In January 1985 began Ronald Reagan's second term in office after he had scored a stunning victory over his Democratic rival, Walter F. Mondale. But the voters had again shown their penchant for splitting their tickets. They had given the control of the House of Representatives to the Democrats.\(^1\) It was evident that in the following four years, Democrats would be critical of the President and offer him grudging cooperation only where they would feel the need to do so. In the years from 1981 to 1984, the drug policy had not been on the top of administration's agenda, though it would not be fair to say that it was totally ignored. But the drug menace was spreading in the United States like a wild fire and consciousness about the threat the drug problem posed was growing. Therefore, it is not surprising that the US Congress tried to seize the initiative from the administration in combating the drug problem.

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1 In the 1984 Presidential election Republican Ronald Reagan secured 54,455,074 votes and defeated his rival of the Democratic Party Walter F. Mondale who got 37,577,137. While in the Congress Republicans secured 165 seats in the House and 54 in the Senate, Democrats had 269 in the House and 46 in the Senate. For details, see Congress and the Nation: Vol.VI: 1981-84 (Washington, D.C., Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1985).
Like many headed Hydra, drug problem has many facets. It is a major problem of the United States but it has international ramifications. The Congress viewed the problem in both its dimensions.

The Centre of gravity between the President and the Congress has periodically swung from one to another. Beginning with the administration of FDR, presidency gained in importance and dominated the Congress, more particularly in foreign affairs. But due to US failure in Vietnam and Watergate scandal the Congress regained some of its lost power and prestige and asserted itself. But this period proved too short-lived. By 1980, the presidency under Ronald Reagan had regained the initiative in foreign policy. The formulation of the narcotic policy and its implementation in the first term of Reagan was in the hands of the executive branch. The Congress began to take active interest only since 1986.

Since then the Congress has continued to focus on reduction of supplies. It repeatedly stressed that policy making at the executive branch should not be fragmented among various agencies. It no doubt supported bilateralism but also favoured multilateralism to reduce supply. It favoured giving incentives to cut down supplies but was not
averse to applying sanctions when they failed to work. And finally, it wanted to use military only as a last resort to implement policy.2

The role of Congress in shaping international narcotics policy during the Reagan Administration passed through three phases. The Phase I which ended early in 1986, with the enactment of the Anti Drug Abuse Act of 1986, was characterized by a limited public awareness of the seriousness of the drug problem and limited congressional activity and focus. During this period drugs were not a top priority for the Congress and no comprehensive "omnibus" legislation was enacted. In the Phase II, there was heavy public pressure for immediate congressional action and solutions. This phase begun in 1986, included enactment of the 1986 anti Drug Abuse Act and continued until early 1988. This period was characterized by a focus on foreign supply reduction. During this period questioning of past policy began as it became evident that the old international drug policy was not successful in stemming the flood of drugs into the United States and the public put intense pressure on congress to produce results. The Phase III which

was the most important phase began in early 1988, in which congress played a leading role in the formulation and oversight of international narcotics policy. The reason behind this was that there was increasing public and congressional disillusionment with the policies of the Government. This resulted in the enactment of the 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act. Congress sought to re-evaluate policy, while maintaining a drug policy leadership role by requiring the executive branch to submit to Congress a coordinated and consolidated anti-drug strategy to serve as the basis of congressional scrutiny and oversight. During this period, a new "drug Czar" was required by law to consult with Congress. 3 This chapter will highlight the role of the Congress in the second and the third phase.

The role of the Congress in shaping international Narcotics policy could be divided into two major components: legislation and oversight. The Congress not only passed laws, and funded programmes but it tried to ensure that they were properly implemented.

The US Congress monitored and influenced foreign

narcotics policy by regular oversight of executive branch's implementation of international narcotics control policy. Important mechanisms for exercising this oversight functions were hearings and investigations. These in turn frequently resulted in published hearing transcripts and reports.

A central role in congressional oversight of international narcotics control policy was played by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. These two committees oversee the Department of State and other foreign affairs agencies. In addition, the House select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, the Senate caucus on International Narcotics Control, and the House and Senate Appropriations Committees regularly oversee the US international Narcotics policy. 4

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 was enacted because of the growing impatience of the public with the failure of the Reagan administration to cut down the flow of narcotics from abroad into the United States. The United States had been

providing financial assistance to the countries for helping them in eradicating crops, in destroying laboratories that laboratories that manufactured drugs and controlling the trafficking. But for all the money that was being spent there was no corresponding improvement. The Congress wanted to use its economic assistance as a leverage to obtain more effective cooperation. A basketball star Glenn Bias died in 1986 because he had taken an overdose of cocaine. This tragic incident contributed substantially to the introduction of the bill in the Congress on Anti-Drug Abuse. The year 1986 was a mid-term election year and members belonging to both the parties wanted to appear as the champion of a popular cause. In October, weeks before election, the Congress passed and President Reagan signed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986.5

The Congress recognized the complex and integrated nature of the drug problem. The Public Law 99-570 passed by the 99th Congress on October 27, 1986 was a comprehensive law, which dealt with the domestic as well as the foreign policy aspect of the drug problem. The preamble of the Act defined the objectives as:


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To strengthen the Federal efforts to encourage foreign cooperation in eradicating illicit drug crops and in halting international drug traffic, to improve enforcement of Federal drug laws and enhance interdiction of illicit drug shipments, to provide strong Federal leadership in establishing effective drug abuse prevention and education programs, to expand Federal support for drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation efforts, and for other purposes.  

Undoubtedly, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 represents the most comprehensive effort in the history of the United States to lower domestic demand for illegal drugs and to reduce the flow of drugs into the United States. The act include provisions designed to attack the drug problem on a variety of fronts simultaneously; tougher law enforcement in US cities; more ambitious anti-drug school education and community programmes; intensified testing in the work place; expanded treatment and rehabilitation programmes for users; lengthier prison sentences for traffickers; increased federal support for state enforcement efforts; augmented interdiction at the border; and additional resources for eradication, crops substitution, and enforcement programmes abroad.  

While the bill was under consideration, the Senate

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had felt "an urgent critical need for funds to carry out the program and activities authorized" by the provisions of the Act. It therefore recommended "the expenditure of funds in excess of otherwise applicable budget limitations." It recommended further "new budget authority for Fiscal Year 1987. To wage an all out war against the drug epidemic, the US law makers authorized the Executive to spend an extra $1.7 billion in 1987, in addition to the $2.2 billion previously authorized."  

The legislation required that at the beginning of each fiscal year, certain kind of aid be withheld, pending certification by the President following March 1. The law provided for the President to certify every major illicit drug producing or transit country that cooperated fully with the United States in the previous year or took adequate steps of its own. Alternatively, the President could certify that countries that would not qualify on these grounds but national interest of the US required the Foreign Aid to continue or he could decide not to certify. In that case  

8 See Senate Policy Regarding Funding (Section 140001 of the Public Law 99-570).  
Statutory sanctions were to be imposed. The law provided that half of military and economic assistance be withheld at the start of each Fiscal Year, pending certification by the President. And if the President failed to certify or the Congress overrode the certification, the other half of military and economic assistance would be withheld. The US would also oppose multilateral aid to these countries. The President could also impose trade sanctions.

