and superficial comparison—that both in Chile in 1973 and in the United States today, terror descended from the sky to destroy the symbols of national identity, the Palace of the Presidents in Santiago, the icons of financial and military power in New York and Washington.

What I recognize is something deeper, a parallel suffering, a similar pain, a commensurate disorientation.

I still cannot believe what I am witnessing on the screen—hundreds of relatives wandering the streets of New York, clutching photos of sons, fathers, wives, lovers, daughters, begging for information, asking if they are alive or dead—the whole United States forced to look into the abyss of what it means to be desaparecido, disappeared, with no certainty or funeral possible for those missing.

...What has come to an explosive conclusion, of course, is the United States’ famous exceptionalism, that attitude that allowed the citizens of this country to imagine themselves as beyond the sorrows and calamities that have plagued less fortunate people. None of the great battles of the 20th century had touched the continental United States. It is that complacent invulnerability that has been fractured forever. Life in these United States will have to share, from now on, the precariousness and uncertainty that are the daily lot of the enormous majority of this planet’s other inhabitants.

In spite of the tremendous pain, the intolerable losses that this apocalyptic crime has visited upon the American public, I wonder if this trial does not constitute an opportunity for regeneration and self-knowledge. A crisis of this magnitude can lead to renewal or destruction. It can be used for good or for evil, for peace or for war, for vengeance or for justice, for the militarization of a society or its humanization. One of the ways for Americans to overcome their trauma is to admit that their suffering is neither unique nor exclusive, that they are connected with so many other human beings who have suffered unanticipated and often
protracted injury and fury. As long as they can look at themselves in the mirror of our common humanity.

The terrorists wanted to single out the United States as a satanic state. The rest of the planet, including many nations that have been the object of American arrogance and intervention, rejects this demonization, as I do. It is enough to see the almost unanimous outpouring of grief of most of the world.

It remains to be seen if this compassion shown to the dominant power on this planet will be reciprocated. It is still not clear if the United States—a country formed by those who have themselves escaped vast catastrophes, famines, dictatorships, persecution—will be able to feel that same empathy toward other outcast people. We will find out in the days and years to come if the new Americans, particularly the young, forged in pain and resurrection, are ready to participate in the arduous process of repairing our shared, damaged humanity; to create, all of us together, a world in which we need never again lament one more terrifying Sept. 11.

LESSONS OF A CATASTROPHE
Ariel Dorfman, September 30, 2003

It is far from encouraging to contemplate what has transpired thus far, in the two years since the disastrous attacks on New York and Washington. In the sacred name of security and as part of an endless and stage-managed war against terrorism, defined in a multitude of ever-shifting and vague forms, a number of civil liberties of American citizens have been perilously curtailed, not to mention the rights of non-Americans inside the borders of the United States. The situation abroad is even worse, as the war against terror is used to excuse an attrition of liberty in democratic and authoritarian societies the world over. Even in Afghanistan and Iraq, the two countries “liberated” by America—and free now of the monstrous autocracies that once misruled them—there are disturbing signs of human rights abuses by the occupiers, old prisons being reopened, civilians being gunned down, men abducted into the night and fog of a bureaucracy that will not answer for them.

I am not suggesting that the United States and its allies are turning themselves into a gigantic police state such as Chile endured for so many years—not yet, at least. But that suffering will have been in vain if we do not today in other zones of the world heed the deepest significance of the catastrophe the Chilean people started to live thirty years ago.

We also thought, we also shouted, we also assured the planet:
It cannot happen here.

was forced to promise the Congress that the massive U.S. military assistance provided to the Colombian military would be used only for counternarcotics purposes. This was always a rather awkward construct, as a military engaged in a counterinsurgency war was never content to use military aid for counternarcotics purposes alone. Indeed, U.S.-funded counternarcotics brigades in Southern Colombia were charged with providing overall security from insurgent forces in areas where counternarcotics operations took place—a rather broad definition of counternarcotics. Prior to September 11th, both the Bush Administration and congressional drug war supporters actively promoted the use of the term “narcoguerrilla” and “narcoterrorist,” emphasizing the involvement of the guerrilla groups in drug trafficking, in order to blur the line between the two missions and promote a more direct counterinsurgency role for the United States.

In August 2002, the administration’s request for military aid to be used for a combined mission of counterterrorism and counternarcotics was approved by Congress as part of the supplemental bill funding the war on terrorism. Despite congressional concerns about being drawn into Colombia’s war, the post-September 11th political climate did not permit members of Congress to challenge this change, and it has been enshrined in U.S. law ever since. The Colombian Embassy skillfully used the rhetoric of the war on terror to intensify U.S. support for the war effort, sending policymakers and opinion makers a regular bulletin with the Colombian military’s body count against “the narcoterrorists.” According to Latin America scholar Abraham Lowenthal, “The only Latin American country that has been able to capture Washington’s attention during the past two years is Colombia, largely because that country’s president and its ambassador to the United States have been able to portray Colombia’s violence as a case of international terrorism. The fact that Colombia’s terrorist are almost entirely home-grown and locally focused has been obscured, as Washington’s ‘war on terror’ button has been successfully pushed.”

