



THE FLETCHER SCHOOL

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**The Role of the Plan Colombia Helicopter Package in Strengthening the
Legitimacy of the Colombian Government**

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to address the question of the specific role of the application of the Plan Colombia Helicopter Package (PCHP) in the context of the Colombian counter insurgency strategy, through the lens of the transformation of the Colombian political and security transformation between 1999 and today, in effecting repeatable outcomes that strengthened the legitimacy of the Government of Colombia (GoC).

Starting in 1999, under President Andres Pastrana and in collaboration with the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), planning began for US military resourcing in support of Plan Colombia.¹ Plan Colombia was President Pastrana's "Marshall Plan" for a comprehensive revitalization of Colombia to include economic, social, political and security dimensions.² The GoC sought foreign aid for this plan and the US provided over \$9 Billion between 1999-2014.³

In the context of this aid package, a capability gap analysis was executed by the Colombian military and SOUTHCOM that resulted in the PCHP which would endow Colombia with a fully developed rotary wing capability starting in 1999 that included training institutions, a logistics pipeline and an order for more than 50 helicopters.⁴ The helicopter capability fully came online in 2003 and by 2004, in the context of a new counter insurgency strategy, the capability facilitated the achievement of asymmetric dominance of the Colombian military over an escalating insurgency.⁵ By 2007, this dominance had contributed to the restoration of 40% of Colombia's municipalities to government control, securing of major highways, increased commerce, and dramatically lower crime rates thus strengthening the legitimacy of the GoC.

¹ Gonzales, Felix (LTC United States Army), in discussion w/author, April 2015; Spencer, David PhD *Colombia's Road to Recovery Security and Governance 1982-2010*; Fort McNair, Va; Center or Hemispheric Studies at the National Defense University; 38

² Spencer, David PhD (DoD Civilian and Plan Colombia Scholar) in discussion with the author, May 2015.

³ Isacson, Adam (Plan Colombia Scholar) in discussion with the author, May 2015.

⁴ Gonzales, 2015.

⁵ Ospina Ovalle, Carlos (General (Retired) Armed Forces of Colombia) in discussion with the author, June 2015.

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⁶ Watchlist.org; “Map of Colombia”; 2015; <http://watchlist.org/the-countries/colombia/>

⁷ Gonzales 2015.

⁸ Isacson 2015.

⁹ Isacson 2015; Ospina 2015; and Spencer 2015

¹⁰ Gonzales 2015.

¹¹ Economist.com “Enemies of the State, without and within” <http://www.economist.com/node/806443>; October 2001

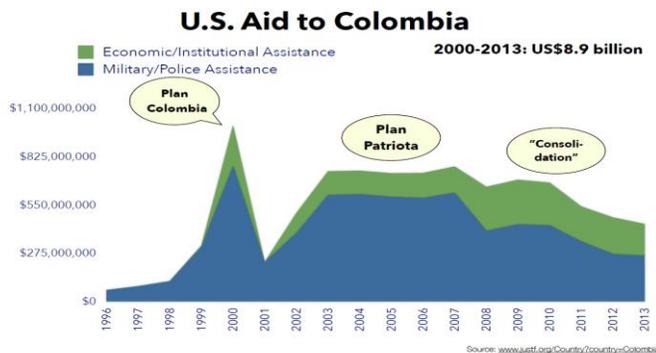
¹² Gonzales 2015 (Figures 5, 6, and 7).

¹³ Marra, Michael (Colonel (Retired) United States Army), in discussion with the author, April 2015

INTRODUCTION

In 1999, the Clinton administration was approached by the administration of Colombian President Andres Pastrana to support a comprehensive social, security, and anti-narcotics trafficking revitalization plan for the country of Colombia that would strengthen the legitimacy of the Government of Colombia (GoC) known as Plan Colombia.¹⁴ The United States supported President Pastrana's request in the form of an initial approximate \$860 billion dollar aid package beginning in 2000 and subsequent follow on aid through present day.¹⁵ This included initial budgeted investments in the military of \$512 million in 2000 and \$87.5 million in 2001 of which over \$500 million was budgeted to be spent on the Plan Colombia Rotary Wing Security Force Assistance Capability Package.¹⁶ This package came to be popularly known as the Plan Colombia Helicopter Package or PCHP.¹⁷ Through 2014, over \$9 billion dollars would be spent on aid to Colombia, a majority supporting the military and police.¹⁸ This aid would prove essential in providing materials and manpower to underserved areas through helicopters.

Figure 1. US Aid to Colombia 1996-2013



¹⁴ Spencer 2011 pg. 64.

¹⁵ Isacson 2015

¹⁶ Ciponline "Website provided by Adam Isacson that gives details on Clinton Budget proposal for Plan Colombia" <https://web.archive.org/web/20040714014756/http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/aidprop4.htm>; 1998

¹⁷ Giraldo, Fabian (Colonel Colombian Army), email message to the author, April 13, 2015

¹⁸ See Figure 1

Prior to the initial aid package, irregular armed groups had escalated in seizing control of territory and population centers from the GoC for a period of approximately eight years and this process seemed to be accelerating rather than slowing down.¹⁹ Additionally, the number of kidnappings and murders had escalated to numbers that were among the highest in the world. This poor security situation damaged the economy through major drops in both tourism and investment. The major player among these armed groups aggravating the security situation was known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The FARC “is the oldest and largest irregular armed group among Colombia’s left wing rebels” and receives most of its financing from the drug trade, an estimated \$600 million annually.²⁰

The citizens of Colombia had become increasingly convinced that the GoC could not defeat the FARC and smaller groups or protect them with the number of abandoned municipalities, murders, and kidnappings escalating every month.²¹ With these escalations, regular citizens were sponsored to take up arms and join paramilitary groups to protect their towns, villages and sponsors from the FARC and other smaller armed groups.²² These paramilitaries committed frequent human rights abuses and in some cases GoC forces individuals were complicit with them.²³ With these escalations in respect to the loss of territory, murders, human rights abuses, and citizens taking up arms, there was a decline in the confidence of the people of Colombia in the GoC’s ability to provide security, enforce rule of law and maintain a

¹⁹ It should be noted the first municipalities were lost beginning in the early 1980s but the losses were very gradual through 1994 and then steadily escalated from 1994-2002. It should be noted that the lost is defined as no GoC presence. Ospina 2015; Spencer 2015

²⁰ Unric.org “Google Search for background information on FARC and ELN”
<http://www.unric.org/en/colombia/27013-the-guerrilla-groups-in-colombia>; 2015

²¹ Spencer 2011 pg. 62.

²² Ibid.; Ospina, 2015.

²³ Ospina 2015; Spencer 2015

monopoly over the legitimate use of force; all basic tenets of legitimacy.²⁴ In order to stem a majority of the losses and the violence at the time of the initial aid package, the GoC was seeking a peace settlement with the FARC with consolidated state control of only 50-60 percent of Colombian municipalities as contrasted with fully consolidated control over GoC institutions and the political system.²⁵

Fast forward to 2015, the GoC is once again in peace talks with the FARC. The GoC has now effectively consolidated control over 85-90 percent of the population and municipalities within Colombia.²⁶ Though, it should be noted that as much as 30% of the land mass is still outside the hands of GoC control.²⁷ The paramilitaries have been disbanded for almost 10 years and the people have a high level of confidence in the state and its institutions to provide security, rule of law, and maintain a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. In this context, the FARC is no longer able to compete with the GoC militarily and the murder and kidnapping rates have improved incrementally every year.²⁸ Additionally, the FARC has now changed its approach to seeking power from primarily violence to one of participation in the political outlets and processes. To be clear, the FARC maintains violence among its active courses of action to pursue power, it just no longer is the primary means.²⁹

It is clear that Plan Colombia had a strong hand in supporting the GoC in achieving this transformation. Plan Colombia was critical to the military's success in that a large part of this aid initially went to support Colombia's military transformation from a conventional force that

²⁴ Florez, Raul (COL Colombian Special Forces) in discussion with author April 2015; Isacson, 2015.; and Spencer, 2015.

²⁵ Ibid Spencer, 2015.

²⁶ Florez 2015, Isacson 2015, and Ospina, 2015.

²⁷ Ibid Isacson, 2015

²⁸ Florez 2015; Isacson 2015; Priest, Dana "Covert Action in Colombia: US Intelligence, GPS bomb kits help Latin American nation cripple rebel forces" 2011 Washington Post,

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/investigative/2011/12/21/covert-action-in-colombia/>

²⁹ Spencer, 2015.

conducted ad-hoc public order operations to the joint, sophisticated and well-coordinated military specialized in counter insurgency operations that we see today.³⁰ One of the major focuses of this initial aid and aid in subsequent years through 2006 was the Plan Colombia³¹ Helicopter Package (PCHP).³² This package consisted of a comprehensive equipping, advising, training, and institutional development rotary wing aviation program that if successfully implemented would endow Colombia with a self-contained and self-sustained world class rotary wing aviation capability.³³

Objectives and Scope

This thesis seeks to address the question of the specific role that the application of the PCHP played in the Colombian political and security transformation between 1999 and today by effecting repeatable outcomes that strengthened the legitimacy of the GoC. To answer this question, first the concept of legitimacy is examined followed by the formulation and analysis of six periods between 1994 and May 2015. In each period, the maturity and application of the PCHP will be examined through the lens of the political and security landscapes in determining its specific impact on strengthening the legitimacy of the GoC. The periods are broken out by level of capability maturity (baseline, crawl, walk, run, glide, and deterrent) and grouped by the presidential administration that the respective levels of maturities fell under. It is noted that in the first three of the six periods examined, only the baseline pre-PCHP capability is available to the armed forces for any legitimacy strengthening outcomes in that the PCHP is either not online or is restricted in use during these periods. These three periods are included in order to establish a

³⁰ Spencer, 2015; Amnestyusa.org “Google search on Plan Colombia and human rights” 2015, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/countries/americas/colombia/us-policy-in-colombia>;

³² Florez, 2015; Flores, Rafael (DoD Civilian), in discussion with the author, May 2015; Gonzales 2015; Ormsby, Terrence (DoD Civilian) in discussion with the author, May 2015; Giraldo, 2015.

³³ Gonzalez, 2015; Flores, 2015; Florez, 2015.

contextual baseline for the later periods in documenting the gradual evolution of the capability and its impacts prior to maturation in effecting legitimacy strengthening outcomes. In this manner, the PCHP impacts can be distinguished from those of legacy rotary aviation capabilities. The thesis almost exclusively focuses only on the FARC as an irregular armed group by name in that the other armed groups in Colombia were much smaller during the time periods examined and only had a marginal effect individually on the security situation in Colombia.

The only other group that may merit mentioning in this one instance is the National Liberation Army (ELN); a left wing group inspired by Marxist ideology that peaked in the mid-late 1990s that receives most of its income from the drug trade and has not been known almost 20 years to be a formidable threat to the GoC of Colombia.³⁴

Per KJ Holsti, states are based on two concepts of legitimacy which include “shared or agreed to political principles and a shared definition of political community.”³⁵ Holsti further characterizes a strong state as having specific measures of legitimacy and breaks down legitimacy as the state both earning moral authority which he refers to as Vertical legitimacy and a state’s political inclusiveness of different identity groups which he refers to as Horizontal legitimacy.³⁶ He further asserts that these elements are supported by specific measures of performance by a state.³⁷ Each of the six periods will be analyzed to assess the impact of the maturing helicopter capability, in the context of the transformation of military strategy and

³⁴ Unric.org “Google Search for background information on FARC and ELN”
<http://www.unric.org/en/colombia/27013-the-guerrilla-groups-in-colombia-2015>

³⁵KJ Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 82-98; Shultz, Richard “GMAP 2015 Winter Residency Security Studies Lectures”, 2015

³⁶ Holsti, 1996; Shultz, 2015.

³⁷ Holsti, 1996.

political/security landscapes in the strengthening each of these Holsti legitimacy elements through the lens of these performance measures.

The first period analyzed is referred to as the “Baseline Period” from 1994-1998 where the GoC control over sovereign territory declined but the state also laid out plans to start transforming its security forces and stood up its first counter insurgency purposed Army Aviation Brigade.³⁸ This initial capability in combination with limited Air Force rotary wing aviation assets is considered to be the Colombian counter insurgency rotary wing aviation asset baseline.³⁹ This baseline capability was primarily employed in counter narcotics operations during this period.⁴⁰

The second period is referred to as the “Crawl Period” from 1998-2002, in which the GoC initially continued to lose ground against the insurgency; security forces started to adapt to insurgent tactics; planning began for a transformation to a counter insurgency force in the context of a greater counter insurgency strategy; Plan Colombia was initiated; the PCHP was actualized to support exclusively counter narcotics operations; and minimal resourcing of multiple operations to secure major highways, pipeline infrastructure, and insurgency corridors were put in place minimally supported by the baseline legacy Air Force and Army Aviation Brigade rotary wing assets.⁴¹ Starting in 1999, under the administration of President Andres Pastrana and in collaboration with the US Southern Command, planning began for US military resourcing in support of Plan Colombia.⁴² Plan Colombia was President Pastrana’s “Marshall Plan” for a comprehensive revitalization of Colombia to include economic, social, political, and

³⁸ Ospina, 2015.

³⁹ Gonzales, 2015.

⁴⁰ Spencer, 2015; Isacson, 2015.

⁴¹ Spencer, 2015.

⁴² Gonzales, 2015

security dimensions.⁴³ President Pastrana sought foreign aid for his plan and the US was the first country to sign on in substance and would ultimately provide over \$9 Billion in aid supporting primarily Plan Colombia between 2000-2014.⁴⁴

A large part of this aid was assigned to the military and close to \$500 million went to support the standing up of a world class rotary aviation capability between 2000 and 2001.⁴⁵ The reason why so much aid was directed at this capability is that it was identified as critical gap by both the US Southern Command and the Colombian Armed Forces.⁴⁶ It was defined as such because this capability was required by the Colombian military to obtain asymmetric military dominance in the context of a new counter insurgency strategy in a geography where rapid ground movement was seriously constrained by the hostile character of the terrain and also where these constraints were being exploited by both narcotics traffickers and a growing insurgency being led by the a left wing Marxist group known as the FARC or Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. At the time of the initial aid package, the FARC military capability and governance structures were growing in sophistication and they were making advances in forcing the GoC to abandon municipality after municipality.⁴⁷ The FARC exploited the hostile terrain as an asymmetric capability in that the government forces, aligned for public order operations were not set up strategically or tactically to effect and or sustain counter insurgency operations let alone operations in areas characterized with hostile terrain.⁴⁸ Due to these factors, the FARC might lose a battle one day with government forces but then reclaim the lost territory the next day.⁴⁹ In that the GoC forces were not able to effectively counter the FARC

⁴³ Spencer (2011), 59.

⁴⁴ Isacson, 2015.

⁴⁵Ibid.; CIP Online, 2015.

⁴⁶ Gonzales, 2015; CIP Online, 2015.

⁴⁷ Spencer, 2015.

