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Talking Points for ADDI

## COLOMBIA:

The New President and His Drug Policies

All indications point to a commitment by President Virgilio Barco to continued aggressive antinarcotics efforts.

- Although he ignored narcotics in his campaign, Barco condemned drug trafficking strongly in his inaugural address last Thursday, and he has expressed personal determination to combat the trade in conversations with US officials.
- He is very concerned about the narcotics-guerrilla connection, especially in the southern and eastern Llanos (jungle) region where many cocaine laboratories are located and the largest insurgent group holds control.
- Also of great concern are rising domestic drug abuse and continuing trafficker threats to government officials, especially judges.

*inaugural**narc  
guerrilla*

Barco wants to work closely with Washington, but will pay careful attention to nationalist concerns. He faces controversy fanned by traffickers over US-backed drug control and law enforcement efforts.

- Although public perception of narcotics as a US problem is changing, traffickers have played on environmental fears to undermine support for aerial marijuana eradication. Testing continues for an effective herbicide against coca.
- Barco is a strong supporter of the bilateral extradition treaty, which he signed as Ambassador to Washington in 1979. He may come under pressure to move for renegotiation; traffickers continue efforts to intimidate or bribe judges and law enforcement officials. A law passed last January toughens penalties for traffickers, but is still untested in court.
- The murder of a key Supreme Court justice by traffickers last month could rekindle public support of government prosecution efforts, but major traffickers will continue to use fear as a weapon against the government. Barco has pledged to protect the judges, and will probably ask for US aid to upgrade security.

*environ-  
ment**extrad.  
treaty**judge  
murder*US*Security  
assist 25X1-*

The new President will probably continue or expand current eradication and interdiction efforts. He wants to commit more resources to drug control, and can be expected to ask for increased US assistance and training.

*drug  
training*

- With no detailed strategy as yet, Barco will have to move fast to avoid losing ground in programs started by Betancur. Appointments to key law enforcement positions will be critical; two outgoing top police officials have been particularly effective, and the caliber of their replacements will have a direct impact on the new government's drug control performance.
- Barco will push for greater regional cooperation against drug traffickers and insurgents, and will probably support US efforts to establish a regional interdiction unit.

#### Impact of Operation Blast Furnace

- Colombian press coverage has been mostly factual, but there has been some criticism of US military presence in Bolivia.
- The new administration is likely to continue active cooperation with Bolivia, and police officials may recommend participation in future drug control operations there.
- However, Barco is unlikely to allow a similar operation in Colombia. Former President Betancur worried Blast Furnace could hurt bilateral efforts, and Barco--who does not favor in-country training by US troops--shares widespread sensitivity to use of US military force in Colombia. Top officials agree Blast Furnace was necessary, but say the situation is different in Colombia.

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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Denied