Counternarcotics, while still important, is increasingly less central to U.S. policy in Colombia. Starting in FY2003, U.S. assistance has included over $100 million each year in foreign military
financing to protect Colombia’s oil pipeline and other infrastructure from guerrilla attack. According to high-level Defense Department officials, the Defense Department’s military aid to Colombia for FY05 is not intended for counternarcotics purposes but rather to support Plan Patriota, President Uribe’s counterguerrilla offensive. This funding is drawn from an account originally and currently authorized exclusively for counternarcotics purposes, but it is only loosely monitored by congressional oversight committees. Freed from Plan Colombia’s initial restrictions about using U.S. aid for counterdrug purposes, military aid, training, equipment and intelligence support can be openly used for the Colombian government’s counterguerrilla offensive.

The consequences of the label “terrorism.” Despite the perfectly apt use of “terrorist” to describe the tactics of the FARC, ELN and AUC, the term “terrorism” has certain disturbing implications for U.S. policy towards Colombia. The first concerns the labeling of small-scale coca growers as “narcoterrorists.” These farmers, many from Colombia’s Afro-Colombian and indigenous minorities, are the typical desperately poor farm families that historically have been pushed, sometimes intentionally by badly-implemented government-sponsored land reform colonization policies, into marginal agrarian frontier areas throughout Latin America. In these remote areas with bad roads, minimal education and health services, and virtually no agricultural extension services or rural credit, farmers turn to the most easy and profitable crop—coca. Far from being “narcoterrorists,” many, if given government-sponsored alternatives, would choose legal crops; and many are victimized by FARC and AUC troops who encourage and tax drug production and wage violent battles over disputed drug profits. Treating these farmers as “narcoterrorists” leads away from the development solutions that would follow when they are perceived, more correctly, as small farmers, and towards more military solutions. This labeling issue has serious implications for Bolivia and Peru as well.

The second potential complication is the closing off of space for negotiated settlements. If the FARC, ELN and AUC are terrorists, and one does not negotiate with terrorists, then negotiated settlements are more difficult to justify. U.S. congressional critics of President Pastrana’s peace negotiations with the FARC used this logic to decry the establishment of a demilitarized zone, while human rights groups emphasized the terrorism connection in their call for prosecutions of paramilitaries implicated in gross human rights violations. The business of establishing peace agreements requires attention to truth, justice and reparations without eliminating all incentives for individuals, including those accused of human rights crimes, to demobilize, and it is a difficult balance to strike. It is not yet clear that the terrorism label has blocked peace agreements, but it is potentially an obstacle.

The third and perhaps most troublesome complication is that in the war on terrorism, as in the Cold War, tactics that limit democratic rights and civil liberties gain justification. President Uribe used his phenomenal popularity, earned from...
Colombians from all walks of life tired of guerrilla brutality, to champion the Anti-Terrorist Statute and other measures which strengthen the military’s role in spheres normally limited to police: detaining suspects, searching houses and establishing wiretaps without prior warrants, and collecting and reviewing evidence.

**Mexico**

The United States and Mexico have a history of strained relations and common interest. The two nations, which have viewed each other with caution since the Mexican-American war, have nonetheless had to work together on issues stemming from a shared, 2,000-mile border. Presidents Bush and Fox pledged to strengthen the bi-national relationship and build a new era based on mutual respect and trust. Three years after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the nature of this relationship has not deviated from its historical pattern. Distrust and skepticism still dominate the public relations between Mexico and the United States. However, common interest based on security concerns, which are generally invisible to the general public, has deepened cooperation between the two nations to unprecedented levels.

**A New Era.** When Presidents Vicente Fox and George Bush took office within months of each other, both promised a new relationship between the two historically cool neighbors. Both touted a new U.S. immigration system that would benefit both nations as a priority and began to use a new rhetoric of mutual respect.

“The spirit in which we have conducted this first working meeting marks the beginning of a novel stage in our bilateral relations. I am certain that we will be able to take advantage of the historic opportunity we have today to set out on the way to a century of shared prosperity. We will face this challenge on the basis of mutual trust, with a fresh and creative vision to advance in the topics of our bilateral agenda.”

—President Vicente Fox, February 16, 2001

“We are welcoming a new day in the relationship between America and Mexico. Each nation has a new President, and a new perspective. Geography has made us neighbors; cooperation and respect will make us partners.”

—President George Bush, February 16, 2001

At President Bush’s first official state visit abroad in February 2001, both Presidents laid out a broad agenda for increased cooperation on economic integration, drug interdiction, energy policy, deepening democratization, and migration reform. Though there was little progress made on this agenda from February to September 11, 2001, the dialogue remained strong. President Bush hosted President Fox as his first official state visit to the White House on September 5, 2001. Such symbolic gestures, coupled with statements from President Bush at that summit that declared “the United States has no more important relationship in the world” than the one with Mexico, helped to create new expectations for a strong working relationship.

**The Public Collapse of U.S.-Mexico Relations.** After the September 11th attacks, however, President Fox was hesitant to issue unconditional support for the United States. Mexican government statements were read as tepid at best, and Fox’s reluctance to invoke the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance left many in the U.S. government skeptical of Mexico’s support. Though President Fox was issuing statements of strong support by the end of September, it was too little too late. By August 2002, President Fox publicly cancelled a state visit to President Bush’s Crawford, Texas ranch over a dispute on the application of the death penalty towards a Mexican citizen in Texas. In less than a year, these two allies had become distant neighbors.
Mexican public opinion displayed ambiguous support for the U.S. during this period. A poll conducted in October 2001 in Mexico by Consulta Mitofsky, a leading public opinion firm, showed that 79 percent of Mexicans condemned the attacks against the U.S. However, it also found that 37 percent of Mexicans had a less favorable opinion of the U.S. less than one month after the attacks.\footnote{42}

Disputes between Mexico and the United States reached a new low in October 2002. With Mexico hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, the media widely reported that President Bush refused an invitation from President Fox to hold a state visit to Mexico.

