



COLOMBIA LESSONS LEARNED ON TERRORISM WORKSHOP

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CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE DEFENCE AGAINST TERRORISM

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DISCLAIMER

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OPENING REMARKS BY THE DIRECTOR

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Speakers, all participants, I am Colonel Bülent AKDENİZ, Director of the Center of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism.

Let me welcome you all, both around the table and online participants, to our Colombia Lessons Learned on Terrorism Workshop.

First of all, let me express my regret about the situation that has arisen for reasons beyond our control that made it impossible to hold this event residentially. However also I would like to thank you for your understanding, great flexibility and unbroken support that made this workshop possible virtually. That, I think also proves not just your professionalism but also how much importance this topic has.

As you saw from our video, this Center is not only the Department Head for NATO's counter-terrorism education and training. We also act as a think-tank supporting NATO's transformation efforts through research projects, books, conferences, and workshops like this.

In order to provide all of us with a common background, let me review how we arrived here today.

Colombia has been a NATO partner nation since 2017 – the Alliance's first in Latin America. Ever since then, NATO and Colombia have strengthened dialogue and cooperation in a number of areas, including fighting against terrorism, and have agreed to share strategic awareness on terrorist threats, including linkages with illicit trade in narcotics as well as exchanging experiences in counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, and counter-piracy.

Colombia has joined COE-DAT activities in the past, most notably at the 2019 Terrorism Experts Conference. At the 2022 Military Strategic Partnership Conference, our leadership learned that Colombia was interested in contributing to COE-DAT events in order to pass on their experience and lessons learned to NATO and Partner Nations. Major General Jaime Carvajal, the former Colombian military representative at NATO headquarters, gave presentations and expressed his intent to collaborate with COE-DAT.

Colombia has counter-terrorism experiences that will be of value to NATO and Partner Nations, and can provide lessons learned in a number of areas that our Center of Excellence is currently researching, to include:

- The role a military can play in support of a Whole of Government approach
- Counter-Terrorist Financing and the linkages between organized crime and terror organizations
- Maritime counter-terrorism

Our aim today is to exchange Lessons Learned and Good Practices in Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism. In the long run, we hope to integrate Colombian experts in future COE-DAT activities.

I would like to express my special gratitude to all of you in advance, since your participation, in person or online, reflects your dedication, which has already ensured the success of this workshop.

Without further ado, welcome again, and I am looking forward the fruitful discussions here and halfway around the globe.

Thank you all.

Bülent AKDENİZ
Colonel (TUR A)
Director COE DAT

COLOMBIA LESSONS LEARNED ON TERRORISM WORKSHOP

Introduction

The “*Colombia Lessons Learned on Terrorism*” Workshop, held on October 24-25, organized by the Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism, served as a platform to delve into Colombia’s rich experience in integrating national and multinational efforts in counter-terrorism (CT). The discussions aimed to elucidate the pivotal role that a military can play in supporting a whole-of-government/society approach.

The workshop began by exploring NATO’s counter-terrorism agenda in collaboration with partners, with insights shared by *Ms. Elena BEGANU*. *Rear Admiral Omar Moreno Yesid MORENO-OLIVEROS* shed light on global trends shaping perceptions and the strategic environment, focusing on the effects of malign actors and transnational organized crime in the Colombian conflict. *Major Yander Josué CLAROS-CELIS* discussed the evolution of Colombian strategy and capability development through persistent campaigning. *Colonel David ARMANDO MARTINEZ-ARDILA* emphasized the key to success in contemporary counter-insurgency, emphasizing the importance of national ownership. *Colonel Andres Eduardo FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO* explored the nature of contemporary insurgencies, particularly focusing on commercial insurgencies and the disruption of illegal economies in the Colombian context. *Mr. Neil SCHUELE* provided valuable insights into NATO’s lessons learned from Colombia, shedding light on the collaborative efforts and strategies employed by building his arguments on the experience he has had during his service in the United States Army. *Dr. David E. SPENCER* shared 11 key lessons drawn from the Colombian experience, offering valuable perspectives for the United States.

On the second day, *Lt. Col. William Andres TABARES-GOMEZ* discussed the challenges posed by the legal prosecution system and the use of military training in the context of human rights, international humanitarian law, and laws of armed conflict. *Lt. Col. Juan Felipe JIMENEZ-LEYTON* highlighted the importance of jointness and interinstitutional cooperation for ensuring security. *Lt. Col. Karl HEARNE* shared insights into NATO Special Operations

Forces Command (SOFCOM) and its role in counter-terrorism. *Assoc. Prof. BAŞAR BAYSAL* (TUR) provided a comprehensive perspective on the intersection of drug trafficking and terrorism, examining strategies to combat these interconnected threats. *Prof. Evan ELLIS* concluded the workshop by offering strategic takeaways, synthesizing the overall lessons learned from the Colombian experience and their broader applicability beyond Colombia.

The workshop aimed to foster an exchange of knowledge and best practices, contributing to the collective understanding of counter-terrorism efforts, particularly in the context of the Colombian experience. Colombia has been decisively countering with the challenge of terrorism, especially in the context of dealing with groups like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and other terrorist organizations. The workshop focused on the crucial issue of how terrorism, when intertwined with drug trafficking and organized crime, transforms from a national problem into an international concern. Over the years, Colombia has developed multifaceted approaches to counter-terrorism, incorporating military measures and engaging in peace processes, along with addressing economic and social dimensions. The aim of the workshop was to comprehensively examine Colombia's experiences and lessons learned in the areas of counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, and counter-narcotics.

DAY I

NATO's Counter-Terrorism Agenda with Partners–Colombia

Ms. Elena BEGANU (NATO ESCD)

Ms. Elena BEGANU lectured about the evolving landscape of international politics, specifically focusing on the role of NATO in addressing contemporary challenges, with a particular emphasis on counter-terrorism efforts and the partnership with Colombia. She began by highlighting the non-predictable nature of the post-Cold War era, marked by strategic competition, pervasive instabilities, and recurrent shocks such as attacks, climate issues, and pandemics.

Ms. BEGANU then explored the significance of NATO's role in maintaining collective defense within the context of the 2022 Strategic Concept, acknowledging the changed geopolitical conditions since the Cold War and underlining the fact that current international security environment is quite unpredictable. Pervasive instability reshapes the perspectives of legal authorities to address the current threats. Ms. BEGANU stated that these ongoing volatilities further trigger the question on what kind of initiatives, as a defense alliance, NATO should take in terms of its framework for collective defense and how the Allies could reshape their defense and deterrence.

Turning back to the 2022 Strategic Concept, Ms. BEGANU emphasized that the world is no longer shaped by the Cold War settings and the threat landscape has changed. In this sense, she expressed that Russian aggression and terrorism are the threats that Allies should carefully examine. She called for a strategic simultaneity, meaning that the Allies should be ready to address these threats at the same time. Terrorism is the most direct threat to the states and their citizens, with the Strategic Concept emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive approach in response to the complexity of security environments. On the other hand, we must also evaluate terrorism as an indirect threat that aims to prevent states from implementing the foreign policies to achieve their strategic objectives. She also highlighted a broader context in the Strategic Concept which refers to *pervasive instability* that is of lack of good governance, fragility, etc. All of these foster terrorism. Additionally, Ms. BEGANU reflected on the efforts on how to address the threats and complexities in the Global South neighborhood and whether NATO adequately answers to the requirements for countering these threats. The international community should also support various conditions for military assistance.

Ms. BEGANU touched upon the increasing number of non-state actors and the threat they pose especially in the African context. She stated that the proxy groups' relations with state actors further complicate the things in this region. In this sense, Ms. BEGANU underlined the fact that there is an intersection between competition and terrorism. Therefore, we should evaluate the security framework from a more comprehensive perspective.

Ms. BEGANU noted the strategic dilemmas of disinformation, propaganda, and deliberate misinformation, underscoring the challenges faced by the alliance in an era where information manipulation is prevalent. These deliberate disinformation activities undermine efforts to achieve a more secure environment. Regarding disinformation, she drew attention to the regions of the Middle East and Ukraine, which NATO monitors and supports. In this context, the distinction between strategic competition and terrorism is no longer as clear-cut as it used to be, making the situation even more complex.

Ms. BEGANU then elaborated upon the NATO's counter-terrorism efforts and further enforcement of collaboration opportunities with Colombia to achieve the goals previously set. NATO's Counter-Terrorism efforts form three pillars:

- (i) **Awareness**; aiming to understand the threat of terrorism through political dialogue first and foremost, to comprehend the terrorist threat along with its complexity and get a sense of the local factors that could also serve as a potential to have impacts in the global context. In terms of Awareness, the Alliance also seeks to learn about the countries' experiences and their insights.
- (ii) **Capacity-building**; reflects on how to recognize the threat and then defend troops. These underpinned the efforts to develop sufficient and effective capabilities.
- (iii) **Engagement** with partners in terms of collaboration, capacity-building, and learning from partners' experiences.

The alliance recognizes the need for a nuanced understanding of threats, moving beyond intelligence-sharing to encompass political dialogue, experience-sharing, and insight generation. Ms. BEGANU emphasized the importance of military and civilian collaboration, technical expertise, and strategic-level efforts to address the multifaceted challenges posed by terrorism. Ms. BEGANU noted that, in recent years, Allies and partner nations have exerted focused efforts, and they have enhanced regular dialogues on counterterrorism in order to discuss the variety of threats that are linked to terrorism. Efforts are underway to determine the root causes and conduct joint initiatives to provide a sustainable response to these threats. Ms.

BEGANU also mentioned areas where NATO adds value. She stated that NATO approaches the fight against terrorism through a civil-military lens. Beyond the transfer of know-how in the fight against terrorism, the Alliance examines various aspects such as border security, special forces expertise, battlefield evidence collection, maritime security, countering Explosive Device Threats (EDTs), and integrity-building.

Ms. BEGANU then focused on NATO's partnership with Colombia in the realm of Counter-Terrorism. High-level visits and commitments to capacity-building in the last months were expressed, with an acknowledgment of Colombia's valuable expertise in dealing with guerilla warfare and organized crime. She underscored the multifaceted collaboration potential in addressing narco-trafficking and other security concerns, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive and regular dialogue.

Ms. BEGANU concluded by recalling the “**Individually Tailored Partnership Program**” (ITTP) between NATO and Colombia that seeks to share strategic awareness of terrorist threat. As a second objective of ITTP, NATO and Colombia both agreed to exchange counter-terrorism experience in terms of including education and training. A third goal was to exchange good practices and improve interagency cooperation and good governance in fighting against terrorism. Ms. BEGANU also underlined the importance of NATO's Science, Peace, and Security Program Workshop in 2019, which was held in Denmark with Colombia where the nexus between counter-terrorism, counter-piracy and counter-narcotics were discussed. She expressed that another key significance of this program is its support for the sharing of experiences, both from a military and expert/academic perspective.

