Chapter-III

US POLICY TOWARDS LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

The international drug control strategy of the United States had both diplomatic and programmatic goals. Initially it was limited to sharing of information about drug trafficking and abuses with the international community. This was done through the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents located in the country and the regular embassy channels. During the early years of the narcotics control efforts, the United States encouraged countries to carry on their own narcotics control programmes unilaterally, bilaterally or multilaterally through diplomatic initiatives.¹

The Control of narcotics, once an issue outside the diplomatic mainstream became a vital component of US relations with Latin America during Reagan’s presidency. Indeed, eradicating drug production and export officially became the highest US priority in Colombia and one of the top priorities in Bolivia and Peru and a few other South

American countries. The US economic aid was allocated accordingly and narcotics related assistance rose from 30 percent of total aid to Colombia in Fiscal Year 1984 to over 90 percent in Fiscal Year 1988. Moreover, the US Congress tied foreign aid to drug control efforts of the recipient countries. In the last two years of the Reagan Administration, the United States withheld $17.4 million in aid from Bolivia, primarily because coca crop eradication targets were not met.²

CHANGING EMPHASIS: INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE ISSUE

It should be noted that Washington did not practice drug diplomacy worldwide but restricted it largely to Latin America and Caribbean. There was no serious threat to cut off economic and military aid to Pakistan that happened to be the world's largest heroin producer; or stop supplying stinger missiles to the mujahiddins of Afghanistan who cultivated opium. Obviously, there were other higher priorities than narcotics control.³

³ Ibid.
Within the narcotics control programmes too there were priorities. Although Latin America was supplying most of the marijuana, nearly 40 per cent of the heroin and all of the cocaine entering the US markets, cocaine was the biggest concern for the moment. The fight against America's cocaine epidemic, an estimated six million people regularly used this highly addictive drug, consumed the bulk of the federal government's drug fighting resources. But the cocaine industry was a powerful antagonist. Having cultivated extensive ties with the economic and political power structure of the Andean countries, it posed a formidable challenge for the US policy.\(^4\) The New York Times, commenting on the situation wrote:

The foreign relations of Peru, Bolivia, Colombia and the United States are linked by one word: Cocaine. Most of the drug that's sold in this country comes from those three states in the Andean region of South America. Much of the money that circulates in those countries comes from drug users in this one. As a result Washington's domestic and foreign policy interests coincide.

The United States wants to fight its drug problem at the source and doing so depends on programs undertaken by fragile democratic government.\(^5\)

\(^4\) Ibid.

The Reagan Administration pursued its policy of international drug trafficking control by adopting the drug diplomacy in this region. Threat of communism and insurgency were not severe problems in the area except in Peru, where the Shining Path, the Maoist guerrilla movement, wanted to change the established democratic political system by their own brand of socialism. The US government tied economic aid with drug control programmes in Latin American countries in the final year of the Reagan Administration.

America withheld aid to Bolivia in 1986 which failed to fulfil the target of drug eradication. In 1988, drug trafficking was the principal point of friction between Washington and Panama, Mexico, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru and Colombia. In these countries drug trafficking not only assumed major economic proportions but either presented fundamental challenges to central authority or at least added complicating dimensions to the imperatives of governance.

The rationale for drug policies in these countries therefore extended beyond the issue of drug abuse to basic questions of domestic governance and foreign relations. The growing threat posed by druglords to various Latin American governments, combined with the US concerns about the massive
inflow of drugs, constituted a potential basis for the US-Latin American cooperation. 6

Till the end of the seventies drug trafficking was considered to be the problem only of the United States. The Latin American countries had different perception. They felt that the US was the cause of the drug related crimes and corruption in their countries. President Turbay Ayala of Colombia said, "Colombians are not corrupting Americans, you are corrupting us. If you abandon illegal drugs, the traffic will disappear." 7 But they also had begun to realize as the seventies neared its end that it threatened not only the wealthy United States but poor Latin Americans too. The Bolivian Ambassador to the United States, Carlos Delius testifying before the Sub-Committee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Affairs stated:

Our business and political leaders for years always considered narco-trafficking as a problem of the wealthy consuming countries. Drug use was thought of as a by-product of the deterioration of Western society, certainly not a scourge on our own house. Now we are all victims. Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and the other


7 Time, January 29, 1979, p. 20.
producing countries will never mature and develop if the drug culture captures our youth.

It was only at the beginning of the 1980s, during the Reagan Administration, that the drug abuse and drug-related violence and corruption in the producing countries forced these leaders to change their attitude. The governments of Latin American countries started regarding it as an international problem. No small or big country, no rich or poor country, could save itself from the evil impact of drug production, processing and trafficking. Illicit narcotics had affected virtually every Latin American country politically, economically, socially and psychologically. Governments at all levels had been corrupted, challenged and destabilized. Economies were subverted or became dependent upon narco-dollars. Traditional social structures were threatened by new narcotics elites which sought to buy and intimidate their way into social respectability. Drug abuse became a serious health problem. National images were transformed in the eyes of the outside world. While

commenting on the realization of the leaders of drug producing countries, Assistant Secretary Jon R. Thomas, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM) commented on the new climate at the international level. He noted:

Perhaps the most profound change has been the realization by other governments that drug trafficking is a threat to their national security and their economic and social well-being. The realization of national risk is spurring efforts for more cooperative bilateral and multilateral enforcement and demand reduction programs.

We have a long way to go before we reach the ultimate benefits inherent in these initiatives, but the great promise for our future is that the affected members of the world community are in fact beginning to act in concert.

Under these circumstances it was considered an opportune time by the Reagan Administration to pursue its policy of international narcotics in the western hemisphere. Besides, the United States itself was badly affected by the production of drugs in these countries and trafficking to the US market, which raised the number of drug addicts to 30 million during the Reagan presidency, with the result that in Washington the anti narcotics policy dominated the

debates on relations with these Latin American countries, while more urgent problems such as the region's unmanageable debt, economic disarray, and political instability were relegated to the sidelines.

As drug abuse and drug related violence escalated at home, the urge to blame the Andean countries proved irresistible. The US anti-narcotics efforts was widely referred to as the "war on drugs", a term that implied the need for aggressive measures against producers of drugs abroad. American public considered drugs as the most dangerous problem confronting the country.

The Congress that had a softer attitude toward President Reagan during his first term started taking hard measures during the second term. Members of Congress seized on the drug issue, in particular, using inflated rhetoric to rail against the "external threat" from drug trafficking. While many legislators privately were skeptical about the US anti narcotics strategy, in public they vociferously blamed the cocaine producing countries. For these Congressmen this was an easy way to get credit without having to produce immediate results at home. The drug issue was especially useful to Democratic Congressmen, who adopted a tougher stance on drugs. Thus the Democrat controlled Congress
during the Reagan Administration became the greatest champion of a get-tough, militaristic approach to the Andean cocaine-producing nations. It was not easy to implement such a policy successfully.