The outset of the Iraq war further damaged the Bush/Fox relationship. Mexico held a seat on the United Nations Security Council and thus played a prime role in the international debate on the impending war. With domestic public opinion strongly against intervention in Iraq, President Fox actively opposed the war in the Security Council. A poll taken by Consulta Mitofsky in February 2003 showed 83 percent of Mexicans opposed to Mexican support of the U.S. war in Iraq.\footnote{43}

**Keep the Cooperation Quiet.** Despite the tension between the two Presidents, the Mexican government worked systematically, with U.S. officials and independently, to increase security along both its southern and northern borders, to secure critical infrastructure and tourist destinations, to facilitate increased screening of passengers in airports, and to step up intelligence efforts aimed at international terrorists that could use Mexico as a base of operations. There are dozens of formal agreements and informal arrangements between Mexico and the United States at the federal, state and local level to facilitate cooperation and coordination of antiterrorist activities.

Mexico actively cooperated with the U.S. in tightening security along both its borders. The U.S. government appropriated $25 million in FY2002 and an additional $20 million in FY2004 to improve border security. These funds purchased advanced X-ray machines used to screen cargo trucks coming from Mexico into the United States, which are now set up at many of the major border crossings. These funds were also used to support training of police and immigration agents in border areas.

Mexico has taken additional steps to increase its patrols of highways and roads in border areas and on major migrant routes, aimed largely at detaining third-country nationals without documentation. While this has largely affected Central American economic migrants, it is aimed also at detecting potential terrorists. The Mexican National Immigration Institute has worked to standardize its database of detainees to be compatible with the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Along Mexico’s border with Guatemala, and to a lesser extent Belize, Mexico instituted Plan Sur in early 2001. While the pre-September 11 operation aimed to institute U.S.-style border security measures to prevent illegal entry into Mexico, it has been reinforced since. The Mexican government has been reluctant to release information on Plan Sur, as many of the
measures taken there contradict Mexico’s opposition to U.S. border security aimed at Mexican migrants. However, reports from the region indicate an increased military presence along the border with Guatemala.

Most notable in Mexico’s efforts to provide heightened border security is Operation Sentinel. Despite Mexican opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq, at the war’s outset, Mexico sent 25,000 military troops to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border in anticipation of any possible hostilities directed towards the U.S. Though the Mexican government asserts that those troops were withdrawn from the border region by the end of 2003, local accounts continue to indicate a strong military presence along Mexico’s northern border.

State and local cooperation along the U.S.-Mexico border is perhaps the clearest indication of increased security concerns since 2001. Information sharing, police cooperation, medical cooperation, and local and state government joint-planning on security-related issues throughout the region have increased. Most notable are numerous joint operations in border cities such as Laredo/Nuevo Laredo, El Paso/Ciudad Juarez, and San Diego/Tijuana on mock bioterrorism attacks and in coordinating flows of people and goods over the official ports of entry along the border. Key in this type of coordination has been a bilateral effort called the Border Infection Disease Surveillance project, under which the U.S. and Mexico monitor potential public health risks in the region and coordinate appropriate public health and security responses.

Securing Critical Infrastructure. In January 2003, the Mexican National Security and Investigation Center (CISEN) organized a series of working groups with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to coordinate the protection of critical infrastructure. The two agencies work together to identify sites that could be potential terrorist targets and share information on security strategies.

Mexico has also worked to secure its airports nationwide, increasing screening of passengers, as well as physical security on site. Federal Preventative and Judicial Police have been stationed throughout Mexican airports to provide passenger screening and site security, and have trained with U.S. marshals as well as Israeli counterterrorism units. Mexico has also begun placing plain clothes air marshals on selected flights from Mexico to the United States. In December 2003, Mexico redirected a U.S.-bound flight from Mexico back on concerns of a terrorist threat at the advice of U.S. Homeland Security officials, again signaling close intelligence sharing and cooperation.

Fox Pays a Price. Cooperation with Mexico has been more extensive than with any nation in Latin America, yet Mexico has not seen any progress on its own priorities for the bilateral relationship. Undeniably, Mexico has an interest in protecting its homeland from residual terrorism aimed at the United States. However, it is doubtful that Mexico would have undertaken many of these measures had it not been for U.S. insistence. In a meeting with the Mexican Foreign Ministry in August 2003, the Director for Border Issues asserted that Mexico had to prove itself a secure and reliable ally in the war on terrorism before it could expect progress on its political agenda, namely U.S. immigration reform.44

President Fox placed a great deal at stake by his openness to the United States, unprecedented in modern Mexican history.
President Fox placed a great deal at stake by his openness to the United States, unprecedented in modern Mexican history. Ostensibly, he stood to reap the benefits of U.S. passage of immigration reform and prove to Mexicans that a positive relationship with the U.S. could benefit Mexico. But his failure to procure domestic legislative victories began to spoil his image at home. Failure to secure an immigration reform, Mexico’s top foreign policy priority, further hurt his image. His cooperation with the U.S. on security issues is seen as subservience to an American agenda at the expense of Mexican independence. The combination of the two failures caused his party, the PAN, serious losses in the 2003 midterm elections, and many in Mexico now consider his lack of effectiveness as a sign that he is a lame-duck president, two full years before the next elections.

