

An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3-24

**A Monograph
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Abstract

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FARC IN COLOMBIA: BREAKING THE FRAME OF FM 3-24 by MAJ Jon-Paul N. Maddaloni, U.S. Army, 58 pages.

This monograph tells the narrative of the FARC in Colombia from the perspective of the counterinsurgent and presents a summary of the evolution of the FARC. The Colombian government has achieved recent success against the FARC after more than forty years and examination of their success is useful to understanding counterinsurgency warfare. Next, using counterinsurgency and state power theorists, the FARC is examined to identify and classify their behavior in their environment. This new FARC perspective is then compared to the frame of FM 3-24 to identify points of variance. Initially, the argument is made that FM 3-24 was written specifically for Iraq to the exclusion of other insurgencies around the world. This aspect of FM 3-24 makes following its prescription dangerous and a more inclusive reframing is past due. Consequently, the historical principles of counterinsurgency from chapter one of FM 3-24 are examined with the theory derived from Colombia's experience with the FARC as a creative way ahead and challenge to the current frame of FM 3-24. The result are the following improved counterinsurgency principles for Colombia: (1) Reassert control over the national territory, (2) A unifying strategy is essential, (3) Political and military factors combined create synergy, (4) Counterinsurgents must understand the adversary space, (5) Operations drive intelligence, (6) Insurgents must be forced away from their support and destroyed, (7) Rule of law and increasing transparency in society is essential, and (8) Counterinsurgents should commit to rapidly ending hostilities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
History	3
The Beginnings of the FARC – 1960’s	9
FARC in the 1970’s.....	10
FARC in the 1980’s.....	12
FARC in the 1990’s.....	16
FARC from 2000 – 2005.....	20
FARC from 2005 – present.	22
Theory	24
What is it that makes the FARC in Colombia unique or different?.....	24
What makes the FARC the same as any other guerrilla insurgency?.....	27
What do the theorists have to say?	28
Doctrine.....	38
Does FM 3-24 apply to all insurgencies or just Iraq?.....	38
Where are the doctrinal gaps for the FARC in Colombia?.....	41
Conclusion.....	46
APPENDIX A – Map of Colombia	47
APPENDIX B – Summary of the FARC Narrative and Strategy	48
APPENDIX C – FARC Chronology and Key Events.....	49
APPENDIX D – Map of the Population Density in Colombia	51
APPENDIX E – Map of the FARC Blocs.....	52
APPENDIX F – Map of Drug Cultivation Areas in Colombia	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY	54

Introduction

General Petraeus likes to ask his analysts to focus on the left of the explosion to reach early understanding and get one step ahead of the adversary. This monograph asks the reader to focus on the right of Iraq in order to reach early understanding of what may potentially become the next struggle against insurgency. There is more going on the world than operations in the CENTCOM Theater.

Colombia's long counterinsurgency war against the main insurgent group, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), or FARC has been going on for over 40 years. Most scholars and pundits agree that Colombia has recently achieved success in the war against their insurgents. In general, what is being said is that FARC attacks have decreased to their lowest observed levels in ten years, the people overwhelmingly support President Uribe's program of "Democratic Security" against the FARC, several key FARC leaders have been killed, and there are signs the overall FARC command and control capability has suffered irrevocably. However, progress in the Colombian counterinsurgency war has not been easy and has had more setbacks than advances. The FARC's relationship to the narco-traffickers is closer than ever before, and as long as the drug trade remains viable, will have an inexhaustible supply of money to continue fighting. Similar to Iraq, some argue that the progress in Colombia is fragile and reversible.

The significance of Colombia's insurgency to U.S. national interests is threefold. First, the U.S. desires stability in the region knowing full well the spillover effects of civil war to the human condition and rights. Colombia is a critical foothold for U.S. influence in the region. The U.S. strongly supports the Colombian government with economic aid and military assistance against their insurgency and illegal drug production and trafficking problem. This aid and assistance is significant enough that Colombia's success against their insurgency is perceived as a U.S. success. Second, economic considerations are paramount, with the U.S. as the largest foreign

investor and trade partner in Colombia. The problems resulting from the Colombian insurgency and illegal drug production and trafficking are a negative influence on the U.S. economy. Third, Colombia is a strong democracy and ally in containing world terrorism. Every effort to strengthen Colombia's capability to fight their insurgency and terrorism is in alignment with the U.S. national interest of counterterrorism.¹

The monograph will follow the history-theory-doctrine methodology. Fundamental to the methodology is understanding the adversary before counter-strategy is identified. The first major section of the monograph will focus on telling the FARC narrative from the perspective of the counterinsurgent. The goal is to examine the complex relationship FARC has in Colombia and identify the reasons for how the recent counterinsurgency successes were possible. The next major section will explore various theories that explain the uniqueness of the FARC and how the FARC is like other insurgencies. This section begins the process of introducing how a study of the FARC might be applicable to the study of the future of counterinsurgency warfare. The final major section is a comparison of the Army's current doctrine as established in FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* with the theories developed for the FARC in Colombia. The result is an adjustment to the eight historic principles of counterinsurgency warfare established in chapter one of FM 3-24 that are more applicable to the Colombian environment from observations of the FARC. Using the historic principles of counterinsurgency outlined in FM 3-24 is simply a creative way to demonstrate the manual's narrow approach and frame. Replacing the principles in FM 3-24 with the ones created in this monograph for Colombia would be a failure in logic because it would replace very specific principles with a new set of specific principles. What this

¹ U.S. Congress. House. Committee on International Affairs. Testimony of Robert B. Charles on Why All Americans Should Support Plan Colombia: Hearing of Western Hemisphere Subcommittee. 110th Cong., 1st sess., April 24, 2007. <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/cha042407.htm> (accessed April 5, 2009).

monograph advocates is a new comprehensive approach to counterinsurgency doctrine that includes theory and observations from insurgencies other than those operating in Iraq.

Seneca, the famous Roman philosopher from 1st AD, said “Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”² For many years in Iraq, the U.S. efforts were unprepared and opportunities were missed. Without elaborating on contributing issues of friction between national policy and the military command in Iraq, FM 3-24 was published to send a clear message of the new military strategy in Iraq as a break from perceptions at the policy level and to gain support for new preparations that would create favorable conditions for positive gains against the insurgents. FM 3-24’s focus was clearly Iraq and not a comprehensive approach to counterinsurgency. The danger in FM 3-24’s narrow approach to counterinsurgency is that it may lead to unpreparedness and missed opportunities, or what Michael Kenney would describe as “competency traps.”³ Additionally, the study of counterinsurgency around the world and in different times throughout history yields a better understanding of the current operations facing the Army in Iraq and Afghanistan. This monograph is a step towards what Seneca would call “preparation” in order to be ready to meet a future “opportunity.”

History

Beginnings in history are troublesome because perfect hindsight is problematic and perspective tends to add bias, or flawed conviction. The beginnings and story of the FARC are no

² David H. Petraeus. “Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance.” *Military Review: Special Edition, Counterinsurgency Reader II* (August 2008): 212.

³ Michael Kenney suggests failures in strategies against insurgencies, drug networks, and terror networks have more to do with failures to address root causes and create policies capable of producing desired results. He labels this the “competency trap” where the same military strategy is used with little to no exploratory learning for more comprehensive measures that could have positive results on the root conditions. Michael Kenney. *From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and Terrorist Networks, Government Bureaucracies, and Competitive Adaptation* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 24.

different. What follows is an attempt to provide a narrative of the FARC to better understand their relationship in Colombia to the government and the people. A narrative of the FARC should begin with knowledge of Colombian history. The two are inextricably linked. (See Appendix A – Map of Colombia when necessary for geographic reference)

Colombia was settled with indigenous tribes until the Spanish arrived in the early 1500s. Spanish colonization and occupation lasted over 300 years and through mechanical ascription established some lasting behaviors and Hispanic culture. The Spanish ruled with power vested in the elites and the church. Governing authority was strongly centralized and society was mostly rural, centered on agriculture and mineral settlements. Export to the old world was the measure of success and taxes were universally administered on all goods and services. The geography of Colombia left much of the population dispersed and created pockets of isolation. Over the three centuries of Spanish domination, indigenous peoples largely declined and either mixed with descendents from Spain, mixed with African slaves brought to Colombia for labor, or fell to disease. Upward mobility in society was not the norm and no charter existed professing inalienable rights for all peoples in society.

There were several small revolts against Spanish rule throughout this period, however, none were successful until a momentous cause and opportunity aligned a revolutionary elite. In 1808 the king of Spain was deposed when the French forces of Napoleon invaded. Napoleon replaced the ruling family of Spain with his own and made his brother Joseph the king. South American born elites with Spanish ancestry saw this as the time to replace their Spanish born masters and keep more of what they saw as theirs. A major point of contention was that taxes had been steadily increased to help pay for Spain's wars against Britain and France. The first major victory came about when Simon Bolivar's revolutionary forces defeated the Spanish military at

the Battle of Boyaca in 1819.⁴ This was a psychological blow to the Spanish royalist followers who subsequently fled the major regions of Colombia. Although Simon Bolivar, the figurehead of the revolution, espoused liberty and republican virtues, the revolution was more about power, money, and independence from Spanish authority.⁵

The next hundred years following independence from Spain were dominated with civil unrest based in two divergent philosophies that still affect Colombia today. The two foremost political parties formed shortly after independence was won and seldom found room for compromise. Colombia's history of violence doesn't have a distinct beginning per se, but during this time the seeds were sown that legitimized violence as the main negotiation tool used in the political arena. On one hand, the conservative party, or *Partido Conservador* (PC), was based in the belief that a centralized system of government with a strong executive was the best for Colombia. The centralized system would protect the church, feudal agrarian society, and native industry. This was in sharp contrast to the liberal party, or *Partido Liberal* (PL), that enlisted change to a federal system with strong checks and balances against dictatorship. The liberal party wanted a secular state with separated church influence and open, free markets.

One thing both parties agreed upon was to protect against a strong federal military force. A strong military was seen as the surest way for the republic to lose its way. Pursuant to their goals the political parties invested in small department and private armies over a larger federal force. Department and landed elite private armies were prone to violence against regional and business competitors for purely self-interest. The result was a trend towards violence as the

⁴ Bert Ruiz, *The Colombian Civil War* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), 190.

⁵ Simon Bolivar commonly traveled with Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois*, or Spirit of the Laws and is best known for stating his beliefs of justice, liberty, equality and the cause for South American independence from Spain in his Letter from Jamaica written in 1815. <http://faculty.smu.edu/bakewell/BAKEWELL/texts/jamaica-letter.html>. (accessed April 5, 2009).

dominant means to resolve problems, a weak federal state, and a preponderance of political imbalance without the means to achieve an overwhelming majority.

Worth mentioning is the dark period from 1899 to 1902 known as the War of 1,000 Days. This period was the culmination of constant political positioning, ongoing since independence was achieved, to gain dominance over the entire state. The level of violence reached new heights as the incumbent conservatives fought against a liberal challenge to control of government.. The results of the war were over 100,000 dead and Colombia's economy in ruins.⁶ More importantly, in their resistance, the liberal controlled forces formed guerrilla bands in the south and central regions of Colombia. These regional guerrilla bands were the precursor for insurgent movements that garnished support from the landless indigents and rural poor. Towards the end of the war the state was exhausted and tired of violence. The parties and the people wanted a return to normalcy and peace. During this time the United States took advantage of the weakened Colombian state and helped Panama gain its independence from Colombia. Then, the United States government helped broker a deal with the Colombian warring factions in order to improve regional stability for building the Panama Canal. U.S. interests were both economic and security focused with a future passage between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans as the immediate strategic goal.⁷

After the War of 1,000 days, relative peace was restored. The fighting was caused from Colombia moving too much to the political right with the rewrite of the constitution in 1886 that called for a stronger national government and a return to a state partnership with Catholicism.

⁶ James F. Rochlin, *Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Colombia, Mexico* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 91.