Rep. Stephen Solarz (D., NY.), Chairman of the Asia Pacific Sub-Committee of the House Foreign Relations Committee, said, "If inter-continental ballistic missiles were being fired on American cities from Peru and Bolivia, surely our government would have devised a plan to knock out the enemy. Why then should we treat the threat posed by the international Cartels so lightly". 10

Paula Hawkins (R., Fla.) who sponsored an amendment that would have barred aid to Bolivia beginning in Fiscal Year 1986 unless the President certified to Congress that Bolivia had reduced coca production by 10 per cent. The amendment would have also required the US representatives at international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, to vote against loans to Bolivia. 11 A similar


amendment was sponsored by Mack Mattingly (R., Ga.) that would have barred aid to Peru unless the Peruvian Government planned to establish limits on Coca production and elimination.\textsuperscript{12}

The White House was equally quick to latch on to the drug issue, although its motives were slightly different. It had often exploited the "war on drugs" to promote other policy objectives, such as support for anti-communism. In April 1986, President Reagan issued a national security directive officially declaring narcotics a "National Security Threat" and authorizing the deployment of the US military in a wide range of anti-narcotics activities. Since then, under the rubric of "anti-narcotics assistance", the United States had provided military aid to countries engaged in battles with insurgencies and had reinitiated previously banned police aid and training programmes in Latin America.\textsuperscript{13} (These had been barred by the Mansfield amendment of 1971).

The United States also attempted to link communism and drug trafficking by promoting the notion of a "narco--

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Congressional Quarterly Almanac} (Washington, D.C., Congressional Quarterly Service, 1985), p.49.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
guerilla threat". In 1987, Col. John D. Waghelstein, former Chief of US advisers in El Salvador, pointed to the "alliance between some drug traffickers and some insurgents" as the ideal opportunity for the US to "regain the moral high ground". While such theories about the connection between the communists and drug traffickers were more myth than reality, they were useful in winning wider public support for the policy of military involvement of the administration.

President Reagan had donned the mantle of the champion in the war against drugs, who had spoken out more often than his predecessors. No US President signed more anti-drug treaties or spent more funds to stem the flow of drugs into the United States. He gave to the drug problem importance that had not been given by his predecessors. He was the man, who in the real sense of the term internationalized this issue. Attempt would be made here to analyze the endeavours of President Reagan and the success or failures of his Administration in this endeavor.


15 Ibid.
During the Presidential elections of 1980, both the Republican and Democratic candidates did not give much prominence to the drug problem. Though Ronald Reagan slightly touched on it but Jimmy Carter did not refer to it at all.

While giving an interview to Time Inc.'s editors Reagan outlined his views on domestic and foreign issues that he firmly believed would carry him to the White House. Neither the editors asked any question on the drug problem nor did Reagan himself mentioned his strategy to control international drug trafficking after coming into power. ¹⁶

However, after his victory in New Hampshire Republican presidential primary, he mentioned the drug problem in one of his speeches. He said that marijuana was "probably the worst and most dangerous drug in America today". ¹⁷ He did not speak on cocaine or heroin, which were even more dangerous than marijuana.

What then prompted President Reagan to give drug problem such importance in the initial year of his Presidency? How he got along with the Congress?

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The answer to the first question might be simply that after taking over the office of President, he saw that drug use or abuse was no longer the problem of the higher strata of society but had spread like wild fire from the higher to the lower stratas and was destroying the very fabric of American society.

Drug Diplomacy in Latin America

When President Reagan declared his "war on drugs" in the early 1980s, the United States entered a new era of drug diplomacy in its foreign policy toward Latin America. Some analysts believed that Control of drug trafficking ranked higher than immigration, foreign debt, and the communist expansion in Central America as a priority issue in the US - Latin American relations.\textsuperscript{18}

The administration involved 37 federal agencies and eleven cabinet departments. The US fought its war against the drugs on a number of fronts: from eradicating coca crops in the foothills of the Andes to using trained dogs to sniff out the presence of cocaine residue in suspected bundles of cash. Political measures were also taken. An amendment passed by Congress in October 1983 provided that the

President should cut off aid to any country that failed to ensure projected reductions in narcotics production. The provision was first applied on Bolivia, which was to receive $48 million in the US assistance in fiscal year 1984. Senator Paula Hawkins (R., Fla.), the sponsor of the amendment told the Correspondent of Time David Backwith that "Bolivia's not going to get another dollar, so far as I am concerned" after the State Department report was released.\textsuperscript{19}

The Administration's various efforts to curtail the drug trade was not fruitless. The amount of cocaine seized in the US increased thirty fold since 1977, and the wholesale price of a kilo of coke in Miami jumped from $23,000 to $35,000 in six months in mid 1984. The authorities in Florida confiscated over two tons of drugs, more than was seized by all federal agents in 1981, in just two weeks in 1984. But the record amount of cocaine intercepted only served to prove that there were record amounts of cocaine pouring into the country through Miami or, increasingly through Arizona, Texas and California,\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
the states closest to the Mexican border.

There was a paradox. The administration could rightly claim success in its efforts but the problem was becoming more menacing. This led to the Congressional critics, most of them Democrats to complain that Reagan's war on narcotics was long on rhetoric and short on resources - Senator Dennis DeConcini (D., Ariz.,) for instance, declared, "It's a political disgrace for the administration to talk tough about drugs but not take strong action".21

The administration took several steps using military hardware against smugglers, giving the Federal Bureau of Investigation jurisdiction in drug cases and pressurizing exporting nations to curtail drug production in Latin American and Asian countries.

According to Secretary of State George Shultz, Reagan's international narcotics policy was based on four basic principle:

First, countries where narcotics are produced or through which drugs are shipped must accept their

responsibilities...to reduce crops and interdict drug smuggling. Second, the international community must assist those nations that lack the resources to take the necessary steps. Third, worldwide emphasis must be placed on crop control and eradication....Fourth, in producer nations that need our help, our narcotics related economic assistance must be linked to agreements on reducing crop levels. 

Therefore, President Reagan's narcotics enforcement strategy included "a foreign policy that vigorously seeks to interdict and eradicate illicit drugs, wherever cultivated, processed or transported", which explained in the public papers of the President.

Destroying drugs at their source was an integral part of American anti-drug strategy. The United States recognised that it cannot do this job alone because of either the political or resource constraints. Thus, international control efforts played a key role in breaking the grower-to-user chain that stretched across continents. Since 1981 the United States carried on an aggressive campaign balanced


between diplomatic initiatives to secure multilateral cooperation and bilateral efforts to ensure achievement of critical US programme objectives in key source countries. The balance sheet of failures and achievements by 1984 was looking far from reassuring. Sources within the administration conceded the failure in preventing huge quantities of drugs from leaving the source countries. As Francis Mullen, the Administrator of Drug Enforcement Administration, tried to explain: "We are trying to overcome centuries of tradition, and we cannot insist that another country do something just because the US wants it". One congressional investigator referring to massive influx of drugs into the United States from the two countries, said, "We are being clobbered by Colombia and Pakistan".

The opinion within the administration in Reagan's first term regarding government's attitude towards Latin American countries was divided. Some believed that the United States should have signed treaties with source countries, pledging to fight against drug traffic. It should have demanded to

25 Gest, "Why U.S. is Losing the War?", n.21, p.49.
draft plans to stop the drug trade and failing that denied the source country American aid. Others contended that such an approach was unrealistic because foreign aid should be based on a variety of factors in which defense considerations played a major role. 26

But it was doubtful that diplomatic sanctions against selected Latin American countries would have made any impact except having a negative outcome. A weak democratic government like Peru or Bolivia could have fallen and replaced by either a military or a socialist government. Such development would have been counterproductive in combating the drug trade. Confrontation, in most respects, would have brought meagre results and only succeeded in enhancing the United States security concerns in a strategic region.

