

Counternarcotics Strategy in Latin America

Testimony by
James F. Mack
Executive Secretary
Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission
Organization of American States

before the

House International Relations Committee
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
March 30, 2006; 10:30 a.m.
Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building

Ø Thank you Mr. Chairman and distinguished member of the Sub-committee

INTRODUCTION

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, a specialized agency of the Organization of American States, to discuss my organization's role in promoting international drug cooperation in the Western Hemisphere. The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, best known by its acronym "CICAD", was established in 1986 in response to a mandate by the OAS General Assembly. CICAD consists a staff of 40 full time professionals from 15 countries based at OAS headquarters here in Washington, and a Commission (or board of directors) with representatives from all 34 OAS member states, which meets twice a year to set policy for the organization.

The universal participation of active OAS member states in CICAD demonstrates their recognition that the problem of drugs is a hemispheric challenge; that dealing with it is the shared responsibility of all OAS member states; and that they can accomplish more by working together rather than by going their own separate ways.

CICAD's main objectives are:

- § To serve as the Western Hemisphere's policy forum on all aspects of the drug problem;
- § To foster multilateral cooperation on drug issues in the Americas;
- § To carry out action programs to strengthen the capacity of its member states to prevent and treat drug abuse, and to combat drug production, trafficking, and money laundering;
- § To promote drug-related research, information exchange, and specialized training; and
- § To develop and recommend to its member states model drug-related legislation, common standards for drug treatment and for the control of pharmaceuticals and of chemicals that can be used to produce illicit drugs, and standardized methodologies for measuring drug consumption.

CICAD PROGRAMS

CICAD programs cover almost every aspect of the drug problem. Here are some examples: We help member states prepare their national anti-drug plans, establish drug abuse prevention programs in schools, and develop standards for drug treatment. With assistance from CICAD, many schools of nursing, public health, medicine and education throughout the Western Hemisphere are introducing drug themes into their core curricula and are carrying out drug-related research. CICAD programs help member states accurately survey drug consumption among their populations. With strong support from Spain, CICAD is helping the Andean countries decentralize many of their drug abuse programs (especially in the area of prevention) to the provincial and municipal level. In partnership with private industry, USAID and international organizations, CICAD is promoting sustainable cacao and tree crop development for small farmers as an alternative

to illicit crops in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. CICAD promotes maritime cooperation against drug smuggling, helps member states set up systems to control the importation of chemicals that can be used in the manufacture of illicit drugs, and trains port security personnel to detect drugs secreted in ships and containers. It runs a drug intelligence school in Lima, Peru for law enforcement officers from the Andean region. CICAD helps member states prepare legislation on drug-control. We train judges and prosecutors to try money laundering cases and help member states set up specialized financial intelligence units in their banking systems to detect suspicious transactions. At the request of the Colombian Government, a CICAD-sponsored international team of scientists published in April 2005 the results of the first phase of its research of the impact of aerial spraying of coca in Colombia on human health and the environment. In May, CICAD, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, will publish the results of the first ever comparative study of drug use by high school students in 10 South American countries.

CICAD receives direct financial assistance principally from the United States, Canada, Spain, France, Mexico, and the Inter-American Development Bank. Brazil and Chile, under agreements with CICAD, are carrying out substantial "horizontal" assistance programs in drug research and drug abuse prevention training for other Latin American countries. In addition, CICAD has established a fruitful partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to carry out a number of programs in the Americas.

MEM BASIC INFORMATION

But today, I want to talk to you about a particular CICAD program, the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), which I believe is taking a unique approach to improve the capacity and strengthen the will of Western Hemisphere nations to deal with the drug problem. The MEM is the western hemisphere's standardized instrument to periodically measure progress, by member states individually, and by the hemisphere as a whole, in all aspects of the drug problem.

The reason for such an instrument is quite simple. In the late 1990s, OAS Member states came to realize that they could not know what future steps they needed to take in drug control unless they had a way to assess their current situation. They wanted a means of measuring, in a comprehensive and systematic way, their individual and collective efforts in drug control, the strengths and weaknesses of their drug programs, and where they should direct their future efforts to address those detected weaknesses. They also wanted an evaluation instrument that was multilateral, not unilateral, collegial, not adversarial, in which all member states participate in the evaluation of all other member states in a constructive, supportive way.

So the Western Hemisphere's Heads of State and Government, meeting at the 1998 Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile, issued a mandate to the OAS (specifically CICAD) to establish just such an instrument. After developing the measurement criteria or indicators, the first national evaluations were completed and made public in 2001, the second in 2003 and the third in 2005.

During the first year of the two year evaluation cycle, every member state is evaluated. In the second, each country's progress implementing the recommendations from the previous year's evaluation is assessed.

WHO DRAFTS THESE EVALUATIONS?

The MEM evaluations of individual countries and of the hemisphere as a whole are drafted by a Governmental Expert Group, one selected by each of CICAD's 34 member states. The experts participate in the evaluations of all member states except their own.