⁷ The U.S. had significant problems negotiating a treaty with Colombia for the construction of the Panama Canal in 1901. The U.S. provided assistance to the PC forces and brokered a peace to the War of 1,000 Days on board the battleship USS Wisconsin. Shortly after the peace, the U.S. helped Panama gain their independence from Colombia and negotiated with the newly created state of Panama for sovereignty rights surrounding the canal and to finish building the canal circa 1904. <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/May/20080521181322WRybakcuH0.9013178.html>. (accessed April 5, 2009).

Liberal change was needed to move Colombia away from the radical political right. The constitution was amended in 1914 to include popular vote for the presidency, in lieu of election through the elites in government. The two main political parties fractured into radical and moderate wings that tended to find a centrally themed consensus or coalition without resulting in civil war. At the turn of the century there were only 4,500 government employees and by 1916 “the number of public employees had increased to 42,700.”⁸ Prior to this change, Colombia was mostly administered at the local level through informal connections. Additionally, prosperity was returned with the strength of the dominant exports, coffee and gold, which turned the economy around from a severe depression at the turn of century. The national military was increased and reequipped to support the constitutional mandate to restore public order and ensure commerce was not disrupted.

The relative peace was shattered with the assassination of liberal presidential candidate Jorge Gaitan in 1948. Gaitan was in many ways the first populist candidate and broke with many elitist traditions as an advocate for the people and labor interests. Colombia’s urban movement and developing middle class found their voice in Gaitan and were shocked by his death. Riots ensued across Colombia as thousands were killed and property destroyed. The reaction to Gaitan’s assassination rocked the political system and caused a movement towards polarization reminiscent of the War of 1,000 days. The period that followed was monstrous and called *La Violencia*, or the violence. Reports of deaths during *La Violencia* range from 80,000 to 400,000 and there was no bloodier time in Colombian history.⁹ Both liberals and conservatives formed guerrilla groups and death squads, and the violence permeated all of Colombia as families and individuals took advantage of the murderous time to exact revenge against “unruly neighbors,

⁸ Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 243.

⁹ Safford and Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society*, 345.

cheating husbands, ruthless landlords, and uncompromising bosses.”¹⁰ A final development from the period was the addition of economic, not just partisan, reasons for killing. Several mafia bosses and gang leaders took advantage of the chaos to better organize themselves and define their boundaries. *La Violencia* left a scar on Colombia that would take decades to heal, and to many, still remains in the consciousness of daily life.

The official end of *La Violencia* began with a political compromise and shared offer of peace from both parties who were tired of the constant fear, death, and destruction. The framework for peace was proclaimed in the agreement named the Declaration of Sitges. The PC and PL parties formed a National Front and in 1957 both parties agreed to a new government where control would alternate every four years for a period of sixteen years. A catch to the agreement was that it existed only between the liberal and conservative parties with the exclusion of all other existing political parties. Communist and socialist parties, as well as their supporters, were disenfranchised with this agreement. Both communism and socialism had taken root in the early 1940’s and 1950’s as a voice for the poor landless and working class struggle against the rich land and business owner elite. The Marxist revolution in Cuba in 1959 led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara would fan the flames of discontent over exclusionary politics in Colombia and the rest of Latin America. There were several guerrilla groups that formed in Colombia during this turbulent time, namely the *Ejercito Popular de Liberacion* (EPL), the 19th of April Movement (M-19), the *Movimiento Revolucionario Liberal* (MRL), the *Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional* (ELN), and the FARC. There were also conservative paramilitary movements calling themselves guerrillas for peace or self-defense forces. As much as possible this paper will focus on the FARC as a single case study, however, there will naturally be some overlap with these other groups.

¹⁰ Steven Dudley, *Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7.

Colombian history to this point exhibits three relevant trends. First, there is a history of violence to resolve problems. Two of the bloodiest periods, War of 1,000 Days and *La Violencia*, were internal wars fought for power and control of the national government along radical fractures in political thought. Second, the state is in constant conflict over the level of centralization which has its origins as far back as the Spanish colonial period. The solution has partly been regionalism which invariably led to the creation of isolated territorial pockets and a disregard for the rule of law. Third, there is a learned behavior with roots to the Spaniards for exclusionary politics. The nature of the two party political system run by elites has been restrictive in granting liberties to the common man or woman. From this point forward, the histories of Colombia and the FARC are one.

The Beginnings of the FARC – 1960's.

Some experts mark the beginning of the FARC with the liberal guerrilla groups that fought in the War of 1,000 days and *La Violencia*, while others attribute the beginning to the Communist guerrillas who were ostracized after the end of *La Violencia*. The former was certainly true with respect to developing techniques and tactics, and the latter shaped the FARC leaders' ideology. As a singular event, the stirrings of the FARC as an insurgency can be traced to 1964 when the Colombian government sent troops after the Communist "independent republics."¹¹ There were several districts in the mountainous region of Tolima and south of Bogota that were Communist enclaves completely separate from government control. For this operation, the U.S. provided aid and military assistance to Colombia as a part of President Kennedy's Latin American pro-democracy initiative, called Alliance for Progress. The Colombian operation was termed Plan Unite, or *Plan Laso*, and was aimed at bringing the

¹¹ Dudley, *Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia*, 10.

independent republics back under state control.¹² The operation achieved its goal, but many of the Communist rebels and guerrillas escaped. Later in 1966, after sufficient time had passed to regain their strength, the Communist guerrillas were reorganized as the *Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia* or FARC.¹³

Pedro Antonio Marin, nom de guerre Manuel Marulanda Valez or simply *Tirofijo*, and Luis Morantes, nom de guerre Jacobo Arenas, came to the forefront and established themselves as the leaders of the FARC. Marulanda's abilities were as a strong guerrilla fighter and charismatic leader, while Arenas was the intellectual Marxist ideologue. Together they formed a formidable team and attracted the disenfranchised agrarian poor and socialist leaning rebels to their cause. It's important to note, that during this early stage the FARC satisfied the role as the armed force of the Colombian Communist Party. They received funding and direction from the leaders of the Communist Party. During this time period, the FARC numbers ranged from 50 to 500 and were spread throughout the rural areas of central and southern Colombia. For the rest of the decade the FARC was on the edge, barely surviving the combined Colombian and U.S. operations against them. The FARC was only capable of small hit and run tactics amounting to a couple of attacks a month.

FARC in the 1970's.

Throughout the 1970's the FARC continued to grow. One of their successful techniques was to establish a front, or geographic guerrilla command, between Colombian department boundaries to take advantage of the government's decentralized administration. In keeping with the Marxist manifesto, the FARC began local township infiltration techniques with a "public

¹² Safford and Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society*, 356.

¹³ Angel Rabassa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and all Its Implications for Regional Stability* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 24.

order commission—armed guerrillas who seek to gain public sympathy by imposing their own version of law and order, which generally involves actions against local criminals or other unpopular individuals.”¹⁴ This technique allowed the guerrillas to gain influence and control of small villages and towns to further expand their logistical base.

During this period, the FARC held their 5th conference with the major theme of creating a general staff and regulating and expanding finances. The FARC established a High Command, known as the seven member Secretariat and a standard front organization, however, there was never any doubt that Marulanda and Arenas were in charge. Each front would establish combat units and commissions for intelligence, finance, logistics, public order, and mass work.¹⁵ The conference decided on the best techniques and targets for extortion and kidnapping. The procedures for both activities were outlined like a business and in conjunction with forms of coercion were successful in raising money for expansion. Some ransoms from kidnapping activity received as much as one million dollars for wealthy cattle farmers and diplomats.¹⁶

Colombia had its first open election in 1974 with the end of the Declaration of Sitges and National Front agreement. The number one political issue was the economy with rising inflation and unemployment. Symptoms of the failing financial system were issues of drug trafficking and a parallel economy that begged for social reform that never developed.¹⁷ In 1978 Julio Cesar Turbay was elected president and charged with getting the state in order. He won approval for the National Security Statute that gave the military more freedom to detain, interrogate, and judge suspected guerrillas and criminals. In essence, the military created torture centers and generally “took advantage of these powers to incarcerate, torture, and murder hundreds of guerrillas and

¹⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶ Jane’s Information Group, “Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC),” <http://www8.janes.com> (accessed September 25, 2008).

¹⁷ Safford and Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society*, 332.

suspected guerrilla collaborators.”¹⁸ Government human rights violations were rampant and every entity in Colombia with even the smallest amount of organization took the law into their own hands.¹⁹ The widely held belief was that success could be achieved through using violent guerrilla tactics against the guerrillas. Violence was widespread and government legitimacy waned. The National Security Statute was “justified both on the grounds that it was employed by the guerrillas, and on the quasi-moral grounds that it was it short-term tactic designed to end a conflict as rapidly as possible.”²⁰

Interestingly, the hardest hit insurgent movements during this time were the ELN and M-19. Both of these insurgencies irreplaceably lost key leaders and sizable numbers of supporters. Conversely, the FARC grew in size, expanded, and the Security Statute had an interesting effect on the FARC’s recruitment. Throughout this period they earned their reputation as a sort of David against the strong-arm tactics of the government Goliath. This perception increased their romantic rebel image and brought many younger volunteers to their ranks.²¹

FARC in the 1980’s.

Throughout the 1980’s the FARC continued to grow reaching 3,600 members and over 32 fronts.²² The FARC reached the point where they were able to bring up to 150 guerrillas to one engagement, take over entire towns by force, and challenge the military directly in small scale

¹⁸ Dudley, *Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia*, 32.

¹⁹ Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia 1875-2002* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 199.

²⁰ Paul Wolf, “Notes on Counterinsurgency and Counterterror,” 2002.
<http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/colombia/counterinsurgency.htm> (accessed February 16, 2009).

²¹ The writings and accounts of Father Javier Giraldo, a human rights activist during the Turbay administration, recorded the “chilling account of the terror in the countryside” committed by the government’s forces. His writings and many more personal accounts of victims of government violence contributed to the perception that the FARC was morally justified. Ruiz, *The Colombian Civil War*, 166.

²² Rabassa and Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and all Its Implications for Regional Stability*, 26.

platoon and company combat operations. This was a significant change from their hit and run and ambush tactics from the previous decade.

The FARC continued to look for ways to expand their finances and discovered a new avenue for extortion with the vast oil discoveries in the remote areas of the Arauca and Casanare Departments. In activities frequently coordinated with the ELN, the FARC bombed oil facilities and pipelines as a form of extortion against the big oil companies. The attacks on oil companies also propelled their Marxist cause on a national scale with the message that government's oil resource export economic policy was not benefiting the people and just making the elites richer. Later, these attacks would progress to the point where the government was forced to levy a \$1 per barrel war tax to pay for protection of oil infrastructure and workers. This was a major success for the Colombian insurgencies that they would use as leverage in the years to come.

The most significant development in the 1980's was the results of 7th FARC conference in 1982. There was a concerted effort of Marulanda and Arenas to legitimize the FARC as a belligerent and receive legal standing similar to that of a government under the Geneva Conventions. Their argument was simple; they controlled territory, had an organized armed force, and wanted a grand secession similar to the declared independent republics of the 1960's. In keeping with this theme, the FARC added the initials EP, standing for *Ejercito del Pueblo* or People's Army, to their name and adopted a more disciplined uniform policy and rank structure. The conference solidified gains and planned for the expansion of commodity taxes on gold, oil, cattle, and coffee in FARC controlled areas. However, most noteworthy of the extortion on commodities was the decision to expand taxes to the illegal drug industry with a deliberate schedule of fees known as the *gramaje*. At first, the FARC leadership forbade the development of coca and marijuana as counter-revolutionary, counter to the social contract with the people, and viewed the illegal drugs as an elitist disease. They changed their minds when they realized the poor farmer, the FARC support base, had little choice but to grow drugs and they would ostracize this group with a hard line stance. The *gramaje*, or coca tax, was viewed as a way to protect the

farmer against the crime organizations and paramilitary groups taking advantage of the poor. In order to maximize support of the coca farmer the FARC deliberately expanded into the coca rich areas of Caqueta, Meta, and Magdalena Valley with new fronts.

