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Bolivia-u.s. Anti-drug Accord: Summary Of Developments, April 5 - 23

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April 5: The Bolivian Workers Central (COB) announced a 24-hour strike for April 9 to protest militarization of anti-drug efforts, and new legislation on foreign participation in mining ventures. An "invitation" to US military trainers was approved by the ruling party coalition April 2 after 15 hours of tense debate in the national congress. Opposition party members walked out of the chamber before a vote on the measure was taken. Military training, specified in "annex 3" of the US-Bolivia anti-drug accords signed in March, will involve a total of 112 US military instructors in two phases. In 1991, the US is providing \$146.3 million in anti-drug assistance to Bolivia. The package consists of the following: \$35.9 million for military aid; \$88.1 million, economic aid; \$15.7 million, police and judiciary aid; and, \$6.6 million for specific anti-narcotics programs coordinated by the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). On the same day, the congress approved legislation authorizing foreign investments in border areas. Prior to the change, border regions were defined as national security zones, and thus, off-limits to foreigners. April 9: Throughout Bolivia, workers responded to the COB's call for a 24-hour strike. Spokespersons for agricultural workers said several road blockades would be set up the following week to express rejection of the government's plans to involve the military in anti-narcotics efforts. Deputy Alfonso Ferrufino, of the Free Bolivia Movement (MBL), reiterated a proposal to legalize the production and sales of coca in Bolivia. He also said he found the government's negotiating skills sadly lacking. In reference to the accord signed on March 9, Ferrufino said, "The government signed an agreement which says that surplus production of coca leaf is a drug trafficking offense, producers of surplus coca are drug traffickers, and associations of coca growers producing a surplus are criminal associations." The deputy predicted that coca growers (impoverished peasants) will suffer the greatest negative consequences from interdiction efforts. These mechanisms, he said, will trigger "an escalation in violence, not only in coca production regions, but throughout the entire country." Under these circumstances, said Ferrufino, Cochabamba department will be one of the most seriously affected areas. Interdiction by soldiers and police, he asserted, will intensify political, social, and economic conflict everywhere. Next, according to the politician, the financial resources offered by the US are wholly inadequate to substitute for the financial losses and economic dislocation caused by coca interdiction, and upheaval expected by branding coca growers criminals. April 12: At a meeting in Oruro, the COB and civic organizations in Oruro, Cochabamba and Potosi departments created a Committee for the Defense of Natural Resources and National Sovereignty. The committee was established to express rejection of the government's decision to militarize anti-drug efforts and to offer foreign companies access and control of natural resources in border regions. Oruro is a mining town, located 230 km. southeast of La Paz. COB leader Jose Luis Flores said the committee's first activities involve organizing a 24-hour work stoppage, demonstrations, and road blockades for April 18. April 19: In Washington, a Pentagon spokesperson said a "less than 60" US military trainers will travel to Bolivia in the near future to provide instruction to Bolivian soldiers for purposes of reducing drug crop cultivation and drug trafficking. Unidentified diplomatic sources cited by AFP said the military trainers numbered 44, and arrival date was April 22. The US soldiers are to provide

instruction to two Bolivian army regiments stationed in Santa Cruz, 570 km. southeast of La Paz, and in Riveralta, about 600 km. northeast of the capital. April 20: Bolivian army commander Gen. Guido Sandoval told reporters that training by US soldiers in anti-drug techniques would begin April 23. April 23: Thirty-six US military advisers arrived in eastern Bolivia to train Bolivian army troops. The US Air Force jet also delivered seven metric tons of military equipment. (Basic data from AFP, 04/05/91, 04/09/91, 04/12/91, 04/19/91, 04/20/91, 04/23/91; EFE, 04/09/91; Inter Press Service, 04/09/91)

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