



## PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

### SURPRISING COLOMBIA

#### Did you know...

Over half of the flowers sold in the United States come from Colombia. Last year Colombia's market share was 84% in the US and 15.8% in Europe.

Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez is the most read novelist in the world.

Colombian pop-singer Shakira is one of the most popular Latin American artists in the world who has won several Grammy awards.

Colombian driver Juan Pablo Montoya was selected as the "2003 Formula 1 International Racing Driver"

NASA Neuroscience Director is Colombian scientist Rodolfo Llinás.

One of the most promising studies on Malaria was led by Colombian scientists Manuel Elkin Patarrollo. This study was donated to the World Health Organisation.

Colombian painter and sculptor, Fernando Botero, has exhibited his works at the Champs Elysées in Paris, Central Park in New York, St. Mark's Square in Venice and in the Paseo de Recoletos in Madrid.

Colombian designer Silvia Tcherassi sells her creations in Paris, New York, Miami and Saudi Arabia and dresses personalities such as Carolina de Monaco, Chelsea and Hillary Clinton and Quenn Noor of Jordan.

Colombia is the world's third largest banana producer.

Colombia ranks fourth in the world in palm oil production, drinking water supplies and nickel.

Numerous foreigners only know very few facts about Colombia like its substantial production of cocaine and coffee, and that the country faces a kind of civil war. This is what they read on newspapers or hear on the media every day. However Colombia is a complex yet amazing country, but its image is frequently stereotyped and biased.

Colombia is:

- **A GATEWAY TO LATIN AMERICA.** It is located in the middle of the Western hemisphere, on the northern coast of the South American continent. Colombia's Caribbean coast is closer to Miami than Miami is to New York. (See Map No. 1).



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- **A LARGE COUNTRY.** Colombia is the size of France, Spain and Portugal combined. Its 41-million residents makes it the third most populous country in Latin America.
- **HOME TO A DIVERSE GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT.** Colombia is the only country in South America to have both a Pacific and Caribbean coast. The rugged Andes Mountains form a geographic spine that divides the country from north to south. To the west and east of the Andes there are fertile plains where the 95% of the population lives and works. It is a highly urban country. More than 70% of Colombians live in just 10 cities. The eastern and southern portions of the country are covered with the dense and tropical Amazon jungle, which is among the world's most valuable natural resources. The Colombian side of the Amazons is home to 10% of the world's biodiversity. A total of 58% of the territory is located in the Amazon region, but only 5% of the country's population lives in that area where there is very little economic infrastructure.
- **A DIVERSE ETHNIC POPULATION.** Colombia is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the Western Hemisphere. The country has 85 different ethnic groups, creating a true melting pot of European, indigenous and Afro-Caribbean communities. The indigenous peoples (700,000) make up less than 2% of the population. Nevertheless, they own almost a quarter of the national territory as it is established in the Colombian Constitution.
- **A SOURCE OF ENERGY FOR AMERICA AND THE WORLD.** Colombia has vast mineral and energy resources, which are being explored and developed for economic benefit. Colombia has over 47 billion barrels of crude oil reserves, of which only 1,632 million have been discovered. Currently, Colombia is the fifth largest provider of crude oil and the largest foreign provider of coal to the United States.
- **A STABLE DEMOCRACY.** Colombia is Latin America's oldest and most stable democracy. It has experienced peaceful changes of government every four years over the last half century. Citizens have elected government representatives during free, fair and competitive elections. Moreover, Colombia enjoys full freedom of press. A national debate to build up democracy, the Colombian Referendum on 25 October 2003 enjoyed an unprecedented turnout. During the following days after elections for mayors and governors, government agencies granted equal protection to all candidates, regardless of their political tendencies or whether they agreed or not with the current National Government. In fact, in the capital, Bogotá, the candidate for the left-wing party, Polo Democrático who opposes to the current Government, was elected with guarantees of his full rights.
- **A STRONG AND STABLE ECONOMY.** Colombia was Latin America's strongest and most stable economy during the 20th century. It did not experience a year of negative growth for over 70 years, between the 1930s and the late 1990s. Moreover,



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it has never experienced hyperinflation and has never defaulted on its international debts or financial obligations.