Despite such possibilities, the Congress passed a law in 1984 as mentioned earlier, that required the State Department to threaten ending assistance to countries that did not agree to specific cut back on cultivation of narcotics. 27

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
It was hardly an exaggeration to call administration's battle against the international drug trade a war, considering the elements: air planes, ships, guns, vast sums of money and raids on enemy territories. In the past few years (1981-84), the United States fortified its resources and strengthened ties with its allies in the global fight against narcotics dealers. For a while, during initial years it appeared that the forces of law were winning. Later on, it was realized that the United States was facing an enemy more powerful and elusive than previously imagined. The year 1984 brought troubling incidents in Mexico, Colombia, and Peru, three major fronts of the drug War. Jon Thomas, the US Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics Matters, narrating the troubled situation in Latin America said, "It's the bust of the century".28

Operation Padrino

In April 1983, the DEA initiated the "Operation Padrino" to investigate and immobilize what was thought to be a major heroin distribution network. The network had

become much more menacing because Juan Ramon Matta Ballesteros, an international cocaine drug trafficker from Honduras, had joined forces with Miguel Angel, another powerful heroin trafficker for the purpose of distributing cocaine in the United States.29

The "Operation Padrino", was begun in Mexico to investigate and immobilize a major cocaine distribution network. A joint operation between Colombia, Mexico, and the United States took place and succeeded in achieving several of its objectives. Indictments were returned against Juan Ramon Matta-Ballesteros and Miguel Angel 'Felix-Gallardo', and approximately 5,270 pounds of cocaine valued at approximately more than $121 million were seized. Asset seizures included property worth more than five million dollars and $56 million in cash.

On February 7, 1985, DEA’s Special Agent Enrique Camarena Salazar was abducted and murdered. It was believed that members of drug cartels organization murdered him in retaliation against the DEA’s effectiveness in this case.30


Mexican drug control agents, with the cooperation of the United States' the DEA officials seized and destroyed a record 9,000 tons of marijuana in raids on five plantations in Mexico's northern state of Chihua. The previous record was made in 1978 when 570 tons of marijuana were seized in Colombia. According to Mexican judicial officials, in the US the Mexican pot would have had a street value of about $4 billion dollars. The sheer volume of seizure and destruction promoted a reassessment of drug traffic and use in the United States.\(^{31}\)

In the year 1983, "Operation Pipeline" was begun by the New Mexico State Police to identify, intercept, arrest, and prosecute cocaine couriers using major highways. The DEA resources were used to train state and local police for this operation in over 30 states from Florida to the West Coast. Over 70 cocaine and money seizures were made by the New Mexico State Police alone. As this operation expanded, it opened up the possibilities of severely disrupting the south to north distribution of drugs from Mexico.\(^{32}\)

\(^{32}\) Hearings United States-Mexican Cooperation in Narcotics Control Efforts, n.29, pp.91-92.
The year 1984, marked a large increase in Mexican drug production. It was reported that during 1984, evidence mounted that Mexican government was beginning to lose control of its eradication programme. Rumours surfaced that government helicopters were spraying fertilizers rather than herbicide on opium and marijuana crops, or were purposely spraying in the wrong places or at the wrong times. The US intelligence revealed unusually large marijuana fields being harvested, suggesting that officials were being bribed or threatened to look elsewhere. And known drug traffickers were becoming increasingly brazen in their activities. 33

It was estimated in 1984 that approximately 1.8 metric tons of heroin was exported to the United States from Mexico. For 1985 this figure was estimated to be 2.59 metric tons. It was reported that in 1985 only two heroin laboratories were dismantled and 6.4 kilos were seized by Mexican authorities throughout Mexico. In 1984, only 44 kilos of cocaine were seized in Mexico, whereas in 1985 this rose to 2,345 kilos. 34


Colombia: The Battle for Controlling Cartels

Colombia’s cooperation during first tenure of President Reagan was encouraging. Dominick L. Dicarlo reported:

In 1981, the Colombian interdiction program supported by the INM seized 3,310 metric tons of marijuana, 345% increase over 1980, and 66 million units of illicit methaqualone, a 380% increase. In 1982, Colombian officials seized another 3,409 metric tons of marijuana, 41 million units of methaqualone and 881 kilograms of cocaine. The manual destruction program, the Bureau supported resulted in the destruction of some 9 million marijuana plants and 9 million coca plants during 1982. A new bilateral extradition treaty with Colombia was in force. 35

The US supported Colombia interdiction programme had been increasingly effective over the last few years. In 1984, the Colombians reported seizing 22 metric tons of cocaine, 2,870 metric tons of marijuana, and more than 500,000 dosage units of methaqualone, the latter figure reflecting an effective clamping down on imports of powder which Colombian suppliers were using to make the pills. 36

35. This was stated by Dominick L. Dicarlo, Assistant Secretary of State for Bureau of International Narcotics Matters before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 9, 1983, while making budget requests. See Fiscal Year 1984, Assistance Request For Narcotic Control, US Department of State Bulletin (Washington, D.C.), vol.83, June 1983, pp.67-68.

In 1984, the United States launched operation Hat Trick in Colombia to control production, processing and trafficking of drugs. In the first half of the Operation, the Colombian soldiers were to move against marijuana traffickers in Guajira peninsula between the Gulf of Venezuela and the Caribbean. It was expected that with the soldiers of Venezuela and Panama closely guarding their respective borders, the traffickers would be forced to ship their supplies. At sea they were to meet with American ships. Marijuana would thus be seized and traffickers would be arrested.37

In November-December 1984, NNBIS coordinated Hat Trick. The Department of State coordinated with foreign governments that included Netherlands and Honduras. The second part, the maritime part of this very Operation was named Wagon Wheel. Numerous coast guard cutter and naval ships with boarding teams patrolled the Caribbean. During the Operation, Colombia and the United States joined their forces and cooperated fully. The Colombia officials were placed abroad the coast guard cutters in Wagon Wheel. This was done to facilitate coordination with Colombian enforcement units.

which had increased their patrol in support of the Operation. The entry of the US vessels into Colombian waters and boarding of Colombian vessels were expedited as a result of cooperation. Colombia also increased its eradication and destruction programmes during the Operation. Other countries in the region did the same.\textsuperscript{38}

The Operation Hat Trick attained a large measure of success. It forced smugglers to cut down drug shipment. This in turn resulted in large stockpiles that were located and destroyed by the Colombian authorities. This unprecedented level of international and multi agency coordination led to the elimination of much of Colombia's Fall marijuana crop.

During the early phases of Wagon Wheel, the maritime forces realized a seizure rate that was much higher than usual. It resulted in the seizure of 37 vessels carrying 169 tons of marijuana. Another three vessels carrying 28 tons of marijuana were chased into Mexican waters where they were seized by Mexican authorities.\textsuperscript{39}

The drug trafficking was like multiheaded Hydra. If one was cut another grew. There were many problems. Four

\begin{footnotes}
\item[38] NDEPB (1986), n.24, p.136.
\item[39] INCSR (1985), n.36, p.8.
\end{footnotes}
weeks before the Operation began, information about Hat Trick began leaking out. While the Operation, according to US Federal officials, was mildly successful, the press reports in American and Colombia had alerted the drug traffickers of the secret operation. Colombian bad weather besides could have delayed the harvesting and shipment and thereby further limited the gains of the Operation.