Ms. BEGANU highlighted the potential for Colombia to contribute to NATO's Counter-Terrorism forces, education and training activities, and maritime security efforts. She emphasized the need for ongoing dialogue, academic and expert exchanges, and the enhancement of NATO's Science, Peace, and Security program as a means of fostering mutual learning and cooperation in the face of evolving global challenges.

Ms. BEGANU mentioned that there is always more that we can do to enhance collaboration. She emphasized the maintenance of a robust dialogue with the Colombian delegation within NATO. She indicated that they are exploring opportunities to assess Colombia's counter-terrorism expertise within NATO through education and training activities. Ms. BEGANU concluded her remarks by stating that maritime security could be another potential area for

exploration between NATO and Colombia, and she underscored the need for more comprehensive and regular dialogues, experiences, and exchanges to be developed.

Global Trends Shaping Perceptions and The Strategic Environment: Malign Actors and Transnational Organized Crime Effects in The Colombian Conflict

Rear Admiral Omar Moreno Yesid MORENO-OLIVEROS (ESDEG)

Rear Admiral MORENO-OLIVEROS from the Colombia War College provided a comprehensive analysis of global trends shaping perceptions and the strategic environment in Colombia. He stated that the Colombian context is not exempt from the influence of global trends, necessitating dynamic and suitable responses to constant changes and challenges. He emphasized that strategies are set by the harmonization of goals, means and ways that take the intentions of the adversary and the environment into account. Each variable in the strategy formula is influenced by the global trends that shape the current international system.

One significant global trend identified by Rear Adm. MORENO-OLIVEROS was “*deviant globalization*,” that includes the use of supply chain technologies, internet, capital mobility, privatization and free market by illicit groups and transnational organized crime playing particularly prominent roles and criminal tasks. He stressed that the Colombian conflict has changed due to narco-trafficking and drug-dealing. Colombia has been a region where illegal drugs, especially coca, have been produced for many years. Rear Adm. MORENO-OLIVEROS highlighted that in this regard, it is an area monitored by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Drug cartels and other illicit groups have met the global demand on illicit narcotics by for a long time. These cartels have played a highly influential role in shaping the conflict by funding insurgent groups. They found living and maneuvering space for themselves by exploiting porous borders. In the areas where they concentrated, they sought to build parallel governance structures parallel to the Colombian government. Those activities showed us that there is a convergence and fusion between drug-trafficking and insurgent activities. Insurgent activities, notably by groups like FARC, have found expansion opportunities through drug trafficking, further complicating the situation. FARC found the opportunity to fund their activities through drug trafficking and fully exploited it for years making the conflict even more vicious.

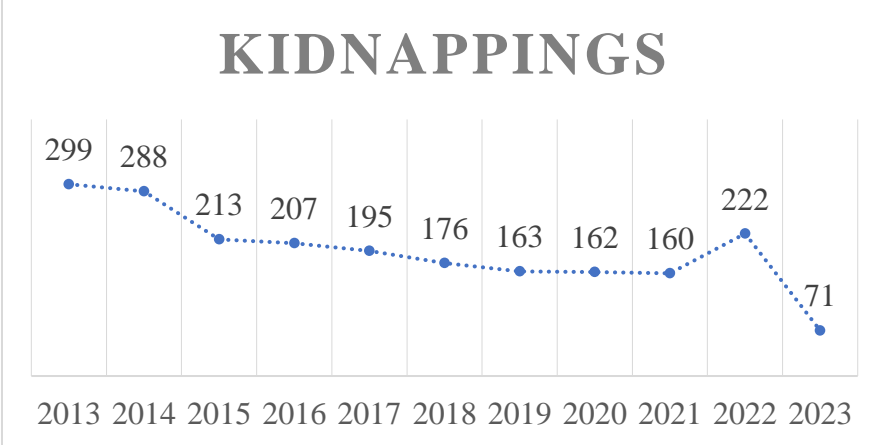
Rear Adm. MORENO-OLIVEROS expressed that the Colombian drug cartels have made use of the global financial systems to launder their profit. The international network of this

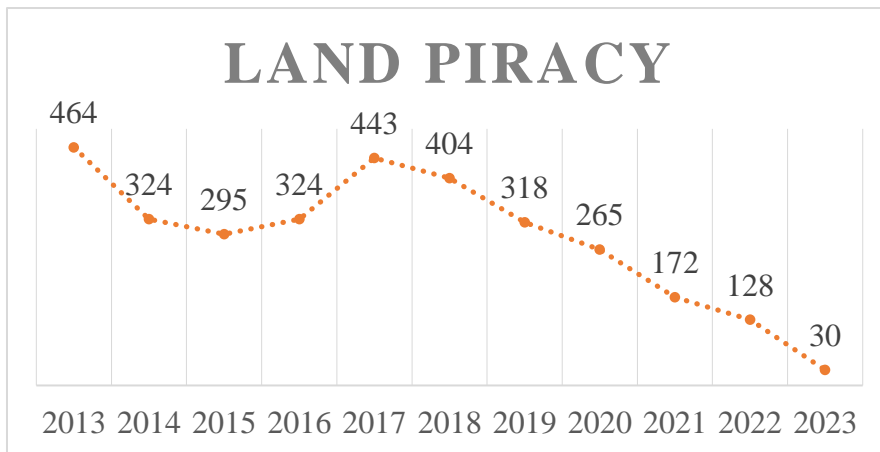
organization contributed to the perpetuation of its money laundering activities. This is significant not only from a criminological perspective, but also a concern for maintaining international financial stability.

Rear Adm. MORENO-OLIVERO agreed that the Colombian conflict primarily had been a domestic issue. However, the rise of the concern about the transnational linkages between these terrorist organizations has reshaped the perception about this case. The consideration of Colombia in the route of transnational crime organizations and drug-cartels access out of Colombia have highlighted how a national issue can, particularly in the context of international security, lead to regional and global implications in the long term. These organizations can reach beyond Colombia, extending their networks to Europe. Refugee flows, drug trafficking, and security issues have become significant challenges in the region. Particularly in Latin America, these issues have raised great concern. Colombians who fled from the conflict zones and sought refuge draw great attention to the conflict in Colombia by showing the degree of instability that has been going on in the country.

Rear Adm. MORENO-OLIVERO also drew attention to the malicious use of cyber domain by the terrorist to acquire intelligence against the state they challenge. In this sense, he evaluated the social media platforms as an emerging challenge in countering terrorist activities. Social media platforms can easily have an impact over both national and international public opinion. Therefore, it has to be managed accurately.

The Colombian conflict highlighted the complexity of modern conflicts, which often involve a mix of political, criminal, and social elements. The strategic environment, as depicted by the Ministry of Defence in Colombia, showed the escalation of kidnappings in 2021-2022 after a period of decrease in 2013-2020 and a decrease in land piracy since 2017 due to combined and joint efforts to mitigate these multidimensional threats.





Rear Adm. MORENO-OLIVERO touched upon the international trends that also affected the Colombian conflict. He stated that in order to produce a comprehensive approach to eradicate the repercussions stemming from this threat, authorities must take these global trends into account. In this sense, he urged the requirement to track the international demand for cocaine production which has also been fueling the Colombian conflict. He also pointed out the importance of drug cultivation and illegal mining to the extent that these also led to some detrimental consequences on the environment. These environmental concerns also grabbed the attention of international community.

Rear Adm. MORENO-OLIVERO recalled that the conflict in Colombia could also be evaluated in terms of economics, trade and business activities in the region. Colombia has implemented various strategies to define and address this threat, emphasizing the adaptability of policies and the importance of flexibility, especially during conflict periods.

To create sustainable solutions, resources must be generated for the population through employment opportunities and a psychosocial approach. Regional cooperation, considering the spillover effect on displaced people and criminal networks, is crucial for stability. He emphasized diplomatic and financial support, along with socio-economic development, as essential components for addressing the needs and disparities that could otherwise lead to new conflicts. The case of Colombia serves as a vital example for conflict resolution, where the government's approach and the active involvement of civil society organizations and the broader community play crucial roles in the reconstruction and establishment of peace. Similarities with the Turkish case, such as the reliance on external support and the importance of political support, were highlighted, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and shared experiences in tackling transnational organized crime.

In conclusion, a multifaceted approach is essential to address the different root causes of the conflict, with a focus on conflict prevention and international peacekeeping missions. The United Nations and the Organization of American States have actively conducted studies on the root causes of the conflict. The peace process, exemplified by negotiations with groups like FARC, suggests that transnational justice mechanisms could play a role in addressing atrocities and human rights violations.

Evolution of Colombian Strategy and Capability Development Through Persistent Campaigning

Major (Col A) Yander Josué CLAROS-CELIS

Major Yander Josue CLAROS-CELIS discussed the military aspect of Colombia's strategy against terrorism, and how and why this strategy has changed over time. The presentation delved into the evolution of Colombia's military strategy, starting in 1998, driven by the need for change due to expanding insurgent structures, and geopolitical considerations that required combining the efforts of different governmental bodies. In an effort to reflect this change, the Colombian forces initiated the Omega Multitask Force. The force involves collaboration between all military branches to rapidly deploy against cartels, crime organizations, and insurgencies involved in narcotrafficking.

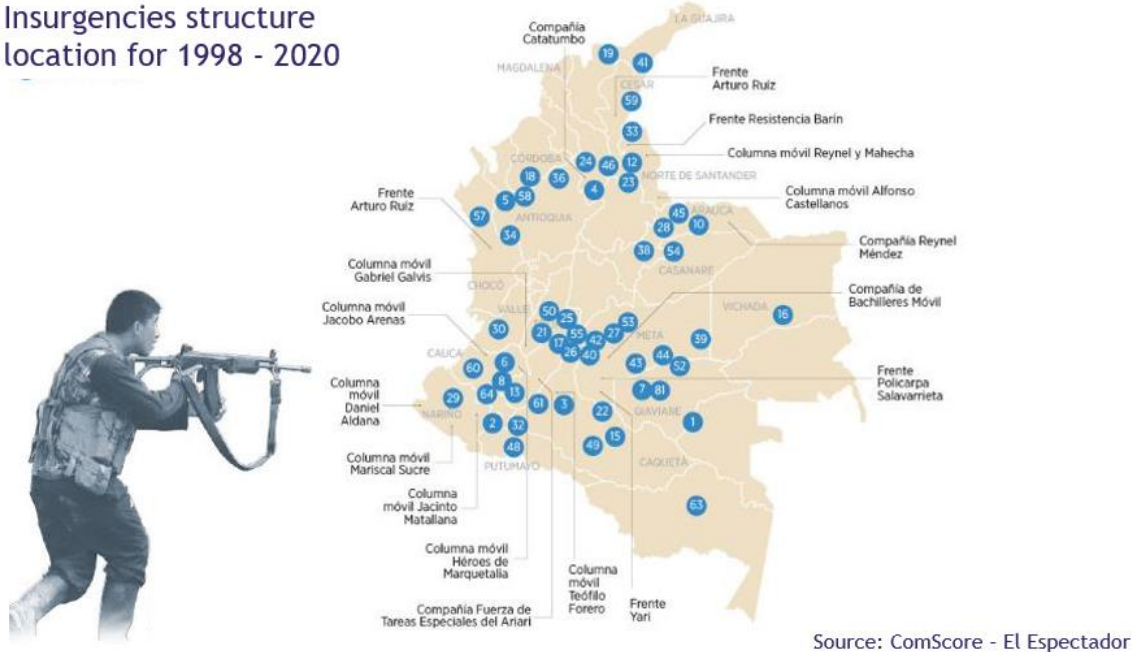
In support of these operations on the ground, Colombian authorities decided that they must first disrupt the criminal economic capabilities of these groups in order to end their organizational activities. They have decided to address this issue by conducting a socioeconomic assessment and aiming to eradicate criminal activities. They have observed that a majority of these activities stem from cocaine production. The Colombian authorities have identified that cocaine production in the conflict region has exacerbated the dimensions of the conflict, making it more complex. By 2010, based on these assessments, they had comprehended the structural causes of the threat and accordingly initiated a reshaping process. They identified structural reasons, highlighting the factors leading to cocaine production and acknowledging that transborder activities supported this production.