The new FARC strategy from the conference was simple, it was an eight year plan to build enough military power and control throughout Colombia to win against the army and take control of the government. Perhaps unintentional, the strategy sounded more Maoist than Marxist and more focused on military than political means. The Maoist proverb “power comes from the barrel of a gun” was a perfect fit for the FARC strategy.²³ There was also a bit of the Che *foquismo* offensive spirit in the new FARC concept for the guerrillas to continue expanding in the rural towns and villages, but eventually surround and with the help of popular support take over the big cities like Medellin, Cali, and Bogota. Arenas would soon create the FARC’s political party called *Union Patriotica* (UP), or Patriotic Union, to bring the FARC’s message to the cities and prepare the path for the guerrilla army.²⁴ Part of the plan was to delay and confuse the government with overages of peace in order to gain more time to grow and expand. The strategy was a deliberate break with the Communist Party and notice to everyone that the FARC was running its own operations.

The FARC’s 7th conference and strategy coincided with two momentous events. There was a change of administration and policy towards the insurgents in the Colombian government. In 1982 Belisario Betancur was elected president with the mandate of the people to end the violence and find a peaceful solution to the troubles. Betancur initiated efforts for widespread amnesty and organized a peace process acceptable to the guerrillas. The peace talks took place in remote *Casa Verde* deep inside the Sumapaz mountain range. A cease fire during the negotiations was never possible and eventually caused the end of the talks in the next decade. The peace

²³ Rochlin, *Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Colombia, Mexico*, 144.

²⁴ Dudley, *Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia*, 56.

efforts yielded the Uribe Accord guaranteeing the FARC protections for their new political party UP. As a rare acknowledgement that severe social problems and disruptions exist in rural communities, the Betancur government agreed to the National Rehabilitation Plan to lessen the suffering of the people. With respect to protecting the UP and solving the social problems in rural communities, the Betancur government had problems keeping both these promises and lacked political will to fully resource these efforts.

The other major event was a backlash to the peace process based in a perception that the guerrillas were granted too many concessions and were never asked to turn in their arms and surrender en masse. Large land and business owners, as well as drug traffickers, formed a new capitalistic, affluent, and conservative class that rejected the increasing influence of the leftist guerrillas. These groups formed security forces and death squads against the guerrillas. One popular group was formed through the efforts of infamous narco-trafficker Pablo Escobar called *Muerte a Secuestradores* (MAS), or Death to Kidnappers. MAS was a precursor to the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), or The United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, the largest paramilitary organization in Colombia. The Colombian military turned a blind eye toward these groups and in some cases helped with all forms of supplies and manpower. Additionally, the Colombian government created a national program called Convivir that created armed neighborhood watch groups. The Convivir's ranks were often filled from victims of guerrilla attacks and tended to abuse their special relationship with the government. The spark for these paramilitaries, or paras, ignited into massive flames against their easiest targets; the UP and left-wing politicians, students, and anyone campaigning for the cause of the FARC and other insurgencies. The reaction was swift and bloody, between the late 1980's and early 1990's nearly 4,000 UP leaders and supporters were assassinated.²⁵

²⁵ Rochlin, *Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Colombia, Mexico*, 102. Also note that some of the killings were from the leftist ranks for reasons of competition.

The end of decade brought with it more success than failure for the FARC. They had significantly expanded, almost tripling in size, and had a new independent strategy as outlined from the 7th conference. The FARC started the decade getting most of their revenue from kidnappings and taxing commodities and ended the decade with getting the most from control of drug cultivation and taxing the drug trade. The 1980's marked the beginning of a strong relationship with narco-based organizations and opened up the door to the illicit arms trade and smuggling for their armed forces. Although the FARC had used the peace process to their advantage, they misread the strong reaction to the UP. The FARC "learned from the murder of key UP members during 1986-1990 that there was no legitimate political space available for the left in the Colombia, and that the familiar game of political exclusion continued unabated in the country."²⁶

FARC in the 1990's.

Throughout the 1990's the FARC continued to expand, surging to over 10,000 members and over 60 fronts. During this period, the FARC was so pervasive in Colombia that they had active support in 622 of 1,098 municipalities.²⁷ Building on the events from the last decade and the large amount of money coming into the coffers from drug related business, the FARC was able to challenge battalion sized Colombian Army units for a limited amount of time and successfully attack military bases.

The 1990's began with the FARC losing Jacobo Arenas. He died of heart complications in the mountains and left an intellectual, political, and ideological savvy that has yet to be replaced. Guillermo Leon Saenz Vargas, nom de guerre Alfonso Cano, came to the forefront to take Arenas's position within the secretariat. Cano was a recent arrival to FARC and had only just

²⁶ Ibid., 102.

²⁷ Ibid., 137.

become a member at the 7th conference. Arenas's death had one immediate impact, the FARC's involvement in the drug trade increased beyond the lower profit margin tax and protecting coca cultivation. Arenas was a strong advocate for not getting too involved in the coca trade because of his fear that it would lessen the impact of the FARC's message to the people if they were too close to morally corrupt criminal organizations. The FARC developed stronger ties to the narco-traffickers to increase their profit margins and in some areas assumed a larger role in HCI processing and smuggling.

In 1991 the Colombian government embarked on reforming the constitution in a way that had never been done before.²⁸ At this particular time in Colombia, events and leaders came together in a miracle fashion that forever changed the political landscape. The 1991 constitution "expressed the themes of the post-Cold War era – emphasizing human rights, ecological concerns, a participative civil society, decentralization, and demilitarization."²⁹ For the first time, the Constituent Assembly included the bipartisan political elite, former guerrilla members, unionists, and indigenous peoples and no one group had a significant majority to force a resolution on the others.³⁰ The impetus for the change was no less than the spiral of violence, failing economy, rampant corruption, and exclusion of rights to all peoples in Colombia. In the end, Colombian society would benefit from the fragmentation of politics, especially at the local level, and the rights to everything from divorce and appeals in courts to protection of children and indigenous rights. One area the new constitution did not address was the Colombian armed forces

²⁸ The 1991 constitution originated as a popular ballot for the election of an assembly and was not initiated from Congress. The M-19, with their recent abandonment of "armed struggle in exchange for amnesty and guarantees of participation in the political process," received almost 30% of the vote in the assembly and the M-19 leader, Antonio Navarro Wolff, became one of the co-presidents of the constitutional assembly. The M-19 demonstrated to the FARC the potential political power that could be gained within the government after demobilization. Rabassa and Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and all Its Implications for Regional Stability*, 72.

²⁹ Safford and Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society*, 337.

³⁰ Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia 1875-2002*, 247.

role in combating crime, drugs, and guerrillas. This issue would play out on the national stage for years to come. Overall, the advent of the new constitution begged the question, what does the FARC have to offer since most of the grievances against the government and alleged crimes against the people were addressed?

The FARC had a series of successful attacks in the decade and with Marulanda's deft maneuvering forced the government to accept a peace proposal. Successful attacks included a series of small offensives in 1995, disruption of presidential elections in 1998, increased kidnapping and extortion, and the attack of the counternarcotics base in Miraflores. However, no FARC attack had ever been as grandiose as the attack and seizure of the Vaupes department capital Mitu. Albeit smaller than most other department capitals, Mitu was significant on a national scale as it represented the deterioration of the whole government of Colombia and the idea that the Colombian military could lose the war against the insurgency. Secretariat member Jorge Briceno Suarez, nom de guerre Mono Jojoy, orchestrated the attack that included over 1,000 heavily armed guerrillas who fought over 14 hours to seize Mitu and "would take the Colombian armed forces three days to take back."³¹ The Mitu incident, among other recent activities, forced the hand of President Andres Pastrana to cede the FARC a demilitarized zone as a precondition for agreeing to peace talks. The demilitarized zone, also called the *despeje*, was 15,000 square miles or roughly the size of Switzerland.³² Granting the *despeje* to the FARC was a tremendous risk for the Pastrana administration. On one hand it gave the FARC a safe haven, an area to regroup, train, grow drugs, and have complete autonomy in a territory inside the state of Colombia. On the other hand, it wasted the FARC's energy administrating the territory while the government regrouped, formulated a new strategy, and gained allies for the next round of fighting. The *despeje* was initially only supposed to last 90 days. However, there were multiple

³¹ Ruiz, *The Colombian Civil War*, 24.

³² *Ibid.*, 26.

extensions granted to the FARC that ultimately prolonged the unopposed occupation until President Pastrana finally ended the peace talks and ordered the Army to retake the *despeje* in February 2002.³³

Immediate U.S. aid to Colombia in 1999 amounted to expediting a contract for Black Hawk helicopters and \$289 million in aid. This aid package made Colombia “the third-largest recipient of U.S. direct foreign assistance in the world, behind Israel and Egypt.”³⁴ The measure included assistance with training an elite special counter-narcotics unit, commitment to intelligence cooperation and listening posts, and support for the national police.

A sign of people’s discontent with the peace process and longing for the end of the violence occurred in October of 1999. The people organized into one of the largest protests in the history of Colombia, with over six million participants who took to the streets in over 17 cities with the words “*No Mas*”, or no more, to kidnappings, murder, drugs, and massacres.³⁵ The nonviolent demonstration marked an opportunity for the Colombian government to gain initiative in the peace process, but instead it was wasted and the situation turned worse with government inaction.

By the end of the decade the FARC had achieved more than any other insurgency in Colombia. They had their own zone to operate in unencumbered from the government. They had gained international recognition and legitimacy simply because the Pastrana administration gave it to them. Marulanda broadcast his message freely from the *despeje*, not only to the disenfranchised rural farmers but to the poor urban students and unionists. Colombia was facing its worst economic outlook since the 1930’s and Marulanda was offering the people more than

³³ Jane’s Information Group, “Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC),” <http://www8.janes.com> (accessed September 25, 2008).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 226.

the government was in a position to give.³⁶ The only sour notes for the FARC was twofold; first, that in their success they had roused U.S. interest and the largest aid package to date called Plan Colombia was forthcoming, and second, the “*No Mas*” protest signaled that the road ahead would be long if the people were to believe the FARC was the non-violent solution to Colombia’s problems.

FARC from 2000 – 2005.

Fearing Colombia could lose the war against the guerrillas and the U.S. would not have a friendly stable democracy to fight the war on drugs, the U.S. Congress approved a \$1.3 billion emergency supplemental appropriation aid package spread over two years to strengthen Colombia’s chances at winning against the trinity of guerrillas, paras, and narcos. This package was called Plan Colombia and was a combined U.S. and Colombian effort to build capability in the Colombian armed forces, push into and eradicate the drug cultivation centers in Southern Colombia, and provide the Colombian people an alternative to drug production. Over 80% of the funds went towards building the armed forces capability and of those dollars the majority went to building and maintaining a mobile helicopter force that could do everything from attack, lift troops and supplies, and eradicate drugs through aerial spraying. All the U.S. support for Plan Colombia was predicated on one thing, that Colombia would reduce its human rights violations. Colombia’s human rights violations were the one aspect of the plan that could stop all aid immediately if conditions worsened. On 22 August 2000, President Clinton “waived six of the seven [human rights] certification criteria” on the grounds of U.S. national security and the money and aid began to flow into Colombia.³⁷

³⁶ Ibid., 96.

³⁷ Nina M. Serafino, *Colombia: Plan Colombia Legislation and Assistance (FY2000-FY2001)*, CRS Report Plan Colombia (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2001), i.

With the passage of Plan Colombia, the FARC declared war against the U.S. and acknowledged the deference paid to U.S. citizens in the past was over. With the *despeje* and their message getting to ever increasingly more parts of Colombia, the FARC grew in strength to between 15,000 and 20,000 members and over twice that amount in support personnel in over 70 fronts. As part of their newly gained political legitimacy from the Pastrana administration, in 2001 the FARC convinced the European Parliament to condemn Plan Colombia as a U.S. plot to intercede militarily in the politics of Colombia.³⁸ 2001 was the height of international support and legitimacy for the FARC. 2001 stood out as the year many in Colombia and in the world thought the FARC was capable of taking over Colombia and running the country better than the current administration.