⁴⁸ Ospina, 2015.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

insurgency, its escalation led to merchants and other groups funding every day citizens to take up arms in the form of paramilitary organizations. As this occurred, the GoC lost its monopoly over the legitimate use of force, its ability to enforce rule of law on an escalating scale through the end of the term of President Pastrana.⁵⁰ Concurrently, the Colombian military was changing its strategy and tactics to fight a counter insurgency war as opposed to its legacy employment as an extension of the police to address public security.⁵¹ As stated, the Army was previously organized under a public order operations strategy rather than a full scale counter insurgency strategy and did not have suitable tactics and or resourcing to defeat the insurgents.⁵² Consequently, the FARC was seen and treated as a criminal gang rather than an insurgency through 1998 from the perspective of military operations and strategy.⁵³ Unfortunately, this transformation though well planned was not fully resourced and the new structure and its associated target operations to include securing of the highways, remote mobility corridors, infrastructure, and abandoned municipalities could not be close to fully manned or supported as was required in remote areas by the small and immature legacy rotary aviation capability.⁵⁴

The third period is referred to as the “Walk Period” between 2002-2003, in which the transformation of the military that began under President Pastrana from a public order force to a counter insurgency force, now fully resourced by the administration of Alvaro Uribe gradually came online. The military was able to fully resource its operations through Plan Colombia foreign aid and a popularly received war tax. It then expanded operations to secure major highways, remote insurgent mobility corridors, pipeline infrastructure and began to re-establish a

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ospina, 2015.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Spencer (2011), 60; Ospina 2015.

police and military garrison presence in over 350 municipalities abandoned to the FARC and other irregular armed groups.⁵⁵ It is also during this period, immediately after and in the context of 9/11 that President George Bush authorized National Security Policy Directive-18 (NSPD-18) authorizing US support for Colombian counter insurgency authorizations against the FARC which had been labeled a transnational terrorist group.

The fourth period also under President Uribe is the “Run Period” between 2004-2007 where the Army has fully transformed to a counterinsurgency force and the new counter insurgency strategy was fully put into action.⁵⁶ This is period where the fully resourced counter insurgency strategy converged in 2004 with the PCHP coming fully online⁵⁷ and authorized for use in the context of NSPD-18 being fully implemented.⁵⁸ The timing of the convergence of these virtuous outcomes resulted in the achievement of asymmetric dominance by the Colombian military over the FARC on the battlefield in the context of a counter insurgency strategy that required the PCHP capability. It should be noted that asymmetric dominance can only be achieved through strategy and not capability alone.⁵⁹ Asymmetric dominance “when achieved means that one party has a comparatively superior capability advantage over another to the extent that the other party cannot successfully compete and win against this capability advantage.”⁶⁰ Following the acquisition of asymmetric dominance vis a vis the new counter insurgency strategy, the insurgency rapidly de-escalated. The Colombian military effectively secured the highways, infrastructure, remote mobility corridors, abandoned municipalities and also went on a full offensive against the FARC progressively leading between 2004-2007 to 90%

⁵⁵ Spencer (2011), 60; Spencer, 2015; Gonzales, 2015; Flores, 2015; Giraldo, 2015.

⁵⁶ Ospina, 2015.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Marra, 2015.

of all municipalities returning to the control of the GoC.⁶¹ These municipalities, roads, infrastructure, and mobility corridors were rapidly secured by coordinated GoC forces (to include the Police) throughout the country with the full support of the Army Aviation Brigade enhanced by the PCHP in the context of the new strategy.⁶² The distinguishing aspect of this period was that the Army went on the offensive primarily against the FARC and the paramilitaries as a transformed counter insurgency force with the full support of the Army Aviation Brigade now enhanced by the PCHP.⁶³

It is during this period that more than 350 municipalities abandoned under previous GoCs were secured/garrisoned; over 24,000 paramilitary personnel put down their arms; a majority of the highways become effectively secured; the FARC is degraded to the point where it is no longer a military threat; and the people regained solid confidence in the ability of the GoC to exercise consolidated control over a majority of sovereign territory, enforce rule of law, and exercise a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.⁶⁴ All of these gains effectively led to outcomes that strengthened the legitimacy of the GoC as a measure of performance. As of 2007, the GoC monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, exercise of rule of law, effective internal sovereignty and capacity to govern throughout Colombia reached close to 90% of all the municipalities.⁶⁵ With this expansion in governance, kidnappings, murders and other security indicators dropped to the lowest levels in decades while the economy started grow at a rate of over 4% per year.⁶⁶ As of 2007, the FARC no longer presented an existential threat to the GoC of Colombia and was on the run.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Spencer, 2015; Isacson 2015.

⁶² Spencer, 2015; Florez, 2015; Ospina, 2015; Giraldo,, 2015.

⁶³ Spencer, 2015.

⁶⁴ Spencer (2011), 61; Isacson, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

⁶⁵ Spencer, 2015; Isacson, 2015.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ospina, 2015.

The fifth period is referred to as the “Glide Period” from 2007-2010 and represents the final years of the term of President Alvaro Uribe. During this period, with most of the country secure under GoC control, the Colombian security forces evolved into sophisticated, well-oiled, and well-coordinated world-class joint model.⁶⁸ Under this model, the Colombian Armed Forces dramatically improved their electronic intelligence sharing and exploitation capability to include foreign intelligence sources which included the United States as well as other unspecified countries in the region.⁶⁹

In order to exploit actionable intelligence, joint command operations centers were stood up that provided commanders with transparent access of ready resources to include aircraft, helicopters, crews, and quick reaction units, so when actionable intelligence was received it could be acted upon rapidly.⁷⁰ The military transitioned from full-blown offensives to targeted high visibility and strategic communications friendly counter insurgency operations employing an advanced coordinated joint capability initiated by actionable intelligence.⁷¹ Upon receipt of the actionable intelligence, these operations involved Air Force jets firing precision guided munitions (PGMs) at high value targets to include FARC leaders or resource caches and were followed immediately by air mobility insertions of Colombian Special Forces and National Police to secure the area and document the crime scene.⁷² Other types of high visibility targeted operations employing actionable intelligence and helicopters included major hostage rescues such as Operation *Jaque*. All of these high visibility operations, though making little real difference on the battlefield, were decisive in bringing the momentum of public opinion solidly

⁶⁸ Spencer (2011), 65; Flores, 2015; Ormsby, 2015; Priest 2011

⁶⁹ Spencer (2011), 65; Priest 2011

⁷⁰ Flores, 2015; A. Flores, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

⁷¹ Ospina, 2015; Priest 2011.

⁷² Ospina, 2015; Priest 2011

behind the GoC security forces.⁷³ Concurrently at this time, in the vacuum left by the FARC, the GoC initiated a Consolidation Program that brought GoC ministries and supplies, in many cases transported by helicopter, to the remotest areas of Colombia thus ensured that these previously under served areas received their share of GoC resources which in turn incentivized them to report on any FARC activity effectively also strengthening the legitimacy of the state.⁷⁴

It is during this period that FARC was forced to modify its violent approach to securing power, transitioning from semi-regular mobile warfare to low level guerilla warfare and terrorism as over 30 high level FARC operatives were killed or captured through coordinated exploitation of actionable intelligence; major high visibility and highly publicized hostage rescues took place; and the FARC was continuously humiliated through pin-point intelligence based military operations against them.⁷⁵

The final period analyzed is referred to as the “Deterrent Period” from 2010-Present (May 2015) represents the first five years of the administration of President Juan Manuel Santos. During this current period, President Santos has strategized to consolidate the gains of the 2000-2010 and actualize a comprehensive peace settlement with the FARC from a position of significant strength. The FARC accepted his overtures and the peace process negotiations begin in earnest in 2012.⁷⁶ The Colombian security forces continue to evolve and perfect their coordinated operational models employing state of the art technology.⁷⁷ The Colombian armed forces also continue to improve their electronic intelligence sharing and exploitation capability to include foreign intelligence sources.⁷⁸ Actionable intelligence continues to be exploited through

⁷³ Ospina, 2015.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Priest, 2011, Spencer, 2015

⁷⁶ (A)BBC.com “What is at stake in the Colombia Peace Process?”;2015 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19875363>

⁷⁷ Ospina, 2015.

⁷⁸ Priest, 2011.

joint command operations centers that provided commanders with transparent access of ready resources to include aircraft, helicopters, crews, and quick reaction units; so, when actionable intelligence was received it is acted upon rapidly.⁷⁹ Over time, the reach and accuracy of these operations became a deterrent for the FARC in that anywhere they hid, they were likely to be reported and also be within an hour's reach of the Colombian military.⁸⁰ Under this constraint, more and more FARC gradually demobilized with many deserting to criminal gangs known as the Bacrim.⁸¹ Additionally, the FARC gave up on violence as their primary means of securing power and started to seek power through the political process while still employing violence.⁸² So, as the FARC reduced in numbers, these gangs grew and continue to grow.⁸³ These gangs have two main industries from which they are resourced which include precious metals mining and cocaine.⁸⁴ It should also be noted they also make money from extorting legal businesses.⁸⁵ In some instances they partner with the FARC and other guerilla groups while in most others they are independent enterprises.⁸⁶ These enterprises as of 2010 have surpassed the FARC as the main threat to Colombian security though they are strictly criminal and do not represent a counter insurgency.⁸⁷ In this context, the FARC came to the peace table in November 2012 and has remained at the peace table.

The key difference between this period and the Run Period is that this sophisticated capability has now become a deterrent for the FARC in that there is no place within Colombia

⁷⁹ Flores, Alvaro (Chief Warrant Officer 4 United States Army), in discussion with the author, April 2015; Ospina, 2015.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ BBC, 2015.

⁸² Ospina, 2015.

⁸³ BBC, 2015.

⁸⁴ Isacson, 2015.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

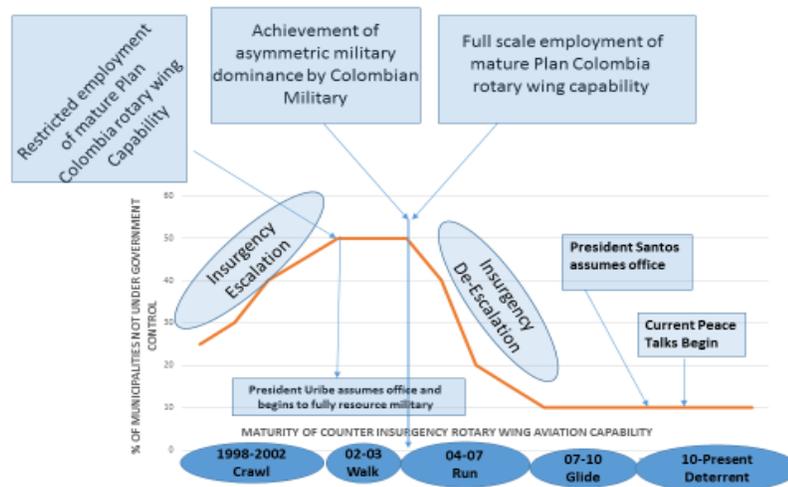
⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ BBC, 2015; Spencer, 2015.

that they cannot be reached, killed or captured within an hour as individuals, let alone as a formation.⁸⁸ Over 40 high level FARC operatives have been killed or captured through coordinated exploitation of actionable intelligence since 2010.⁸⁹

In conclusion, it is clear that the gains made by the Colombian military in its capacity to govern, exercise of rule of law, its internal sovereignty and its monopoly on the legitimate violence in 40% of its municipalities strengthened its legitimacy. It is also clear from Figure 2 below that the insurgency de-escalation started and major gains were made only when the Colombian military achieved asymmetric dominance over the FARC.⁹⁰ This dominance could not have occurred without the full scale online employment of the PCHP in the context of the counter insurgency strategy which gave the Colombian military a sustained capability to reach any point in their country, regardless of the terrain, within an hour on a massive scale and then sustain operations at that point for an unlimited period of time.

FIGURE 2. The Evolution of the Colombian Insurgency in the Context of the Employment of the PCHP



⁸⁸ Ospina, 2015.

⁸⁹ Priest, 2011.

⁹⁰ Ospina, 2015.

DEFINING LEGITIMACY

KJ Holsti in his book “The State, War, and the State of War” asserts that the main cause of conflict today “is an outcome of ‘domestic politics’ and the nature of the political community within the state—to put it another way—a lack of political community.”⁹¹ In this context, he further asserts that there is a legitimacy crisis when the state and its tenet political communities are bifurcated.⁹² In the event of Colombia, this would translate into the state and the irregular armed groups within the state during the examined period to include the FARC, the paramilitary organizations, and other smaller armed groups in that they lack Holsti’s two concepts of legitimacy to include “shared or agreed to political principles and a shared definition of political community.”⁹³

Holsti further goes on to assert that “measures of a successful state include the capacity and right to govern; the capacity to extract resources necessary to provide services; the capacity to maintain internal sovereignty; the capacity to maintain a monopoly over the legitimate use of force; the capacity exercise of force within the rule of law; and the capacity to govern within a consensus based political community.”⁹⁴ By meeting these measures successfully, Holsti asserts that a state can achieve both Vertical and Horizontal legitimacy. Per Holsti, “Vertical legitimacy is concerned with authority, consent and loyalty to the political base of the state and its institutions and can be derived from the moral authority granted by the population of the state to its leaders.”⁹⁵ Horizontal legitimacy on the other hand is concerned with a “shared sense of community” in that all groups within the state feel part of the state.⁹⁶ Each of the six periods

⁹¹ Holsti, 1996; Shultz, 2015.

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Holsti, 1996; Shultz, 2015.

⁹⁵ Holsti, 1996.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

delineated will be examined to determine in the final analysis whether or not the GoC's performance in respect to these measures was strengthened by the outcomes of PHCP applications in the context of each of the legitimacy measures that lead to a successful state characterized with both Vertical and Horizontal legitimacy.

PRIMARY SOURCE/LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Baseline Period (1994-1998; The Administration of President Samper)

A. Political and Security Landscape

The Samper presidency started with accusations from the Andres Pastrana team that the campaign had been financed by the Cali Cartel, during the 1994 election between Pastrana and President Samper.⁹⁷ Two audiotapes were provided as proof.⁹⁸ This accusation set the stage for Samper pouring resources and focus into counter narcotics operations for the balance of his term and this distraction would provide a vacuum for the counter insurgency to flourish.⁹⁹ His connection to the Cali cartel “resulted in a judicial investigation in 1995 known as Process 8,000.”¹⁰⁰ Given the ample evidence, the US government suspended his visa and threatened decertification and defunding of support for drug interdiction programs.¹⁰¹

Samper believed that Colombia's security problems were rooted in social issues.¹⁰² In response to this belief, he created plan “Social Leap.”¹⁰³ He believed that there were two main core issues: impunity and poverty.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Spencer (2011), 12.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Spencer, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Spencer (2011), 13.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰² Ibid., 13.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 14.

In respect to impunity, he wanted the GoC to sign on to international conventions on human rights and apply International Humanitarian Law standards in the courts.¹⁰⁵ He had a special focus on the security forces respecting human rights. In respect to his social agenda, he wanted to engender a Colombian citizenry who possessed the characteristics of economic productivity, dedication to fellow Colombians, political involvement, political tolerance, respect for human rights, respect for the environment, and enhanced pride in being Colombian.¹⁰⁶ This dream, in effect, would create a peaceful Colombia. As a starting point, he wanted to more evenly distribute the wealth to all Colombians, so he substantially expanded social welfare programs.¹⁰⁷ He did this by creating multiple programs and doubling the GDP expenditure in this arena.¹⁰⁸ So, by addressing both impunity and social issues, Samper's "Social Leap" was a peace proposal absent any grand strategy to combat guerillas and or narcotics traffickers.¹⁰⁹

In order to negotiate a peace deal under his plan, Samper created the High Commissioner of Peace cabinet position to negotiate a transition of the armed groups into civil society but at the same time sought to strengthen the military and in particular the police in that he believed that strength of force was a necessary ingredient for successful negotiations.¹¹⁰ Samper proposed setting up a demilitarized zone under which "negotiations could take place with the FARC."¹¹¹ The zone was not supported by the military and Samper quickly discovered that it truly was not supported the FARC because it had no incentive to further the peace process in that their position was continually strengthening with multiple victories over GoC forces.¹¹² It remains a question

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 20.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 19.

