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**(U) Written Statement by  
Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs  
Assistant Secretary Otto J. Reich**

(U) Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

(U) Thank you for the opportunity to discuss U.S. policy and intelligence community support for U.S. policy in the Western Hemisphere, particularly Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, and Haiti. This statement will review U.S. policy in these four specific countries and then comment on current intelligence support and the vital role it plays in achieving our U.S. policy goals in the region, as well as highlighting where enhanced intelligence is necessary.

(U) The Western Hemisphere, perhaps more than any region in the world, is inter-dependently linked with the U.S. The region has benefited from the free flow of trade, people and ideas, and the U.S. has been a natural focus of that flow. Following the events of September 11, this relationship is now more important than ever, making this, in the words of President Bush, the "Century of the Americas." For example:

- 32.8 million Latinos reside in the United States, representing 12% of the U.S. population. One in 4 of these were born outside the United States. This is the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S. and assures that our ties with our neighbors in the hemisphere will become even more important in the future;
- The U.S. has sold more to Latin America and the Caribbean last year than we have sold to the entire European Union. In the last five years, those exports have grown twice as fast as exports elsewhere. As Latin America grows, the United States benefits. In recent years, every one percent expansion in Latin America's GDP was associated with an additional \$1.6 billion worth of U.S. exports to the region.

(U) The President's vision for the Western Hemisphere is one of free markets and free people. With the exception of a single country, there is a remarkable hemispheric consensus in favor of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and open markets. However, despite this consensus, functioning democracies and sound economies in the hemisphere face a wide variety of challenges, such as narco-trafficking, alien smuggling, human trafficking, money laundering and corruption – crimes that eat away at our democratic institutions. Terrorism is also an issue in the Western Hemisphere. There are "Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations" operating in our region, most notably in Colombia, Peru, and in the tri-border region of Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil. Elsewhere, there are concerns about terrorists with international ties abusing the hemisphere's financial systems to raise funds or launder money.

(U) A fundamental objective of U.S. policy in the Americas is to promote and strengthen democracy. The Inter-American Democratic Charter, approved at the Special Session of the OAS in Lima last September, reflects the strong hemispheric consensus that democracy is the only legitimate political model. Nonetheless, the struggle to consolidate democracy continues. In Cuba, the Castro regime denies its citizens fundamental liberties and political rights.

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Elsewhere in the hemisphere, we have witnessed a dramatic and positive democratic transformation over the last 20 years. Nonetheless, developments in Colombia, Venezuela, and Haiti remind us that democracy is fragile and democratic institutions remain under threat. Without a secure environment in which to successfully operate, the region's democratic gains could be severely weakened and even lost. Greater intelligence production, coordination and dissemination are now more important than ever to help accurately guide and support U.S. policy to combat these regional threats.

### Venezuela

(U) The tragic recent events in Venezuela highlight the challenges confronting democracy in the hemisphere.

(U) On April 11 hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans gathered in Caracas to seek redress of their grievances. Chavez supporters fired on anti-government protestors resulting in more than 100 wounded or killed, while Venezuelan military and police refused government orders to fire on demonstrators. During this turmoil, the Government of Venezuela took certain actions to prevented five independent television stations from reporting on events. Soon thereafter we received a report that after meeting with senior military officers, Chavez allegedly resigned the presidency. A provisional civilian government, led by Pedro Carmona, assumed power and promised early elections.

(U) On April 12, Pedro Carmona swore himself in as provisional president. The provisional government announced the dissolution of Venezuela's National Assembly and Supreme Tribunal of Justice. Our ambassador in Caracas warned Carmona that these steps were inappropriate and unacceptable. Subsequently, on April 13, Carmona, who had been under intense U.S., international, and domestic pressure to maintain constitutional continuity, reversed course and reinstated the National Assembly and charged it with selecting a provisional president.

(U) In the end, troops loyal to Chavez seized control of Fuerte Tiuna, home of Venezuela's Ministry of Defense, and arrested Carmona and his military high command. The rest is well-known: Chavez returned to Caracas and resumed his presidency.

(U) What prompted the events of April 11? The roots of the present crisis lie with President Chavez' polarizing, confrontational policies. Chavez has attacked freedom of the press, interfered in labor union (CTV) elections, criticized the Church, stacked the judiciary, and attempted to cow any opposition.