2002 would be the year everything the FARC built started to crumble and break apart. To start, the Pastrana government was tiring of the FARC making very little concessions at the peace talks and still continuing their attacks in the countryside and in the cities. The FARC was trying to influence the 2002 presidential election in their old tried and true technique of violence and intimidation of the people. In February, the FARC hijacked a domestic flight and kidnapped a congressman and in a separate incident kidnapped senator and presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt. At this point Pastrana had enough, announced the end to the peace process, and ordered the army into the demilitarized zone. The Colombian Army slowly entered the *despeje*, wary of the increasing number of landmines, and pushed the FARC into the vast jungles of the interior. The FARC was once again on the run, but nowhere near defeated. When President Alvaro Uribe was being sworn in at the presidential palace in Bogota, the FARC shot mortars and rockets into the palace killing twenty in the attack.³⁹ More than ever before the FARC was viewed

³⁸ Rochlin, *Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Colombia, Mexico*, 141.

³⁹ Jane's Information Group, "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)," <http://www8.janes.com> (accessed September 25, 2008).

as terrorists, not as a belligerent with the status afforded in the Geneva Conventions. President Bush and President Uribe pushed hard after 9/11 to have the world declare the FARC as a terrorist organization and with very few exceptions succeeded. Along these lines, in 2002 President Bush authorized funds from Plan Colombia to be used against the FARC in counterterrorism initiatives.

The FARC continued to lose ground throughout the rest of this period. The training of the Colombian Rapid Deployment Forces, or FUDRA, was paying off and constant operations were yielding actionable intelligence. The Colombian Army had a trained anti-narcotics brigade and under President Uribe's National Democratic Security Policy a home guard of locally recruited men was created to have a presence in villages and towns where government forces didn't exist before. The Colombian government was reconciling with its human rights violations of the past and in 2003 signed a peace accord with the AUC to demobilize over 32,000 paramilitary fighters.

FARC from 2005 – present.

In 2005 the FARC launched a limited offense with advanced tactics that showed great improvement. Their equipment was of the highest quality and rivaled the government's arsenal. The offense included urban and rural terrorism with extensive use of landmines, car bombs, ambushes, and cylinder bombs. During this period the FARC relied heavily on the borders directly between Colombia and Ecuador and Venezuela. These areas became staging bases and provided a safe haven once they crossed over the border. The FARC attacks in 2005 and 2006 were aimed at exerting influence over the Colombian people against President Uribe seeking a second term with a constitutional amendment. It failed and President Uribe was reelected with the highest popular support of any president in Colombian history. Just like the protests using the "No Mas" slogan, the reelection of Uribe was a message of the will of the people in supporting his hard line stance against the guerrillas and narco-traffickers.

More than ever, the FARC operations started to lose their focus and it was harder for the secretariat to meet and disseminate information and coordinate attacks. The FARC secretariat met for its 9th conference in May of 2007 largely to espouse their ideological roots and rail against Uribe's National Democratic Security Plan and the "outrageous gringo interference."⁴⁰ More than anything the FARC strenuously reiterated that it had not lost any strength in numbers across Colombia and was as politically and militarily as strong as ever. This would be one of the last times the secretariat met for a conference and one of the last times they could boast about their strength.

Through a series of remarkable operations in 2007 and 2008 the Colombian government had some of their most critical successes against the FARC. The government's concept of starting in the municipalities and departments around the capital and moving outward from there was pushing the FARC into some of the most remote areas of Colombia. The leaders of several fronts, blocs, and the secretariat were killed in attacks. The old adage of chopping the head off to kill the body seemed to be the government's strategy. Remarkably, the FARC was disintegrating in some areas of Colombia and surrendering in massive numbers. Intelligence gleaned from FARC deserters made even more sensational attacks and operations possible. Perhaps the most critical blows to the FARC came in March 2008 when Marulanda died of a heart attack, secretariat member Raul Reyes died in a camp in Ecuador after an attack, and secretariat member Ivan Rios was killed by one of his bodyguards for reward money. The FARC has been described as a bunch of old men and young boys and girls and losing so many of its elder founding fathers and leaders beg the question of whether it is possible to replace them. Alfonso Cano was named Marulanda's replacement as supreme commander and others were found to bring the secretariat back up to seven members.

⁴⁰ Ninth Conference of the FARC-EP. *Freedom Road: Socialist Organization*. May 9, 2007. <http://www.frso.org/docs/2007/farc9conf.htm> (accessed February 18, 2009).

The Colombian government had achieved so many successes in this period with the killing of many FARC leaders, taking back traditional FARC territory, surrender of FARC members, and the rescue of Ingrid Betancourt in *Operacion Jaque*. The people were solidly behind the government and its policy towards the leftist guerrillas. The FARC would appear as if it was being suffocated from the constant pressure and operations of the Colombian armed forces. By the end of 2008 the FARC's strength was estimated to be approximately 8,000 to 9,000 guerrillas and could decrease to 3,000 guerrillas in 2009 if the same rate of defections, captures, and killed in action is maintained.⁴¹ (See Appendix B – Summary of the FARC Narrative and Strategy and Appendix C – FARC Chronology and Key Events)

Theory

The history of the FARC was established as a narrative in the previous section, the next logical step is to examine theory. The end of the last section summarized who the FARC are and what is their strategy. The next several paragraphs will answer what is it that makes the FARC unique and what makes them the same as any other insurgency. The answers to these questions will assist in categorizing the FARC in order to apply theory and doctrine.

What is it that makes the FARC in Colombia unique or different?

The FARC uses their military as the primary means to solve their problem. For the FARC, the political is a subordinate means to an end. There was a real chance for politics to work for the FARC when Arenas created the UP, but after the UP's harsh treatment and elimination politics have taken a subordinate role in FARC strategy.

⁴¹ Jane's Information Group, "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)," <http://www8.janes.com> (accessed September 25, 2008).

The geography of Colombia, like the geography everywhere, is unique with its own characteristics. These characteristics have shaped the FARC to act and behave a certain way. The FARC's relationship to the coca farmers means they need to be present in these geographical areas to impose their protection and *gramaje* (See Appendix F – Map of Drug Cultivation Areas in Colombia). The remote jungle and mountain terrain in Colombia have provided the sanctuary and space for the FARC to develop and grow. Migrations and movements in the past have led to urbanization on a massive scale in Colombia. The vast majority of the population lives in cities and rarely ventures out to the countryside (See Appendix D – Map of the Population Density in Colombia). The average Colombian urbanite does not understand the FARC and their cause. In this way the FARC's support base is rural, not urban.

The people of Colombia are generally homogeneous in their mixed ethnicity. Combinations of Spanish, Amerindian, European, African, Lebanese, and Armenian backgrounds are common. *Mestizo* has come to mean combinations of all ethnicities and is the overwhelming majority of the population. The indigenous peoples of Colombia make up less than 1% of the overall demographics. Another homogeneous factor of Colombian society is that over 90% are Catholic. The remaining 10% do not have a localized history of extremist positions. The FARC does not rely on ethnicity or religion to define its cause, but instead relies on differences in class and wealth.

A pervasive criminal atmosphere and shadow economy has developed in Colombia making it possible for the trinity of guerrillas, narco-traffickers, and paramilitaries to exist. An addition to the aforementioned groups is the hardened criminal, which all are to a certain degree. The money from drug cultivation and production is too alluring for any organization wishing to dominate the landscape to disregard or ignore. All of the above groups pay bribes, extort commodity tax, grow drugs, protect those who grow drugs, refine drugs, distribute drugs, and sell drugs in the name of profit. In fact, greed and violence perpetuated in the pursuit of their greed is the only ideology that the trinity and criminals share.

Colombia has lost over half a million people since the War of 1,000 days to internal wars. Until recently, Colombia was the kidnapping and murder capital of the world with countless lives lost, most of them in a very public and vicious manner. It is undeniable that in Colombia there is a propensity for violence and internal conflict. The number one publically motivating issue is the murders and kidnapping associated with the insurgents, paramilitaries, drug cartels, and criminals. To a certain extent, the people of Colombia might be able to live the drugs grown and exported around the world, but cannot condone the neighborhood killings and lawlessness that affects everyday life. The FARC is a group operating in this larger system that obeys the laws of violence. Until recently the government played by the same rules, but is trying to break the cycle of violence and honor its covenant with the people.

Even with a history of violence, the door to peace has remarkably stayed open. Compromise and consolation has always been possible even after the worst perpetuated violence. The best examples of the peace process coming out are when the PC and PL parties formed the National Front and when the government and AUC brokered the deal for demobilization. The Colombian government has initiated a peace process several times with the leftist insurgencies and will continue to do so.

The FARC is financially secure and breaks the common held belief that an insurgency needs external support to succeed. As mentioned earlier, the FARC is financially secure due to their involvement in the drug trade. However, the FARC still relies on external actors for what they can purchase and for getting their product to their support base. The FARC may have all the money in the world, but when they buy 10,000 AK-47s or 100 man portable surface to air missiles the illegal arms still need to cross into the Colombia somehow. In this way they are still reliant on external actors. What makes this problem for the FARC a little easier is that the same traffickers who get the drugs out, usually can get the arms or other products into the state and to their support base.

The FARC's organizational structure is hybrid. In most forms it closely resembles a classic flat wheel structure, but in other instances exhibits more hierarchy in vertical arrangements. The hybrid nature is largely due to the influence of narco-organizations on one hand and a rigid military structure on the other. For example, the FARC operates as cell workers, cell managers, and a core group leader while at the same time can operate as a squad, company, column, front, bloc, and a high command. Other than the obvious command control reason for guerrillas in combat, the FARC's desire to maintain a belligerent status over a terrorist label is the main reason for keeping the military structure.

What makes the FARC the same as any other guerrilla insurgency?

What do all insurgencies want? In general they want to overthrow the incumbent government and institute their own brand of administration of a state. The FARC is no different and desires the power to force political change in Colombia. Their strategy is a protracted campaign using Marxist agrarian ideals that is broadcast to the common man with arguments for land and wealth redistribution, nationalization of state industry and infrastructure, patriotic overtones of better traditions and values, and anti-U.S. influence.

An insurgency is possible because the incumbent government does not control all the territory within the boundaries of the state. Control means both physical presence and consent of the people. Control is difficult in the vast unpopulated areas in the eastern regions of Colombia (see Appendix D – Map of the Population Density in Colombia). Additionally, control is problematic in many areas of Colombia where the government lacks the consent of the people (see Appendix E – Map of the FARC Blocs). In the case of the Colombian government, the lack of infrastructure accounts for much of the lack of penetration. The lack of penetration accounts for a weakening of the rule of law and the social contract between the government and the people. However, the physical lack of penetration does not as easily explain corruption and impunity problems that can occur right next to the National Capitol on Bolivar Square in Bogota. The

reason for this is better clarified through a lack of penetration in the social order and lack of trust of the people.

All insurgencies are the weaker contestant right up to the point when they win. The FARC is the weaker contestant in the war as it relates to some obvious categories like overall strength in numbers, mobility, air support, and signal intelligence. The term “weak” is often misleading when applied to an insurgency and the new term “asymmetry,” which is just as ambiguous, has taken precedence. The nature of the insurgent is to fight in a place of their choosing that removes the weakness or asymmetry. The FARC does this extremely well. Their use of landmines to force the culminating point in the pursuit is not weak. Their use of human intelligence to know when and where an attack is coming, essentially spoiling any tactical advantage from surprise, is not weak. Their use of drug money to ensure the election of a political candidate sympathetic to their cause is not weak.

Insurgents are difficult to fight because it’s hard to tell them apart from the general population. The FARC operates under a level of anonymity common to many insurgencies. They can blend into their surroundings and use the hide in plain sight technique because when they are out of uniform there is little to tell them apart from the rest of the people of Colombia. The FARC is a guerrilla force that fights in uniform in the jungles and mountains, but also fights as a terrorist with anonymity everywhere else. In general, the problem of anonymity can be overcome in three ways; first, when you get your adversary to reveal themselves, second, you get others to reveal your adversary for you, and third, you establish conditions that reveal the adversary due to their exclusionary nature.

What do the theorists have to say?

Ian F. W. Beckett.