¹¹² Ibid., 20; Ospina, 2011.

whether or not the FARC was serious in coming to an agreement from the onset of negotiations which were initiated by the GoC.¹¹³

In respect to the National Police, Samper focused on further professionalizing the force as well as intelligence gathering, planning and internal controls.¹¹⁴ To this end, over 10,000 Police were fired for various reasons; education and training was enhanced; the intelligence service was strengthened to the point that it “became fundamental pillar of success against the criminal groups”; and the police aviation capability was enhanced to give it greater access to the total geography of the country.¹¹⁵ Supporting these efforts, 18 UH-1H helicopters were given to the Police by the US Department of State and an aviation school for the National Police was set up in Mariquita.¹¹⁶ The National Police “acquired the capability to carry out electronic intelligence” and the US military, DEA, and FBI also played a pivotal in strengthening a full range of intelligence capabilities.¹¹⁷ The National Police force was also augmented by about 8,600 officers accounting for the 10,000 that were fired from the onset, bringing the police to an end strength of approximately 103,000.¹¹⁸ The goal of this increase was to increase coverage, governance, and rule of law across the country as well take down the cartels.¹¹⁹ Though these moves professionalized and expanded the National Police footprint, over 150 municipalities were still lost to guerilla control during Samper’s term without a national strategy to effectively go after them.¹²⁰

¹¹³ Spencer, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

¹¹⁴ Spencer (2011), 20.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 20.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 20.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 19.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 18.

Given the lack of focus by Samper on meeting the needs of the military or creating a comprehensive strategy that took into account the guerillas, the military forces took matters into their own hands and developed four objectives that would later become part of the basis for a portion of Plan Colombia.¹²¹ These included improving the relationship of the armed forces with the population; acting against irregular armed groups (guerilla groups, paramilitaries, and the cartels); assuming an offensive posture; and modernizing/reorganizing the security forces.¹²² These goals would have to wait to be actualized in that Samper used the military primarily to take on the cartels including the Cali cartel which had caused many political issues for him throughout his term as president.¹²³ This discrepancy illustrated differing points of view between the GoC and the Colombian Armed Forces in terms of military priorities during this period.¹²⁴

In terms of application of the military against the cartels absent any substantial rotary aviation capability, the military formed Joint Task Force South (JTF South) which “was dominated by the Army” but also included the Air Force and Navy.¹²⁵ The Army saw this new focus as a window to their four point plan as well as grounds for expanding US assistance to fighting guerillas because of the “intimate link between drug trafficking” and the FARC.¹²⁶ This approach ultimately did gain the endorsement of the US Southern Command Commander, General Charles Wilhelm in 1998 who testified before Congress that the Colombian Military needed support to combat the FARC as part of combatting drug trafficking.¹²⁷

Between 1995 and 1998, absent US assistance to fight the FARC but with it to go after the cartels, JTF South was very successful in coordinating an interagency approach with the

¹²¹ Ibid., 19.

¹²² Ibid., 20.

¹²³ Ibid., 24; Isacson, 2015; Florez, 2015.

¹²⁴ Spencer, 2015.

¹²⁵ Spencer (2011), 24.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 25.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 28.

National Police in attacking drug, eliminating drug crops and ending the Cali Cartel¹²⁸ but failed to make any gains against the FARC as the FARC increased its number and intensity of attacks.¹²⁹ It should be noted that the National Police represented the main effort in effecting these successes.¹³⁰ During these operations, police helicopters were used as armed escorts for the crop sprayers but not in any offensive capacity against guerilla groups such as the FARC.¹³¹

With the failure of the GoC to develop and employ an effective strategy against the guerilla groups, in that no strategy to fight the guerillas had been fully developed, the FARC grew from 9,500 in 1994 to 11,300 in 1998, and the paramilitaries, born out of a demand to fight the FARC and other armed groups that the military was not meeting, grew from 2,100 to 4,500.¹³² By the middle of Samper's term on 30 August of 1996, the FARC was able to carry out 26 concurrent attacks across Colombia.¹³³ Following this multi-location attack, many police stations in over 150 municipalities were gradually evacuated surrendering these towns to FARC control.¹³⁴ Additionally, the military was being continuously humiliated and the FARC appeared to be untouchable to the average citizen.¹³⁵ This aura of superiority culminated close to the end of Samper's term with a 30 concurrent attack offensive executed by the FARC on 4 August 1998 with the stated goal of achieving belligerent status by taking GoC hostages for an eventual prison exchange.¹³⁶ This status would allow the FARC official relationships with foreign governments as well as the ability to "openly import weapons and equipment."¹³⁷

¹²⁸ Isacson, 2015.

¹²⁹ Spencer, 28.

¹³⁰ Isacson, 2015.

¹³¹ Spencer, 2015.

¹³² Spencer (2011), 24.

¹³³ Ibid 24.

¹³⁴ Ospina, 2015.

¹³⁵ Spencer, 2015.

¹³⁶ Spencer (2011), 25.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 26.

Paramilitaries, born out of demand for security created by the FARC's successes and the GoC's failures to pacify them, grew from approximately 2,100 in 1994 to almost 4,500 in 1998.¹³⁸ These paramilitaries were reputed for alleged complicity with the Colombian armed forces in carrying out operations as well as extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses.¹³⁹ In April of 1997, many of the paramilitaries united under the banner of the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) following the ideology that the state had abdicated its role of governing by proving itself incapable of providing security to its citizens against the guerillas.¹⁴⁰

At the end of his term, Samper had less than a 30% approval rating; the FARC had made significant gains in terms of status, credibility and momentum; hundreds of municipalities were lost to guerilla control; the armed forces and police had lost considerable credibility facing considerable defeats; and every day citizens were increasingly being sponsored to join the ranks of the paramilitaries out of loss of confidence by the citizens, merchants and other groups in the state to protect them.¹⁴¹ These losses reflected declines in respect to the GoC's monopoly of the legitimate use of force, internal sovereignty, and its capacity to govern; all measurements of legitimacy.

B. Application of Rotary Aviation Capability in the Context of the Political/Security Landscape

During the term of Ernesto Samper from 1994-1998, Colombia's rotary aviation capability was quite primitive. At the beginning of his term in 1994, the Air Force was the only service with a semblance of any capability. However, their equipment lacked any institutionalized and or fully professionalized support in terms of supply pipelines in terms of

¹³⁸ Spencer, 28.

¹³⁹ Spencer, 2015.

¹⁴⁰ Spencer, 28.

¹⁴¹ Spencer (2011), 30; Ospina, 2015.

both parts and personnel as well as maintenance capabilities.¹⁴² The pilot training school in Melgar only offered a very basic course of instruction with the training for the more advanced helicopters such as the UH-60As and the AH-60Ls held at Fort Rucker in the US.¹⁴³ Additionally, there were no schools or institutions to train maintainers nor was there sufficient institutional infrastructure to maintain and perform major upgrades and repairs on the helicopters.¹⁴⁴

In general, the armed forces were lacking in terms of an equipment modernization program; they did not have enough troops to provide coverage for the whole country and the military had very few helicopters and trained pilots which limited their capability to conduct concurrent operations throughout the country; much of which required helicopters for expedient access and extraction.¹⁴⁵ These problems were further compounded by the absence of interoperability between aviation and ground communication systems, so any aviation requests (even with aircraft overhead) would have to be funneled through a third party generating a range of “shoot from the hip” land to air signals.¹⁴⁶ In order to partially address the issue of demand for more helicopters, an Army Aviation Brigade (the initial Army rotary wing counter insurgency capability) was stood up in 1995 and an order was placed for 8 UH-60L Black Hawks and 10 MI-17s.¹⁴⁷ The UH-60s were ordered for the primary purpose of transportation of troops but would also be used for limited door gunner Close Air Support (CAS) and the 10 MI17s were ordered for transportation of troops.¹⁴⁸ To be clear, the UH-60 CAS was to take the secondary

¹⁴² Gonzales, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

¹⁴³ Gonzales, 2015.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Spencer, 2015; Isacson, 2015.

¹⁴⁶ Spencer, 2015.

¹⁴⁷ Gonzales 2015

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

form of a door gunner in that the Air Force had been given responsibility for CAS operations.¹⁴⁹

Approximately 30 pilots for the Blackhawks were trained at Fort Rucker, Alabama thus initiating a close aviation relationship between the US and Colombian Armies.¹⁵⁰

Figure 3. Baseline Period Counter Insurgency Rotary Wing Aviation Assets

Model	Capability	Baseline (1994-1998)	
		Army	Air Force
AH-60L	CAS		6
UH-60L	Transport/CAS	8	
UH-60A	Transport/CAS		8
MI-17	Transport	10	
UH-1N-212	CAS		14
Huey II	Escort		19

The use of Air Force rotary wing assets (Figure 3) was focused on the JTF South counter narcotics mission. These assets appear to have been used primarily to transport troops (8 UH-60Ls), provide close air support/command and control (8 UH60As and 19 Huey IIs) and provide training (12 Bell 206s).¹⁵¹

The Army assets (Figure 5) do not appear to have been employed in any significant manner either to combat drug trafficking and or the guerillas from the FARC or other armed groups. However, they were used on a limited basis during in late 1997 and 1998 in conjunction with a number of rental helicopters from other countries to transport troops to remote areas of the country in reaction to increasing number FARC offensives.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ A. Flores, 2015; Spencer, 2015.

¹⁵⁰ Gonzales, 2015.

¹⁵¹ Gonzales, 2015; Florez, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

¹⁵² Florez, 2015.

Additionally, 18 Huey-IIIs given to the Police by the US Department of State (not listed in Figure 2) were employed strictly as armed escorts for the drug crop sprayers.¹⁵³

C. Results of the Application of Rotary Wing Aviation Capabilities in Strengthening the Legitimacy of the GoC

In light of all of the staggering military and police losses to FARC and the legitimacy losses as represented by the standing up of the paramilitaries, the only major gain in respect to legitimacy made by the Samper regime was that of taking on the Cali Cartel in 1995 and its offspring the Coast Cartel in 1998.¹⁵⁴ Though intelligence gathering and police/military security operations to destroy the labs and capture key cartel figures were mainstay of these gains, rotary wing aviation assets did play a repeatable role in giving both the police and the military mobility to move assets over hostile terrain to carry out these operations as well as secure crop elimination efforts.¹⁵⁵ This repeatable role, in the opinion of the primary sources interviewed, facilitated the counter narcotics operations throughout Colombia culminating in 42,000 hectares sprayed and the capture of the Cali and Coastal Cartel key operatives giving Samper at least one win by the end of his term that contributed to a modicum of gain of confidence by the people in the GoC.¹⁵⁶ If no rotary wing aviation assets were present, it is questionable whether or not the Coast Cartel would have been eliminated within the confines of Samper's term and crop spraying efforts would have covered as much ground.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Ibid.; Gonzales, 2015.

¹⁵⁴ Spencer, 2015; Florez, 2015.

¹⁵⁵ Florez, 2015.

¹⁵⁶ Spencer, 2015; Florez, 2015.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.; Spencer, 2015.

During this pre-PHCP period, it is noted that the baseline rotary aviation capability did nothing to strengthen Holsti's five measures of a successful state in respect to the GoC. During this period, it is clear that the GoC's capacity to govern and its internal sovereignty were degraded with the loss of 150+ municipalities. Its capacity to maintain a monopoly over the legitimate use of force and to exercise force within the rule of law were also degraded by the loss of the municipalities to the FARC and by the growth of the paramilitaries during this period. The growth of these irregular armed groups that occurred during this period clearly signaled that the already fractured consensus based political community was fracturing more and more.

II. Crawl Period (1998-2002; The Administration of President Andres Pastrana)

A. Crawl Period Security and Political Landscape

In advance of the 1998 run-off election, the Pastrana campaign sent out representatives to meet with the FARC to better understand their amenability for a new attempt at the peace process.¹⁵⁸ Talks at the time were seen as important to the government addressing social and security deficiencies that were undermining its capacity to capacity govern, exercise internal sovereignty and maintain a monopoly on the legitimate use of force throughout the country; all measurements of legitimacy. Based on a favorable response, as part of his campaign, President Pastrana publically offered to directly meet with the FARC in the jungle and a picture was publicized showing the FARC leader wearing a Pastrana T-shirt.¹⁵⁹ This publicity effort gave President Pastrana the edge he needed and he won the run-off election with 50.4% of the vote (50%+1 was needed).¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Spencer (2011), 32.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 34; A. Flores, 2015; Florez, 2015.

¹⁶⁰ Spencer, 2015.

President Pastrana outlined his vision for the Peace process shortly before the run-off in 1998.¹⁶¹ His proposal included a de-militarized zone for the FARC in order that “negotiations could be conducted without the fear of an attack”; the opening of all subjects of concern to the FARC to negotiation; the employment of the international community as an observer/monitor for the negotiations; a GoC offensive against the paramilitaries; and the strengthening of the rule of law throughout the country.¹⁶² President Pastrana, not unlike Samper and other predecessors, felt that poverty and social issues led to the violence and that the negotiations would help pin point specifics to be addressed.¹⁶³ His successor program to Samper’s “Social Leap” was known as “Change to Build Peace.”¹⁶⁴

This new plan placed the military and police initially in a defensive posture with their efforts focused on working together and with other GoC agencies to “control public order and combat criminal activity.”¹⁶⁵ The “main effort” of “Change to Build Peace” would be the role of the Office of the High Peace Commissioner which would forge a peace deal “through discussions and negotiations.”¹⁶⁶ Also, like Samper, President Pastrana believed that having strong hand in terms of security would be beneficial for any peace settlement but different from his predecessors, President Pastrana wanted a back-up plan to impose peace in the event that the peace talks failed to bear fruit.¹⁶⁷ In a sense, President Pastrana was playing a double game to incentivize the FARC to stay at the table and also advance the Holsti measures of legitimacy.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ Spencer (2011), 32.

¹⁶² Spencer (2011), 39.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 41.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.; Ospina, 2015.

¹⁶⁶ Spencer (2011), 45.

¹⁶⁷ Spencer, 2015; Florez, 2015.

¹⁶⁸ Spencer (2011), 46; Spencer, 2015.

In order to facilitate the peace option, President Pastrana established the promised demilitarized zone (See Figure 4) in November of 1998.¹⁶⁹ The area was 42,000 square kilometers in size and included five municipalities.¹⁷⁰ The police and GoC were supposed to remain following the departure of the military but the FARC decided to test President Pastrana and immediately forced these organizations out once the zone established.¹⁷¹ President Pastrana folded on this grab for power by the FARC which resulted in creating tension between the High Commissioner of Peace and the military.¹⁷²

Figure 4. The FARC Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)



In order to facilitate the second option, President Pastrana ordered the military to recover “state presence in all areas that had been abandoned” and to professionalize the military “by replacing all conscripts with an equal number of professional troops.” This mandate resulted in the growth of the professional Army from 22,800 in 1994 to 56,200 in 1998 without any increase in end strength.¹⁷³ Though there are conflicting numbers available, the no-net or small increase aspect of Pastrana’s plan did not go very well. During Pastrana’s presidency from 1998-2002, the FARC grew from 11,300 to 16,300 and, arguably, more troubling from the perspective of state

¹⁶⁹ Florez, 2015; Spencer (2011), 46.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid 48.

¹⁷¹ Ibid 48

¹⁷² Ibid., 40.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

legitimacy, the paramilitaries grew from 4,500 in 1998 to 12,200.¹⁷⁴ Both the FARC and the paramilitaries grew in the context of the growing success of the FARC and the inability of the military to curb their advances.¹⁷⁵ These trends between 1998 and 2002 led to troubling indicators which included a 25 percent increase in kidnappings (23,000 to 28,000), a 10 percent growth in kidnappings (2,600 to 2,900), more than 350 democratically mayors forced out of office primarily by the FARC, and 16 percent of all municipalities abandoned by the police under fear of attack primarily by the FARC.¹⁷⁶ The total number of municipalities abandoned by the end of President Pastrana's term represented close to half of the municipalities in all of Colombia.¹⁷⁷

In the context of these immense losses, there is a silver lining in that the military started to recover its reputation by winning battles against the FARC during the Presidency of Andres Pastrana. This recovery started almost immediately prior to the inauguration of the DMZ in November of 1998 with a flagrant FARC attack on the department capital of Mitu.¹⁷⁸ It was in the southern-most part of the country and un-reachable by the Air Force without refueling.¹⁷⁹ So, the military outsmarted the FARC and launched a rescue operation from Brazil which took the FARC by surprise and effected a rescue of the municipality within a couple of days of the FARC invasion inflicting heavy FARC casualties.¹⁸⁰

The military had entered a phase of self-analysis where by it transformed from a public order force to a counter insurgency force.¹⁸¹ The resulting new counter insurgency strategy and

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 41.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 42.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 52.