(U) In our meetings with GOV officials and the opposition, The United States has consistently urged a path for Venezuela of reconciliation and democratic dialogue ~~in Venezuela~~ in our meetings with GOV officials as well as with the opposition. Our position was that this situation should be resolved peacefully and democratically, and in accordance with the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

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(U) The U.S. opposes military coups in any democratic country. This has been a consistent U.S. position that has transcended administrations. The U.S. has worked too hard in hemisphere to achieve democracy in 34 out of 35 countries to change policy now. Indeed, the U.S. was one of the prime movers of the Democratic Charter of the OAS. Secretary Powell was in Lima on September 11. Shortly after learning about the terrorist acts and before returning to the U.S., he stopped at the OAS Special General Assembly to join his Hemisphere colleagues in approving the Democratic Charter. There can be no clearer message about where the U.S. stands on support for democracy in the Hemisphere.

(U) U.S. officials have met with a broad spectrum of Venezuelans over the past several months, including Pedro Carmona in his capacity as the president of the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce (FEDECAMARAS). However, the U.S. did not ~~participate in, in any way encourage, or in any way leave the impression that it would support a coup of any kind as an appropriate vehicle for change in Venezuela.~~ In all of our meetings with Venezuelans in the government and opposition – in Washington and in Venezuela – we underlined this fundamental principle of our policy. Ambassadors Hrinak and Shapiro did so in Caracas; White House, State Department and other government officials did so in Washington.

(U) Critics have asked why, if the U.S. is so concerned about democracy in the Hemisphere, it did not condemn the alteration of constitutional power on April 11 and 12. What we ~~knew~~ understood on April 12 was that peaceful demonstrations had been shot at, resulting in dead and wounded, that the military apparently had been asked to fire on the demonstrators and refused, that President Chavez had allegedly resigned and fired his cabinet, and that there seemed to be a ~~de facto~~ provisional government in place.

(U) As I noted, on April 12, upon hearing reports that Carmona intended to dissolve the Congress and fire members of the Supreme Court, our Ambassador – under instructions – phoned him with a strong message that this would be unacceptable. [?] After Carmona took this step late that afternoon, our Ambassador met with him the subsequent morning to [recommend that he reverse this step and to] reiterate that this ~~step~~ would ~~poison~~ Venezuela's relations with the United States. Our objective was simply to preserve Venezuela's democratic institutions.

(U) In the days leading up to the ~~April 12~~ crisis in Venezuela [the shooting took place on the 11<sup>th</sup>], we urged both President Chavez and the opposition to favor dialogue over confrontation. We considered then and now that the Chavez government bore most of the responsibility for the escalating chain of polarizing actions that led to violence in front of the Miraflores Palace.

(U) President Chavez is now back in office, and as the democratically-elected leader of Venezuela, he is the legitimate President of Venezuela. Legitimacy earned through elections must be maintained and nurtured through democratic governance that respects the essential elements of democracy. But as such, he has a responsibility not to undermine democratic institutions or inhibit democratic activity. The crisis of democracy in Venezuela will not be over until the sharp polarization is ever greatly reduced[?].

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(U) It is principally incumbent on President Hugo Chavez to address the issues that created this polarization and which led to the desperate events of last week. And it is President Chavez who must assure the re-establishment of full democracy, guaranteeing the citizens of Venezuela the full respect for their fundamental rights, including the right to express dissent. This was the message from the people of Venezuela inherent in the events of April 11 and the days leading up to that date. It is an essential step that Chavez has called for national reflection and dialogue.

(U) In addition, the international community – and especially the inter-American community through the OAS – must play an active role in strengthening democracy and freedom in Venezuela. OAS engagement in Venezuela is vital to highlight hemispheric commitment to democratic and constitutional government, to address the underlying causes of the political crisis in Venezuela, and to help create an environment in which civil society, the media, and the democratic opposition can exercise their fundamental freedoms. The Special Session of the OAS General Assembly, which opened on April 18, passed a resolution in the early morning hours of April 19 which ~~does just this~~, focusesing a hemispheric spotlight on the state of Venezuela's democracy.

(U) From the fall of Perez Jimenez in 1958, no country in South America had a better record of respect for democracy, alternation of power, and free elections as Venezuela. The Venezuelan people have proven, time and again, their democratic conviction, and will defend those hard-earned rights. President Chavez has an opportunity to rectify past mistakes and work toward conciliation and dialogue.

## **Colombia**

(U) Colombia faces grave challenges, including the outright assault by illegal armed terrorists on Colombia's government, society, and people.