In determining whether aid was to be withheld from a country, the President was required to take two other things into consideration. First, whether the concerned country had taken all the necessary legal and law enforcement measures to "(a) enforce, to the maximum extent possible, the elimination of illicit cultivation and the suppression of illicit manufacture and trafficking -- as evidenced by seizures, and arrest and prosecution of violators, and (b) eliminate to the maximum extent possible the laundering in that country of drug related profits or drug related monies -- as evidenced by enactment of money laundering laws, willingness to enter into Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty's (MLAT's) and other cooperation on money laundering".10

Prior to the Act the Congress had no active role in the international narcotic policy. The Act amended sections 481 of the Foreign Assistance Act and added new sections to the Trade Act of 1974. The amended sections provided that aid to all major countries illicitly producing and transit countries would be suspended and would not be restored unless the President made an exception by certifying that aid to it was necessary in national interest. The 1986 Act provided that President’s certification could be overridden by the Congress by a joint resolution, a process similar to the one in the congressional disapproval of major foreign arms sale.11

This represented a major shift which assured the Congress an active role. It reversed the role previously played by the Congress and the President in the denial of assistance to drug producing and transit countries. Earlier the initiative rested with the President to make the initial determination, it was now for the Congress to make such determination. The President role was reduced to that of enforcing the decision or seeking exception to that determination.12

12 Ibid.
During the Reagan Presidency, while the US policy makers often were inclined to view drug problem in the United States' relationship with Latin American countries primarily as a law enforcement issue, whereas Latin American governments frequently viewed the drug problem as an social, economic and trade issue. Michael Skol, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter American Affairs, US Department of State agreed. He told the US House Select Committee on Narcotic Abuse and Control:

...in thinking about what the U.S. does overseas, the law enforcement element and the military/national security element are not the whole story. What if, for example in Peru's Huallaga Valley, our incipient military assistance and aerial eradication of coca, came together and began to really work to reduce the flow of coca from Peru to Colombia, and eventually to the United States. What happens? What happens to the political situation - to the economy of a country that is prostrate anyway, politically and economically? And what, should the United States' response to such a scenario be? Should the United States do things in the military and in the law enforcement area and then say, "Fellas, it's your problem now there has been a change. Things are now economically out of balance. It's your problem to put it into balance".

I would suggest that we will never even reach the point of success in eradication or interdiction or military action against the traffickers or their allies unless we also think about such long term implications, because there will be resistance. And it is not a lack of political will on the part of a government to say, "we can't do that because -- " . It is a genuine concern for what movements are going on and would go on in an economy and in politics if just half of the United States program is pursued. I am talking, obviously, about the question of economic assistance, military assistance. I am not going to propose figures here.
But if we are serious about working overseas to reduce supply, we had better think about the domestic perceptions of various policy options within the affected nations. This is not just a law enforcement problem, and we won't even get to the law enforcement aspect unless we think about the rest of the equation.

Drugs were a great source of income, employment and foreign exchange for these countries. Farmers earned ten times more by growing these drug crops than legitimate crops. Wherever attempt was made for eradication was immediately followed by violence and murders. Drug had become part of Latin American economy. Lartry Deaton, an economist for the United States Department of Agriculture, noted a major negative offshoot of this trend: "The irony is that while this diversion of land makes more money, it takes away basic crops in countries that already have food deficits". Moreover while drugs exports earned badly needed foreign exchange, they also caused capital outflow as food had to be imported to meet domestic requirements.


15 Ibid.
Gustavo Gorriti, Visiting Fellow, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, also stated before the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control:

That brings us to the main question: What is the impact of cocaine traffic on these countries? I believe that, especially in the production countries, in Peru and Bolivia—and to a lesser extent in cocaine's trading center, Colombia—cocaine trafficking has been nothing less than an economic revolution which has directly involved hundreds of thousands (perhaps as much as one and half million), people in the different stages of cocaine production. In addition, many more millions are indirectly involved with it. In several cases, the whole country has become economically dependent on it.16

One can easily find some reasons behind the inability of Latin American governments to control drug production and trafficking. Latin American countries had been facing severe debt crisis since the beginning of 1980s. There were repeated reports that these governments depended on narco-dollars and sometimes, even drug traffickers were able to get them out of economic crisis by paying salaries or bonus to government officials. Secondly, these governments did not have adequate resources at their disposal which could match the sophisticated well equipped armies and arsenals of the

16 Hearings, Drugs and Latin America: Economic and Political Impact and U.S. Policy Options, n.13, p.5.
drug cartels. Thirdly whatever efforts were made were disrupted by corruption in these countries. The US delegation which visited some Latin American countries reported:

The economies of many Latin American countries are troubled and several of the countries visited by the delegation have taken recent steps to restructure the large foreign debts either through renegotiations (as in Mexico), or through unilateral decisions to limit or halt debt payments (as in Peru and Brazil, respectively)....The delegation noted that these countries like many others in the world need to do a better job of managing their economies and eliminating corruption.

If the Reagan Administration seriously desired solution of this problem, it should have given some debt relaxations to these countries facing violence and resistance from their own people because they were trying to please America. Instead of giving some financial assistance, President Reagan proposed budget cuts on drug control programmes, which met with severe criticism from Congressmen particularly Charles B. Rangel (D., NY.).

While going through the post-Anti Drug Abuse Act of 1986 period, one realized that on the one hand President

Reagan appeared determined to check the inflow of drugs by getting such a law enacted. But on the other hand, he proposed budget cuts for drug control programmes.

Three months after signing the 1986 anti-drug statute, President Reagan submitted his Fiscal Year 1988 budget in which he proposed to cut $1 billion from drug allocations. Although some protests were voiced by congressional leaders, in practice Congress was willing to restore only a small portion of Reagan's cutbacks. The administration's subsequent decision not to request reauthorization in Fiscal Year 1989 for $1 billion in federal funding for law enforcement, education and rehabilitation programmes further undermined the war on drugs. As Congressman Charles B. Rangel (D.NY) put it: "These cuts seriously call into question the administration's commitment to an effective national drug abuse strategy". 18

Drug trade estimates ranged from $80 to $150 billion. Bolivia, Colombia and Peru earned more money from export of drugs than the legal exports like Coffee, Tin, Oil and Sugar. Those involved in the drug trade referred to as narcotraficants or cocaine cowboys, or drug barons, created

their own states within states providing the foundation for export based economies, generating employment and carrying out a number of charitable deeds much in the tradition of a modern day Robin Hood. As a scholar Rensselaer W. Lee, Jr. noted:

...drug barons today are major political forces in countries such as Bolivia, Colombia and Peru, carving out states within states in coca producing regions, sometimes forming alliances of convenience with local leftist guerrillas, undermining authorities with bribery and assassinations, and amassing enough armed might to keep governments at bay. Drug traffickers have also sought to play by the local political rules, banding together to lobby politicians to nominate candidates for public office and occasionally to negotiate with national leaders as quasi-equals.