¹⁷⁷ Spencer 2015

¹⁷⁸ Spencer (2011), 52.

¹⁷⁹ Spencer, 53.

¹⁸⁰ Spencer, 54.

¹⁸¹ Spencer, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

posture initially formulated in 1998 ensured that every deployed unit could quickly receive air and or ground support.¹⁸² This change, though not fully implemented, led to multiple victories against significant FARC offensives through 1999.¹⁸³ Starting in November of 2000, the military went on the offensive against the FARC.¹⁸⁴ With this turn around, the people of the Colombia began to believe that the Army could actually take on the FARC and military earned a 72 percent approval rating that year.¹⁸⁵ It should be noted that the legacy assets from the Army Aviation Brigade supported many of these early counter insurgency operations in coordination with Air Force assets.¹⁸⁶ There was a degree of disagreement regarding whether or not the Air Force truly played a role in the early counter insurgency operations. Many in the Army believed that the Air Force helicopters did not play much of a role in that their attack helicopters, the Arpias, flew at an altitude of almost 3,000 feet and could not be easily seen or heard overhead as compared to the Army helicopters which could be seen and heard but with door gunner CAS that was much less lethal.¹⁸⁷

In order to adapt, carry out offensive and quick response operations as well as secure infrastructure and the roads, several special units were created and the military forces developed a counter-FARC offensive posture between 2000-2002.¹⁸⁸ First, a rapid deployment force was created known as the FUDRA (Fuerza de Despliegue Rapida).¹⁸⁹ It was a unified command with three mobile brigades and the Special Forces brigades.¹⁹⁰ It was located with the Army Aviation Brigade in order to facilitate rapid mobility to anywhere in the country (using baseline assets

¹⁸² Spencer, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

¹⁸³ Spencer (2011), 56; Spencer, 2015.

¹⁸⁴ Spencer (2011), 59.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 59.

¹⁸⁶ Spencer, 2015.

¹⁸⁷ Ospina, 2015; Flores, 2015; A. Flores, 2015; Ormsby, 2015.

¹⁸⁸ Spencer (2011), 60.

¹⁸⁹ Ospina, 2015.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid

only).¹⁹¹ Second, seven motorized infantry companies were deployed to secure all of the major highways.¹⁹² This was known as Plan Meteoro.¹⁹³ In alignment with the new strategy, these companies would have in theory access to quick response ground and air (baseline rotary aviation) support if attacked.¹⁹⁴ Third, special units were deployed to protect the Cano-Limon-Covenas pipeline.¹⁹⁵ These units would ultimately include organic helicopter assets.¹⁹⁶ Lastly, a high mountain battalion was deployed to the Sumapaz area, which was a “key mobility corridor through which the FARC approached Bogata from their strongholds in Southern Colombia.”¹⁹⁷ In respect to setting up the Counter-FARC offensive force posture, each of the Army divisions was asked to identify within their jurisdiction, key FARC base areas and mobility corridors against which they would conduct offensive operations.¹⁹⁸ Due to lack of sufficient resourcing as a result of budget priorities, this strategic offensive approach (just like the defensive one), though sound, had limited success under President Pastrana.¹⁹⁹

Furthermore, in order to enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the security forces, President Pastrana ordered all security forces and associated institutions to sever all ties to and attack the paramilitaries as criminals.²⁰⁰ This order had been part of President’s Pastrana’s strategy from the outset.²⁰¹ The rise of the paramilitaries had caused a double problem for Colombia in that the growth of these groups represented a lack of confidence by groups of Colombian citizens in the GoC to secure the country and at the same time undermined the

¹⁹¹ Spencer, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

¹⁹² Spencer (2011), 59

¹⁹³ Ibid., 61; Ospina 2015; A. Flores 2015; Giraldo 2015

¹⁹⁴ Spencer (2011), 61.

¹⁹⁵ Spencer 2015; Gonzales 2015

¹⁹⁶ Spencer 2015; Gonzales 2015

¹⁹⁷ Spencer (2011), 62.

¹⁹⁸ Spencer 2015

¹⁹⁹ Ospina 2015; Spencer 2015

²⁰⁰ Spencer (2011), 65.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 66.

legitimacy of the GoC in the eyes of many Colombians and the international community due to their known human rights abuses and alleged complicity with both the military and police.²⁰²

This order to sever ties started an indefinite and incremental process by which the military continued to improve on its human rights performance.²⁰³

Encapsulating both the Peace and Security efforts as well as many others was President Pastrana's Marshall Plan for Colombia, known as Plan Colombia.²⁰⁴ It should be noted that though modeled on the Marshall Plan, the initial Plan Colombia concept was authored by the Government of Colombia.²⁰⁵ Later, the official Plan Colombia document included significant US input.²⁰⁶ Though the degree of US versus Colombia content is not clear, it is clear that it was written in part to convince the US Congress to support Colombia.²⁰⁷ The plan, initially designed to effect social programs in support of the peace process, quickly morphed into a security-centered plan in the context of a continuously deteriorating security situation. Of the ten elements, there were three that referenced enhancing security:

1. A defense strategy to restructure and modernize the armed forces and the police to restore rule of law and provide security throughout the country, combat organized crime/armed groups, and protect and promote human rights²⁰⁸
2. A counter-narcotics strategy in partnership with other countries to attack the entire chain of drug trafficking activity, from harvesting to production to money laundering, and to stop the flow of drug money to the insurgents and armed groups²⁰⁹

²⁰² Spencer, 2015.

²⁰³ Spencer, 2015.

²⁰⁴ Spencer (2011), 67.

²⁰⁵ Spencer 2015

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Spencer (2011), 69.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 70.

3. An international strategy to obtain the moral and materiel support of the international community for the counter-narcotics strategy and the peace process with the guerillas²¹⁰

In late 1999, President Pastrana sent his Minister of Defense Luis Fernando Ramirez to request US funding support.²¹¹ The road to the funding support had started in the final year of the Samper administration with the testimony of the US Southern Command Commander, General Charles Wilhelm before Congress advocating for greater US aid for the Colombian military.²¹² General Wilhelm was concerned about the many defeats that he witnessed under the Samper administration and, in this context, he approached the Colombian Army about creating a Counter Narcotics (CN) battalion.²¹³ This battalion was to be modeled after the US infantry air mobile battalion with the requisite firepower to defeat typical FARC hit and run attacks on Colombian units.²¹⁴ This model was quickly favored by the Colombian Army, except they wanted to designate it as a brigade, and planning and training began in 1999 with money diverted from approved counter narcotic assistance funds.²¹⁵ The resulting CN plan was a six-year Colombian led, US supported counter-narcotics plan.²¹⁶ This plan was characterized by three two-year phases that began in the South of the country in the localities of Caqueta and Putumayo.²¹⁷ The first of four CN battalions to be created were quickly set up and initial operations were carried out in Putamayo as early as late 1999 without any air mobility support.²¹⁸ In order to fill this gap and quickly augment Colombian Army aviation assets, the US acquired 18 UH-1N helicopters

²¹⁰ Ibid, 70.

²¹¹ Ibid, 30.

²¹² Ibid, 30.

²¹³ Ibid, 31.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 31.

²¹⁵ Spencer, 2015.

²¹⁶ Spencer (2011), 30.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 32.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 33.

from Canada and gave them to this new CN battalion.²¹⁹ The technical angle of leveraging and indulging the US primary concern of counter narcotics was further leveraged in the context of this data centric fact based pre-established Colombian Army narrative that the guerrillas and the drug trade were inextricably linked, so to effectively go after the narcotics, the approach needed to be comprehensive in going after both.²²⁰ It should be noted that this narrative was not really accepted by the US until 2003 although it was abundantly clear in 1999.²²¹ The Clinton administration argued that there was a clear line between narcotics and FARC and that US assets would not go after FARC unless there was clear evidence of individual FARC front involvement in drug trafficking, and then only if the FARC happened to be in a drug trafficking target such as a lab or coca fields.²²² Under these constraints, the Clinton administration was able to sell the \$860M aid package to Congress not just as a CN package but as total package in support of Plan Colombia. Due to the limitations imposed by the Clinton administration, all US financed military assets were handcuffed from being used in counter insurgency operations through March of 2003 in that the US Government was hesitant to become involved in Colombia's counter insurgency.²²³

The aid package had some strings attached that brought to bear the alleged relationship between the Colombian military and paramilitary groups known for flagrant and significant human rights abuses.²²⁴ Under provisions of the Leahy Amendment, US military assistance could not be given to military units suspected of committing human rights abuses.²²⁵ These provisions complicated and held up transfer of the aid, so President Clinton issued an executive wavier

²¹⁹ Ibid, 32.

²²⁰ Ibid, 32.

²²¹ Spencer, 2015.

²²² Spencer, 2015.

²²³ Florez, 2015; Spencer, 2015; Spencer (2011), 50.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid, 51.

under the pre-tense of national security necessity.²²⁶ Consequently, members and units from the Colombian military who were simply accused of human rights abuses were individually taken off line, investigated, and either allowed to go back on-line with US funding or decertified.²²⁷ Substantiation of the accusations was not required for this process to take place.²²⁸

The aid package did also come with a management team. Though most of the aid would be going to the military, some of it would be employed to support social and State Department development programs within Plan Colombia. To ensure effective adjudication of the aid, an executive committee was formed to provide guidance, focus executive branch efforts, and resolve supporting agency issues.²²⁹ Further an inter-agency task force was set up to implement the policy and this task force “shepherded the process from legislative approval through acquisition and implementation plans.”²³⁰ Additionally, an inter-agency execution cell was sent to Colombia.²³¹ This cell worked closely with the GoC and the US Southern Command J-5 strategic planning staff.²³² It was this staff that helped shape the plans for the PCHP.²³³

It was decided that execution would include the expansion of the CN Battalion to a brigade and that the relatively new Army Aviation Brigade would be expanded to support transportation requirements for the brigade in addition to its support of the FUDRAs.²³⁴ Activated on 8 December 2002, this new CN Brigade in augmentation by the Army Aviation Brigade was

²²⁶ Ibid, 52.

²²⁷ Spencer (2011), 45; Florez, 2015; Isacson, 2015.

²²⁸ Florez, 2015; Spencer, 2015.

²²⁹ Spencer (2011) 46.

²³⁰ Ibid, 47.

²³¹ Ibid, 47.

²³² Spencer (2011), 48; Gonzales, 2015.

²³³ Ibid; Ospina, 2015.

²³⁴ Spencer (2011), 47.

assigned to JTF South the Tres Esquinas base in Putumayo and started conducting operations as early as January 2003.²³⁵

The expansion of the Army Aviation Brigade had an initial budget of approximately \$500 million of the initial \$860 million in aid from the US and took the form of the PCHP which represented a comprehensive military rotary aviation capability to include equipment, training institutions, and a national logistics pipeline.²³⁶ This initial augmentation included 13 UH-60Ls, 25 Huey IIs, and an additional 15 UH-1Ns in terms of helicopters, a contract to set up a logistics pipeline, and additional contracts to set up a flight school in Melgar and three specialized schools that focused on maintenance and logistics support located in Madrid, Fusagasuga and Tolemaida.²³⁷ Concurrently, as part of PCHP, the US Department of Defense started to train Colombian pilots, crew chiefs, and mechanics in the US, primarily at the US Army Aviation School at Fort Rucker, Alabama.²³⁸ The aircraft arrived between 2000 and 2002 and the schools were also set up concurrently during the same period with the first classes graduating in 2002.²³⁹ While the training pipeline was being filled, the US provided contract pilots and hired the contractor DynCorps to implement a logistics pipeline (a supply system to provide rotary aviation parts, fuel, and other supplies) in support of the aviation brigade as well as provide maintenance on all of the US financed helicopters.²⁴⁰ Concurrently, under a separate package, the National Police received 2 UH-60s and 12 Huey IIs.²⁴¹

The initial execution of Plan Colombia in respect to supporting the drug eradication program was very successful with close to 300,000 hectares of coca sprayed between 1999-

²³⁵ Ibid, 49.

²³⁶ Isacson, 2015; CIP Online, 2015.

²³⁷ Gonzales, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

²³⁸ Gonzales, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

²³⁹ Gonzales, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

²⁴⁰ Gonzales, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

²⁴¹ Spencer (2011), 52.

2002.²⁴² Starting in 2001, Colombia’s national coca crop output finally started to drop with the total crop area being reduced by as much as 30 percent in 2002.²⁴³

B. Application of the Rotary Wing Capability in the Context of the Political/Security Landscape

During the term of President Andres Pastrana from 1998-2002, Colombia's organic rotary aviation capability first initiated in 1997 under President Samper was enhanced by the PCHP (estimated to be initially valued at approximately \$500 million), which laid the ground work to give Colombian military ultimately a sophisticated, complete and self-contained rotary aviation capability to include equipment, a logistics pipeline, and world class training institutions.²⁴⁴ In terms of the equipping assets, the Army and police were the only beneficiaries in terms of gaining operational assets between 1998-2002. The Army gained an additional 13 UH-60Ls (for transport, armed escort and CAS for anti-narcotics missions), 31 UH-1Ns for transport, and 25 Huey IIs (for armed escort and CAS in anti-narcotics missions). The Air Force gained approximately 5 AH-60Ls.²⁴⁵ Totals are reflected in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Crawl Period Counter Insurgency Rotary Wing Aviation Assets

Model	Capability	Crawl (1998-2002)	
		Army	Air Force
AH-60L	CAS		13
UH-60L	Transport/CAS	21 Total -8 Legacy -13 PCHP	
UH-60A	Transport/CAS		8
MI-17	Transport	18 Legacy	
UH-1N-212	CAS	31 PCHP	14
Huey II	Escort	25 PCHP	19

²⁴² Spencer (2011), 51.

²⁴³ Ibid, 52; Isaacson, 2015.

²⁴⁴ Gonzales, 2015; Isaacson, 2015.

²⁴⁵ Gonzales, 2015.