(U) Colombia's 40 million inhabitants and its democracy are under assault by three terrorist groups –the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), National Liberation Army (ELN) and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). The three groups have a combined force of over 25,000 combatants, and engage regularly in massacres, kidnappings, and attacks on infrastructure and public utilities. The FARC and AUC are involved in all facets of narcotics trafficking, including cultivation, processing, and transportation. The income they derive – estimated at over \$300 million a year - has been key to their expansion over the last ten years.

(U) What happens in Colombia is of vital importance to all of us in the United States. Terrorism and narcotics trafficking not only exact a terrible human toll in Colombia, but their effects are felt here as well. The FARC, ELN and AUC all have been designated "Foreign Terrorist Organizations" under U.S. law; all three threaten a wide range of U.S. security, political, and economic interests.

(U) Colombia is the source of 90 percent of the cocaine consumed in the United States and is a significant supplier of heroin to the U.S. market. The FARC and the AUC are intimately

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involved in this trade, and in creating the lawless conditions under which this trade thrives. Both the FARC and the ELN have kidnapped and killed U.S. citizens, and regularly attack U.S. investments in Colombia. Since 1992, the FARC and ELN have kidnapped 51 U.S. citizens and murdered ten.

(U) The FARC, ELN and AUC also threaten regional stability. The FARC regularly uses border regions in Panama, Ecuador, Brazil and Venezuela for arms and narcotics trafficking, and resupply operations, and rest and recreation. For some time, conflicts between the FARC and AUC in northwest Colombia have led to the limited movement of displaced Colombians into Panama's Darien region. Venezuela and Ecuador have experienced similar problems with displaced persons at various times.

(U) The ongoing attacks on Colombia's democracy — one of the hemisphere's oldest — also have had a tremendous cost within Colombia itself. The AUC has killed two Colombian legislators over the past twelve months, while the FARC has kidnapped six, including Presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt. The three terrorist groups assassinated 12 mayors during the last year alone. 3,000 Colombians were killed by terrorist violence in 2001; nearly as many were kidnapped.

(U) Since July 2000, the U.S has provided Colombia with \$1.7 billion to combat narcotics trafficking and terrorism, strengthen democratic institutions and human rights, foster socio-economic development, and mitigate the impact of the violence on Colombian civilians. We also during most of this time have provided Colombia and our other Andean partners with trade benefits under the Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA) to encourage economic development outside of the narcotics trade. Our assistance to Colombia using Plan Colombia funds is limited to support of counternarcotics activities.

(U) On February 20, President Pastrana ended the demilitarized zone and the Government of Colombia's peace talks with the FARC. The immediate catalyst for Pastrana's action was the FARC's hijacking of a civilian aircraft and its subsequent kidnapping of the President of the Peace Commission in the Colombian Senate. These were merely the latest in a series of outrages by the FARC since Pastrana had renewed the zone on January 20. The FARC had also stepped up attacks on military and police targets, bombed key economic infrastructure, and refused to participate in good faith in peace talks.

(U) Since February 20, the Colombian military has reoccupied the main urban areas in the former zone, while the FARC has continued its terrorist violence. President Pastrana has announced a hike in Colombia's defense budget to cover the cost of heightened military operations, and has announced plans to add 10,000 professional soldiers to the army. He also requested help from the U.S., including approval to use military assets provided for counternarcotics purposes to help cope with the increased terrorist threat.

(U) Just as we supported President Pastrana's management of the peace process with the FARC, we believe it is critical that the U.S. help Colombia deal with the surge in violence that has followed the end of the demilitarized zone. We answered Pastrana's immediate request for help by providing increased intelligence support on terrorist activities, expediting the delivery of

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helicopter spare parts already paid for by the Government of Colombia, and assisting the Colombians with eradication activities in the former zone.

(U) We are also acting to address the Colombian people's broader needs as they defend their democracy from terrorist violence. In the counterterrorism supplemental submitted on March 21, we are seeking new, explicit, legal authorities that would allow our assistance to Colombia, including assistance previously provided, to be used "to support a unified campaign against narcotics trafficking, terrorist activities, and other threats to its national security." These new authorities recognize that the terrorist and narcotics problems in Colombia are inextricably intertwined. If enacted, they will give us greater flexibility to help the Government of Colombia attack this hydra-headed threat.