Major CLAROS-CELIS stated that the main cause of the conflict in Colombia is *narcotrafficking*. To ensure the survival of terrorist organizations in the country, they needed to engage in narcotrafficking activities and drug production. Consequently, rather than focusing on ideological pursuits within the organization, they turned to these activities. For this reason, Colombia initiated the configuration of efforts for the criminal ecosystem to counter this threat.

The speaker stated that to understand the evolution of the Colombian army in this struggle, it is essential to examine three aspects: the expansion of insurgent structures, the concentration of cocaine labs, and the increasing cultivation of coca leaves, as well as the geopolitics of drug trafficking. In order to combat the expansion of insurgent structures, the Colombian army

constructed a substantial logistical system. Subsequently, they delved into understanding how these organizations conducted cocaine production and how they export of cocaine out of the region. Major CLAROS-CELIS emphasized that the authorities ended up realizing that the real issue lay in cocaine labs. They understood that the production of cocaine had become a socio-economic problem in Colombia, evolving into a conflict that required the intervention of the military. After defining the root causes of the conflict, the mission of the military focused on the disruption of cocaine labs. Upon examining the geopolitics of drug trafficking, they observed that governability was particularly low and challenging in certain regions along the borders of Colombia. The Colombian military noticed that terrorist elements had significantly strengthened their relationships with the local population in these areas. While establishing this connection with the local people, the terrorists relied on criminal financial strategies. Terrorists took advantage of socioeconomically disadvantaged people in order to survive in those areas. Major CLAROS-CELIS provided a map of insurgencies structure location for 1998-2020 to show the complex nature of the conflict in Colombia.

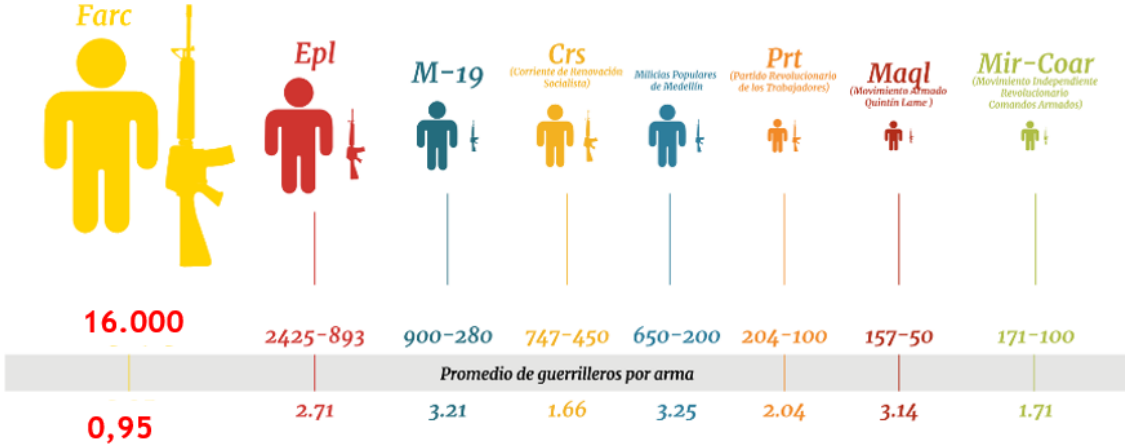
Insurgencias structure location for 1998 - 2020



Major CLAROS-CELIS stated that many of these groups were historically located in borderlands and frontiers. These regions are areas where the Colombian government has striven

to develop but faced extremely challenging economic conditions. The expansion of insurgent structures posed a significant challenge as these groups strategically positioned themselves along the borders, utilizing the fluidity of these areas. Between 1998 and 2000, the structure of insurgency spread across the entire country, demonstrating how funds derived from drug trade could be employed to sway individuals. The FARC, in particular, aimed to solidify its presence in the eastern part of the country.

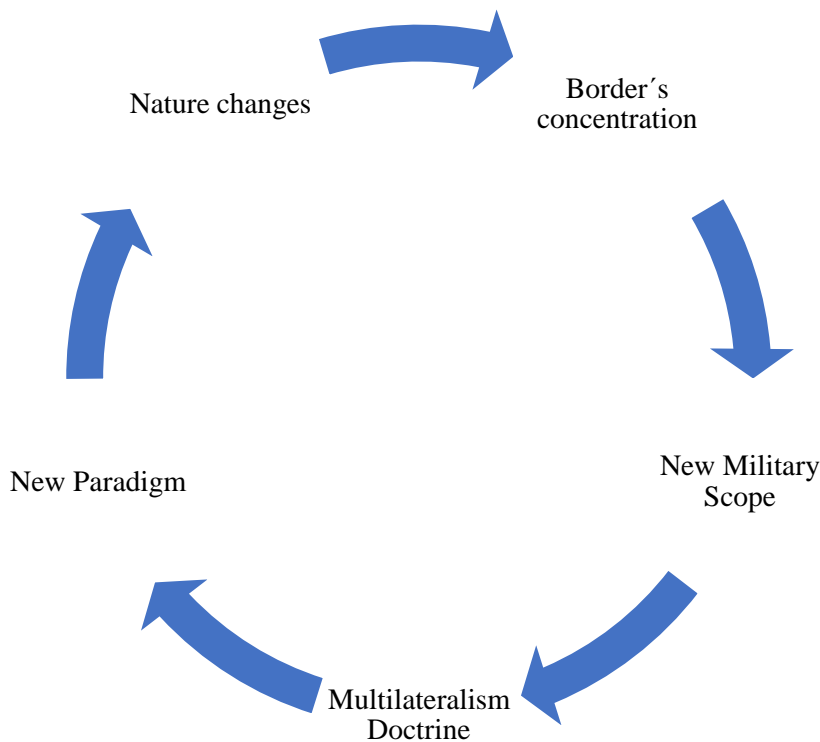
Major CLAROS-CELIS highlighted factors such as the number of terrorists and the average weapons per capita, illustrating the diverse nature of the groups involved. For instance, the FARC boasted 16,000 militants, with the correlation between the quantity of weapons and the number of militants indicating a shift in military dynamics.



Source: Peace Observatory

The concentration of cocaine labs and the increased cultivation of coca leaves brought about a decline in terrorist incidents between 1998 and 2022. This period witnessed heightened military efforts, increased ambition, and efficiency, with a particular focus on Special Operations Forces (SOF). These changes were the result of implemented projects and initiatives.

The geopolitical landscape further influenced military and law enforcement bodies, leading to doctrinal and practical changes. A circular table illustrated these shifts, emphasizing that border concentration was not the sole concern. A new perspective emerged, recognizing the criminal ecosystem and the need for a multilateral doctrine. This realization prompted the development of a new paradigm that involved joint forces, incorporating neighboring countries into the approach.



In summary, the presentation aimed to elucidate why change was necessary and how they achieved it. It distinguished between military strategy and military approach, showcasing the dynamic evolution of Colombia's response to the complex challenges posed by narcotrafficking, insurgency, and the associated geopolitical intricacies.

Discussion

In the discussion section, one of the participants queried Major CLAROS-CELIS about whether FARC similarly adjusted its strategy during the period when Colombia changed its strategy and how frequently the Colombian army evaluated this response. Major CLAROS-CELIS acknowledged that, as FARC evolved, they also changed themselves in order to challenge the new countering measures of the Army. Major CLAROS-CELIS added that the Colombian army conducts an evaluation of its strategy and methods of struggle almost every year. Major CLAROS-CELIS indicated that FARC particularly attempted to engage in dialogue with groups or organizations that could provide international support between 1998 and 2005.

Between 2005 and 2010, FARC began to operate with tactics resembling those of a small guerrilla organization. However, Major CLAROS-CELIS emphasized the importance of not

forgetting that FARC carried out numerous attacks violating human rights and international humanitarian law, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people.

National Ownership: Key to Success in Contemporary Counter-Insurgency (COIN)

Colonel (COL A) David Armando MARTINEZ-ARDILA

The presentation of Colonel David Armando MARTINEZ-ARDILA shed light on important elements to achieve success in counter-insurgency (COIN) policies. He addressed four key elements in COIN strategies, which include *government, strategy, political evolution, and adaptation – development and innovation*.

Colonel MARTINEZ-ARDILA emphasized that Colombia has shaped its COIN Strategy based on the interconnected processes among events, agents, and goals. He underscored the importance that institutions involved in eradicating the conflict thoroughly understanding the previous lessons learned. This understanding is crucial for the agents to become experienced in the process. Consequently, he highlighted the necessity of enhanced conflict policies being effective in achieving the goals.

Success in COIN hinges on three critical factors. First, there is a need for the development of robust policies and activities, emphasizing the importance of formulating strategies capable of responding to the dynamic tactics and attacks of highly adaptable terrorist organizations. The second highlights the significance of the government's authority throughout the conflict. It emphasizes that political leadership must demonstrate unwavering determination both in the field and through discourse, thereby creating a deterrent effect and establishing a sense of commitment. Third, he emphasized the effectiveness of exercises in combating terrorist organizations, focusing on the support of personnel engaged in the field. This involves bolstering their military capabilities and ensuring their preparedness, thereby enhancing their ability to counteract and respond to threats effectively.

Colonel MARTINEZ-ARDILA also discussed the delimitation of lessons learned, highlighting specific periods in Colombia's history. Between 1998 and 2002, President Andrés PASTRANA ARANGO endeavored to achieve "change to build peace" with a development plan. Subsequently, from 2002 to 2010, Álvaro URIBE VELEZ initiated the development of the Democratic Defense and Security Policy. Following his term, Juan Manuel SANTOS CALDERON implemented the Democratic Security and Consolidation Policy. Each of these

presidential administrations reflect distinct approaches and policies aimed at addressing and evolving Colombia's security and peace-building efforts over the specified periods.