Last Tuesday the 13th, President Fox had no option but to declare ‘I am not Bush’s footman’. Fox was looking for a formal immigration accord, by which the U.S. government obligated itself to improve conditions for Mexican workers on its soil. And what he got, barely, is a proposal from President Bush that will have to be approved by the U.S. Congress without even minimum input from the Mexican government.45

— Proceso, January 14, 2004

The foreign minister explains to us that Presidents Fox and Bush’s success is to have achieved an ‘imaginative process’ to tackle problems between the two nations. Effectively, the ‘imagination’ of both leaders is so great that they have invented a new way to mistreat Mexican immigrants, a way to continue humiliating them, and to create an affront that harms the body, if not their very heart.46

— Proceso, August 16, 2004, regarding the use of rubber bullets by the U.S. Border Patrol

While sensible cooperation on security measures may be in the best interests of both nations, if the Mexican government is not seen as accomplishing its foreign policy goals, it is viewed as the handmaiden of the United States. It remains to be seen whether or not this will curb Mexico’s willingness to continue its cooperation with its powerful neighbor to the north.

Brazil

“The United States has a president that for every 10 words he speaks, nine are about waging war.”

—Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.
September 25, 2002 47

The United States and Brazil have engaged in public disagreements over the conduct of the war on terrorism and the war in Iraq. The Brazilian government has couched its rhetoric on these issues in dismissive, anti-American terms—a response to overwhelming public disapproval of the American war on terrorism in Brazil. Nonetheless, in practical terms, Brazil has provided the U.S. government with reassurances over many of its concerns regarding terrorism within its borders.

At the same time that the United States was dealing with the September 11 aftermath, Brazil was preparing for elections that would bring Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (popularly known as “Lula”), the nation’s leading leftist, to power. In the following months, Mr. da Silva would run a campaign that decried American global hegemony. As a new president taking office shortly before the war in Iraq, he would have to maintain that public stance.

A public opinion poll released in November 2001 by Datafolha, a Brazilian public opinion institute, showed that two months after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, 45 percent of Brazilians from São Paulo, the nation’s largest city, had a worse image of the United States than before the attacks. It further found that only
40 percent of those surveyed had a positive view of the United States.\textsuperscript{48}

Brazilian opposition to the war in Iraq was overwhelming, with 90% of Brazilians opposing the war, and 20\% going so far as to claim they were actively boycott ing the purchase of American goods and services. Some 60\% of respondents indicated that they had a worse image of the United States after the war in Iraq than before. Conversely, 86\% of Brazilians approved of President da Silva’s opposition to the war.\textsuperscript{49}

A highly public split between the United States and Brazil appeared in January 2004, after the U.S. government

instituted new regulations requiring foreign nationals visiting the country to be fingerprinted and photographed upon arrival. Twenty-seven countries, not including Brazil, were exempt from this plan. After the U.S. announcement, a Brazilian federal judge ordered U.S. citizens to be fingerprinted and photographed when entering the country, in retaliation for the perceived discrimination against Brazilians. To date, Brazil is the only nation to insist on parity in its security measures towards U.S. citizens.

By April 2004, some Brazilians were openly mocking the application of the war on terror to Brazil. Responding to continued U.S. concerns that the Brazilian town of Foz du Iguacu, known for its world-famous waterfalls, was a haven for terrorists—a claim that Brazil continues to refute—the city government launched a new advertising campaign. Under a photograph of Osama bin Laden, it ran the caption “If he can find time to come see the waterfall, why can’t you?”

Do Actions Speak Louder than Words? The Foz du Iguacu case is a good example of Brazil’s approach to the war on terrorism. The Brazilian government continues to insist that there is no operational terrorist activity in the triborder region, where Foz du Iguacu is located—a conclusion that was endorsed by Argentina, Paraguay and the United States in the 3+1 process. The U.S. government has continued to

aggressively push Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay to focus attention on this area. In the end, the Brazilian government recognized there is ample evidence of money laundering, piracy, and drug trafficking in the region, and is taking a number of steps to address these concerns.

In October 2001, the Brazilian Federal Police announced reinforced security measures and increased intelligence for sites of possible terrorist attacks, including Foz du Iguacu, which was included because of its large Arab population and its border location. In August 2004 more security measures were announced, including patrols of Itaipu Dam, Brazil’s largest energy source. Brazil has also has promoted intelligence-sharing on money laundering and financial crimes in the triborder region. Most notably, in 2003 it
Who is a Terrorist?

The most disturbing issue in the application of the “War on Terrorism” to the Latin American context is the definition of who is a terrorist. The most extreme human rights problem for Latin American militaries for the last several decades has been their expansive definition of terrorist to include those who challenge government policy. In cases where militaries face real insurgencies, militaries in the Southern Cone, Central America and Colombia have often categorized those who organize for citizen or worker rights as threats to the state. “In the 20th century, all Latin American militaries had to do was call someone a communist, and that person became fair game. With revitalized militaries, terrorism could become the communism of the 21st century that puts someone under a death sentence,” cautions Professor Harley Shaiken, chairman of the U.C. Berkeley’s Center for Latin American studies. “The notion that we should strengthen Latin American armies misses the role they played in human rights abuses in past decades and how Latin American governments have been trying to diminish their role ever since.... In many countries, they were the terrorist organization, killing and disappearing thousands.”