## Cuba

(U) Our basic policy is to encourage a rapid, peaceful transition to a democratic government in Cuba, one characterized by strong observance of human rights and open markets. In addition, we seek a Cuba which is a good neighbor in the hemisphere. We have a number of tools to accomplish this goal, both [dissuasive][this seems like the wrong word] – like the embargo and travel restrictions – and persuasive – such as outreach to the Cuban people to encourage civil society development.

(U) The President has asked the Department of State to conduct a complete review of the tools we use to implement Cuba policy. My bureau has been charged with the responsibility of coordinating and overseeing this review, as we have done on earlier reviews on Haiti, Venezuela, Colombia and Argentina. The review will look for ways to make our current policy more efficient and for new ways to encourage a rapid, peaceful transition to democracy on the island.

(U) Claims that the embargo is the reason for Cuba's economic malaise are ridiculous. Cuba's failed socialist policies are the cause of the ruin of Cuba's economy. A few statistics:

[first two bullets do not really prove that the economy is Cuba's fault, not the embargo's fault]

- The UN's Statistical Yearbook of 1960 ranked pre-revolutionary Cuba third out of 11 Latin American countries in per capita daily caloric consumption. Today, out of that same group, it is last.
- While Cuba's infant mortality rate is still among the lowest in Latin America, as it was before the revolution, it has not fared as well in comparison with the rest of the world. In 1957 the rate was 13<sup>th</sup> lowest in the world, ahead of France, Belgium, West Germany, Israel, Japan, Austria, Italy, Spain and Portugal. All these countries have since passed Cuba, which now ranks 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Cuba is the only one among the top 25 world sugar producers whose production today is less than it was in 1958.
- Cuba is the only country in Latin America whose production of rice is lower today than it was four decades ago.

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(U) The problem is not the embargo – it is Cuba's failed economic system.

(U) On human rights, the situation in Cuba has deteriorated of late. At least five hundred Cubans were rounded up following the incident on March 1 when a bus entered the compound of the Mexican Embassy in Havana; we understand that 130 remain imprisoned. At least 30 dissidents have been arrested, and are still detained, since the end of February. This is a major crackdown against the dissident community. Dozens of prisoners of conscience, including Vladimiro Roca and Oscar Elias Biscet, remain in Cuban prisons for crimes like denouncing "dangerousness" or "disrespecting the Commander in Chief."

(U) At the same time, there are grounds for hope. The "Varela Project" – a petition drive which takes advantage of a provision of the Soviet-style 1976 constitution giving any citizen the right to request a referendum on any issue if he obtains 10,000 signatures – has apparently garnered that many and half again more. The proposed referendum would focus on the need to change Cuban laws to permit free association, freedom of the press, an amnesty for all political prisoners, the right to constitute private enterprises, and to reform the electoral law. Project Varela demonstrates that Cuba's incipient civil society is real, and creates the possibility for the kind of peaceful, rapid transition to democracy which is our key policy goal.

(U) We seek to encourage developing civil society organizations by giving them information and the ability to access foreign media, including by distribution of radios. The Cuba regime ~~is~~ appears to be greatly threatened by these activities, evidenced by their shrill attacks on the U.S. Interests Section and Ambassador Huddleston for pushing our outreach program.

(U) The 23-21-09 vote on the Cuba resolution at the UN Commission on Human Rights on April 19 was a victory for the Cuban people. It demonstrates that the world is aware of their plight and supports their brave efforts to press for better human rights observance and real democracy in Cuba. It also sends an unambiguous message to the Cuban government: for the fourth straight year, the international community has found the human rights situation in Cuba wanting. For the first time ever, Cuba's neighbors in Latin America drafted, introduced, and broadly supported, with their co-sponsorships and votes, a resolution on human rights in Cuba. Particular credit must go to Uruguay, for tabling this remarkable and groundbreaking effort, and to all the other Latin American countries which lent their support to the resolution.

(U) Importantly, the resolution calls on the Cuban regime to make progress in the fields of civil and political human rights, and requests the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to send a representative to Cuba and report back to the commission. We will call upon Cuba to comply with the will of the UN Human Rights Commission and permit this representative to visit in order to help Cuba make the necessary progress in the field of human and civil rights.

(U) The President has made it clear that this Administration opposes **efforts to weaken the embargo**, including efforts to weaken financial restrictions on agricultural sales. We do not wish to throw a lifeline to a failed, corrupt, dictatorial, murderous regime by opening up our markets to Cuba. When democratic change comes to Cuba, we will end the embargo.