In respect to training and sustainment, all of the services benefited. Plan Colombia funding and planning led to a nation-wide rotary wing logistics pipeline and the standing up of world class training institutions for pilots, crews, and maintainers.²⁴⁶ The police retained their pilot school at Mariquita and the Air Force with the assistance of the US enhanced the capacity of the existing pilot training school at Melgar (known as the CACOM 4 airbase) for all of the military services.²⁴⁷ With the school, they received they received 9 OH-58s and 14 UH-1Hs for training. In respect maintenance and crew training, three schools were set up by the Army to include one for crew maintenance training at Tolemaida, one for engine maintenance at Madrid, and one for advanced avionics at Fusagasuga.²⁴⁸

These schools were staffed by DynCorps and supported by the US Army Technical Assistance Field Teams (TAFT) teams of U.S. DoD personnel deployed on Permanent Change of Station status, normally for one year or longer, to a foreign country to provide technical assistance and training to foreign military personnel in the operation, maintenance, and employment of specific equipment, technology, weapons, supporting systems, or in other special skills related to military functions.²⁴⁹ The role of the TAFTs was to provide program oversight of Colombian Army Aviation Brigade/Aviation Battalion operations in order to train and assist the Colombian Army in advanced aviation tactical planning and techniques as well as provide program oversight of the US financed Plan Colombia fleet in the sustainment of aircraft management and flow, maintenance, aircrew standardization and safety.²⁵⁰ Additionally, there was a personnel cap that limited the total number of US personnel that could be in Colombia at

²⁴⁶ Gonzales, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

²⁴⁷ Gonzales, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

²⁴⁸ Gonzales 2015

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

any given time consisting of 800 military and 600 contractors.²⁵¹ The footprint initially supporting the aviation program was 256 US Department of Defense (DoD) contractors and 344 US Department of State (DoS) contractors all 600 part of Plan Colombia.²⁵²

The Army Aviation Brigade stood up under the Samper administration in 1997 was finally put to work as well as augmented with the PCHP in respect to counter narcotics operations but the legacy brigade stood on its own when it came to just about anything else.²⁵³ It is unclear whether or not these legacy helicopters received the same level of support as the PCHP helicopters at this time.²⁵⁴

Initially, the US financed helicopters from both the police and the Army Aviation Brigade were not allowed to be employed for counter insurgency operations and restricted exclusively to the domain of pure counter narcotics operations supporting the CN brigade.²⁵⁵ Many of the missions were approved on a case-by-case basis by the embassy staff based on limited discretion in the context of guidance provided from Washington because of the confusion involved with Armed Groups being involved in drug trafficking.²⁵⁶ Catalyzing an incremental change in policy, there was an incident on 15 July 2000 where several policemen wounded in a FARC attack, died that could have lived had US financed helicopters been allowed to evacuate these policeman.²⁵⁷ This incident stung in that there was a similar incident in the late 1990s where a police garrison under attack called in helicopter support but it was not possible to provide it due to altitude limitations and as a result several policeman were injured or killed.²⁵⁸

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² It should be noted that the flight school at Melgar graduated its first 18 students in June of 2002.

²⁵³ Ospina, 2015.

²⁵⁴ Spencer, 2015; Gonzales, 2015.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Spencer (2011), 62; Spencer, 2015.

²⁵⁷ Spencer (2011), 62

²⁵⁸ Ospina, 2015.

General Carlos Ospina, later to become Commander of the Colombian Armed Forces under President Uribe explained that he was temporarily relieved by President Pastrana for providing the bad news to then Governor Uribe.²⁵⁹ Based on outcry generated by these incidents, the authority to use of US financed helicopters was incrementally expanded to include humanitarian support and the rescue of municipalities attacked by any armed group.²⁶⁰ Two weeks after the catalyzing incident, the FARC attacked the municipality of Arboleda, Caldas.²⁶¹ In this instance, US financed helicopters were sent in and successfully rescued the police garrison.²⁶²

Additionally, starting late in President Pastrana's term, legacy rotary aviation assets (non-US financed) from the Army were employed to support the FUDRA quick response operations and the Plan Meteor battalions in a very limited capacity.²⁶³ In a more general sense, these baseline aviation assets were being employed as part of the new counter insurgency strategy against the FARC, which was to ensure that every unit had ready ground and or air support available within a short time frame regardless of the situation.²⁶⁴

C. Results of the Application of Rotary Wing Capabilities in Strengthening the Legitimacy of the GoC

First, these assets continued to be repeatedly effective in supporting CN efforts and the CN battalion. Colombia saw its first drop in coca production in 2001 as a result of the success of the crop spraying efforts which were secured in part by helicopters that were either of legacy origin or from part of the new PCHP.²⁶⁵ This success arguably supported the GoC's legitimacy

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Spencer, 2015.

²⁶¹ Spencer (2011), 64.

²⁶² Spencer, 2015.

²⁶³ Ibid.; Ospina, 2015.

²⁶⁴ Spencer, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

²⁶⁵ Spencer (2011), 63.

as an international partner dedicated to eradicating the drug trade and by extension also increased its legitimacy with people of Colombia in that the people viewed land being used for the drug trade as land not under the official control of the GoC thus enhancing the performance of the GoC in its capacity and right to govern at this specific instance in time.²⁶⁶ However, it should be noted that these gains were not sustained and this organic capability did nothing in respect to achieving sustained legitimacy enhancing outcomes in the context of the FARC insurgency.

Second, the legacy Army and Air Force assets were repeatedly employed to support the mobile infantry battalions, Special Forces brigades and ultimately the FUDRAs in their quick reaction operations that nullified multiple FARC offensives.²⁶⁷ In that many if not all of these operations required a degree of air mobility to be successful, the legacy helicopters proved to facilitate the effectiveness of these operations on a limited basis which led to a 72 percent approval rating for the Army as of 2000 and more significantly a change in the perception of the people of Colombia that the war against the FARC could now be won militarily.²⁶⁸ This change was a legitimacy inflection point for the Colombian military and the GoC of Colombia in that people now believed that the GoC had the capacity to regain its monopoly over the legitimate use of force and expand its ability to exercise force within the rule of law in alignment with Holsti's measures of legitimacy.²⁶⁹ It should be made clear that the gains at this point in time were temporary in nature and led to popular confidence but did not yet yield sustainable results.²⁷⁰

Third, the self-induced reorganization of the military between 1998 and 2002 from a public order force to a force that engaged in counter insurgency operations to an almost

²⁶⁶ Isacson, 2015.

²⁶⁷ Spencer, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

²⁶⁸ Spencer, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

²⁶⁹ Spencer, 2015.

²⁷⁰ Spencer (2011), 63; Ospina, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

exclusively counter insurgency force that had adapted its strategy, tactics and planning to defeat the FARC in combination with employment of the PHCP, set the stage for the repeatable employment of helicopter assets as a decisive capability that would ultimately strengthen the legitimacy of the Government of Colombia.²⁷¹ Even though the military was setting the GoC up for major gains in strengthening the measures of legitimacy, it should be noted that the period of 1998-2002 was marked with an escalated weakening in most of Holsti's five measurements pertaining to legitimacy with an escalation in the loss of municipalities, murders, and kidnappings as well as the growth of the FARC, the paramilitaries, and other armed groups.²⁷²

III. Walk, Run, and Glide Periods (2002-2010; The Administration of President Alvaro Uribe)

Note: There is a change in format for the Walk, Run, and Glide Periods in that they all fall under one Presidential Administration that had one approach and one set of goals whereas the Baseline, Crawl, and Deterrent Periods fell under different presidential administrations each representing different approaches and goals.

A. Political and Security Landscape from 2002-2010

In 2002, Alvaro Uribe was elected president with 53 percent of the first round vote, a first under the new Colombian constitution that was ratified in 1991.²⁷³ He had been elected on the basis of his security first platform and the people's new confidence in the military to defeat the FARC and other irregular armed groups.²⁷⁴ This platform was different than that of his predecessors who emphasized attribution of the root causes of Colombia's problems to poverty and social injustice as opposed to security.²⁷⁵ President Uribe believed that the only way to break

²⁷¹ Ospina, 2015.

²⁷² Isacson, 2015.

²⁷³ Spencer (2011), 69.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 69.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 70.

the cycle of violence was not through only addressing poverty and social issues but instead through the GoC consolidating the security of the whole country under its control.²⁷⁶ He believed that once this occurred that this would feed a “virtuous cycle of security” leading to investment economic growth, sustained development and prosperity and one under which social programs could also flourish and make a difference in the daily lives of the average Colombian.²⁷⁷

As President, President Uribe had five major objectives: consolidation of state control over all national territory; protection of the population; eradication of illicit drug activity; the development and maintenance of a deterrent capability; and the establishment of efficiency, transparency, and accountability.²⁷⁸ President Uribe believed without full control state control of Colombian territory, Colombia could not claim to be a state of law.²⁷⁹ His goal was to defeat the irregular groups with force and then bring their members back into the fold of Colombian society as ultimately they were Colombians.²⁸⁰ In respect to protecting the population, he wanted to bring down the extraordinarily murder and kidnapping rates.²⁸¹ In 2002, there were 2,900 kidnappings and 30,000 murders.²⁸² Additionally, he planned to attack narco-trafficking through further international cooperation as he saw Colombia as only a component of a multi-lateral problem.²⁸³ In order to set out on this ambitious security agenda with an aura of legitimacy, he understood that he had to resource and strengthen the security forces, and do this with accountability and transparency.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 71; Spencer, 2015.

²⁷⁷ Spencer, 2015.

²⁷⁸ Spencer (2011), 64.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 64.

²⁸⁰ Spencer, 2015.

²⁸¹ Spencer (2011), 65.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

i. The Walk Period Political and Security Landscape 2002-2004

To set the stage for this effort, President Uribe set out an aggressive strategic communications campaign whereby he and his cabinet would visit local communities throughout Colombia each week, socialize/build consensus for his plans as well as capture how these communities saw things at their level in respect security, crime corruption, the economy etc.²⁸⁴ Based on his discussions with the communities and their leaders, various ministers from his cabinet would make commitments to address their issues.²⁸⁵ President Uribe was careful not to make promises he could not keep and ensured that those he and or his ministers made were implemented within a timely manner.²⁸⁶ He also created a network of advisors to apply a trust but verify model in terms of implementation in the communities he visited.²⁸⁷ At the national level, he had meetings with groups such as trade unions to socialize his agenda but also sound out their concerns in terms of security.²⁸⁸ At the international level, he held monthly press conferences to promote international legitimacy and would discuss issues such as progress on human rights or his democratic security policy.²⁸⁹

In respect to implementing his security policy, President Uribe provided the security forces with the funding they needed to meet the end strength, equipping, modernization and capability demands of their new counter insurgency strategy and structure.²⁹⁰ This resourcing investment was paid for by a war tax that patriotically supported by a majority of Colombians and did not detract from any of Colombia's spending on social programs in that for each peso

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 72.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 73.

²⁸⁶ Spencer, 2015.

²⁸⁷ Spencer (2011), 73.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.75.

²⁸⁹ Ibid 76.

²⁹⁰ Spencer 2015

spent on security, three were spent on social programs.²⁹¹ The success of this tax was legitimacy enhancing in that it was successfully implemented several times through Uribe's term reflecting an increasing ability of the GoC to advance Holsti's legitimacy performance measure of resource extraction.²⁹² It should be noted that support for the war tax remained consistently high throughout the administration of President Uribe.²⁹³ Additionally, Uribe mandated a unified and coordinated effort from all of the GoC ministries in support of addressing the security situation.²⁹⁴ This was in part facilitated by the legacy placement of the National Police under the Colombian Department of Defense.²⁹⁵ This was done to promote the government's capacity to provide an enduring and comprehensive presence and program in the outlying areas of the country as they were wrested from insurgent control.²⁹⁶

The President Uribe security strategy was carried out in the context of several objectives and with aid from the US under Plan Colombia. The first objective was to protect the civilian population. President Uribe saw the soldiers as a means of connecting the GoC with the people on an individual level and thereby effecting greater legitimacy and freedom of action for the GoC.²⁹⁷ In order to accomplish this level of connectivity, security forces were deployed throughout the country to include permanent stations in remote areas.²⁹⁸ The second objective was to eliminate drug trafficking and the third was to "use military operations to break the guerilla's will to fight."²⁹⁹

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Holsti, 1996.

²⁹³ Spencer, 2015.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Spencer (2011), 69.

²⁹⁸ Spencer, 2015.

²⁹⁹ Spencer (2011), 70.

ii. **Run Period Political and Security Landscape 2004-2007**

In order to achieve these objectives, defensive, offensive, and support tactical concepts were developed in the context of a greater counter insurgency strategy. Reinforcing all of these models, US policy changed in late 2002, in response to the 9/11 attacks via National Security Policy Directive-18 (NSPD-18) expanding employment of US Plan Colombia Security Assistance as well as counter narcotics funding to fight terrorist groups in Colombia to include the FARC.³⁰⁰ This change initially opened the door to use PCHP assets in operations against the FARC and other terrorist groups on a case-by-case basis approved by the embassy.³⁰¹ Without the terrorist group label, this policy would not have allowed use of the PCHP against the FARC.³⁰² In the absence of this NSPD-18, the US was not involved directly in supporting counterinsurgency operations in Colombia prior to 2002.³⁰³ Later on 13 February 2003, in reaction to the downing of a plane from US Southern Command that was carrying military and contractor personnel and the murder of one of the US personnel on board, the embassy lifted its case restriction on the employment of US financed rotary wing assets against the FARC and other terrorist groups in Colombia.³⁰⁴ This policy change afforded the security forces access to a capability that would have a decisive impact in respect to implementing their defensive, offensive and support concepts in the context of their greater counter insurgency strategy.³⁰⁵

I. DEFENSIVE:

The defensive model was the deployment of troops to and the occupation of vulnerable/high risk population areas with an emphasis on winning the hearts and minds of the

³⁰⁰ Spencer, 2015.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Florez, 2015; Spencer, 2015.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

population and human rights.³⁰⁶ This was achieved through “active area control” where all of the more than 350 abandoned municipalities were to be re-occupied with either Soldiers or Police as young recruits known as “Village Soldiers” native to each community who acted as the de facto GoC ambassadors to that community freeing the Soldiers and National Police for other duties.³⁰⁷ In order to augment this effort, locals in each of the villages were encouraged to become informers in the event that they noticed any activity from irregular armed groups in their communities.³⁰⁸ Combined, these two programs eliminated attacks on towns by the paramilitaries and the FARC by 2006.³⁰⁹ Separately, the number of high mountain battalions was increased to control potential enemy mobility corridors and the number of units under Plan Meteoro put in place to secure major highways was also increased.³¹⁰ These operations were both part of the greater counter insurgency strategy. The safety of the major highways would ultimately lead to more commerce and an extended reach of government services to the population centers thus enhancing the GoCs capacity to govern.³¹¹

Once assets from the rotary wing capability package were authorized to augment legacy Colombian helicopters for expanded use against terrorist organizations in mid to late 2003, the Soldiers deployed in support of these programs felt safe in taking risks in these remote areas in that they had confidence if they came under fire they would be rescued and or supported with one hour of requesting assistance.³¹²

³⁰⁶ Spencer (2011), 67.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 68.

³⁰⁸ Spencer, (2011), 70.

³⁰⁹ Ibid

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Isacson, 2015.

³¹² Gonzales, 2015.

II. OFFENSIVE:

The offensive model called for a comprehensive disruption of enemy operations to include elimination of formations through combat, the capturing/killing of leadership and attacking all means of support, mobility, logistics and communication.³¹³ The support model focused on strengthening and modernizing the armed forces, “increasing joint and special operations”, and “developing the capability to carry out interagency actions in support of the Uribe unified effort framework.”³¹⁴

III. SUPPORT:

In support of the offensive model, nine additional mobile brigades were stood up bringing the total to seventeen. These brigades included the FUDRA established under President Pastrana and had a full time guerilla search and destroy mission.³¹⁵ Concurrently, a multi-phased plan conducted exclusively by the Colombian military, called Plan Patriota was implemented to break the FARC’s strategic initiative.³¹⁶ It was developed and executed in two phases beginning in 2003.³¹⁷ The first phase Libertad Uno, launched in mid-2003 was to break the guerilla ring around Bogota.³¹⁸ It lasted four months and involved 11,000 troops, to include some from the 17 mobile brigades.³¹⁹ These troops broke up into platoon size formations and occupied the whole area of the ring around the city and were supported by an enduring logistics pipelines.³²⁰ So, when they went into an area, they went in and they stayed.³²¹ This was known as the concept of

³¹³ Spencer (2011), 70.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 70

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

“dispersed mass.”³²² The victory was overwhelming with over 400 guerillas captured or killed and many others deserting.³²³ The role of helicopters during this operation, representing a shift in tactics, was to sustain the dispersed formations, provide limited air support, medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), create fear (through noise and visibility) in the minds of the FARC, and instill confidence in the minds of the soldiers.³²⁴ To effect the second phase of the operation on 31 December 2003, Libertad Dos, which involved attacking the strategic base area of the FARC around the old DMZ, a new task force was created known as Joint Task Force (JTF) Omega.³²⁵ JTF Omega included several of the mobile brigades from the Army, the full capability of the Army Aviation Brigade, as well as riverine units from the Navy.³²⁶

Libertad Dos was the first operation against the FARC to employ the full aviation capability in the context of the counter insurgency strategy.³²⁷ It should be noted that Libertad Uno was conducted around major population centers and therefore the full breadth of the rotary aviation capability was not required.³²⁸ Though JTF Omega was taking the fight to the FARC in remote territory, Libertad Dos was a huge success with all of the core FARC base areas taken over a period of approximately three years. This success forced the FARC to disperse to jungle areas.³²⁹ This operation was the major first operation for the military in a remote area and as a result many of the logistics functions were improved upon as a result of this operation.³³⁰ It should be noted that as of 2015, many of the areas cleared by Libertad Dos gradually returned to

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ospina, 2015.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Spencer (2011), 71

³²⁷ Ospina, 2015.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ospina, 2015; Isacson, 2015.