Most recently, Colombian human rights groups and union leaders have been targeted by paramilitaries who perceive them as guerrilla collaborators. More union leaders are killed in Colombia each year than in the rest of the world combined. Human rights and union leaders claim that they are included on black lists that circulate between the AUC and members of the Colombian military. One of the Colombian human rights community’s long-standing demands, supported by the Colombia representative for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has been for the Colombian military to conduct an annual purge of intelligence files to eliminate inclusion of civil society activists against whom there are no legitimate accusations of armed insurgency. President Uribe greatly intensified this problem by his repeated public labeling of human rights defenders as “defenders of terrorism.”

These “mistakes” by Latin American intelligence services can become endorsed by the United States through the denial of U.S. visas. Following September 11th, human rights and church activists have occasionally been denied visas for unspecified reasons, in some cases because they may be included on some list over suspicion of terrorist activity. This problem certainly predates 9/11. While many human rights activists still easily obtain U.S. visas, often with the express assistance of the U.S. embassy human rights staff, and this is not a generalized problem, it may have become more common since September 11th.

provided information on a visit by Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, a top al Qaeda official, to Foz du Iguacu in 1998.

A similar pattern emerged over U.S. concerns at the Brazilian border with Colombia.

Brazil has refused to define the FARC, that nation’s lead guerrilla group, as a terrorist organization, much to the disappointment of the U.S. and Colombian governments. However, Brazil has augmented its military contingent along the Colombian border, has
begun to allow the shoot-down of planes crossing the border suspected of drug trafficking, and authorized the use of its SIVAM radar system for use in monitoring the Colombian border. These actions have been framed as measures to combat drugs and preserve Brazilian sovereignty over the rich natural resources of the Amazonian region, not as antiterrorist measures. It is doubtful that Brazil sees a terrorist threat at this border, but it is also clear that U.S. pressure on the matter has encouraged Brazilian actions along the Colombian border.

The da Silva Administration has had to walk a fine line between not angering a domestic constituency that is highly skeptical of the U.S. government’s actions in the name of the war on terror, and not angering the United States for lack of action on concrete terrorism concerns. Cooperation on issues that Brazil sees as a threat to its own territory is forthcoming, but the rhetoric surrounding the cooperation frames the issue as a domestic one, and the actions are taken quietly.

Bolivia

Unlike in Colombia, the United States has remained focused on counternarcotics in Bolivia, and the challenges of U.S.-Bolivia policy are primarily due to the contradictions of U.S. drug policy. However, according to the FY2005 State Department congressional presentation, “in order to ensure that Bolivia does not become an active transit point for international terrorism, we have also stepped up cooperation with the Bolivian military, customs, immigration, financial institutions, police and other organizations to ensure better Bolivian control over its long, sparsely inhabited borders.... We are working with the military to better coordinate Bolivia’s counter-terrorism activities and enhance support for their operations and ability to respond to threats through the acquisition of specialized equipment, training assistance and infrastructure improvement.” Indeed, the State Department’s request to Congress for FY05 included “equipment and training for the Bolivian Army’s new Counter-Terrorism Unit.”

According to U.S. Ambassador David Greenlee, the terrorist threat in Bolivia “is more potential than palpable.” Greenlee notes concern about infiltration by Sendero Luminoso in the cocalero region of Bolivia and links to the Colombian guerrilla group ELN. “We don’t want to overdramatize it, but Bolivia should have CT [counterterrorism] capability.”

But the actual links between social unrest in Bolivia and any activities by foreign insurgencies such as Shining Path or ELN are in dispute. The ELN connection, for example, rests on one slim case: a Colombian, Pacho Corts, who has been jailed in Bolivia. While the U.S. Embassy emphasizes he was caught with a “war book” that revealed his guerrilla links, Colombian human rights groups have claimed he is a social activist rather than insurgent. According to one U.S.-trained Bolivian military colonel operating in the Chapare, the area with greatest social conflict over counternarcotics policy, “Anyone who talks about there being an insurgent group here is irresponsible.”

In this context, the responsibilities of the Bolivian special counterterrorism unit bear scrutiny. Bolivia does have powerful social movements, which range from the cocalero unions that defend what they see as the right to grow traditional coca crops, to worker unions and organizations and political parties representing Bolivia’s underserved indigenous majority. Yet Bolivia does not appear to have insurgent groups. Developing a counterterrorism capability in the absence of a serious terrorist threat runs the risk that other perceived threats—like that of the powerful social movements—will become the focus of counterterrorism action. State repression of social movements is a serious, not potential, concern in Bolivia today—in the social disturbances of September and October 2003, some 58 civilians were killed, allegedly largely by Bolivian army
and police, leading to the resignation of Bolivian President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada. One risk for Bolivian democracy is that unchecked repressive acts by the Bolivian security forces, without legal consequences, could shut off civic opportunities for change—and thus could potentially contribute to the creation of an insurgency where none previously existed.