The nexus between drug and insurgency played a very vital role in the Latin American drug trade. It was usually a "marriage of convenience" between drug traffickers and leftist insurgent groups. It did not mean that the narco trafficantes and leftist insurgents owed loyalty to the same ideology. On the contrary, the drug smugglers were usually conservative and status quo oriented and the leftist groups were usually seeking to radically transform their respective societies by overthrowing their governments and implanting a

revolutionary new order usually an offshoot of Marxist Leninist ideology. The drug insurgency was, the major problem in Peru. In Bolivia, it was significant that narcotraficants had once again begun to challenge the government's pretense that it ruled the nation. As one newspaper noted: "Bolivian officials are increasingly worried about the possibility of a political threat from the traffickers. Thus for the drug lords have financed the campaign of some national and local candidates, and have recently purchased controlling interests in local banks and business". This state of affairs led to 'Operation Blast Furnace'.

Blast Furnace in Bolivia

The spirit of the 1986 Act was tested in Bolivia in an operation code named Operation Blast Furnace in July 1986. The objective of the operation was to stop processing and transportation of cocaine. This was one of the major steps taken by President Reagan during his second term in office. The United States military personnel were sent in for the first time to participate in a joint effort in Bolivia. The

US military contingent had been sent in a situation where they could be fired upon and they had the permission to use their weapons. By undertaking operation of this nature, the United States signaled its seriousness to tackle what had become a major domestic and hemispheric problem. The operation followed soon after President Reagan signed a declaration in April 1986 which characterized drug trafficking to be a threat to American national security that warranted a military response.\textsuperscript{21}

For many years the United States had been pressing Bolivia to eradicate its large coca crop. But the country had not succeeded in eradicating a significant portion of its coca crop which was estimated by the State Department in February at more than 35,000 tons of coca leaf a year. Bolivia had not eradicated 10,000 acres of coca by the end of 1985 as its officials had promised. According to a report in the \textit{New York Times} the United States therefore informed the Bolivian government that its aid would be cut by half. Since President Victor Paz Estenssaro had assumed office in August 1985, the United States aid to Bolivia totalled $64.5 million. The amount for 1986 then had not been set.\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} \textit{New York Times}, July 16, 1986, AI.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., January 11, 1986, AI.
\end{itemize}
the intended cut was announced, it upset the Bolivian
Fernando Illanas said: "the lost aid hurts." But he denied
that the Bolivian government had undertaken the operation to
get aid. "We are doing it because we have to. If we do not
attack this problem our country would disappear as a nation
as we know it very soon."²³

In Washington, members of the Congress reacted
positively to the dispatch of military to Bolivia.
Representative Charles B. Rangel (D., NY.), the main critic
of President Reagan's drug diplomacy, called the action "one
great step forward towards a more aggressive coordinated
enforcement program for this country."²⁴

Though the deployment of military in Bolivia was highly
satisfying to the United States, it raised bitter political
and economic controversy in Bolivia. The Bolivian Interior
Minister Fernando Bathelemy, speaking at a press conference,
acknowledged that the American military presence had created
political controversy for his Government. But he added "we
weighed the pros and cons and are convinced that we did the
right thing."²⁵ The opposition to the deployment of the US

²⁴ Ibid.

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army in Bolivia was not only because it revealed the weakness of the government which could not face the drug barons on its own but also for more mundane reasons. It was the possibility that the destruction of coca plants would cause political and economic upheaval. The crop was the source of employment, income and foreign exchange.

In the Operation six US Black hawk helicopters and a support contingent of 175 US troops were deployed in Bolivia from July to November 1986. The special agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration on temporary duty coordinated the operation. The American resources boosted the capacity of the Bolivian anti drug police. They were able to reach and raid large cocaine hydrochloride laboratories that had been built in the remotest corners of Bolivia’s extensive eastern jungles. With the US support the Bolivian police seized and destroyed 21 cocaine hydrochloride laboratories and 24 transshipment points. These laboratories had an estimated weekly production capacity of 15 tons of cocaine. The operation also seized large quantities of precursor chemicals and other assets.26

The Bolivian cocaine hydrochloride manufacturing industry was virtually shut down for four months but it recovered the lost ground rapidly. Michael Abbot, who commanded Army Aviation personnel during the operation, subsequently attested to this regression. He wrote in 1988: "As soon as the US military pulled out of Bolivia, the major traffickers, came out of hiding and the price of coca leaves climbed to a level just short of its pre Blast Furnace price." The New York Times cited the opinion of narcotics experts that as the pressure was off, everybody was replenishing the stocks that had fallen low. Although the operation destroyed 20 laboratories that turned coca paste into cocaine, several large workshops had started again. The United States Bolivian raids struck at major trafficker ranches in the provinces of Yacuma and Magalena. But the operation failed to arrest any significant number of suspects and suppliers of cocaine. A large number of drug barons had already fled to Panama before the operation began because they had been secretly informed of the operation.

29 The Times of the Americas, August 6, 1986, P.I
The US embassy reported after the operation that the price of coca leaves fell as low as $10 for 100 pounds which prior to the operation was selling for more than $100 dollars for 100 pounds. However, the effect of the operation on the cocaine trade was temporary. With the departure of the US troops narcotics experts noticed after some time that drug started coming out of Bolivia again. And the price the peasants received for coca leaves was rising. But the assessment of the American and Bolivian officials was much more optimistic. They argued that the drive against the drug in Bolivia was not ending but was passing through a period of transition. Plans were under way for the Bolivian authorities to broaden their efforts. The anti drug effort was to be resumed once the Bolivian pilots had been trained to operate six Huey helicopters that the United States loaned them for an indefinite period in November. With six helicopters on loan and a reorganized narcotic police, Bolivia could carry on its own programme of eradication.

To please the United States the Bolivian congress during 1987-88 passed a new law. Upto 1987 the Bolivian

government had refused to make the growing of the coca plants illegal because the country had century old tradition of chewing coca and making coca tea. The new law made all coca cultivation illegal except in a designated 12,000 hectares in Yungas. Prior to the enactment 80,000 hectares had been specified for growing coca for the Chapare and Yungas region.\textsuperscript{32}

The US Ambassador Edward Morgan Rowell told the House Committee on Armed Services that during the operation traffickers had fled leaving the compesinos (farmers) holding the bag. Rowell recommended several changes that he felt would greatly enhance the role of the military in a similar operation:

First, the legislature proscription on U.S. military training of the police is a barrier to maximum cooperation with Bolivian drug eradication and interdiction activities. In Bolivia, the National Police are responsible for anti-narcotics operations; they are the ones charged with busting the production laboratories. The delegation concurs with the Ambassador's recommendations that the legislative restrictions against the US military providing para-military training for police forces should be eased in

\textsuperscript{32} Kevin Healy, "Coca, the State and the Peasantry in Bolivia, 1982-88", \textit{Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs} (Coral Gables), vol.30, (Summer/Fall, 1988), p.114.
the case of anti-narcotics police. Second, valuable
time was lost because military aircraft were not able
to get in close enough. Short take off and landing
aircraft would provide such a capability. The
delegation concurs with the Ambassador's
recommendations that aircraft suitable for Blast
Furnace type operations should be included in the
military inventory. Third, as long as the US Southern
Command was directly involved in operation Blast
Furnace, South Com. was able to provide substantial
amounts of operational assistance while also providing
military training at the same time. Now that South
Com's direct involvement has ended. This is not the
case for the Mobile Training Teams working with the
Bolivian armed forces. The delegation concurs with the
Ambassador’s recommendations that US Armed Forces
should seek out meaningfully training missions in
assisting civilian law enforcement agencies in the
anti-narcotics operations. Fourth, although obtaining
equipment for operation Blast Furnace was not a problem
because of South Com's role, this was apparently the
exception to the complex reimbursement procedures that
must normally be used by civilian law enforcement
agencies seeking use of military equipment for anti-
drug operations. The delegation concurs with the
Ambassador’s recommendation that the reimbursement
procedures for military equipment loaned to support
civilian law enforcement agencies for anti drug
activities should be streamlined.