The government of Colombia carried on a very impressive campaign against narcotics. This campaign entered into a decisive phase by mid 1984 when the Colombian National Police began to test the aerial eradication of marijuana by spraying the herbicide glyphosate. More than 4,000 hectares were eradicated in 1984, including 3,000 by aerial spraying. It was expected that a more comprehensive programme would be launched in the following year. The Colombians also tried to experiment with several herbicides that would eradicate the coca bush. They strove hard to suppress cocaine refining. A major raid was carried out at Caqueta in March 1984, which resulted in the seizure of 10 metric tons of cocaine and 14 laboratories were destroyed.41

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
Until 1984, Colombian officials were afraid to take action against drug Cartels. But then the cocaine smugglers made a Himalayan blunder by deciding to assassinate Minister of Justice, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, the one member of the Betancur government, who was crusading against them. In April hired killers machine gunned him on a Bogota’s street. The drug kings never claimed responsibility but they were believed to have financed this murder. The murder outraged Colombians who began to see the drug cartel as the greatest enemy of the country.

The assassination by hired killers in daylight in Bogota itself outraged the public, which regarded the cartels as the greatest menace. More importantly, it enraged President Betancur, who had till then ignored the extradition treaty on the ground that it violated national sovereignty. But Lara’s assassination him to change his mind. At his grave site, the President vowed to uphold the treaty. In an address on television, he declared "a war without quarter" on the cocaine mafia.

The tough stance led to more than 1,500 raids resulting in 1,425 arrests and the destruction of about 50 cocaine laboratories. In January 1985, President Beelisario Betancur Cuartas fulfilled his pledge, taken at
considerable political and personal risk, to extradite traffickers to the United States for trial. Four of these traffickers were flown to Homestead Air Force Base and were tried in Florida and in Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{42}

The drug lords were forced to retreat. Four days after the assassination, they reportedly held an emergency summit in Medellin. Some headed to Brazil, others including Pabllo Escobar, Jorge Luis Ochoa and Rodriguez Gacha went to Panama. There they approached former Colombian President Alfonso Lopez Michelsen, who was staying there and made an offer of peace. Lopez promised to communicate the message to Betancur, and 10 days later Attorney General Carlos Jimenez Gomez arrived in Panama.\textsuperscript{43}

Jimenez met with Escobar and other members of the Cartels and asked them to put their offer in writing. In that memorandum, the negotiators claimed to represent 80 percent of Colombia's coke traffickers. Later, the memorandum was leaked. In it the drug lords offered to give up their

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.

smuggling operations, help finance the country's debt, and to work for the rehabilitation of addicts. In return, they asked for an end to the state of seize, a revision of the extradition treaty with Washington and new measures that would allow repatriation of all their assets. Jimenez took the offer back to Bogota. But as soon as it became public, there was an outcry. Betancur firmly rejected it, saying that "under no circumstances" he would accept the deal. He demanded nothing less than total surrender.\textsuperscript{44}

To make the point, the 1,500 men of Colombia's US supported anti-narcotics squad persevered in their search and destroyal missions and for a time, scored one spectacular victory after another.\textsuperscript{45}

Despite stringent efforts of the US Colombian governments, the key figures in the cocaine business continued to elude the authorities. Washington had stationed 16 antinarcotics agents in Colombia and in 1985 allocated $9.2 million for its Colombian campaign. The druglords, however, were not lacking in resources. Escobar alone was said to command a personnel army of more than 2,000

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p.10.
retainers and according to one estimate the Medellin Cartel alone earned nearly $2 to 4 billion a year. Probably $2.5 to $3 billion a year in profits was repatriated. As a result of drug exports to Colombia drugs ranked above coffee as the country's principle foreign exchange earner. The drug lords, virtually controlled the government of the country in which they operated. Escobar, was wanted on charges of smuggling ten tons of cocaine into the US At one time he faced just one charge in Colombia: illegally importing 82 of the 1,500 exotic animals in his private Zoo. Such were his resources.

The Colombian drug lords had effectively paralyzed the country's judicial system, drove away a large number of prominent Colombians out of the country and degraded the lives of those who stayed on. Murder became a regular source of income for many. Commenting on the level of violence in Colombia, a DEA official in Mexico City remarked, "I have worked in narcotics for many years in several countries, but never have I seen anything like the Colombian traffickers. He is really one mean bastard".

46 Bruce M. Bagley, "Colombia and the War on Drugs", Foreign Affairs (New York), vol.67 (Fall 1988), p.70. Also see Iyer, n.19, pp.9-10.

Colombia emerged as a key source and trafficking country and became a key concern to policy makers, law enforcement officials and journalists in the United States since the beginning of the seventies.

The war was carried on relentlessly with the help of the United States. Since 1980, Colombia had assigned the task to a specially created and trained para military force, Special Anti Narcotic Unit (SANU). The force effectively used UH1 helicopters. The war against the druglords began to lose its vigour. The drug Czar gradually began to emerge out of the shadows. They adopted new methods. The evidence surfaced of their use of neighbouring countries like Panama. The Panamanians allowed the Colombians to use their country as a point of transshipment. A few corrupt bank officials allowed the Colombians to launder their narco-dollars by taking advantage of the strictest secrecy laws in the hemisphere. From time to time, evidence of Panama's involvement in drug smuggling surfaced, but the US did not take any action because of its relations with President Manuel Antonio Noreiga of Panama. It was only when

President George Bush decided to invade Panama that charges were levelled against him.

Bolivia: Ups and Downs

While Colombian and Panamanian authorities made some headway in the fight against drugs, their counterparts in Bolivia and Peru faced problems that seem almost insuperable. For centuries, Andean natives have chewed coca leaves. Indeed most Bolivians including, President Hernan Siles Zuazo, routinely offered visitors coca tea. This was all quite legal because there was no law in Bolivia that prohibited either the cultivation or the marketing of coca. In 1984, coca accounted for more than $2 billion in unofficial foreign exchange earnings. "Over the past two years", explains a former coca plantation owner, "the only money in the country that counts has been narcodollars". 49

Roberto Suarez Gomez, drug kingpin of Bolivia, said in a December 1985 letter to two national deputies that the 1983 US-Bolivia accords for coca reduction violated the nation's constitution as well as the "fundamental rights of countless Bolivians". 50 The druglords resisted the pressure

49 Iyer, n.19, p.10.

of their own government by painting them as submissive to
the United States. What helped them was that drug
trafficking was bringing in money into the country.

The danger was real. In 1980, General Luis Garcia Meza
seized control in Bolivia in what came to be called as the
cocaine coup. One of his first acts was to release drug
mafiosos from jail. He proceeded to have the police records
of cocaine traffickers destroyed and punished those who
disagreed with his policy. His army meanwhile pocketed
millions of dollars in bribes and payoffs from drug dealers.
In despair, local US drug enforcers closed their office.

In an obvious bid to normalize relations with the
incoming Reagan Administration in February 1981, President
Garcia reversed his policy and extended cooperation to the
US government in checking the drug trafficking. To
demonstrate his intention, he dropped his interior minister
Col. Luis Arce Gomez and began a short-lived campaign, aided
by the American Drug Enforcement Administration to halt the
cocaine trade. After a while, he abruptly ended the
campaign, saying it was futile. But diplomatic sources
speculated that pressure had been brought to bear on him by
Roberto Suarez.\textsuperscript{51} There was no sign of cooperation with the

United States in controlling of drug trafficking except on very few occasions in the beginning of 1980s. This was because there was no democratic system in Bolivia till October 1982. It was run by the military generals with the help of cocaine kings.