Cuba

In 1982, Cuba was added to the U.S. Department of State’s list of nations designated as “state sponsors of terrorism.” Currently the list consists of Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Sudan, and Iraq. (Libya and Iraq are still formally on the list although sanctions have been lifted.) Cuba seems to continue to be included in spite of a lack of serious evidence, in comparison with the other governments on the list. With each year, the alleged links between the Cuban government and terrorism grow ever more tenuous and the charges seem increasingly flimsy.

Cuba’s inclusion in the State Department’s list of nations that sponsor terrorism has its roots in Cuba’s support for armed revolutions around the world during the Cold War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuban support for armed insurrection in practical terms quickly and publicly came to an end. As this support ended, the rationale for including Cuba on the list shifted.

Cuba’s inclusion on the terrorist list now rests on two key arguments. The State Department report claims that Cuba “opposed the U.S.-led Coalition prosecuting the global war on terrorism ... and was consistently critical of the United States.”57 The second charge is that that Cuba harbors international fugitives, including “suspected terrorists.”

As the State Department spells out the first charge, Cuba “remained opposed to the U.S.-led Coalition prosecuting the global war on terrorism and actively condemned many associated U.S. policies and actions throughout 2003” and its press reporting was “consistently critical of the United States and frequently and baselessly alleged U.S. involvement in violations of human rights.” This charge is of course perfectly
true, but it can just as well be made of France, Germany or other traditional U.S. allies. Criticism of U.S. conduct of the war on terrorism, disagreement over what constitutes a legitimate response to 9/11, and critique of U.S. human rights policy, is hardly state sponsorship of terrorism.

Moreover, this assessment ignores other evidence of Cuban cooperation on terrorism issues. Like other governments around the world, the Cuban government offered an expression of sympathy immediately after 9/11. The Council on Foreign Relations notes that “within hours of the [September 11] attacks Cuba offered medical assistance to the victims and opened Cuban airports to U.S. commercial planes diverted because of the crisis. That night, Castro condemned terrorism on national television.” In a September 22, 2001 speech, Castro categorically condemned terrorism as an “ethically indefensible phenomenon, which must be eradicated.” He pledged that “Cuba will never declare itself the enemy of the American people.”

Furthermore, the Council on Foreign Relations reports that “experts say that U.S. and Cuban officials have held low-level talks aimed at getting Cuban help in collecting intelligence and identifying fugitives from Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda terrorist network.” Cuba has also been cooperative regarding the use of the Guantánamo Bay naval base as a prison for terrorism suspects, offering to return any escapees and allowing American use of Cuban airspace for transport planes. Moreover, as the State Department itself notes in the report, “Cuba became a party to all 12 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism in 2001.”

As to the claim that Cuba harbors certain international fugitives and suspected terrorists, the reality is that while there are fugitives in Cuba, the Cuban government has satisfactorily explained their presence and lack of extradition. Topping the list of fugitives are Basque separatists from the ETA organization, members of the Colombian insurgent groups FARC and ELN, and about a dozen fugitives from the United States whose crimes are deemed “political” by Cuba.

The ETA members are in Cuba due to an arrangement between the Spanish and Cuban governments, and Spain has not subsequently asked for their extradition. Regarding the Colombian FARC and ELN guerrillas, the State Department does not detail extensive assistance but simply asserts that Cuba provided “some degree of safehaven and support.” The State Department moreover notes that “Bogota was aware of this arrangement and apparently acquiesced; it has publicly indicated that it seeks Cuba’s continued mediation with ELN agents in Cuba.” The fugitives from the United States are in Cuba for two major reasons: primarily because the United States and Cuba have no formal extradition treaty and because Cuba refuses to expel fugitives from the United States whose crimes it deems to have been political. It is important to note that there are a number of individuals harbored in the United States who have openly admitted to committing attacks against Cuba (see below). All in all, the questions of the fugitives in Cuba could be cleared up with bi-lateral negotiations, which both sides refuse to initiate.

In a telling moment, former Clinton adviser on Cuba Richard Nuccio told the Orlando Sentinel that, “I don’t know anyone in or outside of government who believes in private that Cuba belongs on the terrorist list. People who defend it know it is a political calculation. It keeps a certain part of the voting public in Florida happy and it doesn’t cost anything.” Along with inclusion on the list come certain penalties, which act as a de facto embargo (see box).

Bio-weapons. A new wrinkle in the terrorism charges against Cuba is the accusations over the past two years from senior administration officials that Cuba is developing bio-weapons. The
chief proponent of this allegation is Undersecretary of State for Arms Control, John Bolton. In speeches and sworn testimony he has asserted that the United States believes that Cuba has at least a limited biological warfare research and development effort. In spite of Mr. Bolton’s allegations, which in the Iraq war setting are quite serious, there has never been proof of any development or research effort in this area by the Cubans. President Jimmy Carter was briefed on possible Cuban terrorist activities by State Department intelligence experts prior to his trip to Cuba in 2002. President Carter “asked them specifically on more than one occasion is there any evidence that Cuba has been involved in sharing any information to any other country on earth that could be used for terrorist purposes. And the answer from our experts on intelligence was no.”