### WHY IS MOST OF THE INFORMATION YOU HEAR ABOUT COLOMBIA SO NEGATIVE?

The truth is that Colombia has “two faces.” One is a country of extraordinary natural beauty and hard-working, warm and industrious people – people who succeed at growing one of the world’s finest coffee and freshest flowers, and are renowned professionals, executives, artists, writers and musicians.

Colombians have created a stable democracy and a strong, growing economy. They have courageously stood up to the violence and terrorism of guerrilla groups and drug traffickers.

But Colombia is also a country with problems stemming from a complex and difficult history of violence. Its troubles could be explained by the vast, underpopulated “frontier land” that characterizes the eastern and southern regions of the country. These are difficult to access, and historically there has existed very little, if any, State presence in the form of public institutions, roads, schools, healthcare and utilities. This reality created a breeding ground for the international illegal drug trade that fuels Colombia’s situation today.

People define Colombia’s problems as a civil war. But this is incorrect. The population is not divided into armed camps fighting for competing political and social agendas. What exists in Colombia is a history of violence and armed conflict between guerrilla organizations, illegal self-defense groups, often dubbed as “paramilitary forces,” narcotics traffickers and the Government. The guerrillas and paramilitary forces, which the European Union and the United States consider international terrorists, number less than 40,000 people in a nation of 43 million. But unlike other countries where guerrilla movements have existed, Colombia’s violent groups are financed by the global illegal drug trade.

Opinion polls consistently indicate that popular support for guerrillas and self-defense groups does not exceed 5%.

### FACTORS IN THE HISTORY OF COLOMBIA’S TROUBLE INCLUDE:

- **GUERRILLA GROUPS.** These were born as left-wing organizations during the 1950s and 1960s. Over the years, they have abandoned any political or social agenda. Today, they are well-organized and sophisticated terrorist networks with international connections. They are heavily armed and well-financed through illegal drug trafficking activities and kidnapping. They terrorize civilians through violence,



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bombings and kidnappings. Their tactics are typical of classical guerrilla warfare: attack and run, hit and hide.

The largest guerrilla group, known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, has approximately 20,000 armed men, women and children. Another group, the National Liberation Army or ELN, has less than 5,000 members. Both are receiving hundreds of millions of dollars every year by protecting illegal coca crops and through ransom payments from kidnappings. They routinely destroy villages, economic infrastructure, including bridges, roads, oil pipelines and power stations. They have almost no support among the civilian population. However, they represent a direct attack on Colombia's democracy and society. Like Al-Qaeda, they are part of the international terrorist network.

- **ILLEGAL SELF-DEFENCE GROUPS.** In response to years of guerrilla and drug violence in Colombia, another violent group emerged – illegal self-defense groups or commonly labeled as “paramilitary groups” by the international press. When government resources were limited, such self-defense groups enabled people in rural areas to defend themselves from the guerrillas and to protect their lives and property. Like guerrillas, their funding comes from the drug trade.

- **NARCO-TRAFFICKERS.** In the 1980s, Colombia started as an intermediary production and distribution center in the international coca drug-trade. Coca leaf was grown and brought in to the country from neighboring Peru and Bolivia. It was processed with chemicals smuggled from the rest of the world and then shipped as cocaine to the United States and Europe for consumption. This is how the Cali and Medellin cartels were born. Pablo Escobar was the main leader of the Medellin cartel during most of its existence, but was killed on the run by Colombian authorities when resisting arrest in 1993. The Government destroyed these cartels in the 1990s at a great cost. Thousands of Colombians, including political leaders, presidential candidates, judges and journalists, prosecutors, soldiers and policemen lost their lives.