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(U) On Cuba and **biological warfare capability**, the United States believes that Cuba has at least a limited, developmental offensive biological warfare research and development effort. Cuba has provided dual-use biotechnology to rogue states, and we are concerned that such technology could support BW programs in those states. We [have called and will continue to] call upon Cuba to cease all BW-applicable cooperation with rogue states and to fully comply with all its obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention.

(U) Since September 11, Cuba has mounted a PR campaign against its inclusion on our **terrorism list**. Cuba was designated a state sponsor of terrorism in 1982, principally for supporting terrorist groups in Latin America. It remains on the list of state sponsors of terrorism (the "Terrorism List") for supporting terrorist-list organizations, including the FARC and ETA and for harboring fugitives from U.S. justice, including domestic terrorists.

(U) A statutory provision provides for certain criteria and procedures for removal from the Terrorism List. Cuba falls far short of the requirements set forth in the statute. Its response to the global war on terrorism has been little different from that of Iraq, notwithstanding its decision not to oppose-criticize the use of the Guantánamo Bay Naval Station for detainees.

(U) Cuba continues to give aid and comfort to members of other terrorist organizations, including the FARC. We continue to be concerned over Cuba's involvement with the FARC. The report that one of the IRA members arrested in Colombia last year was a resident in Cuba is disturbing.

(U) Cuba's involvement with terrorists appears to be expanding [?] to other parts of the region. At least one member of the Chilean terrorist group FPMR, recently arrested in Brazil, apparently found refuge in Cuba after escaping from a Chilean prison in 1996.

## Haiti

(U) Haiti is gearing up to celebrate its bicentennial in 2004. This is an important milestone. The close ties that bind us to the Haitian people are enhanced by the fact that the U.S. and Haiti are the hemisphere's oldest and second oldest republics.

(U) Sadly, not all is well in Haiti, the hemisphere's poorest country and perhaps its most troubled democracy. Corruption, narcotics trafficking, human rights abuses, increasing authoritarianism, and a declining economy threaten Haiti's frail institutions. This situation is a significant challenge for the friends of Haiti in the hemisphere and elsewhere.

(U) We want a fully democratic Haiti – one that is more prosperous and respectful of human rights. With a robust democracy, Haitians will enjoy a better standard of living, and the U.S. will enjoy improved national security in terms of diminished threats from drug trafficking and illegal migration.

(U) Our Haiti policy rests on four pillars, all equally important. They are:

- Support efforts to strengthen democracy and improve respect for human rights;
- Provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable Haitians, and actively promote sustainable economic development;
- Discourage illegal migration, which threatens maritime safety and the lives of those who risk dangerous sea travel; and
- Stem the flow of illegal drugs through Haiti to the U.S.; roughly 10 to 15 percent of all cocaine consumed in the United States transits through Haiti.

(U) We are disappointed at the failure of the Government of Haiti and the opposition to reach an accord that would permit them to move forward in rectifying the flawed elections of May 2000. There has been some progress, in large part due to the personal efforts of the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS. However, these efforts will bear no fruit until the parties get serious, get to work and get together.

(U) Political violence – for example, attacks on police facilities in July 2001 and an armed assault on the National Palace and mob attacks on the opposition in December 2001 – is a persistent threat to dialogue and reconciliation. Intransigence on the part of all political parties has put into question the commitment of Haiti's political leaders to resolving the impasse. Boycotting the electoral process, like some political figures have threatened, is not helpful either. Democracy only succeeds when everyone works at it.

(U) We are hopeful that the recently arrived OAS mission in Haiti can help investigate the political violence and create a more secure environment for renewed negotiations. We have worked closely with the expanded "Friends of Haiti" grouping to encourage broad international support for these efforts.

(U) Neither the OAS, nor the United States, nor any other foreign entity can impose the needed reconciliation. Only Haitians can bring about a solution to the Haitian tragedy.

(U) And a tragedy it is. We are deeply concerned by the overall deterioration in respect for human rights and the escalating political violence. The most egregious problems are impunity, officially sanctioned extrajudicial police activity (known as "zero tolerance"), corruption, and threats against freedom of expression. The harassment and intimidation of journalists is extremely troubling, and must cease. Several dozen journalists have fled Haiti since mid-December and the politically motivated killings of journalists Jean Dominique and Brignol Lindor remain unresolved.

(U) The United States will continue efforts to address these issues at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and in the U.N. General Assembly. We have also delivered a series of tough messages to the Haitian government. In this regard, we welcome the recent arrests of notorious political gang leader Ronald "Cadavre" Camille and other criminals.