Moreover, in 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell refuted the main thrust of Mr. Bolton’s statement when he said, “We didn’t say it actually has some weapons, but that it has the capacity and capability to conduct such research.” Cuba itself repeatedly denies that it has bio-weapons or conducts research for their development. Notably, no reputable international body has ever substantiated Mr. Bolton’s repeated accusations, nor have the intelligence units of the U.S. government, including the State Department’s very own intelligence unit, on whose research Mr. Bolton’s claims supposedly rest.

In fact, in a New York Times article on September 18, 2004 entitled “In Stricter Study, U.S. Scales Back Claim on Cuba Arms,” intelligence officials report that a new, more careful study of the intelligence on Cuba’s supposed bio-weapons activities shows “as a result of the reassessment, it is unclear whether Cuba has an active, offensive biological weapons effort underway.” This new assessment “contradicts a 1999 National Intelligence Estimate and past statements by top administration officials.”

Meanwhile, the United States continues to tolerate individuals alleged to have carried out attacks against Cuba and dissenters in the Cuban-American community. Most notorious among these is Orlando Bosch, who was jailed in Venezuela on accusations of taking part in the bombing of a Cubana airliner in 1976, which killed 76 people. Dr. Bosch was released under mysterious circumstances from a Venezuelan prison and returned to the United States, where he was jailed after entering the country illegally. The Justice Department urged his deportation. But President George H.W. Bush approved a pardon for Dr. Bosch in 1990, after he was “lobbied heavily by South Florida Republicans” and in spite of a Federal Bureau of Investigation report that asserted Dr. Bosch “has repeatedly expressed and demonstrated a willingness to cause indiscriminate injury and death.” Dr. Bosch lives in Miami to this day.

A Los Angeles Times op-ed asserts that Luis Posada Carriles, one of Dr. Bosch’s associates, “is an escapee from a prison in Venezuela, where he was incarcerated for blowing up an Air Cubana passenger plane in 1976, killing 73. He also admitted plotting six hotel bombings in Havana that killed one tourist and injured 11 others in 1997.” Most recently, Mr. Posada Carriles was convicted in Panama on public endangerment charges related to a plot to assassinate Cuban President Fidel Castro. Mr. Posada Carriles and three other anti-Castro activists convicted in the case spent four years in prison, until a Panamanian presidential pardon in early September 2004. Three of these men flew directly to Miami, where they received a hero’s welcome. More distressingly, “Federal officials briefly interviewed the pardoned men—all holders of U.S. passports—and then let them go their way.” State Department officials declined to comment on the entire affair. The toleration of these individuals on U.S. soil is a serious issue for the Cuban government, which considers them to be both wanted terrorists and known security threats.
Over the past several years, the Cuban government has aligned itself with most of the nations of the world in actively opposing terrorism. The latest bio-terrorism charges are particularly unsubstantiated. But these facts mean little in the charged rhetoric which flies back and forth in Washington regarding Cuba. Calling Cuba a terrorist nation has become one of the standard rhetorical flourishes in the speeches of members of Congress opposed to increased contact with Cuba. In a war on terror, where over-heated rhetoric claims that nations are either ‘with us or against us,’ U.S. policymakers would do well to recognize that Cuba does not fit neatly in either of the categories.

Avoiding Tunnel Vision
The war on terrorism could easily become a new set of ideological blinders—as in the Cold War—that prevents U.S. policymakers from understanding the complex realities of Latin America. The following suggestions for ways to perceive and address Latin America post-9/11 would help to prevent this tunnel vision.

1. Examine national conflicts in their specifics—not simply as examples of terrorism. Otherwise you will lose opportunities to understand why conflicts developed and to suggest and support policies to settle conflicts and address the underlying problems that caused them.

2. Do condemn specific terrorists acts—actions with political implications that knowingly target civilians—vigorously, from whatever direction, whether committed by left- or right-wing groups, or governments. Help develop broader consensus in condemning terrorist acts by using the term objectively.

3. Consider carefully the tradeoffs between antiterrorist measures and loss of civil liberties and human rights. Beware of government actions that label those who exercise their right to democratic dissent as “terrorists” or “defenders of terrorism.” Core democratic rights must not be violated in the name of an antiterrorism campaign. Democracy is still fragile in many Latin American countries, and the temptation to abandon rights in some cases will be strong.

4. Understand that government policies that close off avenues for domestic dissent, promote vast disparities of wealth, or provide impunity for human rights abusers pave the way for insurgent movements. Social investment, equitable development policies and protection of democratic rights must be included in any antiterrorism campaign.

Sanctions Accompanying Cuba’s Designation on Terrorist List
The inclusion of Cuba on the terrorism list imposes four sets of economic sanctions that remain in force even if the embargo were lifted.

1. A ban on arms-related exports and sales;

2. Controls over exports of dual use items [dual use includes medical technologies];

3. Prohibitions on economic assistance; and,

4. Financial and other restrictions, including:
   - U.S. opposition to World Bank and other international financial institution loans;
   - Denial of company and individual tax credits for income earned in terrorist list countries;
   - Denial of duty-free treatment for goods exported to the United States;
   - Prohibition of any U.S. person engaging in a financial transaction with terrorist list government without a Treasury Department license.
and human rights are powerful tools to persuade people not to stray from the democratic path.

5. Consider carefully the implications of the terrorism label in shutting off space for peaceful settlement of conflict. While strong measures for truth, justice and reparations for victims are essential elements for negotiating a just and lasting peace, the terrorism label must not be used to simply bar negotiated solutions to conflicts.

