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Annual Report of Interdiction of Aircraft Engaged in Illicit Drug Trafficking

Colombia was the only country for which a Presidential Determination under 22 USC § 2291-4 was in effect during calendar year 2017. The President signed Presidential Determination 2017-10 on July 21, 2017 for Colombia certifying: 1) interdiction of aircraft reasonably suspected to be primarily engaged in illicit drug trafficking in that country's airspace was necessary because of the extraordinary threat posed by illicit drug trafficking to the national security of that country, and 2) that country had appropriate procedures in place to protect against innocent loss of life in the air and on the ground in connection with such interdiction, which at a minimum included effective means to identify and warn an aircraft before the use of force was directed against the aircraft.

Consistent with 22 USC § 2291-4(c), this report contains the following information for Colombia (from January 1 through December 15, 2017): A) the nature of the illicit drug trafficking threat to the country; B) an explanation of safety procedures in place to protect against the innocent loss of life in the air and on the ground in connection with interdiction, including any training and other mechanisms in place to ensure adherence to such procedures; C) a description of assistance provided by the United States to the interdiction program; and D) a summary of the country's aircraft interdiction activity for which the United States provided assistance in calendar year 2017.

Colombia

A. On August 21, 2003, the Air Bridge Denial (ABD) program in Colombia began operations. In making a 15th consecutive certification for Colombia on July 21, 2017, the President determined, inter alia, narcotics trafficking continues to pose an extraordinary threat to Colombia's national security that renders air interdiction necessary. The threat drug trafficking poses to Colombia is demonstrated by various factors, including significant annual increases in coca cultivation and potential pure cocaine production each year from 2013 to 2016. Colombia is the world's largest producer of cocaine, largest cultivator of coca, and a supplier of cocaine and heroin to the U.S. market. More than 90 percent of the cocaine seized in the United States is of Colombian origin. The drug trade continues to severely undermine the country's security and ability to implement the peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) by providing one of the main sources of income for Colombia's illegally armed groups – the most significant of which have also been designated by the Secretary of State as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. The United States and Europe remain the primary markets for Colombian cocaine. Moreover, Colombian drug trafficking organizations use the significant profits from their lucrative illicit drug trade to suborn Colombian officials and pay illegal armed groups to protect their organizations. The illegal revenue generated by the Colombian drug trade also disrupts the licit Colombian economy, presents a long-term corrosive threat to democratic institutions of government and law enforcement by promoting a culture of violence. Illegal armed groups continue to represent a significant and growing challenge to law enforcement and security by absorbing weaker and smaller competitors, consolidating control over coca-growing regions, and filling vacuums left by demobilized FARC guerillas. Illegal revenue generated by drug-trafficking activities continues to serve as a primary funding source for criminal organizations, some demobilized former fronts of the FARC, FARC dissidents, and the

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 2 -

Colombian National Liberation Army (ELN). The FARC and the ELN remain designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations by the Department of State.

B. The Colombia ABD program's safety procedures are defined by a bilateral letter of agreement between Colombia and the United States, signed December 30, 2009 (the "Agreement"). An annex to the Agreement clarifying the terms and conditions under which U.S. assistance, including radar and other information, may be shared with third parties was concluded August 25, 2012. A list of cleared third-party states was last provided in writing to the Colombian Air Force (CAF) March 24, 2015. In calendar year 2017, the basic procedures for aerial interception of an unknown assumed suspect (UAS) flight are detailed in Annex I, which is attached to this report. The United States also provided training for Colombian personnel participating in the ABD program.

C. In 2017, the United States dedicated a number of personnel positions to Colombia's ABD program, including a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-S) tactical commander and a JIATF-S command duty officer.

The JIATF-S tactical commander exercised command and control of U.S. ABD assets through the JIATF-S Joint Operations Center (JOC). The JIATF-S command duty officer was the tactical commander's senior watch officer at the JOC. DoD, through the Air Force section of the military group at Embassy Bogota, has day-to-day oversight of this program.

During 2017, the United States provided minimal maintenance support to the five Cessna Citations (C-560) titled to the Colombian government for the ABD program. The United States also provided radar information and intelligence to the Colombian government. As noted in paragraph B above, the United States also provided training for Colombian personnel participating in the ABD program.

U.S. assets (both aircraft and personnel) from DoD and U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) also have provided support for this program under the conditions contained in the Agreement.

D. From January 1 until December 15, 2017, Colombia, with the assistance of the United States, responded to 80 unknown assumed suspect (UAS) air tracks throughout Colombia and the central/western Caribbean, of which eight UAS tracks were within Colombian airspace. The Colombian government responded to and visually identified 51 of the UAS air tracks. While conducting law enforcement inspections as part of the Colombia ABD program, the Colombian government supported the grounding of 139 aircraft.

This was the twelfth year that ABD assets were used in maritime patrol missions off the coasts of Colombia. CAF aircraft flew a total of 115 maritime patrol sorties (352 flight hours) resulting in the seizure of 4.4 metric tons of cocaine.

During 2017, the United States continued to review the implementation of Annex C with Colombia. Annex C was integrated into the ABD agreement on August 25, 2012, and governs the Colombian government's ability to share U.S.-derived information with certain third states.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 3 -

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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

OCT 05 2018

Case Number: F-2018-00682

Steven Aftergood
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Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Aftergood:

This is the initial agency decision on your January 23, 2018, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, 5 U.S.C. § 552, to the Department of State (DOS) for a copy of the Department's latest Annual Report of Interdiction of Aircraft Engaged in Illicit Drug Trafficking, pursuant to 22 U.S.C 2291-4(c). The DOS, Office of Information Programs and Services received your FOIA request on the same date and assigned it the tracking number at the top of this letter. Please include the tracking number in all future communications concerning this FOIA request.

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement conducted a search for records responsive to your request and located the enclosed document. After carefully reviewing this document, we determined that it is appropriate for release.

For further assistance or to discuss any aspect of your request, you may contact our FOIA Requester Service Center or our FOIA Public Liaison via email at FOIAstatus@state.gov or telephone at (202) 261-8484.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric F. Stein".

Eric F. Stein, Director
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosure(s):
As stated