PASTRANA ARANGO made efforts to seek international assistance from the United States for COIN efforts. Simultaneously, the integration of domestic perspectives and combat plans with this support led to a kind of "*adaptation*" process. "*Witnessing the "development" process of the Counterinsurgency strategy strengthened through this adaptation, we eventually saw the emergence of innovation.*" Colonel MARTINEZ-ARDILA explained.

Colonel MARTINEZ-ARDILA emphasized the importance of coordination between *government strategy, military strategy, and international cooperation* to reduce the intensity of conflict in Colombia and address the root causes of the conflict. He highlighted the significant reason for this coordination as the recognition that drug trafficking fuels the conflict in Colombia, and due to its international nature, the issue extends beyond Colombia's borders. To support this comprehensive strategy, he underscored careful consideration of the concepts of "*stability and development*" and "*modernization.*"

In the context of "*modernization,*" the Colonel referred to the strengthening of the Armed Forces, the implementation of new doctrinal design, achieving interoperability, and improving training. Under "*stability and development,*" he outlined the following actions: (i) *Long-term Defense Policy*, (ii) *Enhanced Territorial Control*, (iii) *Increased Security Perception*, and (iv) *Higher Investment*. These measures are essential for supporting the holistic strategy and addressing the international dimensions of the conflict fueled by drug trafficking in Colombia.

In conclusion, the presentation pointed out the significance of international cooperation in Colombia's efforts. Colonel MARTINEZ-ARDILA addressed a question regarding the terms "Counter-insurgency," "Counter-narcotics," and "Counter-terrorism," clarifying that while these concepts are distinct, their usage in the Colombian context may involve different nuances. This distinction is crucial in understanding the multifaceted challenges that Colombia faces and the tailored strategies required for counteracting narcotics, insurgency, and terrorism. The situation in Colombia is marked by political and security weaknesses, along with the persistent presence of illegal activities and a lack of territorial control. The consequences are evident in social issues, the ongoing prevalence of illegal activities, and the growth of narcotics trafficking and insurgency. To address these challenges and improve the situation, certain commitments are crucial. These include a firm commitment to respecting human rights, the

professionalization and interoperability of the Armed Forces, and a focused effort on undermining insurgency finances.

The identified challenges underscore the need for sustained best practices, the transfer of experience in capabilities (Special Operations–Aviation–Intelligence), and the standardization of doctrine and training. By addressing these commitments and challenges, Colonel MARTINEZ-ARDILA claimed that Colombia could strive towards enhancing its security, curbing illegal activities, and effectively combating the roots of insurgency and narcotics trafficking. The integration of modernization efforts, stability, and development initiatives will contribute to a comprehensive strategy, fostering a more secure and stable future for the nation.

Overall, Colonel MARTINEZ-ARDILA offered insights into Colombia’s dynamic political landscape, the evolution of its strategies in response to changing circumstances, and the importance of innovation and sustainability in addressing complex security.

Commercial Insurgencies: Illegal Economy Disruption and the Nature of Contemporary Insurgencies

Colonel (COL A) Andres Eduardo FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO

Colonel Andres Eduardo FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO focused on the dynamics of commercial insurgencies, particularly highlighting the experiences in their 60-year struggle. Colombia has experienced a long-standing armed conflict involving various insurgent groups, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and others. Colombia has undertaken numerous processes ranging from military methods to negotiations in its efforts to combat terrorism. Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO stressed that issues such as land reform, political inclusion and addressing the grievances of marginalized communities are still ongoing challenges.

The presence of both terrorist organizations and organized crime groups complicates the consolidation of peace and security. These groups have been involved in a range of activities, including *commercial insurgencies* and *illegal economy disruption*. The changing nature of these organizations is a complicating factor, presenting challenges for both the insurgencies and the efforts to counter them. Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO acknowledged that the effectiveness of the counter-terrorism process in Colombia hinges on building an inclusive and stable society. To achieve this, they should implement a comprehensive process management approach encompassing governance, development, and security concepts.

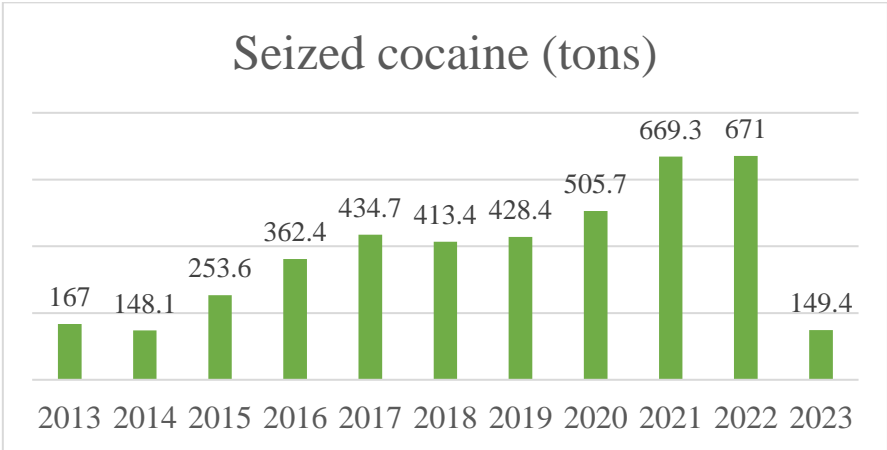
During his presentation, Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO put a specific emphasis on the term “*commercial insurgencies*” which refer to the involvement of insurgent groups in activities that generate income to sustain their operations. In Colombia, commercial insurgencies include activities such as drug trafficking, extortion, and illegal mining to sustain themselves. Historically, military forces have addressed these threats to weaken these groups and their abilities. In order to survive, continue their actions, and sustain their insurgencies, these organizations entered drug trafficking and cocaine production businesses. Eventually, commercial insurgency became indispensable and inseparable for them. Investigating the root causes of commercial insurgencies required the Colombian government to have a multifaceted approach. This has included not only security-related counter measures, but also investment in social and economic development as well as initiatives that address the underlying

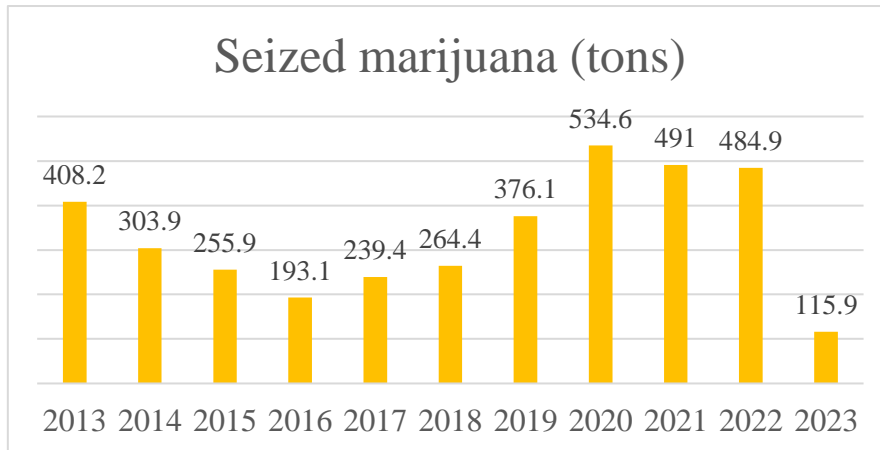
circumstances of political and historical grievances that have motivated the conflict for the decades.

Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO then turned to explain *illegal economy disruption*, specifically focusing on drug trafficking, extortion, and illegal mining. The speaker pointed out that the survival of insurgencies relies on continued engagement in criminal activities, creating intricate relationships with criminal organizations. Drug trafficking was presented as the most significant evidence of the internationalization of the terrorism problem in Colombia. These organizations, by engaging in commercial activities with the drugs they cultivated, developed transnational networks. As a result, the issue became one that could not be resolved solely through Colombia’s on-the-ground military efforts.

The illicit drug trade, particularly cocaine production and distribution, has been a significant source of income for Colombian insurgent groups. The presentation noted the significant presence of FARC in regions where coca is cultivated, demonstrating their effective control. Attempts to prevent coca production faced resistance from FARC members and, simultaneously, drew reactions from local farmers who depended on the coca production for their livelihoods. The speaker conveyed that, with the support FARC garnered from the local population, they attempted to compel compliance from the state. To address this issue, the Colombian government primarily adopted two approaches: engaging in military operations in the field and pursuing peace negotiations. The 2016 Peace Agreement with FARC is an example of the second approach.

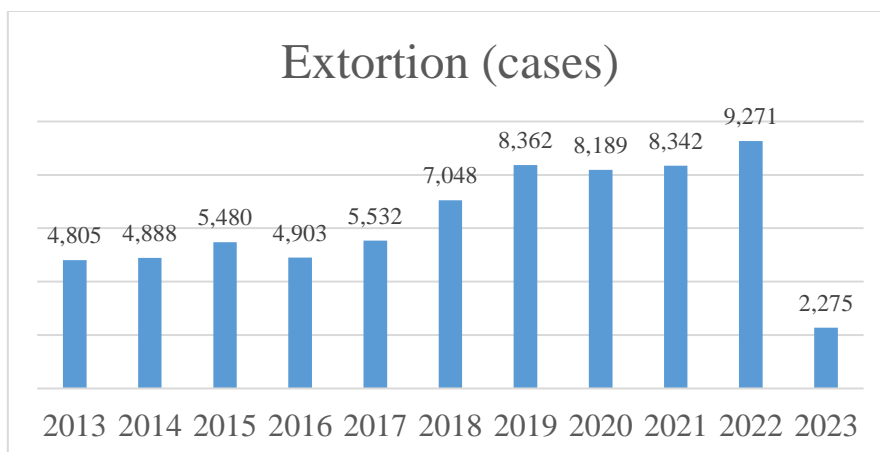
The following charts present the quantities of seized illicit substances, illustrating the volume of illegal materials. The speaker emphasized that tackling this dimension of the struggle is vital in cutting off the organization’s resources.

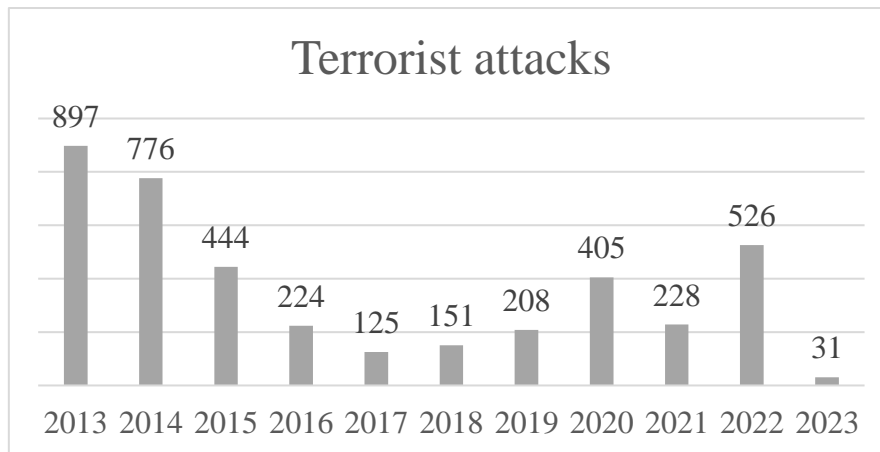




In an effort to facilitate the legal generation of income for the local population, particularly by steering them away from coca production, the Colombian government endeavored to develop various economic programs. This initiative aimed to create a distance between FARC and the local community.