Operation Snowcap

After gaining experience of Blast Furnace, the US
launched another important operation code named "Snowcap".
The Blast Furnace was limited to Bolivia but the Snow cap
was extended to Peru.

33 Hearings Report of the Delegation to Latin America,
n.17, p.2.
'Operation Snowcap' was launched in 1988 to provide a permanent US anti drug presence in the coca growing regions of Bolivia and Peru. Like Blast Furnace, it received US support in the shape of helicopter strikes against drug laboratories by agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration and the forces of the two countries. The Snowcap also involved a training programme in counterinsurgency and small unit tactics, provided by the US Special Forces Personnel.34

The snowcap operation in Peru revealed the problems faced by Washington in the attainment of the goal of suppressing the drug traffic at its source. In the upper Huallaga Valley, in Peru from where 60 per cent of the cocaine was smuggled into the United States, the US agents continued to face not only the organized opposition of local farmers but also armed resistance by Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrillas. In early 1989, the Snowcap had to be suspended temporarily when the Peruvians forces could no longer guarantee the safety of US personnel. The operation was not resumed until September.35

34 Klare, n.27, p.8.
By October 1989, there were approximately 100 US civilians working in Peru and Bolivia under the Snowcap. In addition there were nearly fifty Green Beret training officers.

Although, the US officials reported a steady increase in the number of drug laboratories destroyed and acres of coca eradicated under the Snowcap, nobody really believed that the operation made a significant dent in the Cocaine trade. In 1988, Peruvian forces managed to eradicate 5,130 hectares of coca which was only four per cent of the 115,630 hectares reportedly under cultivation at that time. Moreover, many experts believed that total coca cultivation in Peru had risen to 200,000 hectares with more fields being added. Meanwhile, the Sendero guerrillas steadily increased their control over the coca-growing regions, forcing the Peruvian government to abandon its plans to spray these areas with herbicides out of fear that such action would drive the coca farmers into the arms of the guerrillas. As suggested by the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, the US backed eradication campaigns "portend real economic and political dangers for the governments of nations with marginal economic growth".36

The Operation Snowcap took place in the closing year of Reagan Presidency. There were number of occasions since the beginning of the second tenure when the Peruvian government cooperated with the US narcotics control programmes. It

36 Ibid., p.9.
endeavoured to maintain a manual destruction eradication programme inspite of the violence which took place in those areas where coca was cultivated.

The Problems in Peru

The problem Peru posed for the United States was somewhat different than it did in Colombia and Bolivia. Unlike Colombia the Cocaine industry in the country was not mature and fragmented; traffickers had not been able to develop a common anti-leftist agenda nor were they able to establish alliances with monied classes and with the country's armed forces. Peru's cocaine industry was relatively undeveloped and was located mostly in some remote regions. It represented only a small percentage of South American exports of Cocaine hydrochloride, although, it ranked as a number one producer of coca leaves throughout the 1980s and had priority in the US war against drugs.

During President Reagan's tenure, Peru had no trafficking personalities comparable to Pablo Escobar or Luis Jorge Ochoa in Colombia and Roberto Suarez in Bolivia. Though two Peruvian big time traffickers Carlos Langberg and Reynaldo Rodriguez Lopez had emerged but both of them were jailed during 1980s. The minimal leadership in the existing Peruvian cocaine industry came from Columbian traffickers.
The industry's shallow routes and fragmented structure and the dominant role played by the foreigners might have allowed Sendero Luminoso to penetrate some trafficking organizations. There were also reports of narco guerrilla conflicts in Peru. The narco-guerrilla relationships depended on the balance of forces in a given region at a given time.\textsuperscript{37}

President Alan Garcia who became President of Peru in August 1985, cooperated with the US anti-drug programmes. Despite his cooperation, the results of Peru's war against drugs was not much different from results elsewhere. The Peruvian government won some battles but they were loosing the war. Perhaps the most important question raised by the Peruvian case was whether the US should give priority to anti-drug efforts or to counter insurgency. The US Policy towards Peru appeared to do the latter. The US and Peruvian governments anti drug effort cemented an alliance between the coca growers and Sendero Luminoso, which between 1986 and 1988 gained control of as much as 90 per cent of the countryside in the Upper Huallaga Valley.\textsuperscript{38} The \textit{New York

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\textsuperscript{37} Rensselaer W. Lee, "Cocaine Mafia", \textit{Society} (New Brunswick), vol.27 (January/February 1990), p.56.

Times reported that: "The new government has dismissed 41 of the nation's most senior police officials in a widening investigation of links between law enforcement authorities and the cocaine trade". \(^{39}\)

The Peruvian government decided to wage its battle alone against drugs and launched a major anti cocaine operation and sent two squadrons of airforce planes against trafficker's bases in the jungles of Amazon. Interior Minister Abel Salinas said at a news conference that at the outset of the operation, the jets started bombing and fired rockets at two of 12 bases targeted by the campaign. He said it was the first time that any government in the world had deployed fighter aircraft in an anti-narcotics drive and added that Peru planned to use the jets against other bases. The purpose of this campaign was, as Salinas said, "we want to show that Peru is using its own means to fight drug traffickers and we will not allow foreign forces to enter the country to fight the scourge". \(^{40}\) The government in smaller and developing countries of Latin American became vulnerable when they permitted the US forces to joint eradication operation. The operation was against their own countrymen who were ready with the charge that country's


\(^{40}\) Ibid., August 11, 1986, A5.
independence and sovereignty was being surrendered. The statement of Salinas revealed acute awareness of this explosive political issue. There was no problem, however, in accepting financial assistance.

The Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, which was the driving force behind Peru's anti drug campaign, contributed $3.2 million to the effort in Fiscal Year 1986 and nearly $5 million in Fiscal Year 1987. In addition, the Agency for International Development was involved in a long term $23 million crop substitution/rural development programme in the Upper Huallaga Valley. For all practical purposes, Peru's programme was financed by the United States. 41

At first, in the mid 1980s, the emphasis was upon manual eradication of coca bushes. Plants were dug up by the odd workers for CORAH (Special project for the control and eradication of coca in Upper Huallaga Valley). The eradication was complemented by PEAH (Upper Huallaga Valley Area Development Project), an AID financed programmes for the development of legitimate agriculture production and employment opportunities. coca growers were offered

approximately $300 to destroy one hectare of coca. CORAH eradicated almost 5,000 hectares. But violence erupted and mere 350 hectares were eradicated in 1987 and eradication efforts stalled.42