6. Avoid labeling poor farmers who resort to planting coca or poppy as “narcoterrorists.” Using this label prevents us from understanding why these farmers are turning to illegal production and leads us away from the practical development solutions that are needed to bring them back into the legal economy.

7. Judge Latin American governments’ antiterrorism progress on cooperation in implementing specific measures to track and prevent international terrorist groups with global reach. Do not use adherence to other, essentially unrelated U.S. policies—like the war in Iraq—as a litmus test to judge Latin American governments’ willingness to cooperate in practical ways.

8. Ensure that U.S. assistance for antiterrorism in Latin America actually is designed to make us safer—that it is specifically geared to track the activities of al Qaeda and similar groups with designs upon the United States. Strengthen the judicial, customs and other civilian authorities that can investigate, track and prosecute such activities.

9. Recognize that when the United States fails to respect international laws and norms, it severely erodes our moral authority to critique other governments’ human rights practices. In Latin America, U.S. actions are observed carefully, and U.S. abuses can be used to justify other abuses or to brush off U.S. critiques as hypocritical. The best contribution the United States can make to support for human rights around the globe is our own strict adherence to human rights norms.

Endnotes

2 Human rights advocates were concerned that the Colombia-specific human rights conditions would be removed as part of this legislation, but Congress did not permit this to happen.
18 These contradictory policies were emphasized by Waldo Albarracin, Human Rights Ombudsman for Bolivia, 27 March.
2004, in a conversation with LAWGEF staff Lisa Haugaard.


22 Posture Statement of General Peter Pace, United States Marine Corps, Commander in Chief, United States Southern Command, before the House Armed Services Committee, 4 April 2001.

23 Posture Statement of Major General Gary D. Speer, United States Army, Acting commander in Chief, United States Southern Command, before the 107th Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, 5 March 2002.

24 Posture Statement of General James T. Hill, United States Army Commander, United States Southern Command, before the 108th Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, 1 April 2004.

25 Interview by author and colleagues with Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Inter-American Affairs Rogelio Pardo Maurer, March 25, 2004; see also Posture Statement of General Hill, ibid.


46 http://www.proceso.com.mx/archivocominit.html?nid=21018 “El presidente Vicente Fox no tuvo más remedio que señalar el martes 13: “No soy lacayo de Bush… Sin embargo, lo que Fox buscaba era un acuerdo migratorio formal, en el que se establecieran compromisos del gobierno estadunidense para mejorar las condiciones de los trabajadores mexicanos en su territorio. Y lo que se obtuvo, apenas, es una propuesta del presidente Bush que tendrá que ser aprobada por el Congreso de su país, sin que en ello haya la más mínima intervención del gobierno mexicano.”


51 2005 State Department Congressional Presentation for Foreign Operations, Bolivia.

52 Talk by Ambassador David Greenlee to LAWGEF staff Lisa Haugaard and colleagues, US Embassy, Bolivia, 28 May 2004.

53 According to Waldo Albarracin, Human Rights Ombudman, La Paz, Bolivia, the evidence around the Pacho Cortes case appeared weak. Interview by LAWGEF staff Lisa Haugaard, 27 March 2004. One human rights activist, Pablo Solón, commented about the U.S. Embassy’s focus on the Cortes case —“If you say problems in Bolivia are due to terrorism, you have to find at least one terrorist.” Interview with Lisa Haugaard, Pablo Solón, Fundación Salón, 28 May 2004.

54 Interview by LAWGEF staff Lisa Haugaard with Colonel Dario Leigue Moreno, head of Joint Task Force, Chapare region, Bolivia, 25 May 2004.


56 In August 2004, President Uribe announced a purge of the military intelligence files for inappropriate material on human rights activists. However, so far he has not promised that the Colombian Procuraduria, a civilian Inspector General’s office,
The United States is strong. Latin America is weak. This is the basic truth that shapes their relationship. There is no irrational animosity toward the U.S. in Latin America. There is a measure of suspicion balanced by enormous admiration for the culture of Herman Melville to Walt Whitman to William Faulkner, of Hollywood and jazz, of Eugene O’Neill to Arthur Miller.

The problem lies in foreign policy. Too often, the United States is seen as a benevolent Dr. Jekyll at home and a malevolent Mr. Hyde abroad.... One moment shines through, however: Franklin Roosevelt’s “good neighbor” policy, his decision to win Latin American support during World War II through negotiation rather than confrontation.

This brings us to what Latin Americans find so shocking about the Bush administration. Instead of multilateralism, unilateralism. Instead of diplomacy and negotiation and a search for consensus and the use of force only as a last resort, the barbaric principle of preventive war...

U.S. support for brutal dictatorships in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay in the name of anti-communism caused great suffering. The overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala and Salvador Allende in Chile. The Central American wars in the 1980s and their high body counts. These Latin American grievances were balanced by a perception that the U.S. never formally renounced the principles of international law and the hope that it would reaffirm them again.

What is alarming about the Bush administration is its formal denunciation of the basic rules of international intercourse. With us or against us, President Bush declares starkly and simplistically.... Is it strange that many Latin Americans should see in these statements an aggressive denial of the only leverage we have in dealing with Washington: the rule of law, the balance obtained through diplomatic negotiation?

—Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes, Los Angeles Times, September 26, 2004

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