As a second illegal economy disrupting activity, Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO talked about extortion. Insurgent groups extort money from businesses, ranchers, and individuals in areas under their influence. Failure to pay these “war taxes” can lead to violence or displacement. Extortion activities, resembling state functions like the monopoly of force and justice, contribute to the loss of the state’s law enforcement power in affected regions, allowing terrorist organizations to become more influential. The illicit income collected from the local population shows an increasing trend over the years.





Extortion also obstructs potential investments in the region, further entrenching the local population and their economic needs under the influence of the organization. Consequently, this underscores the necessity of the struggle by highlighting its imperative in addressing various compulsions in different areas.

The impact of illegal mining, particularly in gold, is the third disrupting activity, emphasizing its contribution to environmental degradation. The legal consequences of trading different materials, such as cocaine and gold, create complexities in addressing these issues.

Displacement is a serious consequence of these activities, underlining the need for comprehensive solutions to address the root causes of threats. The presentation concluded with key points, emphasizing the importance of security governance, reconciliation, and international cooperation. Civil society and organizations play a crucial role in tackling these multifaceted challenges.

In conclusion, Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO elaborated that insurgent groups have established links with criminal organizations and guerrilla movements in neighboring countries, which has allowed them to expand their operations beyond Colombia's borders. Civil society organizations have played a crucial role in advocating for peace and justice in Colombia. They have often faced threats, violence, and harassment from both insurgents and state actors because of their work. To combat illegal economies, the Colombian government has implemented alternative development programs aimed at providing legal economic opportunities in multiple regions. Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO concluded that the international cooperation to address commercial insurgencies is critical for addressing the root causes of these threats.

Discussion

The discussion session addressed the illicit activities in peace agreements and neighboring countries' perspectives. Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO explained the challenges in eradicating illegal crops and the impact of peace agreements on insurgencies' behavior. The buffer zones between Colombia and its neighbors highlighted where illegal activities, including coca cultivation, are prevalent. The discussed government initiatives to encourage farmers to shift from coca to other crops, with a recognition of the complexities involved in achieving sustainable solutions, especially considering the prohibition on the use of certain chemicals in the eradication process.

A second question raised why coca production was rapidly increasing despite all the efforts of the Colombian government. Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO expressed the dependency of organizations like FARC in the country on coca production for their survival. The Colombian government had stated that it would provide financial support to local farmers to produce alternative crops instead of coca. In response, Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO added that these organizations responded by increasing coca cultivation to extract more money from the government. Additionally, he highlighted the intense influence and pressure of FARC and ELN in some regions, where these terrorist organizations threatened local farmers to cultivate coca. On the other hand, local farmers saw state support incentives to encourage them to abandon the production of illegal substances as an opportunity to extract more money, rendering the policy ineffective in achieving its intended goals.

NATO Lessons Learned from Colombia

Mr. Neil SCHUELE

Drawing from experiences in Eastern Asia, Somalia, Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Africa, Mr. Neil SCHUELE, who has had the opportunity to study terrorism in these regions, highlighted insights gained from staying in Colombia. Having closely examined operations against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) as an officer, the speaker aimed to share Colombian experiences and what kind of lessons learned these experiences on the Colombian counter-terrorism efforts could offer to NATO.

The primary activity in Colombia revolved around counter-drug operations, while in Afghanistan, counter-terrorism efforts were the focal point. Legal distinctions influenced the naming of these operations, as FARC in Colombia was not officially recognized as a terrorist organization, and opium in Afghanistan was addressed as a counter-terrorism concern. Mr. Neil SCHUELE emphasized that the presence of the United States in Colombia symbolized a partnership in counter-terrorism. However, he underscored that the situation in Afghanistan was entirely different. In this context, he highlighted that the different roles in various problem areas could serve as a model for partnerships conducted by NATO with partner states. This nuanced approach can serve as a model for NATO's analysis.

Mr. SCHUELE indicated that the United States chain of command in Colombia is extremely simple, with everything going through the Ambassador. He adds that Colombia's bureaucratic processes facilitated the support from the United States. On the other hand, he noted that in Afghanistan, due to the involvement of different agencies, operations were managed through a more complex chain of command. Balancing authorities and permissions, where definitions differed from actual capabilities, posed challenges, exacerbated by communication issues and time zone differences, making the situation different from the Colombian example.

While the U.S. had a clear understanding of the situation in Colombia, the nature of the mission in Afghanistan was different. Popularity and support in the region were uncertain, with loyalty being a constant question. Mr. SHUELE stated that these two cases illustrate how the perceived environment can vary significantly.

Another point Mr. SCHUELE touched upon was popular support. In the case of Colombia, there was strong public support for FARC, especially in areas where they had more control. In

the forested areas where the Colombian government or its partners had less presence, this support intensified. However, in Afghanistan, the situation was more complex. When visiting two adjacent villages, they noted that they could encounter very different scenarios regarding popular support. There was no specific pattern, and the idea of tactically developing a protective shield against the potential threat posed by the preference for popular support in the areas they visited became more challenging.

Resource availability significantly differed between Colombia and Afghanistan. In Colombia, the authorities were able to procure what the military personnel needed on the field from the country. When Mr. SCHUELE went to Afghanistan, he noted that the personnel had recently moved to the region, and there were equipment shortages. Considering the distance between countries, the procurement process did not proceed as swiftly as it did in Colombia.

The importance of cohesive ends, aligning objectives with available means, became evident in both contexts. In the NATO framework, terrorism is a national problem, but the speaker contends that it is inherently international. The speaker emphasizes the necessity of accurately defining policies to ensure coherent implementation.

In the Afghan context, the Taliban initially opposed the opium trade but later realized its indispensability for survival. This shift underscores the dynamic and complex nature of engagements in different regions, emphasizing the importance of adapting strategies to the evolving realities on the ground.

In conclusion, Mr. Neil SCHUELE drew attention to several key points based on his experiences in various regions, particularly Colombia and Afghanistan. The Colombian counter-terrorism efforts, focused on counter-drug operations against FARC, exemplify a simpler chain of command and strong public support. In contrast, the situation in Afghanistan, where counter-terrorism efforts were the primary focus, involved a more complex multiple chain of command, varied popular support, and resource challenges.

11 US Lessons from Colombia

Dr. David E. SPENCER

With 27 years of counterterrorism experience, Dr. David E. SPENCER shared valuable lessons, particularly focusing on the Colombian context in terms of counter-insurgency. Dr. SPENCER introduced eleven lessons learned in the context of Colombia.

Lesson 1: *The US cannot win counter-insurgency war in a foreign country. We can only help a local government win its war.*

Dr. SPENCER highlighted that the United States has been more successful in cases where it played a supportive role, such as in Colombia, where the country conducted its own struggle. However, he noted that the US did not achieve the same level of success when they engaged in counter-insurgency activities on behalf of another state.

Lesson 2: *Less is more: the more our allies do for themselves, the better.*

In this sense, Colombia depicted one of the greatest examples in fighting its own war and sought help from the US in the margins. In return, the US provided training, advice and intelligence. However, Dr. SPENCER stated that, by and large, this war was fought by Colombians and they achieved the victories.

Lesson 3: *Pre-requisites to success include committed political leadership, competent military leadership and a political mandate.*

The reason for Colombia's success in counter-insurgency after the 2000s was the unity between political will and the military in supporting this struggle. Merely assigning the military without active political involvement is insufficient for achieving success in the counter-insurgency process.

Lesson 4: *A commitment to a counterterrorism campaign is a long-term commitment, not 5-10 years, more like 50-100 years. Must focus on sustainability.*

The United States has been providing support to Colombia, particularly in terms of army building assistance, since the 1950s. They have organized training for military personnel to conduct counter-insurgency since that time. This training created an environment of trust in US assistance to counter this threat. This represents a long time commitment.

Lesson 5: *Counterterrorism/Counter-narcotics successes are fragile and must be sustained to have lasting effect.*

Since Colombia initiated counter-narcotics operations, the area used for coca cultivation had halved. However, occasions of political backsliding caused coca production to increase again. Therefore, consistent and unwavering maintenance of the policy mitigates the fragility in the counter-narcotics.

Lesson 6: *Killing and capturing enemy middle management is more important than killing and capturing their top leadership.*

The strategy initially was targeting top leaders. However, when the top leader was eliminated, the organization's second-in-command took over, allowing the group to persist. At this point, Colombian military authorities shifted their focus towards disrupting the organization tactically by eliminating mid-level cadre members. The Colombians realized that these middle- to low-level leaders gave the organization *cohesion*. After pursuing lower and mid-level terrorist organization leaders, they observed that the organization began to unravel. In this sense, Dr. SPENCER stated that what is necessary to eliminate a terrorist organization is destroying the structure.

Lesson 7: *If you do not consolidate terrain, you are doomed to play whack-a-mole endlessly.*

It is not possible to speak of success unless the enemy is constrained in terms of maneuvering, recruitment, having resources, and controlling the area. Dr. SPENCER also identified a problem in Colombia, where the country had to reengage in a struggle for an area it had regained control of several years ago. The fundamental reason for this was the failure to establish consolidation in the areas cleared of terrorists.

Lesson 8: *Boots on the ground is vital. Technology is only good if it can be sustained and cannot substitute men, only enhance human capability.*

Dr. SPENCER emphasized that the technology does not replace the *man*. Rather, it *enhances* man. Therefore, in order to consolidate the terrain, one must use technology in parallel with the human resources.

Lesson 9: *Modern terrorist organizations are complex hybrid organizations that combine aspects of terrorism, criminal activity and political mobilization.*

In order to maintain their activities, terrorist organizations do not only engage in terrorist activities, but they also cooperate with other criminal organizations to survive and find themselves safe havens for maneuvering from the counter acts.

Lesson 10: *Counterterrorism is not strictly a military/police campaign but requires a whole of government approach (joint and interagency).*

FARC displays a multifaceted system and all of these dimensions must be countered individually to achieve a victory. In this struggle, the military can eliminate terrorist elements in the field, but the ultimate success depends on the government's implementation of effective policies. In this context, political authority must ensure that the people are loyal towards the government rather than terrorist organizations.

Lesson 11: *Planning must be tied to resources, otherwise it is merely aspirational.*

It is essential to be realistic about the operations and the available resources to ensure the sustainability of the operations. Dr. SPENCER recommended having modest plans in accordance to the resources and trying to consolidate what the states can and have, rather than trying to do everything.