Beckett is adamant that guerrilla warfare and insurgency are the dominant forms of warfare for the past, present, and future. The strength of his theories is that they are well rooted in

history and facts. He adheres to some generally understood aspects of guerrilla operations as it pertains to difficult terrain, support from the population, escalation to conventional forms of warfare, and tendency to resort to banditry. For application purposes and for a hierarchy of terms, he believes insurgency is the broadest classification with guerrilla warfare and terrorism as subordinate efforts. Guerrilla warfare and terrorism are insurgent choices, or ways to achieve an end. The major differences between guerrilla techniques and terrorist techniques are the guerrilla rarely uses terror at the strategic level and terrorist actions for political symbolism rarely result in taking over the “state apparatus themselves.”⁴²

Two ideas from Beckett stand out in relation to the FARC in Colombia. First, Beckett puts forth the proposal that modern insurgencies are either spiritual or economic. This theory accounts for the rise of religious extremism in the recent rash of insurgencies in the Middle East and lumps all other insurgencies into something related to money and status quo. The end of the Cold War also ended most external sponsorship of insurgency. More than ever before, insurgencies around the world were forced to begin exploiting commodities and the drug trade in order to stay competitive or have a chance of winning against an incumbent government.⁴³ Second, Beckett has some interesting thoughts on the breakdown of the social fabric that occurs when both sides in an environment with insurgency fight the same type of dirty war. The bonds and loyalties within society become strained and security becomes impossible when both sides use violent tactics with no limits. His best example is of the Kansas and Missouri border during the U.S. Civil War where both sides used bloody brutish tactics that lost all control and created an “escalating cycle of violence.”⁴⁴

⁴² Ian F.W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750* (London: Routledge, 2004), viii.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

Anthony James Joes.

Joes outlines a seemingly simple strategy for effective counterinsurgency in Colombia. He maintains that success will only happen when the government establishes “secure control over the civilian population, especially in the rural areas.”⁴⁵ Along a similar line, Joes makes a broader statement that without security the people will support the guerrilla. In order to accomplish the type of security Joes has in mind, the counterinsurgent has two responses. First, physically separate the rural civilian from the guerrilla through resettlement. A historical example is the Briggs plan in Malaya where entire secure settlements were created away from known insurgent areas.⁴⁶ Second, if the political will is lacking to physically separate then establish local self-defense forces to drive a wedge between the rural civilian and the guerrilla. The best example of this technique was the development of the *rondas*, or Peruvian rural defense units, who were instrumental in the defeat of the *Sendero Luminoso*, or Shining Path insurgency.⁴⁷

A critical aspect of being able to secure the rural civilian is being able to reach these remote areas with forces. Joes describes the story of the Roman technique that is still relevant today. He believes the way the Romans exerted their authority and “held their empire together” was with a system of roads.⁴⁸ Road building, as well as other infrastructure development, takes a large amount of resources. The decision to build usually falls within the political domain and the economic aspects of this policy requires a strong resolution. Fundamentally important to political will is the idea that the incumbent government must always maintain the perception they are going to win. Colombian President Uribe makes a fine example for this point and always stays on

⁴⁵ Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 105.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

message that his program of Democratic Security is working and the leftist insurgents are losing more every day. The opposite is easily demonstrated using the example of President Pastrana's ceding the *despeje* to the FARC and its perception by most as a measure of desperation and losing to the insurgents.

Boulding and Herbst – the strength gradient and state power.

After the Joes discussion on Roman roads, it is appropriate to recognize some theorists who have applied much thought in the area of a state's potential influence as relative to a state's projection capability. Kenneth Boulding stipulated that "the amount of a nation's military power that can be brought to bear in any part of the world depends on geographic distance."⁴⁹ His theory is known as the loss of strength gradient (LSG) theory and is depicted easily in graphical form. Intrinsically, the theory finds that a great geographic distance can be overcome with forward bases that shorten the lines of communication. Boulding's theory was originally meant for nations acting in remote areas around the globe, but can be applied to a nation acting within its own boundaries. Jeffrey Herbst struggled with this concept in creating his theory for state power in Africa. He argues that "states are only viable if they are able to control the territory defined by their borders [and] control is assured by developing an infrastructure to broadcast power and gaining the loyalty of citizens."⁵⁰ A British Lieutenant-Governor in the Cape Coast understood this well when he defined the "limits of British territory as the distance of a cannon shot, or five miles from each castle or fort."⁵¹ As a validation to the Roman model, Herbst used road density as a measure for state power, broadcast capability, and penetration within a state's borders.

⁴⁹ Kieran Webb, "The Continued Importance of Geographic Distance and Boulding's Loss of Strength Gradient." *Comparative Strategy* (2007): 295.

⁵⁰ Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

Stathis Kalyvas.

Kalyvas adds depth to this line of thought with his theory of determining sovereignty in civil war. Sovereignty in civil war depends on the amount of state control within its borders. The space within the state borders is fragmented into 3 zones; the zone of incumbent control, the zone of insurgent control, and the contested zone.⁵² The zones are often noncontiguous and can be oriented along lines of communication to a support base. In this way Boulding's strength gradient and Herbst's distance for penetration apply. Within these zones the population is the terrain because control is gained from the consent of the people. Popular support is the best reflection of consent to authority for either the incumbent government or the insurgent. Intimidation or fear is the strongest way to secure popular support. Kalyvas proposes the reason this is true is that intimidation and fear are the strongest motivators to determine behavior. To support his claim, Kalyvas uses Jeremy Bentham's hypothesis on intimidation of the terror of the law which says, "the profit of the crime is the force which urges a man to delinquency: the pain of punishment is the force employed to restrain him from it. If the first of these forces be greater the crime will be committed; if the second, the crime will not be committed."⁵³ True authority is based in the power of punishment and impunity.

Indirectly, Kalyvas explains why counterinsurgencies require so many troops. In an insurgency, it only takes a small active minority using fear and intimidation to influence the majority of the population to support their cause or to remain neutral.⁵⁴ If the population supports the guerrilla cause they win and if the population remains neutral the guerrillas don't lose.

⁵² Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 88.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

Kalyvas makes his point with the following story. In 2003, Colombian forces went into the town of Cabrera, fifty miles southwest of Bogota, where the guerrillas had maintained control for several years. The guerrillas in the town fled to the surrounding jungle, but to the man, the town would not help the Colombian armed forces with information on the guerrilla whereabouts. A local man on the street was asked to explain why and as he pointed to mountains surrounding the town replied, “If they haven’t been killed, then what’s to stop them from returning.”⁵⁵ The local man was intimidated by fear of the guerrilla and the punishment they would they would deliver if he cooperated with the Colombian armed forces. The intimidation is made worse because of the guerrilla’s anonymity and the fact that informants for the guerrillas could be anywhere in the village or in the Colombian armed forces.

Kalyvas’s view on the subject is readily seen in an anecdote from the troubles in Kashmir. He asked an Indian officer in Kashmir to explain why the government needed half a million armed forces if there were such a small amount of terrorists. The Indian officer replied, “Because you don’t know who they are.”⁵⁶ The combination of the story of the local Colombian man and the Indian officer prove that Government forces need to be present in order to enforce the law and the people need to see them to believe the punishment will result from breaking the law. However, the idea of anonymity of the insurgent has erroneously swayed many theorists to conclude the same as the Indian officer. The government needs only to act as an active minority in contested zones and insurgent zones to assert power, influence, and intimidation. Kalyvas proposes that “there must be, above all, absolute determination to establish and retain a government police post intact and uncorrupt in every inhabited village. Authority must be re-

⁵⁵ Ibid., 228.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 90.

established patiently , village by village, into the ‘liberated’ area, dealing with the easiest areas first.”⁵⁷

John B. Alexander.

Alexander believes the problem of anonymity is made harder in Colombia because the “nexus between the drug cartels and the insurgencies” has become infrangible.⁵⁸ It is not enough to just have a policemen on duty or a police post in every town, the solution also requires reforms to strengthen the rule of law through increased accountability and transparency and rural and border development.⁵⁹ The solution to the problem that Alexander promulgates is best described using Geoffrey Demarest’s theory of property and peace. Demarest suggests the rule of law is based in property and that the formal contract of ownership best solves society’s conflict by exposing the actors in the system. He details five ways that advancing ownership and property laws serve peaceful conflict resolution; (1) property “feeds conflict resolution mechanisms,” (2) property “creates confident stakeholders willing to support the rule of law,” (3) property increases transparency through exposing capital, (4) property decreases illegal behavior due to owners not wanting to “risk forfeiture if they involve themselves in outlawry,” and (5) property provides “a powerful forensic tool with which to support” peace and justice.⁶⁰ Alexander stresses the need for using alternative methods of land reform to “provide relatively small parcels of land on which

⁵⁷ Ibid., 138.

⁵⁸ John B. Alexander, *Intelligence Scotomas in Central and South America*. The Proteus Monograph Series (Carlisle: The U.S. Army War College, 2008), 45.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 48.

⁶⁰ Geoffrey Demarest, *Property and Peace: Insurgency, Strategy and the Statute of Frauds* (Fort Leavenworth, Foreign Military Studies Office, 2008), 351-52.

farmers can grow crops to feed their families” and possibly agrofuels for profit in a government regulated market.⁶¹

Alexander would be the first to suggest that money spent on fighting “drugs and thugs” is not enough, nor has it ever been enough. Citing a figure that is staggering, the U.S. has spent over half a trillion dollars on the war on drugs since its inception 36 years ago in the Nixon administration, and what has it yielded?⁶² All that money and time was spent fighting symptoms, when the root of the problem is rural and border development and the effective use of property in the rule of law.⁶³

Thomas A. Marks.

Just like Alexander, Marks is bewildered as to why the focus of the U.S. and the world is not more on Latin America and the growing problem of illegal drugs and crime. He refers to Colombia’s FARC problem as America’s “number three war” after Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶⁴ The irony here, if you can call it that, is something was done right in the number three war. The something right originated with the Colombian government. They have always been in the lead in this war with the U.S. in a supporting role. Marks proposes that President Uribe’s 2003 plan, called the Democratic Security and Defense Policy (DS), is a classic counterinsurgency plan that is correct for the problem and sustainable.

⁶¹ Alexander, *Intelligence Scotomas in Central and South America*, 87.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 94.

⁶³ Border development is not specifically brought up previously in the monograph, but is an aspect of a state’s control of its entire national territory. The border areas in question are with Venezuela and Ecuador, specifically the Aruaca and Putumayo provinces respectively. The FARC uses these areas to evade capture from the Colombian government forces and as a logistics resource.

⁶⁴ Thomas A. Marks, “A Model Counterinsurgency: Uribe’s Colombia (2002-2006) vs FARC.” *Military Review* (August 2008): 49.

Colombia's first success was the correct understanding of the problem and threat. The two main objectives of the DS are "protection of the population" and "elimination of the illegal drug trade in Colombia," which are "accomplished through the application of national will, resources, and power."⁶⁵ The root cause of the problem in Colombia is identified as a "lack of national integration" as defined as the absence of "personal security resulting from the state's absence from large swaths of the national territory."⁶⁶ Personal security is threatened with an "explosive combination of terrorism; the illegal drugs trade; illicit finance; traffic of arms, ammunition, and explosives; kidnapping and extortion; and homicide."⁶⁷

The DS strategy is similar to FM 3-24's clear, hold, and build approach. The DS approach starts with restore control, moves to secure and protect, and finally transitions to consolidate through strengthening and broadening state services. In the DS approach Colombian armed forces are transformed to accomplish the task they are called to conduct, including local hometown defense units. Additionally, the DS calls for a joint command structure in their grid-like operations that takes advantage of the law enforcement force's contribution to act in the judicial system. Marks describes the grid-like operations as a concentration of security forces in an area that provide a "shield behind which restoration of legitimate government writ takes place."⁶⁸ In a war where the Colombian security forces have been accused of operating outside the legal boundaries, cooperating with paramilitary forces, and committing human rights violations there must be adherence to the rule of law in all government actions. In the DS,

⁶⁵ Ibid., 54.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Colombia has finally applied Sir Robert Thompson's third principle of counterinsurgency, that the government must function in accordance with the law.⁶⁹

Michael Crawshaw.

The British Defense Academy advocates a similar vein to Colombia's DS and recognizes the relevance of Thompson's principles to today's counterinsurgency operations. Crawshaw, in writing one of the Shrivenham Papers, warns against generalizing counterinsurgency operations due to the inherent complexity involved in each country where insurgents have a foothold. In his estimation, Thompson's five principles provide a guideline which then a country specific administration plan of the counterinsurgency effort must be applied. The best example of this concept can be seen in the British colonial experience when the doctrine was written specifically to the environment they operated in. For example, during the Malayan Emergency the British published the manual called Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malay, or ATOM, which they used successfully to defeat the largely Chinese insurgency.