(U) We have no intention of giving up on Haiti. We are certain that our relations will flourish with the implementation of commitments to resolve the electoral crisis, strengthen democracy, and improve respect for human rights. This is what President Aristide committed to Presidents Clinton and Bush with an eight-point agenda that included measures to resolve the flawed legislative elections, improve counternarcotics cooperation, strengthen democracy, and address security, migration, and human rights issues.

(U) President Bush has indicated to the Haitian president that these eight points are a good starting point for realigning the relationship between our two countries, and for advancing the best interests of the Haitian people.

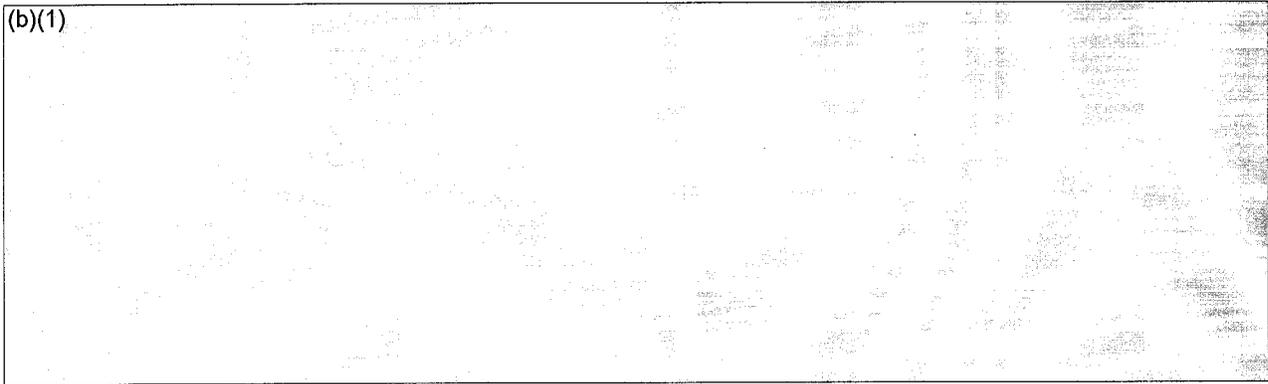
(U) As an interim measure, if Aristide reaches a national agreement with the opposition and resolves the electoral crisis, we will support renewed lending from the Inter-American Development Bank and other international financial institutions. Closer U.S. engagement with the Government of Haiti, however, will require substantial progress on Aristide's eight points, particularly on issues that have the most direct impact on our national security.

(U) Whatever our policy differences with the Government of Haiti, we will not abandon the Haitian people. Overall U.S. humanitarian assistance for the past three years was more than \$265 million, a substantial amount. Programs funded this year include over \$50 million for food assistance, child immunization, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, primary school education, agricultural development, environmental protection, disaster preparedness, and civic society strengthening. There are no sanctions against the Haitian people. We simply choose to channel our assistance to them through NGOs. The Government of Haiti's shortcoming with regard to drugs, corruption, elections, and human rights preclude our direct assistance or assistance channeled through its entities.

### **Intelligence Support for U.S. Policy in the Hemisphere**

(U) To advance our policy objectives in the Americas, we employ a variety of instruments: diplomatic, political, and economic. In addition, intelligence support remains critical. Intelligence can provide essential information as to the plans, intentions, and capabilities of key actors in foreign states, helping us to both predict future behavior and providing a more accurate context to shape and carry out U.S. policy. I will briefly touch on the role of the intelligence community in supporting U.S. policy and decision-makers and where needs exist for enhanced intelligence.