The nature of the drug business changed since the fall of the large urban drug cartels. They have been replaced by a new generation of smaller, more dynamic and broader international networks, and have ties with terrorist organizations in other regions of the world. They engage in arms smuggling, money laundering, contraband, extortion and other criminal activities. In addition, as Peru and Bolivia achieved some success at eliminating illegal coca within their countries, much of the coca production shifted to Colombia's vast Amazon region.

Since September 11, 2001, the world has developed a greater understanding of the links between terrorist groups and drug-traffickers. The profits of illegal drugs often end up in the hands of perpetrators of terror such as al-Qaeda or FARC.



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- **COCA PEASANTS.** Fighting drugs in Colombia today means that the Government must have the resources to combat both sophisticated coca entrepreneurs, while helping thousands of peasant families engaged in coca farming to switch to legal crops. The Government is fighting drug trafficking not just through aerial spraying, but also through "The Colombian Plan," a program that provides social and economic alternatives to farmers and their communities to help them switch from growing coca to legal crops.

### THE WORD IS WORRIED ABOUT TERRORISM. WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT COLOMBIA?

**Colombia's illegal drugs are available in your city and neighborhood.** Colombia produces 80% of the cocaine in the world and almost all the heroin consumed in the US. In 2003, 63% of drugs produced in Colombia went to the US and 37% to Europe. These drugs have caused 520,000 deaths in the US and generated costs of over US\$110 billion per year in anti-narcotics campaigns and awareness raising.

European nations contribute to Colombia's fight against drugs through economic, financial and technical co-operation programs and an International Support Programme. In 2002, the Spanish National Drugs Plan gave the Organization of American States (OAS) US\$ 150,000 to help Andean countries with their anti-narcotics efforts.

- **COLOMBIA IS NOT AN ISLAND.** Colombia's guerrilla and self-defense groups, primarily funded by drug trafficking activities, are a source of potential instability for Latin America, particularly in the Andean region.

The struggle against terrorism is a worldwide challenge on the account of the international of terrorist networks. The presence of guerrilla groups in Colombia is a concern and a risk to regional security.

The illegal drug business damages political institutions, violates human rights and holds back social and economic development. It is an industry that doesn't have any kind of geographic or cultural borders.

This issue has significant political, economic and security interests. It is also becoming increasingly integrated in a number of areas - culture, language, the arts and commerce.

**STRONG ECONOMIC TIES.** Colombia is an important economic market and a valuable trading partner for the United States. Bilateral trade exceeded US\$11 billion in 2003. Colombia has a diverse economy with highly developed manufacturing and agricultural sectors, a modern infrastructure and extensive natural resources,



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including oil, coal and minerals. Colombia has attracted more than US\$ 4 billion in direct foreign investment by the United States. More than 200 companies in the US and more than 50 in Great Britain are present in Colombia and have become allies in the country's development.

In Europe, the total of exports to Germany in 2003 represented US\$264 million. Between 2002 and 2003, exports to the Netherlands rose by 212.34%. In 2003, exports to this country represented US\$301 million. Colombia is the leading Latin American supplier of textiles to the United Kingdom. In 2003, textiles and clothing exports to some parts of Europe increased sharply- Switzerland went up 657.72%, Portugal 572.61%, Malta 441.91%, Croatia 402.88% and Sweden 182.59%. During the same year, Colombia became Japan's second largest supplier of flowers, with total sales of \$22.4 million.

Colombia produces for well-known foreign companies such as Liz Claiborne, Vanity Fair, Adidas, Nautica, Levi Strauss, Polo Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hillfiger, Pierre Cardin, Nine West, etc.

The Uribe Administration is seeking to further expand trade and commercial ties with Europe, the United States and other international markets to create new employment opportunities for Colombians in today's increasingly global economy.

- **A SOURCE OF RELIABLE FOREIGN ENERGY.** According to the Bush Administration's national energy report, Colombia has become a major source of oil for the United States. About 80% of Colombia's oil is exported to the US. In fact, over 20% of American oil imports come from Colombia and its Andean neighbors. Colombia's perpetrators of violence know the importance of energy to the country and foreign markets – this is why they regularly target Colombia's energy infrastructure as well as oil pipelines.