The election of a democratic President Hernan Siles Zuazo in Bolivia in 1982 was considered as providing a new opportunity for Washington to get at the roots of the huge Bolivian cocaine trade. But the new President was aware that if he challenged the coca growers it could mean the end of his own political carrier. An aid to Roberto Suarez Gomes, one of the country’s large coca suppliers warned that "US pressures could lead to another revolution and a takeover by another repressive military government or, worse by the leftists".

As soon as Siles was elected the fight against drugs was resumed. The DEA reopened its office and President Reagan appointed Edwin G. Corr., a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics Matters, as Ambassador to Bolivia. Ten months after Siles took office,

53 Iyer, n.19, p.10.
the US signed a bilateral agreement with Bolivia for a five year, $88 million programme to fight cocaine. That remained an uphill struggle.

In August 1983, Bolivia signed its first narcotics assistance agreement (eight bilateral agreements, four related to drug control programmes and four to crop reduction-substitution projects) with the United States. Its emphasis was on eradicating the nation’s coca crop and dismantle the trafficking network. In the agreement Bolivia said it would eradicate just over 10 per cent of the coca planted in roughly 90,000 acres by the end of 1985. 54

Dr. Carlton Turner, Special Assistant to President Reagan for drug abuse policy noted with some satisfaction that "The mere fact that they’re beginning to chase the traffickers is refreshing". He added, "But I have my doubts that you’re going to be able to do away with the corruption built into the Bolivian system". 55

After signing the agreement, the Siles government sent the army of 1200 troops in the same year into the Chapare

55 Quoted in Iyer, n.19, p.11.
regions, where one quarter of the world’s coca leaf and a third of Bolivia's coca was grown. In this operation two cocaine laboratories, 810 kilos of coca paste and 40 kilos of cocaine were seized and several arrests were made in Beni region of the Chapare. However, the coca paste and cocaine production and trafficking not only continued but increased without interruption as the trafficking had some degree of police and military protection directly or through political connection. It was reported that only six ill equipped 100 men companies took to the field. Some of them gave local growers warning of their imminent raid six days in advance. One General actually resigned, saying that he was not about to kill compesinos just to please North Americans. 56

The 150 men of the US funded Bolivian antidrug unit known as the Leopards did not fare much better. After two months of Special training, complained one US official, "they spent months and months doing nothing. The Government’s choice was to avoid confrontation, so they stayed in their barracks". Finally in October 1984, 93 members of the heavily armed para military unit were sent on a sweep of the Beni. Nothing much was attained and the big

56 Ibid.
shark, Suarez could not be found\textsuperscript{57}

In response to the US government's threats to cut off aid, if the government did not check the drug trafficking, President Siles passed a decree to eradicate 4,000 hectares of coca leaf by 1985 as well as several other measures designed to restrict production. It was apparent that the new decree for reducing production rested on fallacious assumptions and that the implementation measures had little political commitment behind them. President Sile's most determined action against the coca growers, however, was aimed at marketing rather than production.

**Peru**

Peru was the single largest producer of coca. The US Peruvian eradication and substitution programmes antedate all similar programmes in Latin America. It was hoped that the project would become the long sought model, not only for Peru but also for other sources countries as well. However, controlling coca cultivation was considered even harder in Peru than in other countries. It was only in 1981 that

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
assistance agreements were signed, and not until 1983 that crop destruction programmes actually got off the ground in Upper Huallaga. 58

The US and Peruvian governments signed a bilateral coca reduction and regional development assistance agreements for the Upper Huallaga Valley in 1981. Washington launched what was regarded as a well planned $26 million programme centred on the coca growing Upper Huallaga Valley. The first part of the programme was an $18 million, five year project by the US Agency for International Development (AID) to help the Peruvians build roads, bridges, and water systems. The scheme was also designed to reduce coca production and encourage instead the cultivation of coffee, bananas, rice, citrus and other crops. And coca reduction operations commenced there since 1983. More than 3,000 hectares of coca were eradicated in 1984. It was the most successful coca eradication effort in any country thus far. 59

By the end of August 1985, 2,066 hectares were eradicated. The programme continued to move forward by the

59 INCSR (1985), n.36, p.112.
end of year, it had reached the high point 4,830 hectares. However, it slumped to 2,675 hectares in 1986. This was due to bureaucratic rivalries and resistance by the farmers, corruption and terrorist violence.  

Richard B. Craig a well known scholar also confirmed that from a modest 700 hectares eradicated in 1983, the total reached an impressive 3,200 in 1984. The eradication would have been much more had "logistics, bureaucratic rivalries, local resistance and terrorist violence had not converged to sidetrack the effort in November 1984". That eradication began to hurt some narcotics interests was evident in their response. Narcotics violence and political terrorism increased rapidly, hampering enforcement activities and eradication efforts. This was because coca cultivation was a source of income and the farmers growing the coca crop could earn ten times more than from any other crop.

60 Ibid., p.113.
62 Ibid.
63 INCSR (1985), n.36, p.112.
In 1985, David L. Westrate, Assistant Administrator of Drug Enforcement Administration, testified before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in November 1985 that the progress that Peru was making in its eradication and enforcement programmes with the United States's help was satisfactory. The US helping it by providing aerial photography. In same year, the Governments of Peru and Colombia launched a programme with the assistance of the United States which provided aircrafts to support this campaign which was codenamed as "Operation Condor". Six cocaine laboratories complex were seized and destroyed, and eleven airstrips were also located and destroyed. Operation seized large quantities of cocaine paste and precursor chemicals, seven aircrafts, diesel fuel generators and other equipment. Westrate while noting the achievements of Peru's programme sadly acknowledged that "the job of curtailing cultivation of coca leaf and stopping production of cocaine in Peru is far from complete".65

Ultimately, the Peruvian government declared the area an emergency zone and dispatched troops to restore order. At

65 Hearing Developments in Latin American Narcotics Control, n.9, pp.13-14.
that time the military’s priority was to eliminate guerrillas, not to chop down coca plants and thereby antagonize the peasant grower whose allegiance was needed against Sendero. "We have to have popular support to fight terrorism" noted an anonymous army official. He added, "We have to have a friend in the population. You cannot do by eradicating coca". Indeed, the top military commander forbade anti-narcotics operations in the area, arguing that they disrupted counterinsurgency. The military’s opinion prevailed. With no reason to oppose security personal or needing guerrillas' protection, coca growers withdrew their support from the insurgents and druglords, even informed the authorities about guerrillas' whereabouts. The guerrillas retreated and the coca industry in the valley boomed. By mid January, both the military and the special narcotics police were operating in the upper Huallaga Valley.

From this experience of 1984 the authorities learnt that the successful coca eradication in entrenched producing areas required a continuous, effective, and necessarily costly security effort sufficient to protect against violent

resistance.\textsuperscript{68} 

\textit{Time} magazine reported that:

In Peru American officials are concerned about leftist guerrillas who may be working with narcotics traffickers to end a US financed program that hires Peruvian workers to destroy coca plants, \textellipsis\textellipsis\textellipsis Two weeks ago anti-drug labourers were attacked in the middle of night in a house where they were sleeping. According to an eyewitness account, about four unidentified men burst into the building and began firing shotguns and revolvers. At least 15 workers were killed and three were wounded.\textsuperscript{69}

The incident affected the US will to go on with the programme. The spokesman for the State Department's Narcotics Assistance Unit said: The programme begun in 1984 was halted temporarily "until we get a clearer picture" of the attack.\textsuperscript{70}

Other Countries: Problems' Many Facets

Columbia, Bolivia and Peru were the three most important countries which produced drugs. Panama and Mexico played their part in the transshipment of narcotics into the US But even smaller countries like Bahama, Turks and Caicos

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{69} Lamar, "The bust of the Century, n.28, p.19.
island could frustrate the US effort to choke off narcotics supplies into the country. The programme had to be all embracing and comprehensive. No country, which was a player in the lethal game could be left out.