FARC control over due to a lack of a consistent government presence.³³¹ The employment of rotary wing assets decisively facilitated the success of the Libertad Dos operation in terms of transportation, supply line sustainment, MEDEVAC and CAS.³³² Using a similar approach, offensive operations were conducted with decisive rotary aviation support throughout the country, dispersing the FARC and other irregular armed groups to more and more remote terrain.³³³ This dispersion resulted in almost 10,000 irregular deserters by 2005, 4,500 of which came from the FARC.³³⁴

iii. Glide Period Political and Security Landscape 2007-2010

To support these successes, an additional 29 UH-60Ls and 13 MI-17s were acquired by the Army between 2007 and 2009.³³⁵ Additionally, the Air Force began an upgrade program for its attack AH-60L Arpia helicopters to include the addition of advanced guidance systems, night vision, radar, and light rockets.³³⁶ Further, in all cases, the national logistics pipeline and maintenance capability for the all of the helicopters matured through the employment of DynCorps and the training of mechanics and maintainers.³³⁷ What this meant was when a helicopter would go down anywhere in the country, it could be extracted and repaired within the borders of Colombia by Colombians in most cases whereas previous to the PCHP when a helicopter went down, it stayed down.³³⁸ It should be noted that this extraction and capability was initially available beginning in 2003.³³⁹

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Flores, 2015.

³³³ Spencer, 2015; Gonzales, 2015.

³³⁴ Spencer (2011), 71.

³³⁵ Gonzales, 2015.

³³⁶ Flores, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

³³⁷ Gonzales, 2015.

³³⁸ A. Flores, 2015; Gonzales, 2015.

³³⁹ A. Flores, 2015; Gonzales, 2015.

Facilitating employment of these assets during the same time period, the military's intelligence capability was significantly increased and so was the level of integration of service component capabilities otherwise known as the joint level of Colombian armed forces specifically with the formation of the first Joint Special Forces Unit and then the First Joint Caribbean Command which basically placed all of Colombia's joint combat assets under one Commander.³⁴⁰ This new command included JTF Omega and also the Joint Special Operations Command.³⁴¹

Integrating this new structure, new technology and foreign sources to include NSA eavesdropping, Colombia's military intelligence capabilities increased dramatically.³⁴² They could accurately predict enemy behavior and pinpoint enemy activity.³⁴³ These advances had a clear link to air mobility in that the air mobility assets allowed them to move quickly and effectively exploit intelligence information they received.³⁴⁴

To coordinate both intelligence and air assets, a coordinated air command center was set up in Bogota which included real-time status of all of the air assets and crews.³⁴⁵ Once intelligence was received at the center, assets could be selected and deployed based on availability, and readiness of helicopters, pilots, and crews.³⁴⁶

With these new integrated capabilities, the special forces and Army Aviation Brigade started to tie in operations with the Air Force beginning in 2007 whereby intelligence would be received on high value FARC or other irregular army key operatives; the intelligence would be fed into the combined air operations center; concurrently an aircraft with a precision guided

³⁴⁰ Ospina, 2015.

³⁴¹ Ospina, 2015; Spencer (2011), 72.

³⁴² Priest, 2011.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Flores, 2015; Spencer 2015

³⁴⁵ Gonzales, 2015; Flores, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

³⁴⁶ Gonzales, 2015; Flores, 2015; A. Flores, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

missile would be sent to hit the target and a special forces team would be dispatched on a UH-60L helicopter from the Army Aviation Brigade.³⁴⁷ Once the missile hit, the helicopter(s) would deliver the Special Forces troops with members of the National Police to clean up the impacted area, secure enemy combatants as well as any materials that might provide intelligence information.³⁴⁸ Using this approach, during 2007-2011, over 80 high value targets were taken out to include elements from the highest levels FARC leadership, including members of the “Secretariat” that runs the entire organization.³⁴⁹ The successful operations to take out these individuals acted as a mass marketing tool that captured the enthusiasm and support of the Colombian people and transitioned momentum from the FARC to the GoC of Colombia.³⁵⁰

Additionally, with what is known as Operation *Jaque*, Colombian military intelligence was able to tap into the location of the three hostages taken on 13 February 2003 by the FARC and created a scheme with a faux NGO and painted MI-17 to trick the FARC into handing over the hostages.³⁵¹ In another hostage rescue operation, Operation *Camaleon*, intelligence was used in combination with helicopters to rescue “an additional group of hostages including a police general.”³⁵² It should be noted that Operation *Jaque* truly became a mass marketing tool as a multi-part television drama that captured the imagination of the Colombian people and people throughout the Spanish speaking world.

Other gains were made through Uribe’s Consolidation initiative whereby all GoC ministries worked together to support development and investment projects in previously insurgent-held municipalities in and around the former DMZ and the Operation Libertad Dos

³⁴⁷ Gonzales, 2015; Flores, 2015; A. Flores, 2015; Priest 2011.

³⁴⁸ Flores, 2015; Ormsby, 2015.

³⁴⁹ Priest, 2011.

³⁵⁰ Flores, 2015; Spencer, 2015; Gonzales, 2015.

³⁵¹ Spencer (2011), 75.

³⁵² Ibid.

area of operations.³⁵³ The goal was to not only restore governance to these areas where only limited GoC was traditionally in place but to win the hearts and minds of the populations in these municipalities and also keep out the FARC.³⁵⁴ This effort was known as the Consolidation Program, which continues to be supported by US AID as of 2015.

In contrast to these gains, a scandal known as the “false positives” surfaced under then Defense Minister and later President Manuel Santos. The scandal involved the extrajudicial killings by the military personnel.³⁵⁵ The motivations seem in some cases to have been professional jealousy on the part of the Soldiers not engaged in combat operations against the FARC desiring the attention and accolades their peers in battle were receiving.³⁵⁶ There is also main stream attribution of the problem to the Colombian Ministry of Defense incentives system which rewarded those that most produced body count over other measures of effectiveness.³⁵⁷ Soldiers accused by the FARC or other organizations were taken off of the battlefield and placed before regional civilian courts that did not employ harmonized standards such as International Humanitarian Law or case law in these unfamiliar military matters.³⁵⁸ This uneven justice, while getting it right in many cases, probably was too light in some and too heavy in others.³⁵⁹ Ultimately, subsequent reforms, investigations, convictions, and resignations led to increased accountability and the number of accusations dwindled to almost none after 2010.³⁶⁰ It should be noted that the “False Positives” scandal though controversial did not have any substantive impact on the legitimacy of the GoC.³⁶¹ It is a matter of some controversy whether or not the quick

³⁵³ Isacson, 2015.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ospina, 2015.

³⁵⁷ Isacson, 2015; Spencer, 2015.

³⁵⁸ Spencer, 2015.

³⁵⁹ Spencer, 2015.

³⁶⁰ Isacson, 2015; Spencer, 2015.

³⁶¹ Isacson, 2015.

response (as the scandal broke) from the military and the GoC was the driving force behind the limited damage. There are those (including scholars) who assert that the limited impact of the scandal was mainly attributable to many of the victims (as many as 80%) being ignored due to their marginal social status.³⁶²

iv. Walk-Run-Glide Political and Security Landscape Outcomes 2002-2010

The resulting increased security situation led to many successes that improved the legitimacy of the GoC. Consolidated GoC control over a majority of the sovereign territory 2002-2009 led to the effective obsolescence and elimination of the paramilitaries with over 24,000 paramilitary soldiers laying down arms.³⁶³ Additionally, having suffered many defeats at the hands of the strengthened and adapted security forces, over 22,000 guerillas deserted from the FARC and other armed groups and entered GoC run rehabilitation programs.³⁶⁴ These transitions strengthened the legitimacy of the GoC in terms of extending its monopoly on the legitimate use of force and consolidating internal sovereignty. With the shunting of these irregular armed groups, over 350 previously abandoned municipalities were re-occupied by police and elected GoC officials expanded and strengthened the GoC's capacity to govern.³⁶⁵ Crimes also spiraled downward with the number of murders dropping from 28,000 in 2002 to 15,000 in 2009 and the number of kidnappings plummeted from 2,800 in 2002 to 300 in 2009.³⁶⁶

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Spencer 2015

³⁶⁴ Spencer (2011), 67.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

B. Application of the Rotary Wing Capability in the Context of the Political/Security Landscape

i. Walk Period Application of Rotary Wing Capability 2002-2003

There were no major changes in capability during this period.

Operationally, the Colombians were not able to apply the full capability of their Army Aviation Brigade until mid-2003 after the taking of the American hostages by the FARC and the killing of American personnel.³⁶⁷ Between the time the NSPD-18 Executive order was issued and mid-2003, the full capability could be used on a case-by-case basis in counter insurgency operations as approved by the US Embassy. During this short one year time period, the capability was used to support operations already put in place under the Pastrana administration to secure roads, mobility corridors, infrastructure and re-garrisoning of abandoned municipalities as well as for offensive counter insurgency operations against the FARC on a limited basis.³⁶⁸ Once the PCHP was effectively released to their hands in mid-2003, the Colombians made effective use of it beginning with the support of defensive operations. Helicopters were fully utilized without restrictions to support remote troops on the roads, secure oil pipelines, secure mountain pass mobility corridors, and rescue/secure remote towns.³⁶⁹ The helicopters transported the troops as well as supplies for the troops to these locations.³⁷⁰ When these troops faced any enemy forces, the helicopters would be there within an hour to either assist in MEDEVAC, extraction, or CAS.³⁷¹ The helicopters gave the troops the confidence to defend these remote areas and highways, take on the enemy and hold their ground.³⁷²

³⁶⁷ Spencer, 2015.

³⁶⁸ Spencer, 2015.

³⁶⁹ Ospina, 2015.

³⁷⁰ Gonzales, 2015.

³⁷¹ A. Flores, 2015.

³⁷² Gonzales, 2015; Ospina, 2015; Giraldo, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

Additionally during this period, the Aviation Brigade honed and perfected its skills through participation in complex exercises with over twenty helicopters in the air at any given time.³⁷³

ii. Run Period Application of Rotary Wing Capability 2004-2007

In terms of training, maintenance and sustainment, all of the services continued to benefit, though DynCorps was still taking the lead with 70 percent of the work with Colombians taking on the balance.³⁷⁴

Additionally by 2007, the pilot school in Melgar had produced a total of 218 Colombian pilots, a 700 percent aggregate increase over 7 years, while the 3 schools in Tolomaida, Madrid, and Fusagasuga, dedicated to maintenance, produced 133 mechanics, and 165 crew members.³⁷⁵

In terms of additional assets, the Army’s number of UH-60Ls continued to grow to 38 (See Figure 6) while the Air Force continued to modernize their existing fleet of AH-60L Arpias.

Figure 6. Run Period Counter Insurgency Rotary Wing Aviation Assets

Model	Capability	Run (2004-2007)	
		Army	Air Force
AH-60L	CAS		13
UH-60L	Transport/CAS	38	
UH-60A	Transport/CAS		8
MI-17	Transport	18	
UH-1N-212	CAS	26	14
Huey II	Escort	30	19

³⁷³ Gonzales, 2015.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Gonzales, 2015.

Operationally, helicopters were used decisively in offensive operations in the context of the counter insurgency strategy that began with Plan Patriota, and Operation Libertad Dos.³⁷⁶ These operations were key in effectively defeating the FARC’s offensive military capability and swung the strategic initiative to the GoC over a period of three years.³⁷⁷ Concurrent and following Operation Libertad Dos, helicopters supported rapid deployment of the FUDRA battalions that allowed these troops to exploit intelligence and go after the FARC and other enemies when they were most vulnerable.³⁷⁸

This is also the period where by through the addition of the full PCHP to the organic Colombian counterinsurgency capability in 2004, the Colombian military achieved asymmetric military dominance over the FARC.³⁷⁹ From this point forward, the FARC could no longer compete with the Colombian military and win.

iii. Glide Period Application of Rotary Wing Capability 2007-2010

By 2010, the Army had 50 UH-60Ls and the Air Force assets remained static. See Figure 7 below.³⁸⁰

Figure 7. Glide Period Counter Insurgency Rotary Wing Aviation Assets

Model	Capability	Glide (2007-2010)	
		Army	Air Force
AH-60L	CAS		13
UH-60L	Transport/CAS	50	
UH-60A	Transport/CAS		8
MI-17	Transport	23	
UH-1N-212	CAS	18	14
Huey II	Escort	29	19

³⁷⁶ Ospina, 2015.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Gonzales, 2015.

Additionally by 2010, the flight training school in Melgar had produced a total of 240 Colombian pilots while the 3 maintenance schools in Tolomaida, and Madrid, Fusagasuga continued to pump out 50 plus graduates per year.³⁸¹

With the advent of joint capabilities, the formation of the Joint Command and the joint aviation control center, helicopters played a key role in successful high visibility strategic joint operations in going after FARC high value targets and hostage rescues.³⁸² Additionally, helicopters were used for MEDEVAC of enemy combatants in many cases.³⁸³

Institutionally, the PCHP positioned Colombia to have an unlimited pipeline of talent in terms of flying, maintaining, and sustaining a large fleet of helicopters.³⁸⁴ As of October 2011, 248 Colombian pilots graduated from the flight school.³⁸⁵ Today, the flight school at Melgar is a world class level institution that in addition to Colombians, trains pilots from Mexico and other Latin American countries.³⁸⁶ Graduates of the three maintenance and avionic schools now manage the national logistics pipeline and repair most aircraft domestically with minimal contractor support.³⁸⁷

These are all huge accomplishments that have left Colombia with a ready fleet in excess of 300 helicopters, 400 expert pilots, 300 expert mechanics as well as a national supply pipeline of parts, and four world class training intuitions dedicated to rotary wing aviation.³⁸⁸

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ospina, 2015; Washington Post, 2013.

³⁸³ Gonzales, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

³⁸⁴ Gonzales, 2015.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.; A. Flores, 2015.

³⁸⁷ Gonzales, 2015.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

C. Results of the application of Rotary Wing Capabilities in Strengthening the Legitimacy of the GoC

i. Walk Period Repeatable Legitimacy Strengthening Outcomes (2002-2003)

During this period, President Uribe socialized his security campaign plans with the people of Colombia and the International community. The focus of the security forces at this time was to expand and resource operations to secure villages, highways, mobility corridors and continue counter-narcotics operations.³⁸⁹ All of these initiatives were started but under resourced under Preseident Pastrana.³⁹⁰ The 10 MI-17 and eight UH-60L baseline rotary wing assets from the Army Aviation Brigade were the only assets consistently used to support counter insurgency operations in a very limited manner during this period and it is noted that these operations had limited success in maintaining security in the territory that they occupied.³⁹¹ During this period, the PCHP assets could only be used on a case-by-case basis authorized and coordinated by the US State Department.³⁹² It was not until late 2003 that these assets were available to be regularly employed against the FARC.³⁹³ This availability directly correlated to the advent of NSPD-18 which permitted US support of Colombian armed forces to pursue the FARC. NSPD-18 was issued in 2002 in response to the 9/11 attacks and was a key forcing event in convergence with Colombian realities that ultimately led to the full-scale employment of PCHP against the FARC.³⁹⁴ The FARC had been designated a trans-national terrorist group and as a result of 9/11, the gloves were off in respect to all terrorist designated groups from the perspective of the United States.³⁹⁵ It should be noted that the delay in the PCHP being allowed to be used against the

³⁸⁹ Spencer, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ospina, 2015.

