

imagine an even stronger US military presence in the region - especially in the context of Panama's newfound control over the Canal combined with its limited resources, and also against the backdrop of the defiant policies of President Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. Once again, it is likely that a much stronger US military intervention in Colombia and perhaps surrounding areas is in the offing, and Washington may ask for assistance from its hemispheric allies.

Options

The single most significant **medium-to-long-term option** is the consideration of legalized cocaine and opiates, as was noted in the Mexican case. There is no doubt that such a bold policy would take power away from fueling Colombian groups, and reduce significantly the violence and corruption which blights the Colombian state. Since the US, among others, vehemently opposes this idea, it is simply not feasible in the short-term. What is feasible, however, is to attempt to bring the topic to legitimate and thorough debate within the forum of international organizations such as the Organization of American States and the United Nations.

The following are **immediate-term** options which presume that the cocaine and opium trade will remain illegal. The **first option** addresses consumption, since without this there would be no production of illicit drugs. While consumption of drugs has been a problem in Northern countries for decades, it has only been during the 1990s that it has become problematic within Colombia and many other developing countries. Augusto Perez Gomez, Colombia's current anti-consumption czar, has energetically initiated innovative programs, such as educating parents, journalists, and teachers to educate others regarding drug consumption, and has also promoted detox clinics as well as programs to reduce drug use in prisons.¹¹¹ He is seeking additional international support, which is something Ottawa should consider. The United Nation Drug Control Program is also active in Colombia with anti-consumption programs, an idea which seems popular in all sectors of society, even