In 1982, the DEA set up Operation BAT for Bahamas and Turks which was designed to disrupt the flow of drugs transiting the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands enroute to the United States. It was a cooperative effort between the DEA and the governments of the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Operation targeted islands used by smugglers as refuelling stops, stash sites and transshipment points. Two US Air Force helicopters were used to transport host country enforcement officials to targeted islands to investigate, search, and seize contraband and conveyances. Periodically, the DEA and Army helicopters and crews augmented the OPBAT unit, particularly for special operations. The forces of Operation BAT also provided immediate response capability for both maritime and aircraft interdictions.

From March 1983 through December 1985, operation BAT forces flew 5,800 hours; interdicted 18,103 pounds of cocaine and 360,000 pounds of marijuana; seized 30 vessels, 86 aircraft, and 13 vehicles; and arrested 261
individuals. 71

David Westrate, Assistant Administrator for the Operation, the DEA, testified before the Sub-Committee on Investigations of the Committee of Armed Services about the military support in the Operation. He said,

One of the classic example to me of military support is operation BAT. In OPBAT, we have US Army and Air Force helicopters, as well as Coast Guard, DEA and Customs aircraft of all kinds, flying in the Bahamas to transport law enforcement officers to make interdictions. This operation is highly successful in my view and the primary reason why we now see up to a third, if not more, of the cocaine flowing up through Mexico and across our land border 72 as opposed to through the traditional Caribbean routes.

Despite the various operation for eradication, coca production not only continued to thrive in Peru and Bolivia but it also began to rapidly spread into areas which were previously not growing coca. For instance, Amazon river basin, a wilderness of lush jungles and rivers that was almost two thirds the size of the United States, came under coca production three years ago. Policemen noticed that

relatively primitive Indians were suddenly sporting modern clothes and traveling in motorboats. The peasants, they learned, had been pressured by Colombians into cultivating epadu, a small shrub tree that can grow in the forest up to ten feet height. Epadu contains about 40 per cent less active alkaloid than the more common coca variety cultivation in the Andes and yields less pure cocaine per kilo. But it costed the trafficker 60 per cent less to buy and can sprout as many as 30 shoots. According to an embassy official in Sao Palo, "It's easier to grow than any other crop in the Amazon". 73

Brazil, also began to master the more advanced stages of the trade. In the Fall of 1984 alone, twelve Brazilians were caught while they were carrying cocaine to the US. Shipments of illegally imported processing chemicals had also been intercepted with increasing frequency. Most of all, coke preprocessing plants had begun sprouting up in the Brazilian backcountry. By now, said Dr. Juarez Tavares, the federal criminal prosecutor in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil had become "the distribution center for cocaine leaving South America". 74

73 Iyer, n.19, p.12.
74 Ibid., p.13.
The Brazilian government had not taken strong measures to control drug trade. In 1980 it adopted a law under which foreign drug dealers, if caught could be expelled rather than imprisoned. "That", said Tavares, was "an open signal that the narcos had nothing to fear in Brazil". Dealers who were jailed on account of drug related offences manage to get out relatively easily.75

In Brazil extensive coca cultivation was a phenomenon at the beginning of the 1980s in the Amazon region while marijuana cultivation was fairly widespread. The government initiated coca eradication operations in 1984 with the United States' support.76

The primary aim of INM in Brazil was not to provide assistance for long term drug enforcement programme but only the "seed money" which financed activities for educating the Brazilian authorities and public to the dangers of the traffic in Brazil.77

As more refineries were set up across South America, drug routes crossed more and more borders, bringing

75 Ibid.
77 INCSR (1985), n.36, p.60.
previously untainted countries into some phase of the business. By the end of 1983 customs had seized 667 kilos of cocaine, at that time the largest haul in history at an airport near Caracas, Venezuela. In Paraguay in September 1984 officials intercepted 49,000 gallons of ether, acetone and hydrochloric acid, enough to process eight tons of cocaine. The DEA officials speculated that influential Paraguayan might be involved in drug trafficking. Cocaine arrests in Trinidad soared to 150 in 1983 from three in 1978. In the Bahamas, three Cabinet Ministers in the government of Prime Minister Lynden O. Pindling resigned from their posts and two others were removed just before the release of a Royal Commission report that exposed widespread cocaine related corruption in government. The drug problem was spreading like cancer. It was not confined to countries of Latin America.78

The processing business started to take root in the United States which till now had been mostly customer. Forced to quit to Colombia and aware that the United States is the world's largest producer of ether, drug traffickers decided to import coca paste to Miami and process it

locally. During 1983-84, authorities in Miami closed down cocaine refineries at the rate of one a month. 79

Miami became the nerve centre of the drug activities in the United States. It became the most important point of entry of narcotics into the United States but a major centre for dumping of narco dollars. In 1980 the US set up a task force drawn from the US customs and internal revenue service. It started auditing all transactions of more than $10,000. But the traffickers continued to launder their narco-dollars. It was realized that the best way to control narcotics' related problems was to check it at the place where it began because once it reached the United States the drugs and the drug money were dispersed.

The eradication programme initiated and supported by the United States gained some success. But weaning away the coca growers and asking them to grow other cash crops required that the growers be compensated for their loss. After all growing coca was ten times more profitable and required much less labour. Often, no other crop could grow on the soil on which coca was grown. The United States wanted to support the anti-narcotic programmes in Latin

79 Ibid.
American countries but was not willing for the massive influx of funds to these countries. An official was reported as saying: "We just cannot afford it. If we gave money to Peru or Bolivia other countries could start growing coca in order to get US funds." 80

A much greater problem was the perception of the Latin American countries that cocaine was a US problem. As Gustavo Sanchez, Under Secretary of Interior in Bolivia, put it: "We are putting our lives in danger to prevent drug from entering the United States." 81 While the US officials claimed that it was illicit production that resulted in consumption, the Latin Americans argued just the opposite. According to them, the process worked the other way round. "The US is to blame for most of this mess.....If there were not the frightening demand in the States, we would not even have to worry about trying to eliminate the supply", said a Panamanian official. 82 As reports of cocaine use in the developing world circulate, says Enrique Ellias Laroza, Peru's former Justice Minister, South American governments get dispirited and people ask "how a poor country can win

80 Ibid., pp.13-14.
82 Ibid.
the fight against narcotics trafficking when much more powerful, rich countries have failed". 83 This contrasting perception of reality was a major obstacle in the realization of the US objective. And till the Latin American countries came to see it as a common global problem, there was no way by which this hurdle could be removed.