HOW DOES THE MEM EVALUATION PROCESS WORK?

Each member country first completes a standardized questionnaire based on a series of indicators or benchmarks agreed to by all member states. These include metrics such as the existence of national drug control plans, drug consumption and drug seizure statistics, ratification and accession to international treaties, areas of illicit crops under cultivation, persons charged and convicted of drug trafficking, legal and judicial regimes to deal with money laundering, arms control and diversion of chemical and pharmaceutical products for illicit use.

The MEM experts examine the data submitted by each country, make judgments on national progress or shortcomings, and then draft the evaluation reports based on this information, and on subsequent dialogue with each country. All MEM reports include recommendations specific to each country. The evaluation mechanism is designed to maximize participation and transparency. Governments are given the opportunity to review and comment on preliminary evaluation drafts. Reports, including recommendations, are approved by the CICAD Commission, and then published. In fact you can find them on our OAS/CICAD website (show example).

The process does not impose sanctions. But the evaluation reports do call upon member states to address problems that are identified.

WHY HAS THE MEM BEEN USEFUL?

The MEM process has stimulated improvements in drug control programs, as well as increased coordination and cooperation in the drug field among the OAS member states.

Here are some specific results of MEM evaluations and MEM recommendations. Most CICAD member states now have national anti-drug plans, and the equivalent of national drug commissions to coordinate their implementation. The Government of Ecuador, with the help of CICAD, updated its anti-money-laundering legislation, which was recently approved by the Ecuadorian Congress. Based on Ecuador's new law, CICAD is now helping Ecuador establish a specialized financial intelligence unit to spot suspicious financial transactions. As a result of another MEM recommendation, CICAD is helping many member states adopt standards of care in their drug treatment programs. Countries

have also adopted CICAD's standardized methodology to measure their internal drug consumption. This allows for comparisons among countries, and permits the identification of trends of use and abuse of drugs over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ASSISTANCE FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

I want to talk briefly about the recommendations made to member states, since they lie at the heart of the MEM process. As I noted earlier, the objectives of these recommendations are to identify the strengths, weaknesses, progress and setbacks in each country and to help fine tune their policies and programs to respond in a more effective manner to the drug problem. If countries require help to correct any gaps or deficiencies identified by the MEM through its recommendations, they are encouraged to seek assistance from other member states and from CICAD in areas which they consider a priority.

Since the outset of the MEM, CICAD has invested nearly \$ 2 million in projects throughout the Hemisphere in response to requests by member states as a result of the MEM process. These projects include the creation of drug information systems, the drafting of national anti-drug plans, the adoption of drug trafficking control measures and the collection of statistics on drug consumption through scientific surveys.

Member state responses to MEM recommendations have been very positive. To date, over 90 % of recommendations from the First Evaluation Round (2001), and over 70% from the Second Round (2003) have been completed.

In practical terms, this high level of compliance by CICAD member states demonstrates their clear commitment to the MEM, and to the principles of shared responsibility and multilateral cooperation.

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP

An important feature of the MEM is its constant self-evaluation and adaptation to the ever-changing facets and challenges presented by the drug problem.

At the outset of each new MEM evaluation round, representatives of all CICAD member states meet in an Inter-Governmental Working Group (IWG) to evaluate and update the indicators, the questions and the process itself. Such a meeting took place one month ago in Washington to streamline the MEM process before the initiation of the Fourth Evaluation Round. Its findings and suggestions on how to improve the MEM will be presented in May to the full CICAD Commission for approval.

One of the main proposed changes is to extend the duration of the full MEM evaluation (which includes the initial country evaluation reports and the follow up reports on the implementation of recommendations) from 2 to 3 years. This would give countries more time to implement recommendations and show general progress. One new indicator

being proposed for the next evaluation round would measure illegal internet sales of pharmaceutical drugs. Another would measure member state capacity to curb maritime narcotrafficking.

THE BENEFITS OF THE MEM PROCESS

The MEM provides CICAD member states with an exhaustive assessment of how they are progressing in all aspects of the drug problem, both individually as well as on a collective hemispheric level. The information contained in the reports helps policy makers to then design the most effective policies and programs which respond to the priority needs of their country.

In this sense, the MEM process serves as a blueprint and stimulus for corrective action as well as a means for countries to request assistance from CICAD to make the needed changes.

Despite great disparities in resources available to individual CICAD member states, all of them have seen fit to participate in the MEM evaluation process. This is a significant achievement. The key reason the MEM enjoys such universal support from member states is that it is a mechanism that they themselves have designed, in which they themselves participate, and in whose success they themselves have at stake.

I would like to close by underscoring that the CICAD's Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism has proven itself to be one of the central pillars in strengthening capacities and commitment of the countries of the Americas to deal with the drug challenge, as well as encouraging more effective cooperation among them.

Thank You.