Discussion

The discussion recalled Dr. SPENCER's point about the effectiveness of neutralizing lower- and mid-level terrorist leaders. The participant asked whether there was another successful example where lower- and mid-level organization leaders were pacified. Dr. SPENCER mentioned that this was a specific example and clarified that FARC did not fall apart all at once until mid-level leadership was targeted. While emphasizing the need to target lower- and mid-level leaders, Dr. SPENCER also highlighted the importance of rendering top leaders ineffective for achieving political victories. It is essential to eliminate the mid-level cadre that provides cohesion to terminate a terrorist organization.

DAY II

The Challenges of the Legal Prosecution System and the Use of Military Training/Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law, and Laws of Armed Conflict

Lt. Col. (OLAF) William Andres TABARES-GOMEZ

Lt. Colonel William TABARES works as a pilot in the Colombian Aerospace Forces. He is also, currently the Director of the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of the Colombian War College in Bogota.

Lt. Col. TABARES presented a comprehensive overview of Colombia's advancements in the field of human rights and international humanitarian law. He covered the prosecution system, military training, human rights, international humanitarian law, the law of armed conflict, and various challenges. Subsequently, he addressed complications in countering these challenges. Before starting his presentation, he shared a short video showing the unique beauty of Colombia.

Lt. Col. TABARES stated that Colombia is a nation with distinct features. Despite external perceptions, the Latin American country possesses its own history, government, politics, cultures, and problems. He emphasized that each Latin American nation should be explored and understood with their own historical and political evolution. The presenter emphasized the unity within the political realities of Colombia.

Lt. Col. TABARES explained the current state of Colombia reveals several challenges, including illegal immigration, the cultivation and export of cocaine, social progress, and common crime. These factors significantly impact the coexistence of Colombian citizens. He indicated that the nation has grappled with instability for more than 60 years. Since its independence, Colombia has adopted policies, norms, protocols, and agreements to guide its actions in international relations. The importance of human rights dates back to the pre-independence era. The first significant milestone was the introduction of agreements in the political constitution in 1994. The Geneva Convention protocols were later incorporated in 1997, demonstrating Colombia's commitment to international law.

The unique convergence of regional and global interests in Colombia, influenced by its geographical position, climate, and other factors, presents both opportunities and challenges. The cultivation and commercialization of the coca leaf remain persistent issues, despite efforts to overcome this weakness. From an external perspective, the key challenge for the military forces and police lies in ensuring legality and legitimacy. Colombia faces various social challenges, including education, health, and security. Fundamental services provided by the state often fail to reach all citizens, leading to discontent. Media and social networks contribute to the challenges, creating manipulation and adding to the existing difficulties. In the face of these challenges, the Colombian military forces prioritize education, using innovative strategies to train soldiers and the population. This underscores the importance of addressing challenges through education and leadership to build a better future for the country.

In conclusion, Lt. Col. TABARES stated that Colombia remains dedicated to upholding human rights and international humanitarian law. The immediate and proportional response within the frameworks of international conventions and protocols is a priority for the Colombian military forces as they navigate complex operational environments. Lt. Col. TABARES indicated that Colombia is a very particular country where many regional and global interests converge. Its geographical position, its climate and meteorology make Colombia an ideal country for the cultivation and commercialization of the coca leaf, potentiating this weakness. Countering drug trafficking, human trafficking and illegal immigration are the first priorities in this regard. The training of the Armed Forces in human rights and international humanitarian law is essential in Colombia to face the challenges that the community. The priority that the Colombian military forces must face is providing an immediate proportional response within the framework of international conventions and protocols, which consist of multiple actors, causes, methodologies and of use of violence.

Discussion

The question-and-answer session covered various aspects of Colombia's approach to security and military operations, particularly from a Special Operations Forces (SOF) perspective. The initial statement expressed gratitude for the briefing, highlighting the significance of the topic for NATO and emphasizing the seriousness with which both NATO and Colombia approach it. The participant shared positive feedback on Colombia's approach to legal aspects within their operations, noting the impressive legal framework observed during a recent evaluation. This underscored the importance of the legal perspective in Colombia's security operations.

After this question, another participant shared insights about the evolution of Hungary's military law to adapt to internal challenges, such as the migration crisis and the pandemic. They inquired about Colombia's experience in adapting its military system to handle internal threats, given Colombia's multifaceted challenges, including illegal trafficking and organized crime.

The response acknowledged the complexity of Colombia's challenges, requiring coordination among different government organizations. It highlighted the need to comply with international humanitarian law in addressing the diverse and complex threats the country faces.

The final question was about the relationship between judicial system and law enforcement in addressing the challenges that Colombia experiences. The response acknowledged the challenges and stressed the importance of specialized knowledge in differentiating operations between police and armed forces. It also emphasized Colombia's commitment to ensuring professional performance by the judicial system.

In conclusion, the session provided valuable insights into Colombia's multifaceted security challenges, the importance of legal frameworks in military operations, and the ongoing efforts to address complex issues within the country's judicial system.

Jointness and Interinstitutional Cooperation for Security

Lt. Col. Juan Felipe JIMENEZ-LEYTON

Lt. Col. Juan Felipe JIMENEZ-LEYTON delivered a comprehensive overview of Colombia's approach to national defense and security, emphasizing the importance of collaboration among various branches and agencies. Lt. Col. Jimenez-Leyton began by acknowledging the historical significance of joint relations, highlighting its evolution since 2003 and questioning the motivations behind such collaborations. The central theme revolved around the multifaceted challenges faced by Colombia, particularly in combating illegal activities originating from its borders. Organized crime, with a long history, has significantly impacted the country, necessitating the active involvement of military forces and security agencies. The speaker underscored the critical role of jointness in addressing these challenges. The military and security forces work together to adapt and respond effectively to changing circumstances. This collaboration includes the Army, Navy, and Aerospace Force, which coordinate efforts to combat security threats and provide humanitarian assistance when needed.

Lt. Col. JIMENEZ-LEYTON identified that coordination and cooperation between these forces is vital, as well as a standard chain of command to ensure a unified response. He emphasized that jointness, incorporating the doctrines of each force, enhances regional fitness, integrity, and adaptability, fostering cohesion in the face of diverse challenges. He presented the outcomes of Colombia's efforts, displaying remarkable capabilities in affecting terrorism and reducing the overall threat to national security. However, he recognized new challenges, particularly the close link between organized armed groups and transnational criminal organizations. The presentation delved into the **interconnectedness of insurgency and organized crime**, revealing the challenges posed by increasingly sophisticated criminal networks.

Despite these challenges, Lt. Col. JIMENEZ-LEYTON emphasized that Colombia has learned and applied lessons effectively, demonstrating adaptability in the face of evolving threats. He highlighted the ongoing struggle against illicit networks, including money laundering, tax evasion, corruption, smuggling, and cybercrime. He also emphasized the importance of international partnerships and collaboration with neighboring countries, as well as organizations like the United States and the United Nations, in addressing these challenges.

In conclusion, the presentation emphasized that success in disrupting illicit networks requires continued efforts through integrated national and multinational endeavors. The collaboration among branches, agencies, and international partners remains crucial for Colombia to secure peace, stability, and the well-being of its people in the face of evolving security challenges.

Discussion

The discussion session provided valuable insights into Colombia's approach to inter-institutional collaboration in the context of joint operations. One participant commended the bold presentation and highlighted the emphasis on joint operations, particularly underscoring the significance of inter-institutional collaboration. The participant expressed that such collaboration is often challenging, especially in integrating military professionals with non-military professionals.

In response to the question about organizational examples and paradigms that other countries can benefit from, the speaker explained that Colombia has the Ministry of Defense, led by civilians, acting as a link between military and civilian forces. The collaboration occurs at the high level, where the Ministry of Defense connects with other ministries, facilitating the necessary cooperation. Despite not having a specific organization solely dedicated to civilian-military collaboration, the speaker emphasized the close internal collaboration at the tactical level, overcoming challenges and ensuring effective coordination.

The discussion highlighted the challenges faced at the tactical level, where civilian-military cooperation is most necessary. The participant shared their experience of facing similar challenges in NATO and stressed the importance of pushing down jointness to the lowest level possible. The speaker acknowledged the challenges but highlighted the success achieved by following specific roles in different branches and maintaining a coordinated approach.

The speaker provided examples of how collaboration works in practice, explaining the specific roles of the army, navy, and space force in joint operations. The emphasis was on a project-like approach where each branch contributes its capabilities based on their roles, ensuring effective coordination and success in military operations.

In summary, the question and answer session emphasized the importance of inter-institutional collaboration, displayed Colombia's approach to overcoming challenges, and provided practical examples of successful joint operations. The coordination at both high and tactical

levels was essential for achieving success in military operations and ensuring effective civilian-military cooperation

NATO SOFCOM and CT

Lt. Col. (UK A) Karl HEARNE

Lieutenant Colonel Karl HEARNE, with a background of almost three decades in the United Kingdom Special Forces, delivered a comprehensive overview of the evolving landscape of counter-terrorism and SOFCOM's role within it.

The speaker indicated that this workshop is a perfect nexus for understanding special operation forces (SOF) responsibilities in countering terrorism. His extensive experience in the UK Special Forces, coupled with his firsthand engagement with Colombia dating back to the 1990s, adds a practical dimension to his insights. Lt. Col. HEARNE, more a practitioner than an academic, emphasized the importance of partnerships and expressed gratitude to the workshop speakers.

Lt. Col. HEARNE emphasized the ongoing transformation within SOFCOM, paralleling NATO's shift to a war-fighting headquarters. The strategic environment, particularly the situation in Eastern Europe, drives this transformation and guides SOFCOM's objectives. The Alliance's commitment to collective defense highlights the perceived threats in the contemporary global scenario. The speaker mentions SOFCOM's threefold approach to counterterrorism: partnership, development of partner SOF capabilities, and maintaining strategic relationships. He stresses the sovereignty of CT for most nations. The objective is to build a global network of interoperable SOF capabilities, significant for addressing CT concerns where strategic interests intersect.

The complexities arise when partner SOF capabilities may not be compatible with the CT objectives of a particular country. Measuring the effectiveness of Counter-Terrorism Forces through partners is an ongoing challenge, which shows the need for a nuanced and adaptive approach. The speaker indicates the challenge but expresses optimism in resolving these issues in the near future.

Lt. Col. HEARNE elaborated on special forces' role in CT operations, emphasizing their complementarity to conventional operations and their focus on tactical activities for strategic effects. The taxonomy of allied SOF, with 33 tasks ranging from military assistance to counterterrorism, gives a comprehensive picture of their multifaceted responsibilities. The presentation mentions the strategic dilemma that stems from the differences in national and

NATO approaches to CT. He highlighted the sovereignty of national policies and the challenges in an international context. The speaker discussed the integration of lessons learned, and acknowledged the importance of SOFCOM approaches in this respect. He mentioned that SOFCOM is committed to stay ahead in the dynamic landscape of CT

In conclusion, Lt. Col. HEARNE's presentation emphasized the complex and complementary role of SOFCOM in counterterrorism. SOFCOM is leading the way in global security by dealing with big changes and solving partnership problems.