The Interior Minister Salinas who in mid 1987 assumed overall coordination of the Peru government's anti-narcotics effort gave new impetus to the programme. Despite these efforts interdiction and eradication activities during 1987 had limited effect on drug production and trafficking in the Upper Huallaga Valley. In 1987, manual eradication carried out by the 462 men special project for Control and Eradication of coca in the Upper Huallaga (CORAH), dropped to 355 hectares from 2,575 hectares in the previous year, half of which occurred in December. Additionally, CORAH destroyed 8,000 square meters of coca seedlings, which would have been sufficient to plant 500 hectares of coca. Although CORAH workers moved to the advance base at Santa Lucia in September, their efforts for most of the year were stymied by severe security concerns, as terrorists and narcotics traffickers dominated the area.43

42 McClintok, n.38, p.130, See also Craig, "Illicit Drug Traffic", n.41, pp.19-20.
The renewed interdiction campaign, Condor VI, started in the Upper Huallaga Valley on July 15, 1987. It was carried out by members of Peru’s Guardia Republicana (GR) and the Investigative Police (PIP). On the first day of Condor VI, government’s forces penetrated the town of Tocache, noted as the area’s principal drug trafficking center. The Police established a field headquarters there and commenced daily anti-drug operations. Air support was provided by three INM-leased helicopters and, later, by the INM-owned C-123 transport. These operations resulted in the destruction of coca green houses, leaf storage areas, maceration and decantation pits, paste and base conversion labs, clandestine runways for trafficker aircraft, and the detention of over 1,100 suspected drug traffickers. However, while seizures and arrests were up significantly, trafficker activities continued relatively unimpeded.44

Beginning in November 1987, a new strategy was instituted by using U.S.-provided helicopters for airlift of workers and security surveillance to eradication sites. This made swift and positive impact in raising eradication figures during the concluding weeks of the year.

44 Ibid.
In the later half of the second term of the Reagan Administration, the drug law enforcement and coca eradication efforts in Upper Huallaga Valley were supplemented by the Area development Project (PEAH) which was financed by the Agency for International Development. This programme was carried on despite the increasing violence of drug traffickers and insurgents in the project area. In Fiscal Year 1987, PEAH spent nearly $4million to assist the development of agricultural production and employment throughout the Upper Huallaga Valley. It provided agricultural and community development services, maintained and repaired key road ways to help farmers rehabilitate land upon which coca had been eradicated. It was a pilot programme to help the growers of coca who agreed to return to the production of legitimate crops.

The AID made it clear that its projects was not intended to stop coca production and therefore, it would not be fair to judge its success or failure on that basis. The intention was to provide a safety net for farmers who had to give up coca production due to eradication.45

The Garcia Administration which came into power in 1986 carried on its war against illicit narcotics production and

45 Ibid.
trafficking against the background of very difficult conditions. During the entire period of this study it was faced with South America's most violent revolutionary movement, deep economic crisis, inhospitable terrain and climate, and entrenched trafficking groups. Under Alan Garcia, Peru achieved much more in interdiction and law enforcement than all the previous governments combined. In the short period it seized thousand of kilos of coca derivatives, destroyed more than 150 airstrips and dismantled some forty laboratories. His anti-corruption drive attained unprecedented success. He became a recognized leader in promoting regional cooperation in combating the narcotics problem. Peru under Garcia closely cooperated with the five South American states and Mexico.\textsuperscript{46}

US Attorney General, Edwin Meese, on a visit\textsuperscript{47} expressed his admiration for Peru's continuing commitment to effective action against narcotics traffickers. It was because of this understanding that the US gave nearly $19 million a year to Peru for its drug programme. He even raised the possibility of increasing the overall American aid to Peru, which totalled in 1988 to about $60 million. He

\textsuperscript{46} Craig, "Illicit Drug Traffic", n.41, pp.19-20.
\textsuperscript{47} US Attorney General visited Peru in April 1988.
added that the United States was also willing to expand aid to Peru in combating Leftist guerrillas, including the Sendero Luminoso that had launched repeated terrorist attacks on American installations. Meese told American reporters in Lima, "the United States planned to begin aerial spraying of potent herbicide here within a year. Unless you can get some pretty effective aerial eradication, there is no real way to even start to come to cope with this problem". This was the only way to curb the production of coca leaf in Peru.

Much remained to be achieved in stopping the cultivation of coca leaves in Peru. For this several important measures were required. First, a firm decision was a must to substantially reduce the hectares under cultivation. The goal set by the US State Department of 6,000 annually was not unrealistic. Second, external support, more particularly from the United States needed to be increased several fold as Peru alone could not bear such heavy economic burden. Third the Peruvian army had to eliminate corruption from its midst and become the spearhead of this programme.

49 Ibid.
Growing Strains with Mexico

The second term of President Reagan began with strained relation with Mexico, as a result of kidnaping and subsequent murder of DEA special agent Enrique Camarena Salazar. This was followed by the torture of special agent Victor Cortez by state police in Jalisco. The Camarena issue generated an acrimonious debate between the two countries. In private the US officials complained that Mexico was not doing enough in the search for killers of Camarena. The then US Attorney General William French Smith lodged a complaint with the Mexican authorities expressing frustration and disappointment at the pace of investigation. The US Ambassador in Mexico Jorge Espinosa de los Reyes exchanged messages with the Mexican officials including President Miguel de la Madrid. According to a report in the Time some elements among the Mexican authorities were very late in responding to leads, the US provided and never gave any explanation for their inaction.50 The explosive Camarena issue continued to dog the US-Mexican relations in 1986. On February 21, 1986, Department of State issued the Statement of the Assistant Secretary of State for INM, Jon R. Thomas

as saying that kidnaping and murder of Camarena and subsequent investigation brought to light severe problems in Mexico’s programme. The first lady Nancy Reagan who took a personal interest in the war against narcotics in the United States was reported as upset and Secretary of State George Shultz told the Senate Appropriations Committee, "Our level of tolerance has been exceeded by these events."²

It was strongly believed in the United States that the abduction and murder of Camarena were carried out by targets of operation Padrino with the assistance of former and present Mexican police officers to retaliate against the DEA’s effectiveness in that operation. It was alleged that the members of Mexican Federal Police proved uncooperative during the investigation because they were in the employment of traffickers. The US exerted strong diplomatic pressure and the US customs carried a border crackdown. This finally brought forth Mexican cooperation.


The Camarena and Cortez incident severely strained bilateral law enforcement efforts in Mexico. These focussed attention to Mexico's narcotics production and trafficking situation. The United States was greatly irritated with Mexico's inability to control narco-trafficantes and perceived official corruption. This perception was greatly strengthened, when the United States renewed its efforts at interdiction off the Coast of the Florida, the Colombian drug producers forged a new alliance with Mexican Crime families to ship cocaine through Mexico despite the route being longer and more costly. 53

The United States response to this situation was to persuade Mexico to sign Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty. John C. Lawn, the Administrator of the DEA stated before the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control:

Bilateral enforcement efforts may be enhanced through the mutual legal assistance treaty that has been drafted and has the support of the Attorneys General and Presidents of both the United States and Mexico. This treaty will serve as a mechanism through which each government may request and expect formal cooperation and assistance regarding the collection of evidence, witness testimony, and other investigative and judicial procedures. 54


Despite these adverse developments the United States was not willing to ignore the meagre achievements of Mexico. In its eradication programmes, the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 1986 indicated that the Mexico's own performance was improving. In 1986 its eradication went up to 2973 from 1738 hectares in 1985. In 1986 the government seized over 5 metric tons of cocaine. Its military blocked many thoroughfares leading toward the United States in order to stop the movement of narcotics as well as illegal weapons. 55

Ann B. Wroblleski, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, while recommending Mexico for certification attested that it had a good record of achievement. She said:

You look at the numbers on eradication. They're well up for marijuana. They're nothing to write home about, but they're up on opium. Seizures are up, although not a lot. The Mexicans this year seized, I think five metric tons of cocaine, which is more than they've ever seized. There were more arrests certainly; more seizures of guns, vehicles across the road. They've increased the narcotics budget in the Mexican Attorney General's office. They've clearly increased the number of people that they have in the field on the military side, on the manual eradication program. We've made great progress on an Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT)

which now sits before the Mexican congress, and should be initiated by both our governments soon.