Early Years of Second Term

The achievement of the US during the Second term of Ronald Reagan was that the American government succeeded in making drug producing countries aware of the growing problem of drug abuse among youth of Latin America countries. At the same time the US made it apparently clear to them that drugs were no more a problem of the United States alone, they were rather a global problem needing global solution. That was the reason why the number of countries co-operating with the US rose from 2 in 1981 to 15 in 1985. John C. Whitehead, Deputy Secretary of State told the Senate, "Of the 18 countries that are the primary sources of illicit narcotics, 15 receive some form of US economic, military, or narcotics control assistance. Fourteen of the fifteen conducted

83 Ibid.
eradication programs in 1985..."84

Though President Reagan created no new agency during his second term except the 'National Drug Policy Board (1988)' which was headed by a cabinet rank official "Drug Czar", but he catalyzed his war on drugs by getting the Anti Drug Abuse Act of 1986 and the Anti Drug Abuse Act of 1988 passed.

In fact, Congress and public opinion forced President Reagan to take strict measures. Many congressmen particularly Democrats assailed the President, for talking tough but never taking it seriously. Despite its rhetoric, the administration never went to war on drugs.

The war against drug had two aspects. One dealt with educating the public at home, treatment of the addicts, and rehabilitation of those who were freed. The criticism was that the administration never allocated sufficient resource for these prevention programmes. The second, the overseas

84 US Department of State Bulletin, (Washington, D.C.), vol.86 (October 1986), p.38. This was the statement before the Sub-Committee on Foreign operations of the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 14, 1986, and a report on the status of efforts to control narcotics production prepared by John C. Whitehead, Deputy Secretary of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters.
programme aimed at curtailing production of drugs overseas and their entry into the United States. Congressman Charles B. Rangel (D., NY.), frequently voiced criticism throughout mid eighties. He complained that the Reagan administration had no coherent strategy for prosecuting the war at home and abroad. It failed to provide consistent leadership in the implementation of policy. 85

In a similar vein, Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R., NY.), insistently denounced Reagan's conduct of the war on drugs. He charged that the President was not "tough enough" on drug traffickers. 86

Still other hard-line critics faulted President Reagan for not ordering the US military to take a lead role in the drug war. Indeed, in 1986, the US House of Representatives approved a bill with the provision which specifically directed the US Armed Forces to "seal" the country's borders against drug trafficking within forty five days. This was almost an impossible task. It was not only

86 Ibid.
President who used rhetoric but the House too indulged in it. The Senate, however, subsequently deleted this directive. The final version of the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act did call for an expanded role for the Armed Forces in support of civilian interdiction and law enforcement efforts at US borders and on the high seas.  

Senator John Kerry (D., Mass.), said during the debate on the bills that "Stopping drugs trafficking into the United States has been a secondary US foreign policy objective. It has been sacrificed repeatedly for other policy goals". Even scholars like Bagley held similar views. He wrote:

Nevertheless the most serious accusation is not that the U.S. government is losing the war on drugs, but that the Reagan administration never launched a full-scale attack. US policies have been stymied by the inadequate resources, lack of bureaucratic coordination, and inconsistent leadership. They have also frequently been subordinated to other concerns of US policy, especially national security.

In Latin America, too, the war on drugs has often been subordinated to interests of the US security. The US polices

87 Ibid. For the detailed discussion of the 1986 Act see the next chapter.
89 Bagley, "Where has Reagan's anti Drug diplomacy gone wrong?", n.6, p.32.
towards Panama, Honduras, Jamaica and the Contra illustrate it. Both the Carter and the Reagan administration tolerated Noriega for years because he was a useful "asset" despite growing evidence that he was involved in the drug trade. The US intelligence sources linked Noriega to drug trafficking as early as 1972. A secret 1985 study written by the US Army's Southern Command charged the Panamanian Defence forces with involvement in the drug trade. According to former National Security Council Chief-Economist Norman Bailey, the State Department's attitude was "lukewarm", the Pentagon did not want to "rock the boat", and the CIA actively opposed doing anything. "He is an important asset", it pleaded.  

In Central America, accusations against the Contras of their involvement in drug trafficking were repeatedly levelled. But no evidence was ever made public against the Fuerzas Democratics Nicarageanses, the main organization of the Contras. The Reagan administration supported the Contras so much that any thorough investigation of the charges against other Contras Organization was ruled out. In 

90 New York Times, April 10, 1988, Y 10. For details see Bagley, ibid.
contrast, the US frequently accused the Sandanista government of being involved in the drug trade without solid evidence to back the charges.

As with the Contras, numerous allegations of Honduran military involvement in the narcotics trade surfaced. According to the New York Times DEA Agent based in Honduras between 1981 and 1983 reported that Honduran army and navy officers were involved in the transshipment of drugs through Honduran territory and in the protection of drug traffickers. John L. Lawn, Administrator of the DEA explained that the evidence was too "weak" to merit investigation. The DEA office in Honduras was finally shut down in 1983 because it had not been "productive". According to one Reagan Administration official: "it wasn't that there was a cover up. It's that people knew certain questions shouldn't be asked". 91

Despite criticism of its policy, in 1985 the United States set forth and then accomplished a series of significant objectives for its international drug crop eradication and interdiction programmes. These broad

91 Ibid., p.33.
objectives were to expand the base of programme and to give higher priority to increasing the number of countries in which eradication of crops were to be taken and to expand the scope of eradication and enforcement operations. It also wanted to internationalize the response to the narcotics problem by encouraging greater participation by other countries and international organizations.

The strategy to reduce international drug production and trafficking was necessarily a long term goal. The US gave high priority to yearly campaigns and demonstrably advance the major components of the strategy, especially crop control. This shift in policy is clearly reflected in the reports of NNICC submitted after 1985.

Perhaps, the most profound change was the realization by other governments that it was a global problem and not the one only affecting the rich countries. The drug trafficking was a threat to their national security and economic and social well being. Such realization led to more cooperative multilateral enforcement and demand reduction programmes, thus broadening the base for international cooperation.92

Speaking on this new turn in drug control efforts and cooperation from drug source and transiting countries, Ann B. Wrobleski, Assistant Secretary of State for INM, said that:

1986 gave us a clear indication that countries are on the right track. In many ways, this year was a turning point—in attitudes, in commitment, in worldwide resources dedicated to narcotics control. The international community has stood up to narcotics producers and traffickers, and there is simply no turning back.

Wrobleski’s statement was supported by the testimony of Bolivian Ambassador to the United States Carlos Delius who attested that:

Our business and political leaders for years always considered narco-trafficking as a problem of the Wealthy Consuming Countries. Drug use was thought of as a by-product of the deterioration of western society, certainly not a scourge on our own house. Now, we are all victims. Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and the other producing countries will never mature and develop if the drug culture captures our youth.

The year 1985 was also proved to be effective year since 1981 in reducing marijuana and coca cultivation in

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Latin American countries i.e., Colombia, Jamaica, Panama, Belize, Mexico, Marijuana and Coca in Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil. The INM working closely with the DEA provided the equipments and technical assistance to improve enforcement efforts in these and other countries. In several countries, the INM and the AID collaborated on assistance programmes linked to crop reduction. Public awareness programmes sponsored by INM, AID and the United States information Agency (USIA) significantly enhanced these control initiatives.

The first major operation in President Reagan's second term was Operation Blue Lightning undertaken in. It was a multi agency operation, with NNBIs as its lead agency. The government of Bahamas coordinated with the operation. Intelligence had provided information that certain Bahamian islands were being used for stashing and as transshipment points. The operation was directed against these islands. Due to the pressure exerted in the Bahamas, smugglers were forced to move their drugs immediately to elude capture. A substantial quantity, over 5,500 pounds of cocaine, 36,000 pounds of marijuana and 26 vessels were seized during two weeks of operation. The operation Blue Lightning was followed up by a maritime operation entitled "Thunderstorm" which was conducted by Coast Guard and DEA with the
cooperation of the government of Bahamas.