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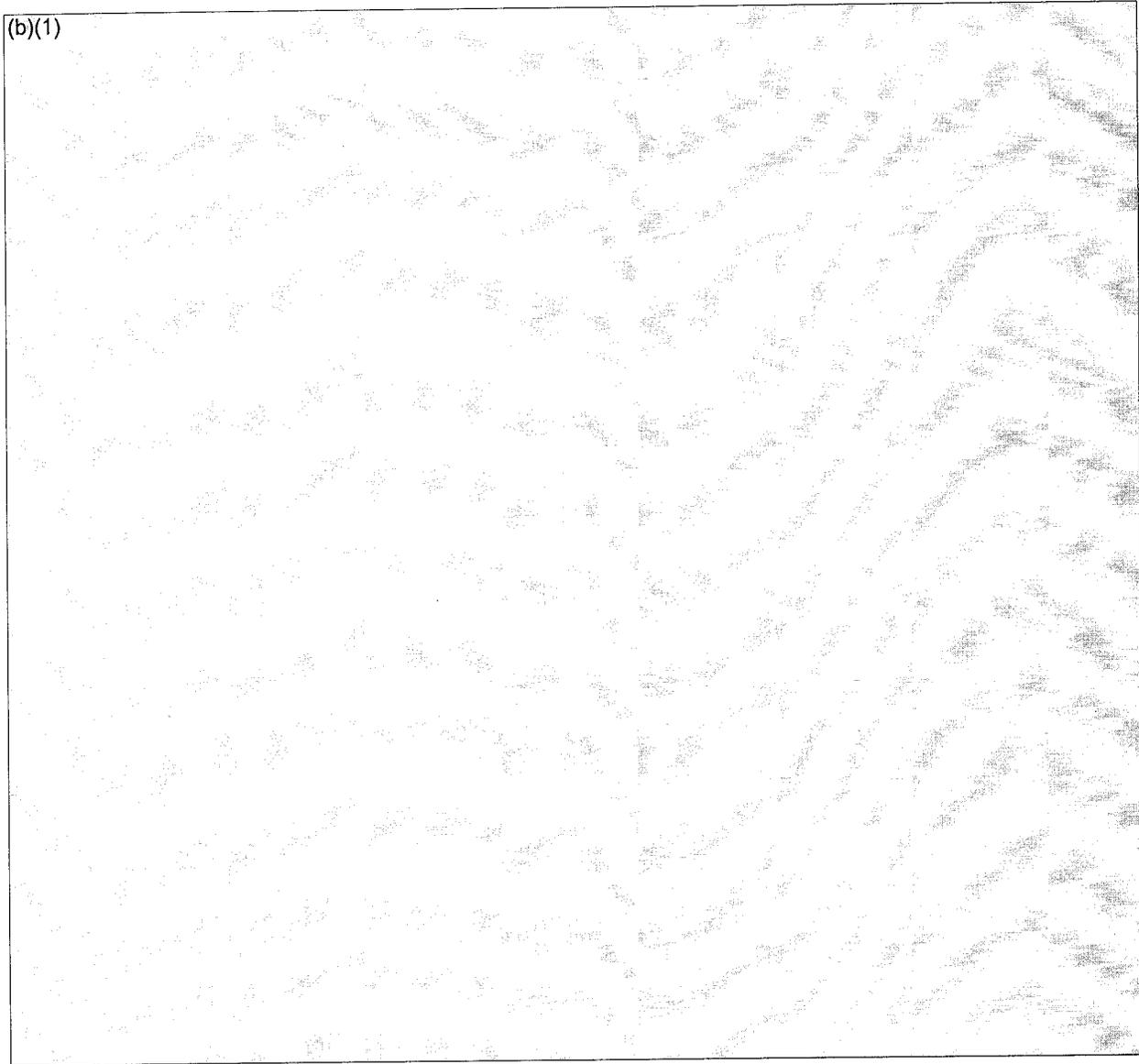
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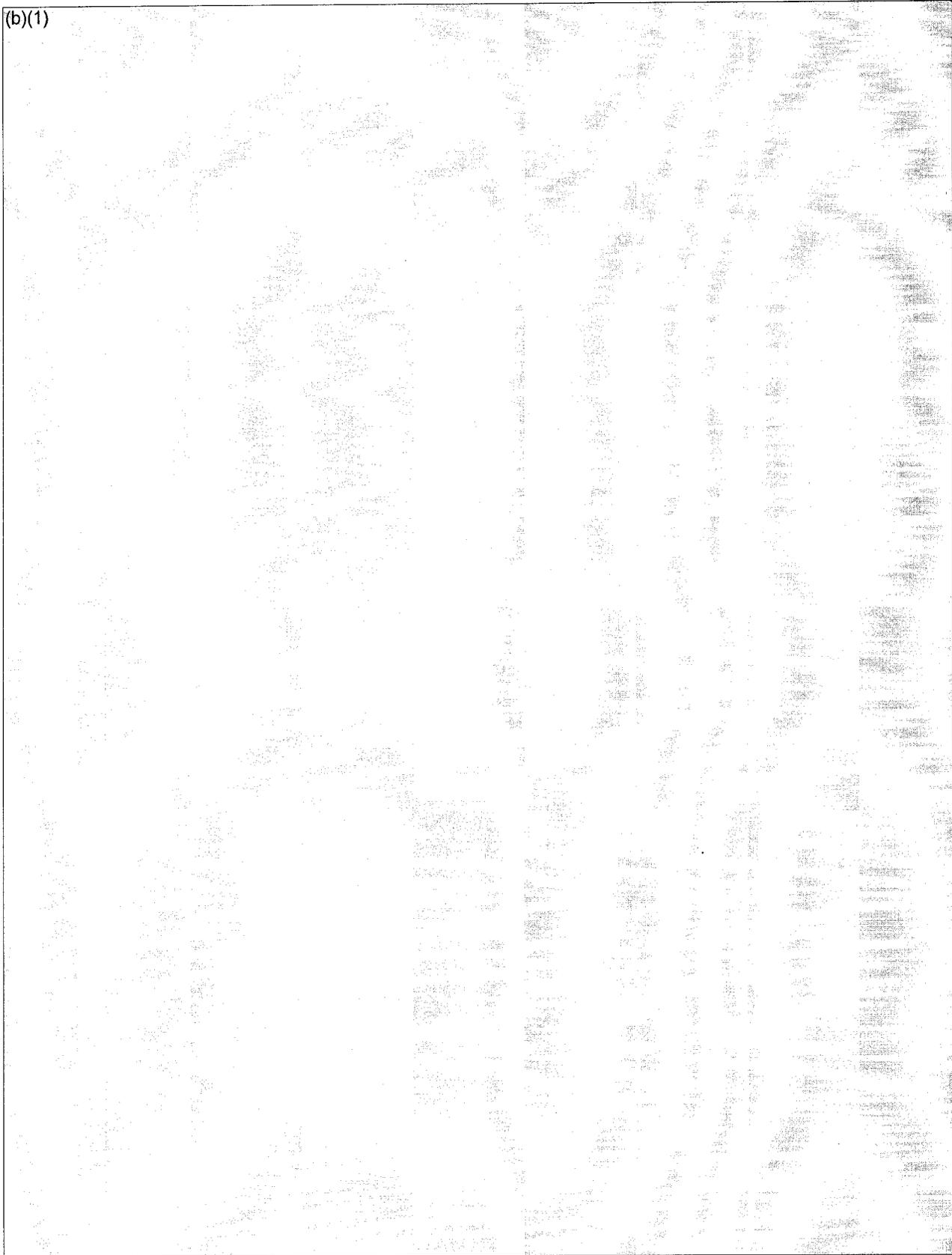
**Colombia:**