Again, what did we ask them to do? How well did they do it? They said no on the issue of hot pursuit, which is a sovereignty question. Progress on Camarena and Cortez, I think is slow; but moving.

On December 9, 1987, the United States and Mexican governments finally signed a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), which opened up a number of new areas of cooperation. One of the most significant new provision was the "voluntary" transferring of persons in custody for testimonial or identification purposes. This agreement, which took several years to negotiate, did not extend to widening extradition powers between the two countries. This soon became obvious.57 Nine policemen, including three former Mexican policemen were indicted on January 6, 1988 in connection with the torture and murder of the DEA agent Camarena. The indictment was returned by a Federal grand jury in Los Angeles and accused two former police officers and three others, including drug baron Caro Quintero and his Chief Assistant Rene Martin Verdugo Urguidez, of direct

56 Ibid., pp.11-12.

57 MacDonald, n.14, pp.83-84.
involvement in Camerena's death. Three of the suspects were in custody in the United States and the rest in Mexico. Two of these in Mexico were at large. Although the US indicated that they wanted the extradition of those held in custody in Mexico, the prospects for that were not high as Mexican law permits extradition only in exceptional cases. On January 7, 1988 Mexican and US officials eventually agreed that there would be no attempt to extradite Caro Quintero.

The frustration and indignation of the United States about the seemingly inability of the Mexican government to come to terms with the drug trade reached its farthest limit in June 1986, a few months prior to Mexican President's visit in August. It was not the White House which brought up the issue but the sub-committee of Senate Foreign Relations Committee which was chaired by Jesse Helms (R., N.C.).


59 Ibid.
There had been earlier accusations about corruption in Mexico, including claims that both former President Luis Echeverria (1970-76) and Jose Lopez Portillo (1976-82) were involved in corruption amounting to billions of dollars. The former Police Chief of Mexico city, a crony of President Portillo, was alleged to be heavily involved in the drug trade. During the hearings of the Helms Sub-committee, Mexico was strongly assailed for its official corruption, drug trade, and immigration. Even its credential as a democratic nation was questioned by witnesses appearing before the Committee. Helm's "testiness" did little to calm the situation. He accused Mexican officials of fraud, corruption and links to drug trafficking. The Mexicans were quick to point out that their army devoted a quarter of its total manpower to anti-drug activities. Furthermore, the Mexican Ambassador to the United Nations issued a statement saying that his country allocated 40 per cent of the budget of its Attorney General's office to combating narcotics and pointedly suggested that if the United States were to do the same, some progress could be made.60 When Mexico responded to these and other charges, some of them strongly worded,

Helms commented "All Latins are volatile people. Hence, I was not surprised at the volatile reaction."

As often in the past the United States spoke in the strident and imperious tone forgetting that poorest of the poor nation have dignity which is hurt by such criticism. Mexican officials were particularly irritated by the testimonies of John Gabin, former United States Ambassador to Mexico, and US customs commissioner William Von Raab. Both were highly critical of Mexico's anti-drug efforts. Raab called Mexico's drug trade a "horror story increasing logarithmically, and Mexico is doing nothing about it". Gabin raised the issue of the involvement of Mexican Governors, arguing that "at least two 'were' upto their elbows in the drug trade." The DEA charged that a trafficker Miguel Felix Gallardo continued to live openly in a somewhat flamboyant lifestyle in Mexico. Scholar James Mills, who had specialized on the nexus between the drug traffickers and officials at all levels in Mexico, quoted, a


source in the Mexican Attorney General's office as saying that Felix Gallardo "is a trafficker of such magnitude and wealth that he was able to bribe so many influential officials in high government positions, including Attorney General's office and the MFJP (Mexican Federal Judicial Police), that if it were to reveal the identities of these individuals, it would create too much chaos and havoc in the government of Mexico." 64 It was alleged that after the DEA agent's death, Gallardo was the house guest of Antonio Toledo Corro, the Governor of State of Sinaloa.

In August 1986, President Miguel de la Madrid came to Washington on a four day (August 12 to 14) "official working visit". The meeting was the fifth in the series that had begun in 1982. The Mexican President's visit followed President Reagan's visit to Mexico in the first week of January. In a brief discussion lasting about half an hour, two Presidents in January had discussed the drug problem. Both sides then agreed that this remained a "very large and serious problem for the United States and for Mexico. Both underlined their commitment to address this problem." They

had noted the improvement in eradication of drugs and also noted the increasing flow of marijuana, cocaine and heroin from Mexico. Mexico suggested law enforcement summit between the Attorney Generals of the two countries. The suggestion was enthusiastically accepted by the United States. It was to be a multilateral meetings with the involvement of other countries also.

Mexico was facing extremely difficult economic situation due to the oil crisis and the burden of international debt. President Reagan expressed his willingness to help Mexico. He also announced that the US was lifting a six year old embargo on the importation of Tuna from Mexico. He also stated:

One area of solid agreement was our recognition of the necessity of maintaining our countries' strong campaign against drugs. We pledged to bolster our eradication programs and our efforts to bring to justice vicious drug traffickers, who have been such a corrupting influence in both our Countries. We also pledged to do all possible to attack the demand side of this evil by aggressively discouraging the consumption of narcotic drugs.65

After so much progress had been made, the Mexicans were naturally taken aback and were dismayed by the criticism in the Helms sub-committee. Therefore, it was necessary for

65 American Foreign Policy, Current Documents: 1986, n.51, p.714.
the Reagan Administration to soothe the ruffled feelings of the Mexicans. 66

On August 19 at a meeting with the Press, the President was specifically asked a question regarding "the criticism by some US elements of Mexican democracy and the pressure on Mexico by some US Senators and some other US political figures with regard to Mexico's domestic politics and the corruption of Mexico's political system." The Question also referred to some US diplomats who had raised questions about Mexican political system and corruption in the country. This was an obvious reference to Senator Jesse Helms and Ambassador John Gavin. The President in his response acknowledged that we "have problems with our relations from time to time." But he clarified "it's important to distinguish very carefully between the policy of the US government and the private views of individuals whether they are political figures or ordinary citizens." Thus President Reagan clearly distanced himself and his administration from the acerbic opinion expressed by people like Senator Helms and Ambassador Gavin. 67

67 Ibid., p.712.
In Mexico, a new anti-drug campaign was launched during their meeting in Washington. The new operation involved twenty-five helicopters and a large crop dusting plane (financed with US aid). It targeted marijuana production in northern Mexico. Spraying was extensive and was intended to last through February to catch the 1987 opium poppy harvest. As one Mexican official noted of their campaign and the fact that it was conducted without the United States personnel "we Mexicans think that combating drug trafficking in the case of Mexico should continue to be carried out exclusively by the Mexican army and the Mexican Police".  