³⁹² Spencer, 2015.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Florez, 2015; Spencer, 2015.

³⁹⁵ Florez, 2015; Spencer, 2015.

FARC may have been fortuitous in that it allowed the assets and infrastructure to be put into place, and it gave the crews time to practice and perfect their skills prior engaging in heavy combat operations.³⁹⁶

One of the previous major stumbling blocks to success against the FARC was that the military was casualty adverse in that there was no consistent and reliable means for rapid extraction and or support during counter insurgency operations.³⁹⁷ This gap stymied risk taking by the troops and made them hesitant to remain in remote areas after an offensive.³⁹⁸ The baseline helicopter assets could not fill this capability gap, which required rapid response air mobility assets for transportation, extraction, MEDEVAC, and CAS.³⁹⁹ Additionally, during this period, these baseline assets supported occasional light offensives on the FARC and also the major offensive Operation Libertad Uno but they did not play a decisive role.⁴⁰⁰ At this point in time the CN operations were not making much headway and therefore did not strengthen the legitimacy of the GoC.

The good news is that between 2002-2003, Holsti's five measurements of legitimacy began to stabilize with no further rebel advances in taking municipalities, a drop in the murder in kidnapping rates, and the initial securing of highways, infrastructure, and remote FARC mobility corridors. This being said, the GoC's ability govern within a consensus based political community was still in a state of escalating fracture with the continued growth of the FARC, paramilitaries, and smaller irregular armed groups.

³⁹⁶ Gonzales, 2015.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.; A. Flores, 2015.

³⁹⁸ Gonzales, 2015.

³⁹⁹ Ospina, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

⁴⁰⁰ Ospina, 2015.

ii. Run Period Legitimacy Strengthening Outcomes (2004-2007)

This was the period of convergence for rotary wing capability package. The full capability of the PCHP augmented Army Aviation Brigade was effectively employed in Operation Libertad Dos in the context of the counter insurgency strategy from the very beginning of 2004 at arguably the exact time it was really needed for the strategy.⁴⁰¹ The helicopters were a decisive factor in the success of this three-year operation.⁴⁰² Helicopters were the key capability exploited to transport troops in to the remote FARC base areas bordering the former DMZ, MEDVAC, provide CAS and support an extended logistics pipeline to continuously resource dispersed formations.⁴⁰³ With this support, FARC forces were systematically defeated over a period of three years and either crumbled from desertions or dispersed into remoter areas in response to the military onslaught.⁴⁰⁴ The addition of the PCHP to the Colombian counter insurgency force model and strategy resulted in the Colombian military achieving asymmetric military dominance over the FARC where by the FARC could no longer successfully compete with the Colombian military.⁴⁰⁵ Following this operation, the FARC had no major projection points for avenues of approach they had established from the DMZ areas to the major population centers.⁴⁰⁶ Concurrent and subsequent operations on a smaller scale but employing a similar model defeated multiple FARC, paramilitary and other armed group formations throughout Colombia during this period militarily degrading the FARC to the point in 2007 where they started to turn away from semi-conventional warfare as their primary means of securing power.⁴⁰⁷ Additionally, with the enhanced aviation support capability during this period, the

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Spencer, 2015.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.; Ospina, 2015.

troops deployed to secure the villages, roads and mountain passes deployed and continuously expanded their secure perimeters with confidence in that they knew that they would be rescued and or supported by the PCHP enhanced Army Aviation Brigade within an hour if they came under attack.⁴⁰⁸ As a result, by the end of 2007, most of the municipalities (50 percent of the total in Colombia) abandoned under the previous administrations, the major highways, and the mobility corridors in the mountains had been fully secured by the GoC.⁴⁰⁹

The methodology in securing these objectives was consistent throughout most of Colombia.⁴¹⁰ The only major areas not fully secured include the Pacific Coast (uncontrolled), the south-central area (FARC dominated) and the borders with Brazil, Venezuela and Ecuador.⁴¹¹ The GoC had militarily defeated the FARC and without any major armed group threat and a GoC that they could now rely upon, a majority of the 31,000 paramilitaries put down their arms in a vote of confidence for the legitimacy of the GoC or arguably in the absence of financing by their supporters or both.⁴¹² The GoC had successfully and repeatedly consolidated sovereign state control over most of its territory thus enhanced its capacity and right to govern, regained its monopoly over the legitimate use of force, consolidated its internal sovereignty and could exercise force within the rule of law throughout most of the country. As a result, the security groundwork had been laid to facilitate increased interstate and international trade, tourism, and investment that in combination with other factors fostered economic growth.⁴¹³ The economy

⁴⁰⁸ A. Flores, 2015.

⁴⁰⁹ Spencer, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

⁴¹⁰ Spencer, 2015; Isacson, 2015.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Spencer, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

⁴¹³ Isacson, 2015.

started to grow at a rate of 4.3 percent per year.⁴¹⁴ Additionally, the number of kidnappings and murders dropped substantially and would continue to do so for years to come.⁴¹⁵

It is clear that the capability endowed to the Colombians by rotary wing capability package alone was not the only ingredient or even key ingredient in facilitating these legitimacy outcomes. It was part of a greater multi-layered recipe of progressive incremental reforms, transformations, investments, acquisitions, capability developments and visions with each layer requiring its own dwell time to fully congeal. This being said, without the PCHP capability, the Colombians would have had a very difficult time advancing with their operations to secure villages, highways, and mobility corridors let alone take on the FARC in remote regions of the country in that there were significant risks involved in respect to supply line interruptions and rapid support if they came under fire in that their organic rotary aviation capability was very limited.⁴¹⁶ For these reasons, the enduring and decisive capability endowed to the Colombians by the totality of the rotary wing package in the context of a greater strategy to include not only equipment but also a logistics pipeline and institutions, gave their military forces the enduring and resilient confidence they needed to take and hold territory from the FARC and to a lesser extent other armed groups during this period.⁴¹⁷

iii. Glide Period Legitimacy Strengthening Outcomes (2007-2010)

Beginning in 2007, the administration of Alvaro Uribe launched what is known as the “Consolidation Program” whereby the goal “was to use the Colombian Army and police to drive out the guerillas; bring in the civilian authorities to help farmers grow legal crops in a place

⁴¹⁴ Spencer, 2015.

⁴¹⁵ Isacson, 2015.

⁴¹⁶ Ospina, 2015.

⁴¹⁷ Ospina, 2015.

where the GoC had no more than a token presence for decades” by setting up infrastructure and services to include roads, courts, schools, and health clinics.⁴¹⁸ This program was supported by the full force of all of the GoC ministries and due to the remote nature of the locations that it targeted mainly around the former DMZ such as La Macarena, air mobility provided primarily by helicopters was key to flying in the necessary resources and people to get this program off the ground quickly.⁴¹⁹ Additionally, helicopters were used to resupply military and security forces located in these hamlets on a re-occurring basis and from time to time supported light counter insurgency operations to keep the towns secure.⁴²⁰ This effort became a showcase for the Colombian people as well as foreign dignitaries and gave both groups confidence that the GoC was placing its best foot forward in bringing these borderline communities into the greater Colombian fold.⁴²¹ This program repeatedly increased the legitimacy of the GoC throughout the region through in many cases an initial provision of official governance that enhanced the GoCs capacity and right to govern and exercise force within the of rule of law. Additionally, the sustained provision of GoC services (in the form of schools, courts and health clinics), transportation infrastructure, and electricity the GoC began to win the hearts and minds of a previously alienated population base thus enhancing its capacity to govern within a consensus-based political community.⁴²²

The reach available to all GoC ministries via helicopters in the glide period was greatly enhanced as just about everywhere in Colombia could be accessed within a one hour flight from from strategically located air strips dispersed throughout the country.⁴²³ This means that the

⁴¹⁸ New York Times, 2015.

⁴¹⁹ Ospina, 2015.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

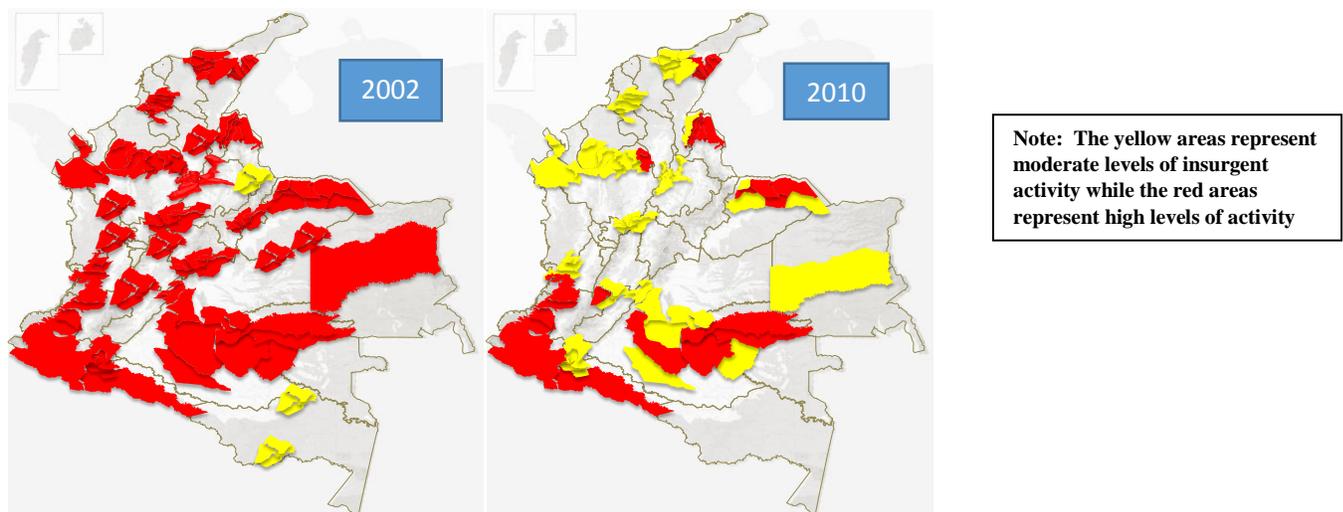
⁴²¹ Isacson, 2015.

⁴²² New York Times, 2015; Isacson, 2015.

⁴²³ Spencer, 2015.

people in even the most remote areas potentially now had access to GoC services⁴²⁴ Additionally, troops and police at checkpoints on remote highways and mountain passes were easily resupplied and supported at within an hour's time during this period.⁴²⁵ In this context, the PCHP enabled a deterrent capability in the form of sustaining these remote military units while fortifying and sustaining the GoC of Colombia's capacity and right to govern, its capacity to maintain its monopoly over legitimate use of force and its ability to exercise force within rule of law in some of the most remote and inaccessible areas of the country on a repeatable and consistent basis as illustrated Figure 8 below. The yellow areas represent moderate levels of insurgent activity while the red areas represent high levels of activity. In summary, during this period, the PHCP capability in the context of the counter insurgency strategy ensured that citizens felt the GoC's presence, the main roads were safe enough for travel, infrastructure was protected from sabotage, no security vacuum existed in even the most remote mountain passes and roads thus contributing to an environment of sustained security, governance, and rule of law throughout the country.

Figure 8. Comparison of Insurgent Activity in Colombia 2002 vs. 2010



⁴²⁴ Ospina, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.; Giraldo, 2015.

IV. The Deterrent Period (2010 and onward; The Administration of Manuel Santos)

A. Political and Security Landscape

In August of 2010, Manuel Santos ascended to the presidency of Colombia with the objective of consolidating the gains of the Uribe administration through a comprehensive peace deal with the FARC.⁴²⁶ Negotiations with the FARC started in Havana Cuba in 2012 and included five main points.⁴²⁷ President Santos would like to implement a final peace with the FARC to include full disarmament of the rebels, victim reparations, political participation for ex-rebels, and elimination of the illegal drug trade.⁴²⁸ President Santos “hopes that a permanent peace settlement with the FARC will allow security forces to concentrate on combatting criminal gangs” known generally as the Bacrim that are vying for control of Colombia’s cocaine production crops and resources.⁴²⁹ The peace process is burdened by splits in popular opinion in terms of what should be conceded. There are many in Colombia who are rallying behind ex-President Uribe with the cry “Peace without impunity” supporting Uribe in his belief that the rebels involved in killing should not be amnestied without judicial punishment.⁴³⁰ This is not a good sign for legitimacy in that this division is fracturing political consensus within Colombia.⁴³¹ Additionally, the number of victims eligible for GoC and FARC reparations as a result of human rights abuses is growing rapidly and now exceeds 7.4 million.⁴³² It is unclear whether or not the FARC is serious but what is clear is that the FARC no longer represents an existential security threat to the GoC and appears to be achieving its goals primarily through publicity, the political

⁴²⁶ Isacson, 2015; Ospina, 2015; Spencer, 2015.

⁴²⁷ BBC, 2015.(A)

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ospina, 2015; BBC, 2015.(A)

⁴³² Isacson, 2015.

process, and negotiation. As of May 2015, several advances had been made in the peace process to include a deal on land reform in November of 2011 which one of five major demands that require resolution for a peace deal.⁴³³ These included political participation of the FARC as a legitimate political party in the event of a peace deal in November of 2011, a pledge to eliminate illegal drug production in May of 2014, and an agreement to “work together to remove landmines in March of 2015.”⁴³⁴ In a promising step, the FARC also declared a unilateral ceasefire in November of 2014 in response to which the GoC suspended all bombardment in March of 2015 and was considering a full bilateral ceasefire.⁴³⁵ Unfortunately, in April of 2015, the FARC attacked and killed 11 Soldiers and wounded 19 in one of the few remaining FARC dominated areas known as Cauca.⁴³⁶ In response, coordinated airstrikes were resumed against FARC strongholds and leadership with a raid taking place on 22 May 2015 that took out 26 guerillas and a weapons cache.⁴³⁷ This attack, though a setback, did not have sufficient scale to impact the confidence of the people in the GoC or derail the peace negotiations.⁴³⁸ As the negotiations have dragged on and on, more and more members of the FARC and other groups have laid down their arms but only to swell the ranks of Colombian criminal gangs known as the Bacrim.⁴³⁹ Both sides agree they are closing in on a deal with the issues of reparations and rebel demobilization and disarmament as the only ones left in the breach.⁴⁴⁰ If it happens, a deal in the opinion of Colombian scholars is expected sometime in 2016.⁴⁴¹ It should be mentioned that

⁴³³ BBC.com “Colombia lifts bombing truce after Farc attack in Cauca”
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-32318890>; 2015 (B)

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ The Guardian, 2015.

⁴³⁸ Isacson, 2015.