Discussion

During the question-and-answer session, the speaker addressed the comprehensive range of the training and education provided, emphasizing that it spans across technical, tactical, and operational levels. Courses cover a range of topics, from technology exploits to operating at the staff level, and are tailored to various roles within Special Operations, including command level. As with most SOF activity, this should be for strategic effect.

A participant sought clarification on one of the most important aspects in countering terrorism. Lt. Col. HEARNE indicated the significance of an interagency, joint, or whole-of-government approach. He emphasized that Special Operations alone constitute a small part of the solution. He stressed the importance of collaboration across defense institutions, civil institutions, and various government agencies.

Another question inquired about the role of Colombian SOF in counterterrorism activities. The response highlighted the joint command of Special Forces in Colombia, emphasizing innovation, dedication, and transparency as key attributes. Lt. Col. HEARNE acknowledged the Colombian SOF as a sophisticated force that demonstrates effective planning.

In summary, the question-and-answer session emphasized the comprehensive nature of training, the critical importance of interagency collaboration in countering terrorism, and insights into the role and attributes of the SOF. The focus on innovation, dedication, and transparency emerged as key elements in addressing the challenges posed by terrorism.

Fighting Drug and Terrorism

Assoc. Prof. BAŞAR BAYSAL (TUR)

Assoc. Prof. Başar BAYSAL made a comprehensive exploration of the securitization and desecuritization of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) through the lens of the Ph.D. study he conducted. The speaker highlighted the multifaceted nature of terrorism in Colombia, emphasizing that the challenges extend beyond being a mere financial problem and should be considered with broader societal and political implications. He focused on the conflict phase, and drawing parallels with international contexts, the speaker elaborated the dynamics between wartime economies, disorder, and the evolution of violence in Colombia.

Assoc. Prof. BAYSAL began his presentation by explaining on Colombia's peace process after 2016. The speaker discussed the transformation of violence from political to criminal in certain regions. Drawing on interviews with various groups in Colombia, including former FARC members and indigenous leaders, the presentation provided a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play. He also emphasized the commercial dimension of armed groups in Colombia.

Assoc. Prof. BAYSAL framed the lessons from Colombia within the context of its extensive experience with peace processes, including instances in 1986, 1990, and the ongoing process with FARC. The speaker emphasized that while Colombia serves as a valuable learning experience, each country faces similar challenges, citing issues such as migration, illicit drug economies, and various forms of terrorism.

He explored the core concept of wartime economies, encompassing activities like cocaine and marijuana production and other illegal activities like illegal mining. The speaker outlined how conflict areas create an environment for these economies to thrive and discussed their role in financing terrorism. The presentation mentioned the need for countries to provide alternative production means to discourage involvement in illicit activities. Assoc. Prof. BAYSAL indicated that the wartime economy takes place particularly in regions where there is disorder because of the ongoing conflict. The convergence of conflict and drug trafficking, particularly the trafficking of cocaine, becomes a focal point as various groups vie for control over this profitable trade. The presentation demonstrated the political and societal implications of these dynamics, emphasizing the diverse groups involved, from coca producers to landless peasants, each deriving income from this complex network.

Having elaborated the situation in Colombia, Assoc. Prof. BAYSAL introduced the lessons from Türkiye particularly the shift to small unit commando operations and the effective use of high-tech equipment like unmanned aerial vehicles. The speaker suggested that such tactics could offer insights for Colombia in its counterterrorism efforts. Drawing parallels with PKK operations in the 1990s, the speaker highlighted the technological advancements in contemporary conflict scenarios, such as the coordinated use of UAVs, ground units and fighter jets. The intersection of narcoterrorism and governance reveals the challenges faced by Colombia, which are also similar with Türkiye's challenges in counter-terrorism operations against the PKK, emphasizing the importance of coordinated efforts and technological education.

The presentation proceeds to compare two distinct scenarios – Colombia and Türkiye—mentioning the multifaceted challenges arising from the intersection of conflict, governance, and narcotics. Assoc. Prof. BAYSAL emphasized the common thread of narcoterrorism. Moreover, the speaker draws on individual experiences in CT operations, highlighting the disruptive impact of illicit activities.

The presentation concluded with a call for increased collaboration and cooperation between nations facing similar challenges. He expressed hope that events like these could mark the beginning of joint projects under NATO's umbrella, fostering shared learning and enhanced security measures. He underscored the importance of good governance in navigating the complex interplay between armed groups, landowners, and landless peasants. He noted how strategic interventions can affect the lives of local populations who are caught in the crossfire. In addition, he emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach encompassing technology, education, and better governance structures.

Discussion

In the question-and-answer session, a diverse group of experts shared valuable insights into the complex landscape of counter-terrorism efforts, drawing experiences primarily from Colombia and Afghanistan. The conversation covered a range of topics. The participants discussed the challenges faced in combating insurgencies, the evolution of military strategies, economic situation, the critical importance of public support, and the lessons learned from both successful and ongoing efforts against insurgency. Emphasizing the importance of countering criminal organizations involved in the cocaine trade, the participants emphasized the critical role that

these efforts play in gaining control over the terrain and answering the problems of local populations.

The discussion then shifted to the evolution of military strategies, from facing large armed formations to adopting a more proactive approach of pushing threats away from borders. Participants shared their experiences, particularly from deployments in Afghanistan, highlighting the challenges of replacing opium fields with alternative crops and the complexities involved in adapting to ever-changing insurgency tactics.

One of the central challenges discussed was the difficulty of convincing peasants to substitute coca crops with legal alternatives like cacao. Economic incentives and the inherent complexities of the issue emerged as formidable obstacles in the process of economic substitution.

Acknowledging Colombia's successes in regaining support for the government and diminishing the legitimacy of terrorists, participants explored the lessons learned from these achievements. Drawing parallels with experiences in Afghanistan, a participant explained the significance of continuous control of terrain, the impact of governance presence, and the tendency of populations to align with whoever provides security.

The participants indicated the importance of international collaboration. The exchange of experiences and strategies among nations facing similar challenges emerged as a key aspect of building a collective and effective response to counter-terrorism. The insights shared in this question-and-answer session provided a comprehensive overview of the complex challenges inherent in Colombia's counter-terrorism efforts. From economic complexities to the importance of public support and international collaboration, the discussion highlighted the ongoing problems faced by law enforcement and the evolution of strategies needed to address the dynamic nature of commercial insurgencies and drug trafficking.

Strategic Takeaways: What are the overall lessons beyond Colombia

Prof. Evan ELLIS (US AWC SSI)

The last presentation of the workshop was delivered by Dr. Evan Ellis. He made a comprehensive overview of the ongoing relationship between Colombia and NATO. The professor expressed gratitude for the opportunity to address the audience and conveyed regret for not being present in person due to prior commitments in Chile.

Dr. Ellis indicated the significance of the event within the broader context of the enduring relationship between Colombia and NATO. He emphasized the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme, illustrating the evolving opportunities for interaction between the two parties. The professor noted that NATO is still in the early stages of understanding its Colombian partners, and the relationship promises fruitful collaborations beyond the current event.

The professor began his discussion on philosophical considerations and reminded the audience to carefully assess the applicability of lessons learned. He acknowledged the complexity of different situations and cultural contexts and emphasized the importance of selective understanding. He dedicated a significant part of the lecture to the importance of understanding adversaries. The professor explained how to discover the nature of adversaries by encompassing elements of criminality, politics, and terrorism. Using examples from the Colombian situation, he explored the evolution of adversaries' goals and tactics and stressed the need for adaptability in response. The role of illicit economic activities, including drugs and mining, in fueling opponents' capabilities was an important point. He also mentioned the strategic objective of controlling illegal resources.

The professor explained the critical role of whole-of-government coordination in dealing with opponents. He emphasized joint efforts and collaboration between military and civilian authorities, citing examples from Colombia's experience. The concept of "credible local government presence" emerged as a key factor in his presentation. He underlined the need for effective relationship and the provision of essential services to win the hearts of the local people.

In his presentation, the professor explored the strategic considerations, including the evolving nature of strategies. He touched upon the role of peace negotiations and their integration into

broader strategies. He identified the need for adaptable military leadership, coupled with political support, as essential for success. The discussion extended to the importance of doctrine, particularly in the context of counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism efforts.

Dr. Ellis emphasized the value of mobility at the tactical level, which includes both air and coastal capabilities. He gave special attention to the role of local forces by stressing the importance of proper training and control to prevent unintended consequences. He indicated the significance of human intelligence, in addition to technological assets, and emphasized the need for well-balanced approaches.

The presentation concluded with reflections on the post-conflict phase, cautioning against the assumption that battlefield victories guarantee enduring peace. There remain challenges in implementing peace agreements, addressing economic issues, and preventing the weaponization of discontent. The professor drew parallels with global scenarios, including Afghanistan, highlighting the common struggle in translating tactical successes into sustained peace and democracy.

Dr Ellis' discussion provided a comprehensive perspective towards the Colombia-NATO partnership, which includes philosophical considerations, strategic insights, tactical considerations, and post-conflict challenges. The importance of whole-of-government coordination, adaptability, and understanding opponents emerged as central topics.

Discussion

The discussion provided insights to the challenges in Colombia's counterterrorism efforts. They emphasized the significance of effective communication and strategic messaging, with the acknowledged influence of media on perceptions and in creating the narrative of security forces.

One participant raised concerns about the potential misuse of ceasefires by terrorist groups to reorganize and prepare for future confrontations. There was a discussion of the complexity of managing multidimensional peace processes, including dealing with armed groups and cross-border issues.

The discussion also touched upon the post-modern nature of conflicts, where issues such as human rights violations become strategic vulnerabilities. They stressed the need for comprehensive training, awareness of the law, and strategic communication to counter misinformation and shape public perception. Another participant asked about the application of

force in addressing diffuse and complex criminal networks involved in activities such as drug trafficking. The response emphasized the multidimensional approaches such as proper training, strategic communication. In addition, he stressed that being prepared for the challenges posed by adversaries is vital. Coordination, both in military planning and communication strategies, emerged as a crucial factor. The importance of understanding the combined effects of military actions and being proactive in countering disinformation was emphasized.

Finally, the presentation highlighted the complexities of Colombia's counterterrorism efforts, covering issues such as ceasefires, social media manipulation, and the synchronization of military and communication strategies. The recurring topic was the necessity for awareness, preparation, and a comprehensive approach to addressing the complex dynamics of modern conflicts.

Conclusion

By
Prof. Evan ELLIS (US AWC SSI)

The workshop on “*Colombia Lessons Learned on Terrorism*” is a significant part of an ongoing relationship between Colombia and NATO, presenting diverse opportunities for interaction. This is evident in what the speakers referred to as the Individual Tailored Partnership Plan. NATO has just started to appreciate the counterterrorism experience of Colombian Partners and the dynamics of this relationship. There is a wealth of potential, not only in this event, but also in the broader series of relationships that NATO and Colombia maintain.