**Operation Vanguard**

When the Mexican official was making the statement, he possibly did not rule out the US cooperation in Mexican programmes. Indeed, after the January 1986 visit of the President Ronald Reagan, the two countries jointly launched the Operation Vanguard. The Operation Vanguard of March 1986 was the United States-Mexican bilateral eradication campaign which used aerial reconnaissance for the purpose of detecting illicit cultivation of opium poppies and cannabis and verifying their eradication. This programme identified

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increases in cannabis and opium poppy cultivation in previously eradicated areas as well as in non-traditional growing areas. Resources for the Mexican eradication campaign were supplied by the INM. However, the DEA also played a vital role in this campaign. Its agents supplied information on the locations of fields under cultivation for eradication campaign. They also participated in the verification of the eradication efforts.69

It was an operation in which government of Mexico invited US observers to accompany verification elements of the Mexican Attorney General's Office (MAGO) to verify cannabis and opium poppy herbicidal eradication. Through Operation Vanguard, assistance was provided to the MAGO eradication programmes. The International Narcotics Control Strategy Report estimated that in 1986 opium poppy eradication increased from 2,297 hectares in 1985 to 2,383 hectares in 1986 while marijuana eradication went up from 1,738 hectares to 2,973 hectares and over five metric tons of cocaine was seized.70


However, it is worth noting that the February to March 1986 phase of Operation Vanguard proved to be one of the most productive in the history of this special programme. Total flight hours increased substantially and verification programme was providing encouraging informations, 90 per cent verification rate on fields sprayed by the Mexican government. During this phase, aircraft maintenance problems were also minimal, with only routine downtime arising as scheduled inspections came due. There were regular weekly meetings between the DEA and the MAGO in Mexico to discuss any problems which could adversely affect on this important programme. Both the United States and Mexico reaffirmed their commitments to the eradication campaign in Mexico.

**Operation Alliance**

Operation Vanguard was further followed by "Operation Alliance". In August 1986, the US Vice-President as Head of the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System and the Attorney General as Chairman of the National Drug Enforcement Policy Board announced the commencement of Operation Alliance on the Southwest border of the United States. It was a multi-agency law enforcement interdiction effort aimed at curtailing the flow of illicit drugs from and through Mexico into the United States.
The primary agencies involved in the actual interdiction activity were the US Customs service, the US Border Patrol, the US Coast Guard, and the DEA. The US Customs were primary responsible for air and ports of entry interdiction. The US Patrol had the responsibility with land interdiction, and the US Coast Guard's primary responsibility was for sea interdiction. The DEA provided strategic and tactical narcotic trafficking intelligence, and was responsible for pursuing all domestic and international drug investigations resulting from operation alliance. In addition, to providing man power within the US for carrying on the responsibility assigned to it, the DEA added 11 special agents to its offices in Mexico, and this enhanced the collection of tactical drug intelligence there. "Operation Full Press" and Operation "Chem Con" were carried on at the end of 1986 in which arrests and seizure of marijuana, cocaine and chemical precursors were in Mexico.

The Mexican efforts grew each year and in 1988 about 25 per cent of the Mexican army was engaged full time in

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72 Ibid., p.95.
efforts to stop narcotics production and trafficking. In 1987, 10 employees of the MAGO were killed while they were engaged in anti-drug operations. Eradication of marijuana and poppies increased. At the same time, the amount of drug coming in from Mexico and the amount of drug related corruption was also growing which accounted for growing frustration.

Despite best efforts made by the Mexican government and its President de la Madrid, American officials were unwilling to believe that Mexico was fully cooperating with drug enforcement efforts of the United States. But the United States was reluctant to cut off aid that could be used in the drug fight. The tension between the United two countries over the control of international drug traffic, flared up at a summit meeting held on February 10, 1988 between President Reagan and Madrid in Mazatlan, Mexico. In his toast at the conclusion of a working lunch President Madrid charged the United States with being guilty of spreading "disinformation" about Mexican effort to control drugs. "In certain United States sectors", he said, "it would seem that the efforts and achievements of the Mexican campaign to fight drug trafficking are still not appreciated.

to their full extent".  

American official reiterated their position in the meetings between the two sides that Mexico should be doing more to combat drug traffic. After meeting his counterpart, Edward Meese, the US Attorney General, said at a news briefing that "there is both progress and frustration in the fight against drug." President Reagan, who was under pressure, himself conveyed to Madrid his deep concern over the drug issue and said: "This is the year we have to show result." 

President Reagan was reminded of Mexico's argument that the best way to control drugs was to curb consumption. President Reagan expressed his agreement with the view. He observed that progress was being made in controlling drug consumption. Bernardo Sepulveda Amor, the Foreign Minister of Mexico, noted that this was a new element "in the fight against drugs".

75 Ibid.  
When President Reagan certified in accordance with the 1986 drug abuse law that Mexico was extending full cooperation to the United States and carrying on its own programme of drug control, the US Senate by a 63-27 vote rejected the certification. In April 1988 it overwhelmingly approved economic sanction against Mexico for failing to fully cooperate with the US anti-drug efforts. The decertification by the Congress required that the United States oppose to the new loans to Mexico by international development banks and curtail of American economic aid. Mexico was not receiving any foreign aid from the US, it received only anti-drug assistance of nearly $14 million. It was passing through severe debt crisis. This made new loans crucial for Mexico.

The US was on the horns of a dilemma that if Mexico failed to receive relief for its international debt it could have a negative effect on the financial sector of the United States. According to the Federal Financial Institution Examination Council at the end of 1987, Mexico owed to US Commercial banks $22.4 billion. While decertification had the potential to put more pressure on Mexico’s ability to meet its external obligations, it could also lead to severe budget cuts in government spending, including enforcement agencies. It could also result in further incentives for
bribery and other forms of corruption. Moreover, decertification could not create an atmosphere of cooperation between the two nations. Fortunately, the measure did not pass the congress and the Reagan Administration was saved from implementing a policy which could have only disastrous consequences for the enforcement of anti-drug policy of the United States. The Senate vote however, remained an indication of US discontent.78

It must be acknowledged that the United States efforts met with greater success in Mexico than in any other country of South America. There were four main reasons for this success. Firstly, unlike many drug producing countries the Mexican government chose to crack down on marijuana and poppy growers and traffickers. Secondly, the government exercised greater degree of political and military authority over its territory than most other governments could claim. Thirdly, revenue from drug production constituted a smaller portion of foreign exchange earnings of the country. Finally, the Central Government never allowed the drug producing sectors of the economy to acquire a legitimacy and authority of its own.

78 MacDonald, n.14, p.84.
Columbia: War Against the Cartels

The fourth important Latin American countries in the drug policy of the United States was Colombia. It was noted in the last chapter that the assassination of the Minister of Justice was the turning point in Colombia's war against drug Cartels. One of the three most notorious drug barons, Carlos Lehder was arrested and extradited to the United States on February 8, 1987. He was tried in the United States and awarded life and 150 years of imprisonment. His extradition and punishment was an indication of growing cooperation between the two countries. The revulsion with the Colombians at Lara's assassination provided broadbased support for the drastic action of the President. Many Colombians realized that they could no longer afford to dismiss the cocaine problem, as gringo problem, to be solved by the Americans.