Crawshaw makes another intrepid point with his use of the following quote from Oliver Lyttelton, "You cannot win the war without the help of the population, and you cannot get the support of the population without at least beginning to win the war."⁷⁰ Lyttelton was the Colonial Secretary of Malaya during the Malayan Emergency and observed countless counterinsurgency plans fail because of the lack of initial success. In Malaya, a country specific approach, taking into consideration all the complexities of the operating environment, was essential before multiple successes could lead to the beginnings of winning and subsequently winning the population. Crawshaw statement that "generalizations are dangerous" when they lead to direct

⁶⁹ Michael Crawshaw, *Running a Country: The British Colonial Experience and its Relevance to Present Day Concerns*, The Shrivenham Papers-Number 3, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (Cranfield: Cranfield Studios, 2007), 33.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

solutions without understanding the specifics of the situation, questions the brash production of doctrine from theory without understanding the consequences. Crawshaw's main position is the perfect transition to the next section and the discussion of doctrine.

Doctrine

The next focus of the paper is to outline the gaps in FM 3-24 counterinsurgency doctrine that do not include the dynamics of the FARC in Colombia. FM 3-24 was written while the Army was engaged in two increasingly violent insurgencies, one in Iraq and the other in Afghanistan. The Iraq problem was the primary concern and received the bulk of resources. Of the two environments, an argument could easily be made that FM 3-24 was written primarily for COIN efforts in Iraq because the situation there was approaching a tipping point where irreversible defeat appeared imminent. More importantly, this focus on Iraq permeates every aspect of FM 3-24 to the exclusion of insurgents operating elsewhere in the world with different traditions and strategy. Before identifying the gaps in doctrine for the FARC in Colombia, it is beneficial to examine FM 3-24 and summarize its main points.

Does FM 3-24 apply to all insurgencies or just Iraq?

Doctrine is supposed to inform the practitioner how to think and establishes "how the Army views the nature of operations, fundamentals by which the Army forces conduct operations, and methods by which commanders exercise command and control."⁷¹ The foreword of FM 3-24 is in agreement with the intent of doctrine and postures the manual to provide

⁷¹ Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-0, Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2008), D-1.

“guidelines needed to succeed in operations that are exceedingly difficult and complex.”⁷² Also in the foreword is the allusion that the reason for writing the manual was to provide soldiers fighting the insurgency in Iraq a guide to action and chance for success.

The first chapter of FM 3-24 reviews the history of insurgency with a discussion of the aspects of both insurgency and counterinsurgency. This chapter establishes the central view of insurgency and counterinsurgency operations and the rest of manual is based on the principles, imperatives, and paradoxes presented. So, if the authors of the manual got the first chapter right and accurately described insurgencies in the world today, then the succeeding chapters will be also be accurate. Conversely, if knowledge and understanding of insurgencies were left out or missing from the first chapter, then the rest of manual and the overall Army doctrine suffers.

The historical discussion of the evolution of insurgency separates into the period before WWI, the period between the world wars, the period after WWII during the Cold War, and the period after the Cold War until today. In the text, the problems facing the Army with the insurgency in Iraq continually surface as the only trend. Starting a counterinsurgency from a state of collapse or failed state and fighting an insurgency with worldwide revolutionary aspirations are just two of the frequent charges. The history leaves out the development of insurgencies in places like Sri Lanka, Peru, India, El Salvador, Northern Ireland, East Timor, and Chechnya. There are trends that exist in the evolution of insurgency that the history turns a blind eye towards.

Although published after the manual was completed, Jeffrey Record’s book *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win* presents a comprehensive history of insurgencies and exposes pertinent trends for external support and problems democracies face combating insurgents.

Iraq is a particular case where the counterinsurgency approach has been diluted because of the need to initially conduct post conflict reconstruction. At times, the result has been a

⁷² Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2006), foreword.

popularity contest that resounds with winning of hearts and minds as opposed to winning the war against the insurgents. By including persistent references to Iraq, FM 3-24 reads more like a strategic communication document answering the antagonists who said there was no plan for post major combat operations. The overall weakness of FM 3-24 is that in its rigidity of applying theory from observations in Iraq it has limited critical and creative thinking and promoted conceptual rigidity.

The opposite view is that our doctrine is fixed to time and space by its very nature and proponents of the doctrine freely admit that it only assists in the war you are in now. These same proponents would argue that the doctrine was perfectly placed for Iraq because that is where we have forces using counterinsurgency operations. However, doctrine written for combat that is ongoing starts to lose relevance when the ink is still wet on the page. Again, proponents would subsequently acknowledge the adherence to doctrine until something better comes along or the risk of failure becomes too great to bear. If this is the case, FM 3-24 should have been titled Counterinsurgency Operations in Iraq or Counterinsurgency Operations against extremist Islamic groups.

FM 3-24 outlines five imperatives and nine paradoxes of counterinsurgency operations. The five imperatives are sound and have a positive influence from John Nagl, asserting organizations that learn and incorporate lessons from Robert Thompson and Frank Kitson will stand a better chance at achieving success in counterinsurgency warfare. The nine paradoxes are mostly superfluous generalizations and bear the brunt of criticism leveled against FM 3-24. LTC Gian Gentile summarized the weakness of the sound-bite like paradoxes extremely well in his article "Eating Soup with a Spoon." He states the "paradoxes actually deceive by making overly simple the reality of counterinsurgency warfare and...[discard] the essence and reality of

counterinsurgency warfare fighting, thereby manifesting [the FM 3-24's] tragic flaw.”⁷³ Although the paradoxes were intentionally placed in the manual to force creativity in thinking about counterinsurgency warfare away from conventional warfare thinking, the actual result has been to lessen the appeal and value of the entire manual.

More importantly, FM 3-24 outlines eight historical principles of counterinsurgency operations that are similar to the principles of war. The word “principles” evokes the primacy of science and the ghost of Jomini. The other notion closely tied with the principles of anything is the checklist mentality where one can ensure success through simply giving attention to each of the principles in an operational plan. This is not the issue for discussion in this monograph, but whether the principles are helpful in analyzing the approach to the adversary. The principles of counterinsurgency in FM 3-24 are: (1) legitimacy is the main objective, (2) unity of effort is essential, (3) political factors are primary, (4) counterinsurgents must understand the environment, (5) intelligence drives operations, (6) insurgents must be isolated from their cause and support, (7) security under the rule of law is essential, and (8) counterinsurgents should prepare for a long term commitment. These principles will be the focus of doctrinal gaps with respect to the FARC in Colombia.

Where are the doctrinal gaps for the FARC in Colombia?

Legitimacy is the main objective ≠ Reassert control over the national territory.

In Colombia the democratically elected government is already legitimate. Politically, the people overwhelmingly support President Uribe and his administration against the leftist insurgents. The problem of legitimacy is really a practical problem of asserting control over the entire national territory. If a state doesn't control the full extent of its territory then legitimacy is

⁷³ Gian Gentile, “Eating Soup with a Spoon: Missing from the New COIN Manual’s Pages is the Imperative to Fight,” *Armed Forces Journal* (2007): 1.

problematic. There are two aspects of control, physical and psychological. Once physical control is established then the finer aspects of credibility can be administered like rule of law, the social contract of governance, and consent of the people. Joes provides a good example of the importance of extending control with Roman roads which align closely with the Boulding's strength gradient.

Unity of effort is essential \neq A unifying strategy is essential.

Unity of effort is important in a counterinsurgency because of the different agencies operating at the same time in the same boundaries. For example, at the tactical and operational levels there could be a multinational coalition with command and control of military forces operating with police forces while civilian agencies and non-governmental organizations execute a humanitarian relief operation with aligned goals. However, the optimal synergistic effects will only occur when there is a unifying strategy at the highest level. In Colombia, success was only possible with the unifying strategy of President Uribe called the Democratic Security and Defense Policy (DS). Marks describes the DS strategy as unifying efforts to restore control, moves to secure and protect, and finally transitions to consolidate through strengthening and broadening state services. The DS resulted in success after success which built optimism and increasing political will for the Uribe administration.

Political factors are primary \neq Political and military factors combined create synergy.

Often the point is made that political factors are primary as a way of pointing out that a military solution by itself will not succeed. However, this reasoning is better stated as one element cannot create success by itself. At any one time in a counterinsurgency operation, the point could be made that either the political or the military was primary to success. The truth is that both are necessary for success and when there is a unifying strategy combining both political and military objectives, then there is a chance to defeat an insurgency. Bard O'Neill has a good

way of describing the situation “that an insurgency is a political and military phenomenon...it is not an either/or situation.”⁷⁴ Colombia is a country that has been dealing with numerous insurgencies for the last century and when they have failed to defeat a guerrilla group it has been because of an overreliance on the political or military factors. Today, the Colombian government has a balanced approach between the two factors and is managing the FARC problem well.

Counterinsurgents must understand the environment ≠ Counterinsurgents must understand the adversary space.

The environment in Colombia is not Mars, some far off distant planet that no one truly understands and only decades of study and analysis will yield true meaning. The adversary or enemy is the subject that requires critical thought and understanding. The FARC is not just a guerrilla and operates at a nexus of criminals, narco-traffickers, and paramilitaries. Beckett describes the difference between a terrorist and a guerrilla, and the FARC is both. The best way to describe the FARC is a combination of egalitarian and commodity based insurgency motives, operating with a preservationist principle. The FARC operates in an environment called the adversary space and understanding this space is the key to breaking the insurgent anonymity and achieving success in counterinsurgency operations.

Intelligence drives operations ≠ Operations drive intelligence.

Intelligence does not arbitrarily fall out of the sky into one’s lap. Actionable intelligence is only possible with a series of operations that apply constant pressure and get inside the adversary’s decision cycle. Contradicting itself, FM 3-24 describes a cycle that develops “where

⁷⁴ Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Dulles: Brassey’s Inc., 1990), 154.

operations produce intelligence that drives subsequent operations.”⁷⁵ The dynamic that is created is a reinforcing loop. One could call it semantics as to which comes first, operations or intelligence, but operations are active while intelligence is reactive. In counterinsurgency operations keeping the initiative and staying in state of constant activity is the key to never letting the insurgent gain an advantage and initiative. The advances against the FARC in 2008 were the result of planned operations that yielded actionable intelligence and follow-on operations.

Insurgents must be isolated from their cause and support ≠ Insurgents must be forced away from their support and destroyed.

Using an analogy, isolation implies that the fruit will die on the vine without its nutrients. The Maoist example would be the fish will die without the water. It is simply a flawed assumption to think the insurgent will not adapt to the new environment or move somewhere else where cause and support exists. Counterinsurgency operations, like counter-guerrilla and counter-terrorist operations, are offensive in nature. In the simplest terms the counterinsurgent force attacks the insurgent force until they are destroyed or unconditionally capitulate. In counterinsurgency operations, war is still an act of force to compel the adversary to do your will. Using the Kalyvas example, authority comes from force and the power of punishment and impunity. In this respect, insurgents cannot simply be isolated, but must be forced away from their support and destroyed. The Colombian grid-like operations are executed with this principle.

Security under the rule of law is essential ≠ Rule of law and increasing transparency in society is essential.

⁷⁵ *Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency*, 1-23.

When a state asserts control to the entirety of its territory security will follow. The key aspect of this principle is the rule of law and what it provides. The greatest advantage an insurgent has is anonymity and rule of law takes it away. Rule of law, through expansive civil administration and property regulation, advances transparency and accountability in society. This is the key to insurgent recognition. Alexander and Demarest attest to the benefits of improving rule of law to counter anonymity in society and take away one of the insurgent's advantages. In Colombia it has been the combination of improvements to the judicial system for prosecutors and the DS contributions to police forces that have been essential to the recent success.

Counterinsurgents should prepare for a long term commitment \neq Counterinsurgents should commit to rapidly ending hostilities.