After the Operation Blue Lightning, the US Customs standardized much of the Federal, state and Local operation as the Blue Lightning Strike Force. This Force carried out a three month operation that began on June 28, 1985 along the Florida coast. The operation resulted in the interdiction of 103,755 pounds of marijuana and 6,710 pounds of cocaine. Because of its success, customs decided to retain it as a permanent cooperative effort and establish the Blue Lightning Centre. 95

Operation Buckstop:

In 1985, customs initiated another operation code named 'Operation Buckstop' designed to intercept the large amount of narco-dollars shipped to foreign banks and individuals. It included the "currency canine" programme in which Canine teams detected the presence of currency in Cargo or baggage. It was a three pronged effort using targeting procedures to intercept illicit monetary instruments shipped as Cargo, transported by commercial aircraft passengers, and

95 NDEPB (1986), n.24, p.137.
transported by private aircraft. The Buckstop resulted in investigations that revealed the identities of traffickers, their record keeping systems, and their method of shipping. 96

The impression in the United States was that no country was cooperating more than the Bahamas. But there were still some problems. Jack Blum, Special Counsel, Committee on Foreign Relations described them as follows:

The problem is that two very peculiar things happen. One, when the US aircraft intercept an incoming drug delight in the Bahamas, the Bahamas make the arrest and the Bahamians seize the drugs. The Bahamians will not permit us to watch the drugs being destroyed and the Bahamians release whoever is arrested on bond the following day.

What has happened is the Bahamians then turn around and, this is at all levels, put the drugs right back on the market. In fact, what we are doing with our assistance is improving their capacity to be pirates. The cost of cocaine in some parts of the Bahamas is now down to $2,000 a kilo. That is really the pirate's premium off the top of the cost.

96 Ibid., pp.137-38. This Centre links various detection, sorting and tracking capabilities -- land, maritime, and airborne -- and functions as a multi agency command and control facility directing participating marine resources. The area of operation encompass Fort Pierce, Florida, South through the Florida keys, and North across Florida Bay to Marco Florida.

These were serious accusations. Bahamias were being accused of dishonesty and insincerity. This also meant that the real success claimed for Operation Blue Lightning was limited.

So unpredictable strategies and tactics were effectively used during 1984 and 1985 to keep drug smugglers off guard. Smugglers did not anticipate operations Hat Trick and Blue Lightning, such extensive operations had rarely been mounted before. Other strategies and tactics were applied throughout the period, albeit on a much smaller scale.

The US government made significant progress in 1985. This was the time when government was able to substantially reduce the availability of drugs in the US market by pursuing similar programmes simultaneously in a large number of foreign countries.

In 1980s, Colombia was the principle source of marijuana coming into the United States. In 1985, it was able to reduce marijuana production by a dramatic 67 per cent through effective eradication efforts. After extensive testing of glyphosate against Cannabis in mid 1984, the government undertook a comprehensive aerial eradication programme along the North Coast in 1985. A 1985 aerial
survey, conducted under INM’s auspices, showed that cultivated was 85 per cent below 1983 levels in the key north coast growing region. It was expected that this production decrease would be sustained in 1986. 98

In 1985 the government of Jamaica took a strong public stand against the cultivation and trafficking of marijuana. It made significant progress towards controlling them. Prime Minister Sega stated the objective of eliminating the export of marijuana through eradicating crops and severing transportation links. More than 955 hectares of cannabis were eradicated manually. The progress was attested by the United States. Similar eradication programmes were carried on in Panama, Belize, Mexico, Colombia and Brazil.

In these countries eradication programmes were carried on with the active cooperation and assistance of the United States. The spraying of glyphosate over the crop was done through American assistance. The results were visible in relation to marijuana. For instance, in 1985 Marijuana exports from Belize to the United States decreased by 39 per cent. But the report submitted by the State Department noted

98 NDEPB (1986), n.24, pp.149-50.
regretfully that in Mexico Cannabis available for export increased in 1984 to about 2500-3000 metric tons. This was despite the fact that in February 1985, Mexico rejuvenated its eradication programme that was quite effective. What accounted for the slide back? The American drug authorities blamed it on inefficiency and corruption. Taken as a whole, however, American had reasons to feel happy with the success in eradication of marijuana crops and with the cooperation extended by Latin American countries.99

In contrast to the progress made against Cannabis production, coca eradication results were modest. While Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Brazil began manual eradication programmes in early 1984, Bolivia began initial coca eradication only at the end of 1985. Bolivia and Peru remained the world's principal sources of coca leaf supporting the cocaine trade. However, in May 1985 decree provided a broad mandate to restrict production and trafficking of illegal coca in Bolivia. In addition, the firm commitment and more effective leadership of new Bolivian government under President Victor Estensorro Paz who came into power in August 1985 increased the prospects

99 Ibid., pp.150-51.

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for more extensive coca eradication in Bolivia in 1986. An incentive for Peru and Bolivia to cooperate in US supported eradication programmes had been the agricultural development programmes funded by AID that were linked to coca eradication. The United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control also supported coca control related programmes in Peru and Bolivia. With US support, Colombia took the lead in testing herbicides for the use in the aerial eradication of coca plants. The government of Colombia also carried out a manual coca eradication programme which destroyed 2,400 hectares in 1984 and 2,000 hectares in 1985. A joint manual eradication programme was carried out with Ecuador along with their common border in mid 1985 and a cross border induction campaign was conducted with Peru. 100

A coca eradication programme was begun in Peru in April 1983, after both the Department of State and AID had entered into assistance agreements. The programme resulted in the destruction of 703 hectares that year, 3,134 hectares in 1984 and 4,823 hectares in 1985 despite a precarious security situation. Dozens of eradication workers were

100 Ibid., p.15. Also see Kevin Healy, "Coca, thee State and the Peasantry in Bolivia: 1981-88", Journal of Inter American Studies and World Affairs (Coral Gables), vol.30 (Summer/Fall 1988), p.111.
killed, and scores more threatened with violence. In Ecuador, where significant coca cultivation was discovered in late 1983, the government eradicated 114 hectares in 1984 and 464 hectares in 1985, with operational support from the United States.101

In Brazil extensive coca cultivation was a recent phenomenon in the Amazon region while marijuana cultivation was fairly widespread in that country. The government initiated coca eradication in 1984, with operational support provided by the United States.102

The result of the US programme conducted with the assistance of Latin American countries.

The Reagan Administration laid stress on the control of drugs at the source, so that supply could be checked to the United States. In this endeavour the United States received good measure of cooperation from countries in Latin America. But even then few governments which did not cooperate, and few governments which did not fulfill the target of drug crop eradication, made the American public and congressmen restless.

101 NDEPB (1986), n.24, p.182.
102 Ibid., p.153.
Some people in the United States felt that the administration’s policy had not accomplished much except to raise the level of tension in relations with Latin America during the eighties. The US did not provide either enough economic or technical resources that would have produced results. The critics contended that the US lacked a coherent policy. It did not take a serious note of the ground reality that the drug cartels inside some countries had become so powerful and violent that the respective government did not have resources to control them. What was needed was the realization that would have seen the threat posed by the drug trade as common problem.