⁴³⁹ BBC, 2015 (A)

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Isacson, 2015.

there are many who believe that the FARC keeps stalling the talks to swing the deal more and more in their favor as they gain greater influence and leverage through the political process over time.⁴⁴² At this point in time, the delays have not undermined the legitimacy of the talks or the government.⁴⁴³

B. Application of the Rotary Wing Capability in the Context of Political/Security Landscapes

In 2012, Colombia acquired 7 S-70i helicopters and 10 additional UH-60Ls.⁴⁴⁴ Though there has been interest in additional purchases of UH-60Ls, the purchases have not materialized.⁴⁴⁵

The Air Force has steadily retained its legacy Pre-Colombia organic complement (with no further additions) of 13 AH-60Ls known as Arpias (armed Blackhawks), 8 UH-60As, 19 Huey IIs, 14 UH-1N-212s, and 12 Bell 206s.⁴⁴⁶

During this period, the Colombian military has become increasingly joint in all respects leading to the standing up of joint air command centers (JoACs) where the military receives actionable intelligence on a targets; assesses aviation support requirements; views online and real-time, which air and air mobility assets and associated crews are available; makes assignments; and launches operations within an hour of receipt of the intelligence.⁴⁴⁷

In respect to training, maintenance and sustainment, all of the services continue to benefit from world class training institutions, expert mechanics, and a well-resourced and sophisticated logistics pipeline.⁴⁴⁸ The JoAC also has the capability to provide real time visibility in respect to

⁴⁴² Ospina, 2015.

⁴⁴³ Spencer, 2015; Isacson, 2015.

⁴⁴⁴ Spencer, 2015.

⁴⁴⁵ Flores, 2015.

⁴⁴⁶ Gonzales, 2015.

⁴⁴⁷ Ospina, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

⁴⁴⁸ Gonzales, 2015.

the location required parts in the pipeline if a helicopter goes down or is inoperable, the maintenance status of aviation assets by serial number, and the sleep status of their associated crews.⁴⁴⁹ Additionally, Colombians continue to take the lead on maintenance and logistics with DynCorps gradually phasing out of maintenance and logistics operations as of 2011.⁴⁵⁰

In terms of training institutional output, the flight training school in Melgar continues to produce world-class pilots with other countries such as Mexico and Peru sending candidates. As of 2015, the school has produced a total of over 400 pilots including 15 graduates from other Latin American countries each year.⁴⁵¹ Helicopters continue to play a key role in successful high visibility strategic joint operations in going after FARC high value targets and hostage rescues.⁴⁵² Additionally, helicopters have been used to MEDEVAC enemy combatants in many cases.⁴⁵³ As recent as of 22 May 2015, 26 FARC guerillas were killed and a weapons cache was destroyed in a coordinated joint operation, which included rotary wing air mobility support.⁴⁵⁴

The rotary wing capability that was used as a decisive factor in hundreds of operations to secure Colombia between 2004 and 2007 has evolved to be part of a coordinated and targeted asymmetrically superior joint deterrent capability that gives the leadership of Colombia the option to capture or kill FARC leaders and units almost at will.⁴⁵⁵ This capability leaves the FARC with almost no refuge except outside the sovereign borders of Colombia and even then this coordinated capability has been used to take out FARC leaders.⁴⁵⁶ By virtue of its deterrent

⁴⁴⁹ A. Flores, 2015.

⁴⁵⁰ Gonzales, 2015.

⁴⁵¹ Quiros, Milton (Lieutenant Colonel United States Army) in discussion with the author, June 2015.

⁴⁵² Ospina, 2015; Priest, 2011.

⁴⁵³ Gonzales, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

⁴⁵⁴ Brodzinsky, Sibylla "Farc ends Ceasefire after air raid kills 26 leftist rebels in attack"; 5/22/15; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/22/colombia-Farc-suspends-cease-fire-air-raid-kills-leftist-rebels>;

⁴⁵⁵ Priest, 2011.

⁴⁵⁶ Priest, 2011.

features, this capability further consolidates the GoCs sustained capacity to govern, internal sovereignty, and monopoly on the legitimate use of force.

Additionally, the PCHP capability in the context of the counter insurgency strategy, remains a critical factor in supplying and supporting troops assigned to remote highway, village and mountain outposts thus sustaining a GoC presence throughout most of the remote areas of the country.⁴⁵⁷ This supply and support capability also contributes to the consolidation of the GoCs sustained capacity to govern, internal sovereignty, and monopoly on the legitimate use of force.

The Colombian military is now a recognized internationally as global center of excellence and subject matter expertise in respect to development, sustainment and execution of a rotary wing capability in the context of counter insurgency operations.⁴⁵⁸ As such, other countries, such as Mexico and Peru, are turning to Colombia for training and tactics in respect to employing helicopters to defeat insurgent and criminal groups within their borders as well as to reassert government control over remote populations and under-governed spaces being controlled by these groups.⁴⁵⁹

Institutionally, the PCHP continues to provide Colombia an unlimited pipeline of talent in terms of flying, maintaining, and sustaining a large fleet of helicopters.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁷ Ospina, 2015; Giraldo, 2015.

⁴⁵⁸ Gonzales, 2015; Flores, 2015; Ormsby, 2015.

⁴⁵⁹ Gonzales, 2015; Ospina, 2015; Flores, 2015.

⁴⁶⁰ Gonzales, 2015.

C. Results of the Application of Rotary Wing Aviation Capabilities in Strengthening the Legitimacy of the GoC

There are two repeatable outcomes that support strengthening the legitimacy of the GoC of Colombia.

The first is that FARC can no longer hide or seek refuge in remote areas. The expanded asymmetry in capability dominance between the intelligence gathering and coordinated precision guided munitions strikes with follow on air mobility insertions has left the FARC vulnerable in every corner of Colombia.⁴⁶¹ By maintaining this expanded asymmetric dominance, the GoC has brought the FARC back to the peace table; kept the FARC at the peace table and is negotiating with them to support its efforts to defeat the growing criminal elements known as the Bacrim within its borders as well as fully join the legitimate political framework.⁴⁶² The longer negotiations continue, the more FARC are vulnerable to being killed and they know it was evidenced by more and more deserting every year.⁴⁶³ The rotary wing capability in the context of a de-escalating crisis and counter insurgency strategy is now transforming into a component of a joint coordinated capability that exploits actionable intelligence and employment of PGMs.⁴⁶⁴ Once negotiations are complete and insurgency is defeated, the GoC can focus on taking on the criminal gangs and restore rule of law, monopoly on the legitimate use of force, and GoC administration to the remaining of rural areas where it is not yet fully exercised to include primarily the frontiers, the south central areas and the Pacific coast.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶¹ Ospina, 2015.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.; Priest, 2011; Flores 2015

⁴⁶⁵ Isacson, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

The second is a continuation of the Glide Period outcome pertaining to GoC access. It continues to be the case that anywhere in Colombia can be reached within an hour for any purpose, so the people even in many of the most remote areas have potential access to GoC services.⁴⁶⁶ Additionally, troops and police at checkpoints on remote highways and mountain passes are easily resupplied and supported at almost a moment's notice thus the aviation capability enables a deterrent capability in the form of sustaining these remote units and also extends and sustains governance to the governance and rule of law to some of the most remote areas of the country on a repeatable and consistent basis thus enhancing the GoC's capacity and right to govern, maintain essential elements of sovereignty, maintain a monopoly over the legitimate use of force and exercise force within the rule of law throughout 90 percent of the country.⁴⁶⁷ In summary, the PCHP employed by the GoC during this period continues to ensure that its citizens feel the GoC is present, the roads are safe for travel, infrastructure is protected from sabotage, and there is no vacuum in respect to security that can be seeded in even the most remote mountain passes and roads thus contributing to an environment of sustained security, governance, and rule of law throughout most of the country.

CONCLUSIONS

The initial question this thesis sought to answer is whether or not the various applications of PCHP in the context of the political and security landscapes of each of the delineated periods led to repeatable outcomes that strengthened the legitimacy of the GoC of Colombia and if so how. In this context, five measures of successful state that contribute to a state's legitimacy developed by K.J. Holsti were employed in answering the how: the capacity and right to govern;

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Giraldo, 2015.

the capacity to extract resources necessary to provide services; the capacity to maintain internal sovereignty; the capacity to maintain a monopoly over the legitimate use of force; the capacity exercise of force within the rule of law; and the capacity to govern within a consensus based political community.⁴⁶⁸ By meeting these measures successfully, Holsti asserts that a state can achieve both Vertical and Horizontal legitimacy.⁴⁶⁹

It is clear from the research done that the GoC capacity and right to govern, exercise force within the rule of law, consolidate internal sovereignty and expand its legitimate monopoly on violence to 40 percent of its governed sovereign territory were all consistently and repeatably strengthened during the run, glide, and deterrent periods. The measure of capacity to govern within a consensus based political community was notably strengthened with the Consolidation Program in the beginning in the glide period and continuing into the deterrent period and the measure to extract resources was best represented the successful President Uribe war tax. By virtue of these achievements, both the elements of Vertical and Horizontal legitimacy were strengthened, meaning that the state at a high level vertically gained in the authority, consent and loyalty of the political base and also horizontally gained with an enhanced “shared sense of community” through the Consolidation Program and the provision of GoC services to 40 percent of the country’s municipalities that were previously abandoned.⁴⁷⁰

This research also sought to determine whether these gains could be traced to the application of the PCHP during these three periods that are distinct from other capabilities to include the baseline helicopter counter insurgent capability that Colombia had as of 1997. It is clear that in each in every case the answer was yes that they could be traced exclusively to the full

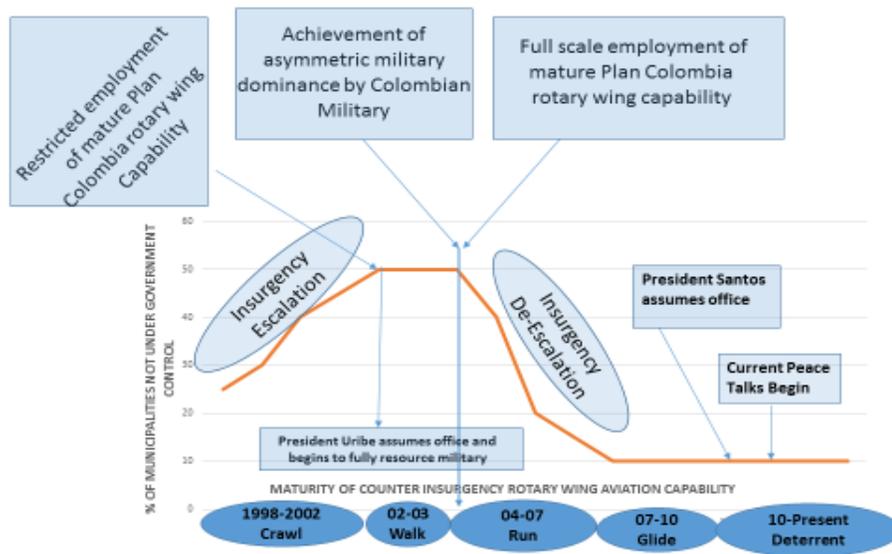
⁴⁶⁸ Holsti, 1996; Shultz, 2015.

⁴⁶⁹ Holsti, 1996.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

augmentation of the PCHP capability. It is also clear that the insurgency de-escalation started and major gains were made only when the Colombian military achieved asymmetric dominance over the FARC. This dominance could not have occurred without the full scale online employment of the PCHP which gave the Colombian military a sustained world class capability to reach any point in their country, regardless of the terrain, within an hour on a massive scale and then sustain operations at that point for an unlimited period of time.

FIGURE 2. The Evolution of the Colombian Insurgency in the Context of the Employment of the PCHP



As seen in Figure 2, it is clear that through 2002, without the modernized counter insurgency capabilities fully online and fully resourced to include the complete transformation of the Colombian military to a counter insurgency force and the mature PCHP, the insurgency continued to escalate unabated to the point that the GoC lost control of over 50 percent of its municipalities. Once the transformed and resourced counter insurgency strategy came online beginning in 2002 but still absent the full force of the PCHP, the GoC was able to halt the insurgency escalation but was not able to make any substantial gains in bringing the lost

municipalities back under GoC control.⁴⁷¹ It should be noted that the GoC had the legacy counter insurgency rotary aviation capability available from 1998 -2004 but it failed to make any decisive difference on the battlefield on its own.⁴⁷² During this time between 1998 and 2003, the Colombian Armed Forces had many victories over the FARC—only for the FARC to take back the gains achieved by the military once the military left the area of the successful operation.⁴⁷³ It was only in 2004 with the addition of a fully developed rotary aviation capability online in the form of the PCHP that the Colombian Military was able to achieve asymmetric dominance over the FARC. Once this occurred, the military was able to clear and hold territory.

The PCHP gave the military the capability offensively to maneuver, transport troops and required supplies on a massive scale to any point in Colombia within an hour as well as the follow on capability to sustain the those troops for an indefinite period of time.⁴⁷⁴ It also gave them on demand defensive capabilities of air support, MEDEVAC, and or extraction from any point in Colombia within an hour.⁴⁷⁵ Supporting these capabilities, a national logistics pipeline and a world class training pipeline were also in place supporting helicopter readiness, manning and maintainability, so these capabilities could be employed with minimal interruption.⁴⁷⁶ With the composite of these capabilities in place, the newly transformed counter insurgent military could now mass and overwhelm the FARC or any other armed group in any location of the country no matter how remote with an hour's notice. In this context, the FARC's legacy advantage of being able to dominate remote and challenging terrain ceased to be an advantage on the battlefield.

⁴⁷¹ Ospina, 2015.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Spencer, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

⁴⁷⁴ Giraldo, 2015; Ospina, 2015.

⁴⁷⁵ Giraldo, 2015; Ospina, 2015; A. Flores, 2015.

⁴⁷⁶ A. Flores, 2015.

It is clear that the decisive capability endowed to the Colombians by the PCHP alone was not the only ingredient in facilitating these legitimacy outcomes. It was an essential part of a multi-layered recipe of progressive incremental reforms, taxes, investments, acquisitions, capability developments and visions over the course of multiple presidencies with each layer requiring its own dwell time to fully congeal. This being said, without in the use of PCHP to achieve asymmetric military dominance starting in 2004, the Colombians would have had a very difficult time advancing with their operations to secure villages, highways, and mobility corridors let alone take on the FARC in remote regions of the country in that there were significant risks involved in respect to supply line interruptions and rapid support if they came under fire in that their organic rotary aviation capability was very limited.⁴⁷⁷

For these reasons, the enduring and decisive capability endowed to the Colombians by the totality of the PCHP to include not only equipment but also a logistics pipeline and institutions, not only resulted in their asymmetric dominance but gave their military forces the enduring and resilient confidence they needed to take and hold territory from the FARC and to a lesser extent other armed groups during this period.⁴⁷⁸ Additionally, today this capability in combination with multi-source actionable intelligence, and PGMs has resulted in an asymmetrically dominant deterrent capability whereby the FARC have no sanctuary as individuals or units. This enhanced deterrent capability has undoubtedly kept the FARC both off balance and incentivized at the highest and arguably most vulnerable levels to make a peace deal with the GoC and retire with their lives and riches intact.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Ospina, 2015.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Isacson, 2015.

With respect to the probable success of exportability of the PCHP to other countries facing insurgencies with terrain hostile to rapid ground movement of vehicles, the prospects remain unclear. In Colombia, the PCHP was developed using a joint requirements adjudication process by both the US Southern Command and the Colombian military to fill what was identified to be a critical capability gap.⁴⁸⁰ These planners designed the PCHP to be specifically tailored to Colombia's requirements and future modernization plans and strategy.⁴⁸¹ Additionally, the scope was based on the maturity of the armed forces, the existing infrastructure, and the anticipated talent pipeline.⁴⁸² As stated, though the PCHP was a decisive ingredient in facilitating the strengthening of the legitimacy of the GoC in the context of its counter insurgency strategy and was the result of deliberate planning, it was also part of a greater multi-layer recipe of progressive and incremental reforms, transformations, investments, taxes, capability developments, acquisitions, visions and most importantly a desire to succeed by the Colombian people over the span of multiple presidencies. Success was not just a matter of simply providing a capability. Other ingredients were required to include an effective strategy and the will to win.

⁴⁸⁰ Ospina, 2015; Gonzales, 2015.

⁴⁸¹ Ospina, 2015.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

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