Drug trafficking always remained a central issue in the US-Colombian relations. Washington defined this phenomenon as a national security problem for the United States. It also considered it as a threat to both the regional and national security of Colombia because of the violence indulged in by drug cartels. The US and Colombian authorities made every possible effort to get the drug
barons extradited. But these efforts were always averted by Medellin Cartels. Despite these impediments, the Reagan Administration pursued its drug diplomacy in Colombia and the latter fully cooperated with the United States. Colombian production of marijuana, processing of cocaine and their export to the United States, remained a major concern of the White House.

United States helped Colombia in obtaining a so-called "jumbo credit" of US$ 1 billion, with the consent and support of private banks and by means of a special monitoring agreement with International Monetary Fund (IMF), but without being subject to the strict conditions normally demanded by the latter.79

The US aid proved to be a morale booster to President Betancur, who escalated the war on drugs instead of bargaining with the drug barons. He extradited ten Colombians and three foreigners to the United States, stepped up eradication programmes and seized more illicit drugs than all of his predecessors combined. Jon R. Thomas, Assistant Secretary, INM, while giving report to the

Congress said that compared to an estimated 8,500 hectares marijuana under cultivation in 1983, only 1,300 hectares were under cultivation in the principal northern growing region in 1985, a decline of 85 per cent.\textsuperscript{80} About 6,000 hectares were eradicated with herbicides. This would have yielded about 6,800 metric tons of marijuana. Because of continued seizures and destruction of Colombian marijuana, however, it was believed that the growers moved some operations to other, non-traditional growing areas.\textsuperscript{81} To halt the production of cocaine, the Colombia government seized more than 9,500 kilos of cocaine hydrochloride in 1985 and manually destroyed more than eight million coca plants. It also seized 667 clandestine laboratories of which 25 were used to process cocaine hydrochloride and 642 were used to make base.\textsuperscript{82}

Colombia continued to mount a multi-faceted programme of eradication and interdiction, with well trained police.


\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.

The marijuana spray programme was very effective in traditional areas. But as the Reagan Administration was nearing its end, the end of Colombia's war against the drug barons was nowhere in sight. It continued to suffer from the violence of narcotics traffickers, whose long list of political assassinations continued in 1988 with the abduction and murder of the Attorney General Carlos Maura Hoyos. Although drug lord Carlos Lehder was extradited to the United States, a key trafficker, Jorge Ochoa succeeded in gaining release from a Colombian prison. A major weapon in the anti-drug arsenal was lost when the Supreme Court of Colombia invalidated the implementing legislation for the United States extradition treaty and denied President Virgilio Vargas Barco a certain state of seize authorities. 83 Robert S. Gelbard, Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America, Bureau of Inter American Affairs, Department of State stated before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1988.

The most acute threat the Colombian government faces today, is the powerful, ruthless Medellin Cartel. The Cartel members' ability to corrupt and intimidate governmental and judicial officials is well documented. On January 25, hit men in the employ of Cartel members abducted and killed Carlos Maura Hoyos, Colombia's Attorney General. Previous victims of narcotics violence include justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, in April 1984, and Supreme Court Justice Hernando Baguero, in July 1986. What these three officials had in common was a dedication to the rule of law and the courage to demand that Cartel bosses facing criminal charges in the United States be arrested and extradited. Their deaths have had a paralyzing effect on some Colombians. Many other Colombians, however, recognize that the traffickers pose a clear threat to the well being of Colombia, to its very social and political fabric.

Though Colombia did a lot to control drug trafficking and went to the extent of extraditing top drug traffickers, thereby exposing their political and economic systems to grave risk but all these steps could not satisfy the American people fully.

There was no linear progress in the developments in Colombia's war against the drug cartels. In June 1987, the Colombian Supreme Court intimidated by the cartels threat ruled out that the extradition treaty was unconstitutional despite President's Barco's signature. Though Barco's reaction was a promise that his government would find a

84 Ibid., p.36.
legal way to extradite but extradition was suspended indefinitely. By early 1988 it had become clear that there was little public and political support in Colombia to renew the process of extradition. In November of the same year another development gave a severe jolt to the war against the Cartels. Jorge Luis Ochoa was captured at a police check point. After more than a month in jail he bribed his way out. He was released by a judge. Although the government prosecuted the judge, the credibility of the government had suffered. The US Attorney General Edwin Meese called the release a shocking blow to hit international enforcement. He protested that Colombians had assured him that they would extradite Ochoa to the United States. The developments in Colombia were taken very seriously by the critics of Reagan Administration. They argued that it had failed to assign drug control top foreign policy priority. The United States senator John Kerry (D., Mass.), and New York City Mayor Edward Koch wanted to send troops to Colombia to root out the Medellin cartels. In their over reaction, these two politicians failed to add the qualification" if desired by the Government of Colombia.

Such was the mood in the United States which adversely affected its relations with Colombia. No effort was made to understand the compulsions of Colombia where the drug traffickers were stronger than the State. President Betancur had confessed in 1987 on the completion of his tenure that the drug dealers had become "stronger than the State". And Attorney General Carlos Mauro Hoyos had declared before his death "we are confronting a super state". Many Colombians and Western diplomats openly said that "the war against drug traffickers can’t be won, because the judicial system is no match for the resources and power of the drug bosses with their planes, billions of dollars, sophisticated weaponry and high technology.  

Irked by the release of Cartel King Ochoa on December 30, 1987, Washington ordered sanctions against Colombia, including the lengthy customs checks for travelers and products arriving from there. These actions prompted bitter


complaints from Colombians. These also fueled rising nationalist and anti-US resentment, and many Colombians to conclude that the US authorities neither understood the precariousness of their situation nor cared that the anti-drug war was undermining Colombia "both materially and morally".  

As the last year of President Reagan's term approached, both the political parties felt the need to capture the drug issue. On May 27, a Washington Post/ABC. News opinion poll revealed that the Americans rated the drug problem as the most important of their concern. The 1988 legislation on drugs, according to the analysts, was driven by Presidential electoral politics. Both the political parties accused each other of not doing enough to combat drugs. The Democratic presidential candidate Rev. Jesse Jackson made the drug abuse one of his top campaign issue. On the other hand Republican presidential candidate George Bush was defensive about the administration's record.

The bill that passed both the houses of the Congress was the last major action of the 100th Congress. It authorized $2.7 billion anti-drug activities. The President

Reagan signed it on November 18, 1988. The bill contained one item which President Reagan had supported for a long time, allowing the federal death penalty for major drug traffickers. For the first time the Act created a cabinet level position to coordinate the fight against drugs. In effect, it created the post of a drug czar which had earlier been ruled out by President Reagan on the ground that he had assigned to the Vice-President the function of overall coordination of the activities of various agencies. Commented Senate Majority leader Robert C. Byrd, (D., W.Va.), that the message which the bill sent was: "Don't do drugs, this country will no longer tolerate it." 


90 Ibid., p.85.