The counterinsurgent force that enters the war thinking it will be a long protracted effort requiring limitless resources and political will is going to lose. This is especially true in a democratic government where the insurgent will deliberately protract the war knowing that the counterinsurgent government has to go through multiple election cycles and has to constantly validate the cost of the war. The ultimate goal of an insurgent protracted strategy is to exhaust the incumbent government. If counterinsurgents prepare for a long term commitment, they play right into the insurgent protracted strategy. Another disadvantage to preparing for a long term commitment is that the offensive spirit is lost and the approach begins to look like a mobile defense. The mobile defense is nothing more than a holding operation with a series of counterattacks. In this counterinsurgency approach, the majority of forces are used for holding and not attacking. Consequently, this approach yields the initiative to the adversary. Therefore, counterinsurgents should commit to rapidly ending hostilities and quickly gain capability to manage the problem. This can only be done with a unifying strategy and adequate resources to find, fix, and finish the adversary rapidly.

Conclusion

The end of the FARC is closer today than any time since the last thirty years. Successes are widely covered in the news and as one pundit put it, “The Shine is Off the FARC” as guerrillas surrender in the hundreds.⁷⁶ No one is saying the FARC will give up tomorrow, but something has changed that is worth examining. Was it the election of President Uribe in 2002 and his new plan? Was it the military and police forces that benefited from improved resources and training who were finally were able to take advantage of their experience and leadership? Was it the people who have overwhelmingly grown tired of the violence and terrorism perpetrated by the leftist insurgents, narco-traffickers, and paramilitaries? Counterinsurgency operations are complex and there is no coup de grace solution in this monograph. However, the real question to ask would be, if Colombia only had access to FM 3-24 and the principles contained therein, would their success have been possible?

The resounding answer to this last question is no. The case study of the FARC in Colombia, explored in this monograph using a history-theory-doctrine methodology, demonstrates doctrinal gaps in the principles presented in FM 3-24. The argument has been made that FM 3-24 was largely written for the nuances of Iraq and is narrowly focused. The frame of FM 3-24 fails to understand the fundamental nature of insurgencies and comprehensively examine counter-strategies. Strategies and principles used in Colombia suggest a reevaluation of the counterinsurgency principles outlined in FM 3-24. Further research is required and multiple case studies should be included in updating FM 3-24. The intent of this monograph was not to replace one set of principles with another, but to search for deeper understanding of counterinsurgency warfare and identify potential doctrinal gaps.

⁷⁶ Chris Kraul, “Shine is Off the FARC Rebel Army.” Los Angeles Times, January 19, 2009, <http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-colombia-farc19-2009jan19,0,5274066.story> (accessed January 20, 2009).

APPENDIX B – Summary of the FARC Narrative and Strategy

The FARC is:

- the oldest, best equipped and trained, richest, and best organized insurgency in Latin America,
- based in Marxist ideology and class warfare developed in the 1960's through the 1980's,
- fully integrated in the illegal drug business in Colombia,
- financially self sufficient and does not rely on external support from ideologically sympathetic countries outside of Colombia, and
- not popular in urban centers or the majority of the population of Colombia, its base of support for recruitment and sanctuary is in remote rural areas.

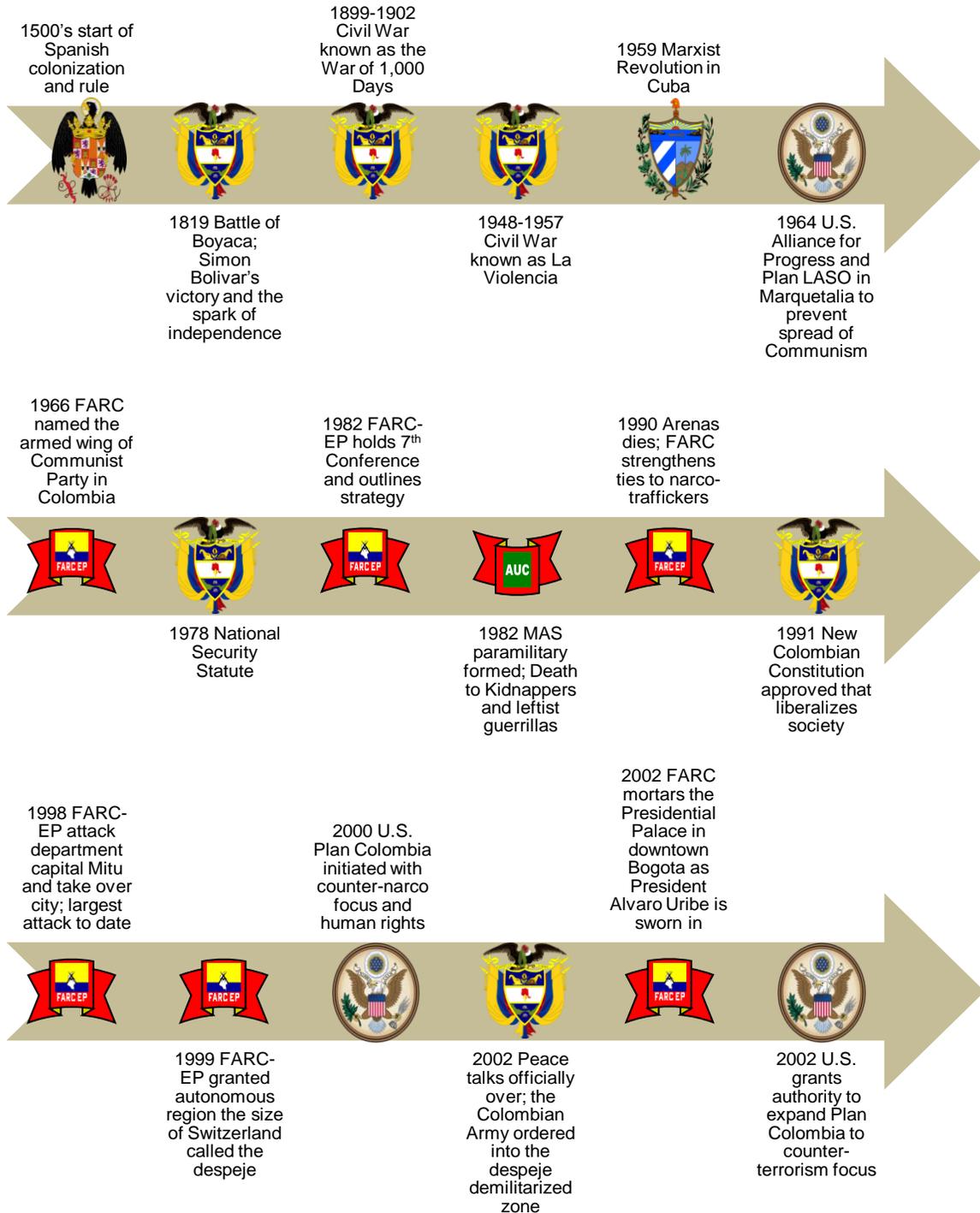
The FARC membership is not about:

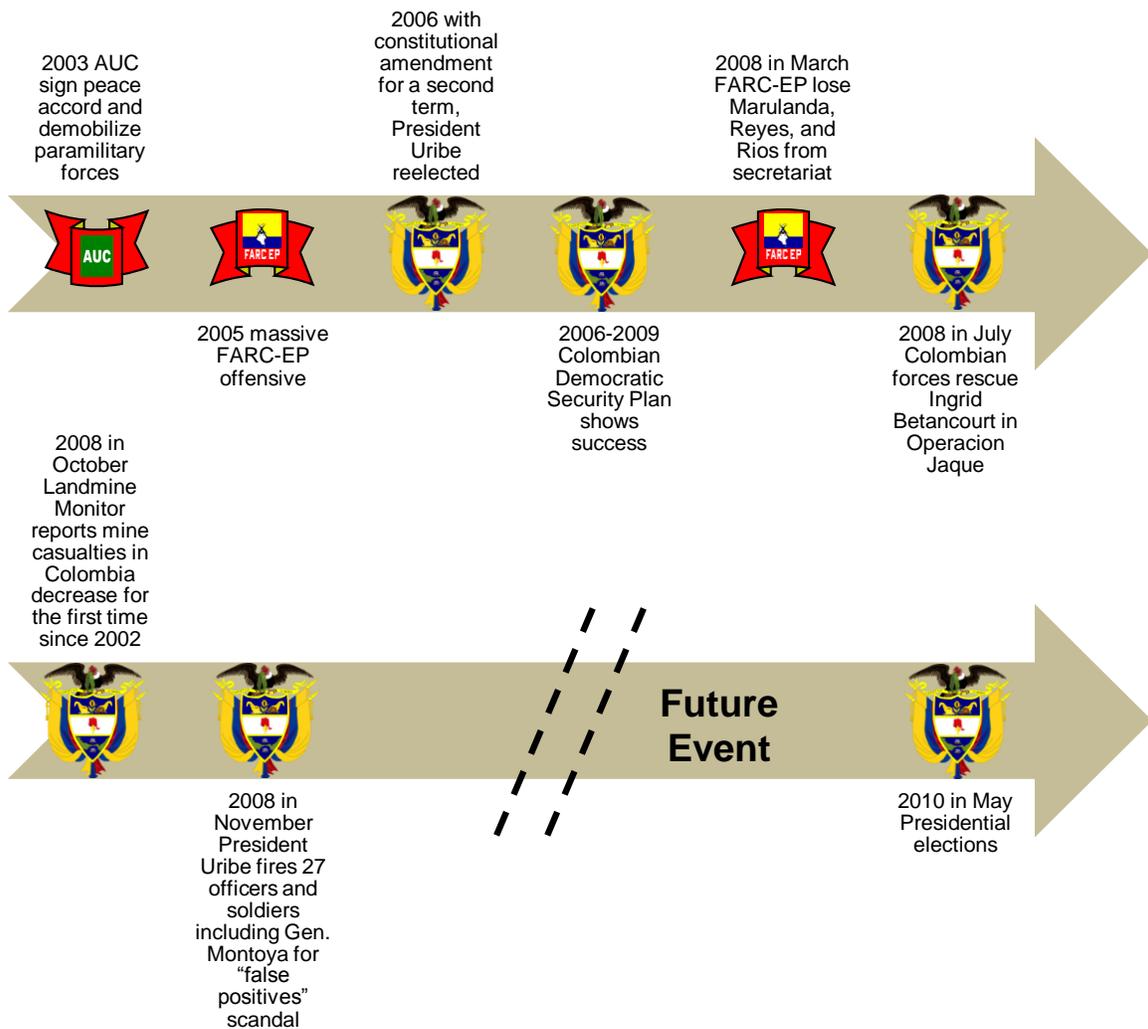
- religion, or
- ethnicity.