(U) Our ability to provide Colombia with real time intelligence support on terrorist activities is critical to the efforts to combat the FARC, AUC, and ELN. Prior to February 20, our intelligence support to the Government of Colombia was largely limited to counternarcotic operations and force protection.

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**Conclusion**

(U) The Western Hemisphere has never been more important to us. The countries of the Americas are our neighbors both physically and psychologically, they are our partners in advancing free trade and democracy, and they are our allies in confronting terrorism and crime.

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However, the hemisphere's democracies require a secure environment in which to successfully operate. This means confronting and removing the criminals, drug smugglers, human traffickers, money launderers, corrupt officials, and terrorists from our hemisphere. This can only be done if we can successfully identify, locate, seize and prosecute these individuals and eliminate their organizations.

(U) Each of the countries outlined here represents a high priority for the U.S. because of these challenges. In order to implement successful policy to promote freedom and defend democracies in crisis in countries such as these, and other countries in the hemisphere, we need continued and enhanced intelligence tools. The assets involved now will serve us far better than the more extensive assets that would be required if our policy is unsuccessful.

(U) Despite events taking place elsewhere in the world that require increased intelligence efforts, the Western Hemisphere cannot be neglected. As seen in Colombia and the Tri-Border region, organized crime and terrorism is taking place in our own backyard. Cuba remains a security threat. In Haiti, we need continued insight into the plans of Aristide and his inner circle. The events of April 11-14 in Venezuela confirm the need to carefully track the plans and intentions of President Chavez. We must not let a region that has embraced democracy, free trade and respect for human rights slide back into the morass from which they have fought so long to escape. As the world's first and most powerful defender of freedom, we owe the nations of this hemisphere – as our neighbors and allies – this effort to aid them in their struggle. Intelligence provides us a key instrument in this effort.

(U) Again, thank you for this opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee.

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