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Anti-drug Summit In San Antonio, Texas

by Barbara Khol

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On Feb. 26 in San Antonio, Texas, US President George Bush met with counterparts from Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Mexico, and Venezuela's foreign minister to follow up on an anti-drug summit held two years ago in Cartagena, Colombia. Summit participants agreed to send a joint mission to Asia and Europe to request increased cooperation in anti-drug trade efforts. Precise destinations of the mission were not reported on Wednesday. Unidentified US officials were cited by the Agence France-Presse as saying that the declaration due to be signed Feb. 27 was not likely to include a Colombian proposal for a 50% reduction in narcotics demand and supply by the year 2000. At a press conference immediately before the summit opened, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori said setting supply side reduction targets was not realistic until concrete development aid and workable crop substitution programs are in place. Colombian President Cesar Gaviria told reporters in Bogota on the day before the summit that Latin American drug- producer nations need assistance from advanced industrialized nations in the form of market openings, not just military hardware. Most US aid to Colombia consists of military hardware and training and advice to police engaged in anti- drug efforts. In 1991, the Colombian government received about US\$60 million worth of military aid from the US. Gaviria asserted that aid to combat drugs should be extended to economic development assistance and the elimination of trade barriers. He said he would propose setting up a ministerial commission in San Antonio that would travel to Europe and Japan to obtain cooperation in the drug war. The Colombian president reiterated that he would reject any proposals calling for an active US military presence in Colombia. (Basic data from Associated Press, 02/25/92; Agence France-Presse, 02/26/92)

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