The FARC's strategy, tactics, and messages include:

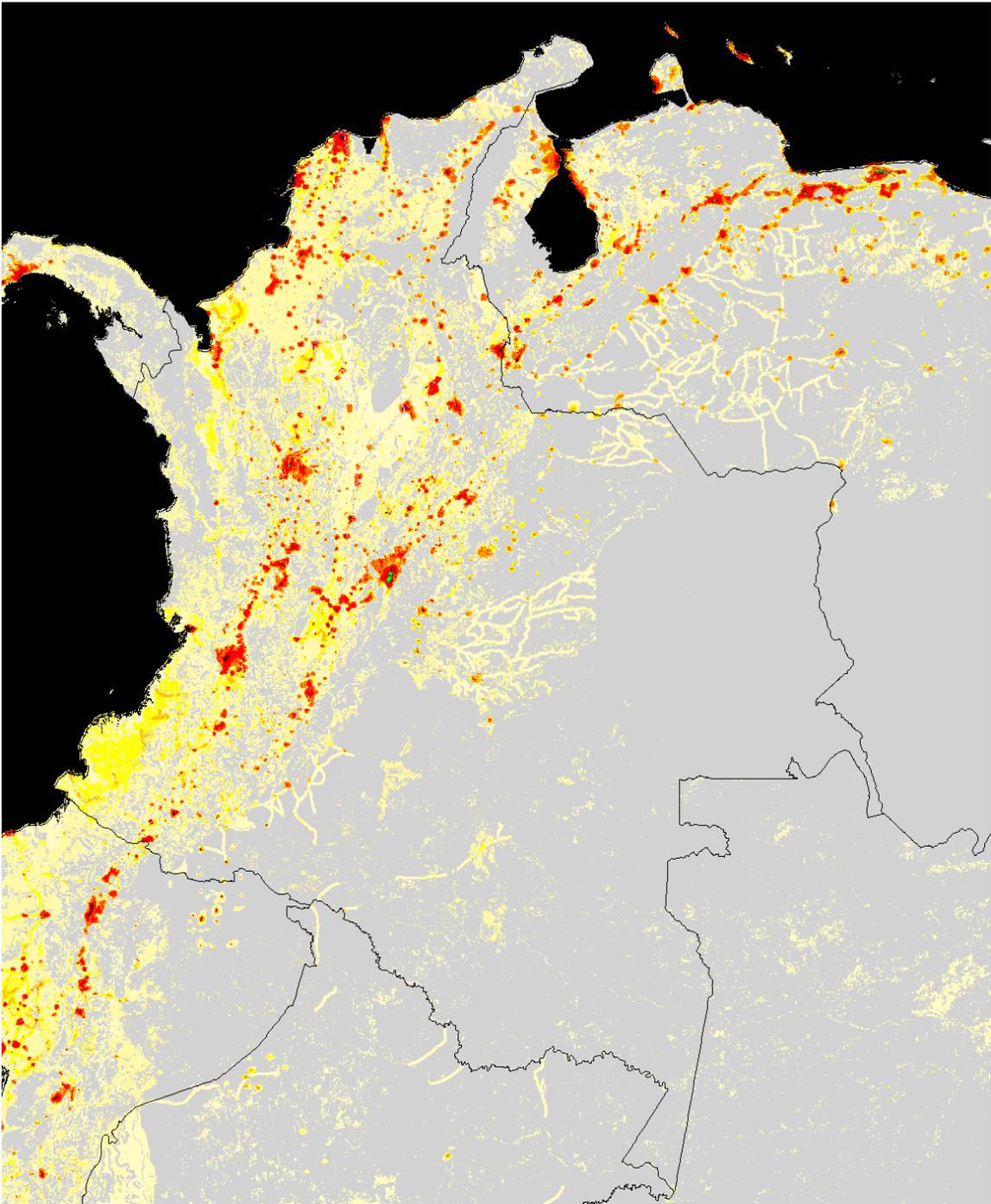
- overall strategic goal is to change Colombia into a democratic socialist state,
- protracted popular war approach with a recent trend towards urban terrorism to weaken the perception of government legitimacy,
- preservationist principle increasingly dominates and translates to the use of whatever means will give them an advantage and strengthen their power and control in Colombia,
- preference for military strength over political, power is achieved through a "barrel of a gun",
- using the peace process to strengthen its position and then renegotiate from strength,
- garnishing legitimacy as a belligerent in a civil war and not the terrorism label,
- fostering a relationship with Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Europe against the U.S. influence in Colombia,
- not trusting any other leftist insurgencies in Colombia (all other insurgencies are viewed as competition),
- advancing their role as the trainers for other Latin American insurgencies to sow similar violence in other countries with a leftist cause and gain support,
- using the border regions of Ecuador and Venezuela as safe havens,
- use and manufacture of landmines to protect lines of communication,
- using children as fighters,
- maintain financial self sufficiency and expand operations against existing drug traffickers to take over all stages of drug production and trafficking,
- using kidnapping, extortion, commodity taxes,
- labeling the Colombian government as human rights violators aligned with the paramilitaries in a state sponsorship of terrorism against the people, and
- communicating themselves as the true patriots of Colombia and the government as despots under the influence of the U.S.

APPENDIX C – FARC Chronology and Key Events





APPENDIX D – Map of the Population Density in Colombia

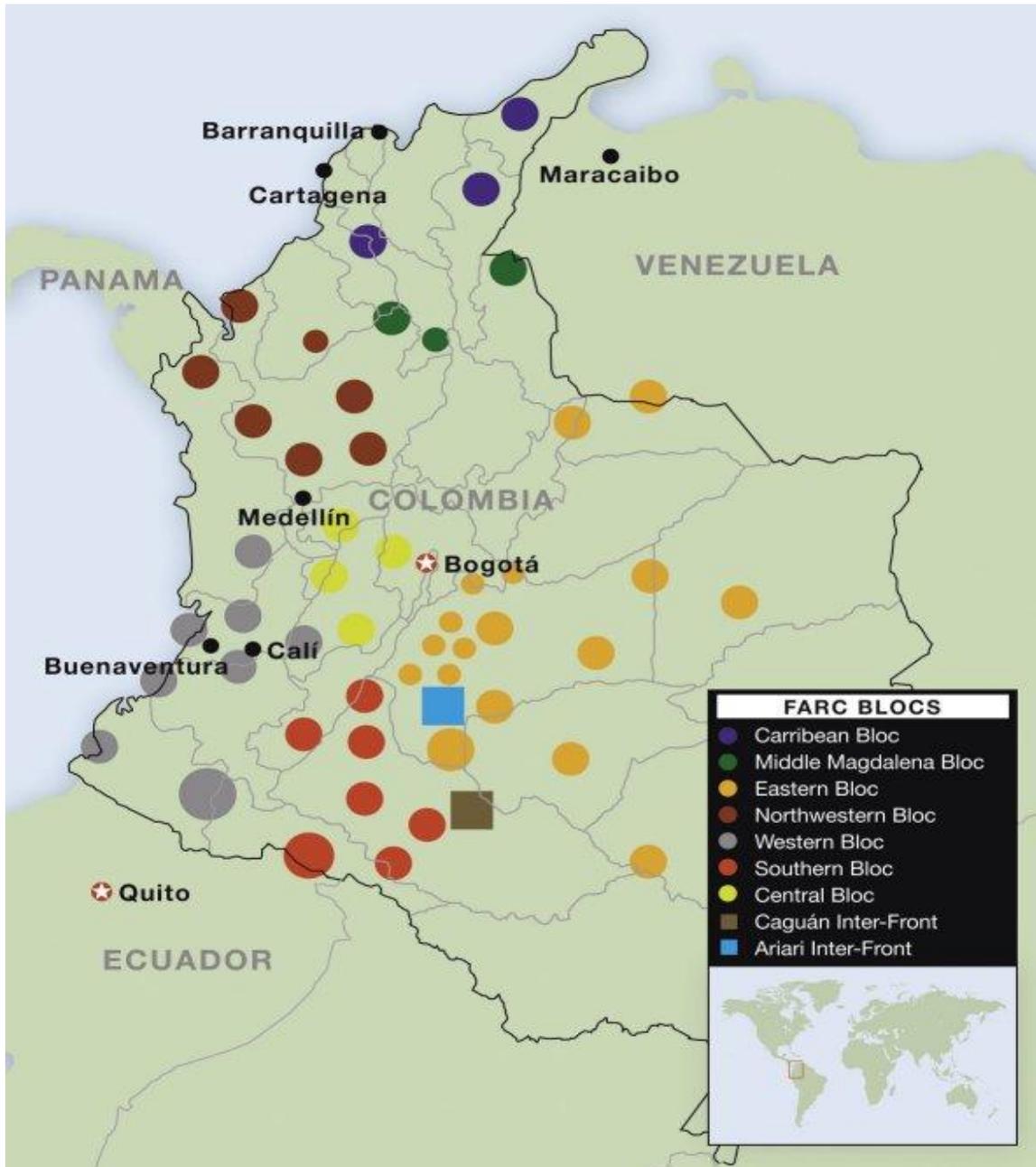


The population density of Colombia. Red showing concentration of population.

This is a file from the Wikimedia Commons. Commons is a freely licensed media file repository.
Source: ESRI, CIAT Data, Sep 2007, by Carlos A. Arango.

Reference: http://www.commonswikimedia.org/wiki/File:Densidad_pop_col.png

APPENDIX E – Map of the FARC Blocs



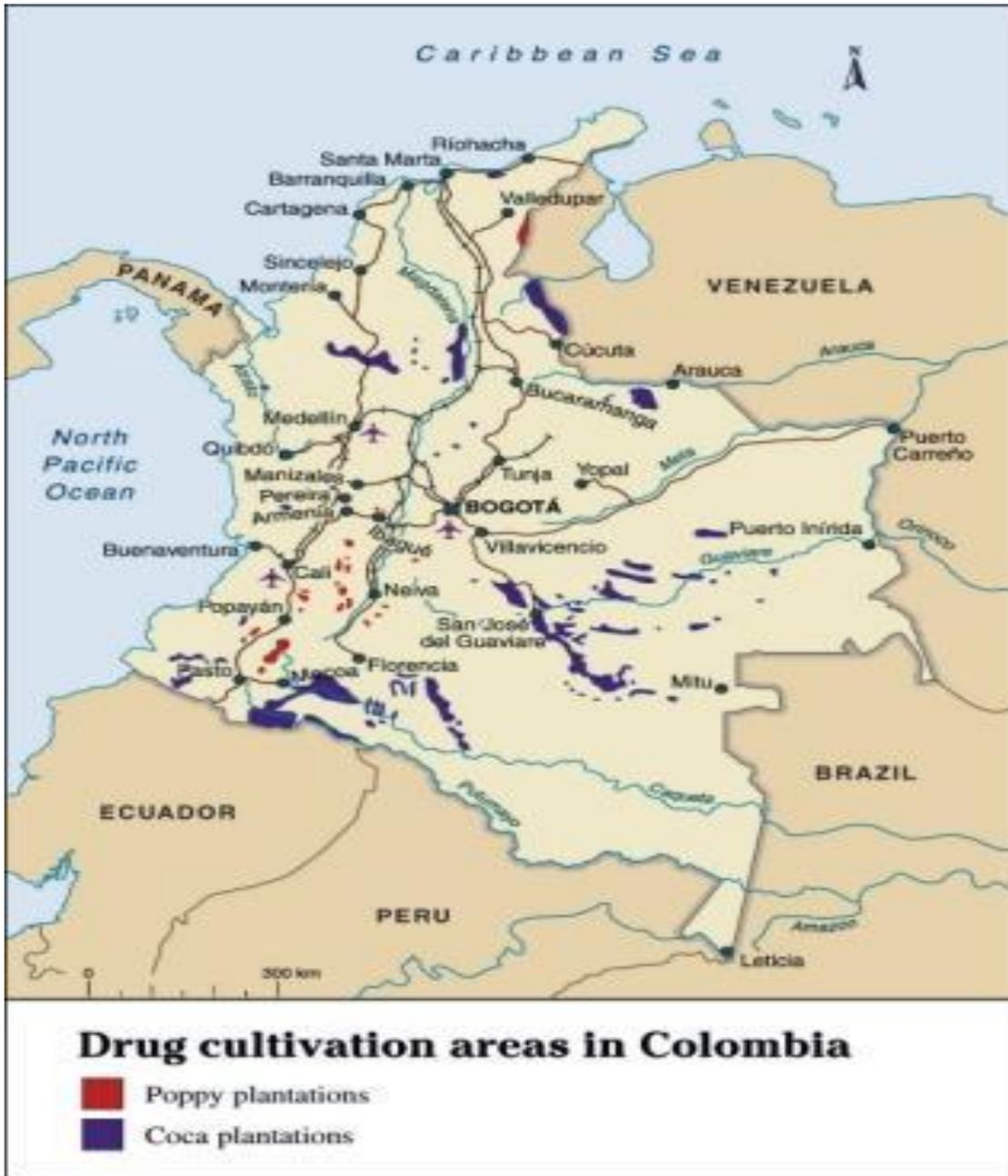
Terrorism & Insurgency

Date Posted: 14-Aug-2008

D Playford/IHS (Global) Limited, Jane's Intelligence Review

Reference: http://search.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/mags/jir/history/jir2008/jir10458.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=farc%3CAND%3Emap&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=JIR&

APPENDIX F – Map of Drug Cultivation Areas in Colombia



Security, Colombia

Date Posted: 11-Dec-2008

IHS (Global) Limited, Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - South America

Reference: http://search.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/samsu/sama000.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=farc%3CAND%3E2009&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=SAMS&

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