Over the years, Colombia has witnessed an evolution in its counterterrorism efforts with different governments coming to power. It is essential to think carefully about the applicability of the lessons learned, being selective and understanding the differences in situations and cultural contexts. When evaluating Colombia’s success in this struggle, it is crucial to make a distinction between the successes gained against FARC and ELN. This is because the enemy is not the same. In this sense, Mr. Neil SCHUELE underlined the importance of strategic successes in Colombia whereas Dr. David E. SPENCER recalled the fragility of these achievements, highlighting that consolidation is essential for maintaining the success.

One aspect of overcoming these fragilities lies in understanding the opponent in countering terrorism. At this point, Ms. Elena BEGANU’s emphasis on the *awareness* highly matters. Additionally, Major CLAROS-CELIS highlighted the importance of defining the opponent as a system and discussed how looking at the opposing group as a system can be beneficial in the fight against it. Dr. David E. SPENCER also discussed the concept of understanding opponents, noting that opponents can involve elements of criminality, political dimensions, and terrorism simultaneously without clear distinctions and the authorities must comprehend the *evolving* goals of opponents and how these goals depend on their specific situation. In line with this argument, Major CLAROS-CELIS recalled these organizations’ the ability to *adapt*. For example, in the Colombian situation, a group initially involved in terrorist activities evolved over time. At one point, it became entwined with the narcotics economy, transforming into a relatively large, well-armed force engaged in conventional warfare. However, with campaigns led by individuals, their orientation changed as they were reduced to a more terrorist-oriented force. Our opponents sometimes evolve voluntarily, but also involuntarily because of things

that may not be our opponents' choosing. For instance, the 7th FARC party Congress was rooted in Maoism and mass mobilization. The role of drugs liberated them from the need to stay close to their populist base, allowing them to pursue more terrorist tactics instead of mass recruitment. In response to adversaries' quick adaptation capabilities, Colombian partners highlighted that our strategies also have to evolve. In this sense, Major CLAROS-CELIS referred to *persistent campaigning*.

The discussion included references to sources and illegal economic gains. There were parallels drawn in the comments made during the workshop, involving the experiences in Türkiye, Afghanistan, and other locations. Several speakers from the Colombian side and the US emphasized this point, with Rear Admiral MORENO-OLIVEROS addressing *deviant globalization*. Colonel FERNANDEZ-OSORIO talked about *commercial insurgencies* whereas Assoc. Prof. BAYSAL elaborated upon the wartime economies. It is crucial to understand the enabling role of illicit economy in terms of the capability of opponents. Several speakers pointed out the significance of understanding the illicit mining economy and the role in taxing revenues in areas under control. The speakers also referred to the way in which those illicit economies not only enabled the forces of our opponents, but also have secondary effects that are important in the strategic and political sense, such as the environmental damage they cause and the displacement of people. It is important to comprehend how the control of illegal resources becomes a strategic objective in this modern type of warfare.

The speakers also focused on the *strategy*. Ms. BEGANU talked about strategic simultaneity, and Colombian partners talked a lot about how global trends and interdependence creates problems. There was an interesting discussion of the role of the military in preventing conflicts to the degree to which that is possible, and the question of what is the proper role of the military and the authorities in preventing conflict, and the use of the military as a social force.

Another important issue that Rear Admiral MORENO-OLIVEROS raised during the workshop was the *role of perceptions*. In other words, it is not just winning the battle on the ground, but it is also about how the military or the government is perceived. A related issue is the question not of just strategy, but of doctrine. Rear Admiral MORENO-OLIVEROS challenged the distinction between COIN, counter narcotics and counter terrorism. Furthermore, he discussed the *role of peace negotiations, including* the use of peace negotiations to complement the military campaign.

Additionally, the speakers underlined the importance of *leadership and mass support*. The speakers talked about the domestic legitimacy and how critical it was for the Colombian government to win the fight among the population, that the government had the presence of local areas and had the legitimacy. The speakers acknowledged that the Colombians were very devoted to fund and execute combat operations on their side as well as managing the financial support they took from the US in the most efficient way possible. On the other hand, a related point was the role that *military leadership* plays. Some of the work that Dr. SPENCER has done investigates the importance of the roles of different Colombian generals with a great deal of knowledge about the situation and a strong strategic concept. These military leaders were also, to certain degree, reformers within the military institution and they show the importance of adept military leadership coupled with political leadership.

The speakers also reflected on the role of *resources*. In Colombia's counter-terrorism implementation, US resources played an important role. Roughly \$300 million of U.S funding is allocated to Colombia every year. However, Dr. SPENCER pointed out that the US role in operations was limited. Referring to the quote of Dr. SPENCER, "*The less is more*", Prof. ELLIS stressed that it was strategically important for the Colombians to take the Lead in CT within their county, making effective use of U.S resources. As Colonel MARTINEZ and Mr. Neil SCHULE also emphasized, the Colombians had and must have agency in these efforts. It was not the US pushing things to Colombia, it was the Colombians in a dialogue with the US, providing the answer for what they required at that time. In addition to that, one of the other things that Dr. SPENCER reiterated was this idea of "*Do not plan too far beyond your resources. Without resources, it is just aspirational.*"

The speakers also drew attention to the importance of *whole-of-government coordination* and *credible local government presence*. Prof. ELLIS stated that the local presence concerns the relationship between the military, the government and the population. If this relationship is strong, then the population can support government CT efforts by providing intelligence and supporting the judicial process. Nevertheless, in addition to the relationships, authorities also need to provide credible services such as security and investments, and these services must be free of corruption. Dr. David SPENCER mentioned that the authorities have to get the presence right or else they are condemned to fail.

Prof. ELLIS stated that there is opportunity for a virtuous cycle. If the governments get it right, the benefits reinforce each other. If the authorities have government presence, they receive intelligence and gain citizens' confidence.. Security forces can clear out or suppress the

adversary in an area. Yet, if local government does not come in, provide key services, and build relationships, authorities could lose even their security presence. Therefore, the Colombian case again and again showed that the coordination is critical to take advantage of that window that security forces provided.

Col. TABARES-GOMEZ drew attention to the importance of *human rights commitments*. In his opinion, neither economic opportunities nor judicial oversight alone is sufficient without *legitimacy*. If the perception that the government is committed to human rights, and to doing things in a proper way is not bolstered within the society, all the financial and other resources spent will not create the desired effect.. Prof. ELLIS emphasized the commitment to human rights as a strategic enabler. If authorities do not have required training and awareness of laws down to the tactical level, strategy will falls apart. He also mentioned that communicating the concept, both domestically and internationally, is important. He believes that it is not enough to have a good concept. It has to be simple enough to be embraced by the population.

The speakers also mentioned the importance of close air support and the importance of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. Colonel FERNÁNDEZ OSORIO emphasized the importance of air assets. An important point that came up in one of the sidebar discussions is the question of who owns those assets, who tasks them, and how you access those assets that you need. Assoc. Prof. BAYSAL talked about UAVs and the role that they play. Another asset that was also discussed was the *HUMINT*. There was a reference that sometimes the authorities overdo it with the technology and they forget how important humans are. The Colombians especially with limited technical capabilities in the early days were actually very good and got better at human intelligence. Prof. ELLIS highlighted the fundamental role humans play in counterterrorism operations. .

Prof. ELLIS also mentioned what he would call the *post-conflict phase*. He argued that this was a cautionary tale that authorities are all struggling with right now. According to him, The Colombians are struggling with this phase now just as the US did in Afghanistan. The challenge is transforming victories on the battlefield into an enduring peace or democracy. One of the questions that has long been argued was what commitments to make in peace agreements. Do they have the resources and abilities to comply with the commitments they have made and satisfy the expectations that peace has generated in the population? Sometimes those expectations are so inflated that they cannot possibly be achieved with both the adversaries and the population. In Colombia's case, even though FARC forces demobilized, disaffected personnel often returned to the field as combatants in a different force.

In addition to this, Prof. ELLIS recalled Colombia's Plan Victoria which had a credible concept of holding the terrain. He stated that what happened in Colombia after the 2016 peace agreement was just a reminder of how difficult it is to make the peace work after the authorities tactically win the battle.

Prof. ELLIS shed light on the social media dimension, which is what he would call the *weaponization of* discontent. This feeds on taking legitimate population grievances such as those existed in Colombia and directing it into violence by agitating the people. Therefore, trying to make peace work is that much harder when you have adversaries with strategic interests in destabilizing.

As a last comment, Prof. ELLIS mentioned that there has been strong dialogue between NATO and Colombia, which is a major NATO Partner. Current workshop was among many different activities NATO holds with Columbia. According to Prof. ELLIS, in addition to overarching lessons explained during the workshop, participants got to know each other in a framework of mutual respect and professional engagement to be able to reap the fruits out of that relationship.

Recommendations

By
Col Tamas KENDER (NATO COE DAT)

“In light of the topics covered in the workshop, this report can conclude with the recommendations provided below that might be useful for NATO:”

1. **Understand roles:** In the fight against terrorism, the Alliance must clearly understand and define its role in providing support to a country or legal government. (*Pull, instead of push*).
2. **Setting objectives and making plans:** Plans for fighting against a terrorism campaign must look forward to the longest term possible with the aim of sustaining the achieved success. They must adapt to the ever-changing nature of the threat, built on lessons learned and must be based on real capabilities and resources.
3. **Understand capabilities:** Planning on strategic and operational level, tactical requirements should include high-mobility (*air/riverine*), special operations, close air support, ISR, and human intelligence. All capabilities must be optimized for the mission including support and properly trained troops (*tactically, but also legally*).
4. **Understand the opponent:** Understanding modern terrorist organizations as adaptive and complex hybrid systems—including criminal, political and terrorist elements without clear distinctions—demands a well-structured and maintained awareness system.
5. **Understand illegal economy:** While opponents organize and maintain illegal economy for their own support with secondary effects on the strategic and political sense, such as the environmental damage, the nature of this economy also affects the struggle for hearts and minds. Degrading terrorist organizations and winning the population requires targeting of the illegal economy with careful consideration of the second-order effects.
6. **Targeting:** When focusing on opponent leadership, target the middle management for effective disruption. Taking out middle management creates gaps in the system harder to fill and lowers moral throughout the organization.
7. **Appreciate the environment:** Terrorist organizations are as interdependent as any other organization. They use intra- and international contacts to maintain and evolve. Their operational environment, to include the human terrain, should be understood.

8. **Set the theater:** Dedicated political, law-enforcement and military leadership with clear political mandates and legitimacy are key pre-requisites to success. However, winning the population over ensures winning the war. In order to achieve that, use of military as a social force within whole government approach including a joint and interagency campaign is essential
9. **Achieve and maintain stability:** In order to achieve long-standing stability, build upon small battlefield victories and sustain the results with strong legal, social and economic systems.