- **HUMAN RIGHTS.** The drug-trade has strengthened both guerrilla and illegal self-defense terrorist groups. They extort, kidnap, and kill civilians. They recruit children to support both terrorist groups and target public institutions. The armed conflict has taken a huge toll in terms of human lives, including women and children. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Colombians have been forced to abandon their homes due to threats, harassment and violence by the guerrillas and self-defense groups.

About 30,000 Colombians lose their lives every year in terror and violent acts— this is equivalent to almost ten September 11 attacks every year. In fact, in the year 2002 there were more terrorist attacks perpetrated in Colombia than in the entire world.

- **GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ARE AT RISK.** One fact that is hardly ever mentioned is the damage that the international drug trade causes in the Amazon's environment. In the past 15 years, narco-traffickers destroyed more than 2.5 million acres of Colombia's tropical jungles to grow coca. Colombia's Amazon



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jungle has one of the highest carbon dioxide absorption rates in the world, turning it into an immeasurable resource for global climate change. The jungle is also threatened by the millions of gallons of toxic chemicals that are necessary for the production of cocaine, and which are dumped into the rivers of the Amazons. The amount of pesticides and chemicals that are dumped into the Amazons every year is equivalent to three Exxon Valdez spills.

### **ILLEGAL DRUGS ARE A GLOBAL PROBLEM THAT DEMAND A GLOBAL SOLUTION**

While most of the raw material from the illicit drug trade, such as coca leaf, stems from Colombia, the remaining ingredients come from other countries. The drug trade is not only a Colombian business. It is global enterprise in scope. The demand for drugs in the industrialized nations is not a new phenomenon. Neither are the precursor chemicals used by the narco-traffickers to transform coca into cocaine. The United States, Europe and China are among the illegal exporters of such precursor chemicals. Other countries also provide the arms used by the narco-traffickers in their criminal activities. The highest profits generated by the drug trade are laundered and invested in international financial institutions and subsequently spent on the arms used by both narco-traffickers and guerrillas.

Colombia has proved to be a highly committed in the fight against drugs and terrorism. Such dedication has taken its toll in human lives and government expenditure. Colombia spends about US\$ 1 billion annually on its struggle against drugs. This enormous sum could be invested in improving social security, education and housing. Although the drug industry is a global trade, no other country in the world has spent so much per capita as Colombia has in combating the illicit drug trade.

### **THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION**

President Alvaro Uribe Vélez was elected President of the Republic of Colombia in May 2002 during the first round of elections. Colombians seek strong, decisive leadership to restore public order and peace in their country. To achieve this goal, President Uribe set three priorities - a democratic security policy, an anti-corruption drive, and an economic and social recovery.

Colombia is a democratic nation that trusts and supports its institutions. While in 1993, public approval of the Armed Forces was 49%, but 10 years later it reached 76%. Compared to other nations, Colombia stands out for its firm support of its armed forces.



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There has been a similar rise in public approval for the National Police in the past 10 years. In 1993, 21% of Colombians trusted the police. Now this figure has risen to 57%.

The Colombian Government democratic security policy has paid off, particularly in the restoration of governmental control over the national territory. At the end of 2003, all 158 towns recuperated its police force that was absent since the previous year. During 2003, the number of massacre victims dropped a 37.8% and the kidnapping rate fell to a 26.3%. Between January and July 2004, the number of massacres victims dropped a 44.9%, the kidnapping rate a 39.87% and the common homicide rate dropped, compared to the last years same period, a 10.1%. Since August 7 2002, when President Alvaro Uribe started in office, 6.181 terrorists have demobilized (26/08/2004).

As a result of President Uribe's democratic security and economic policies, Colombia's economic growth reached 3.86%, and exports rose by 7.2% in 2003.

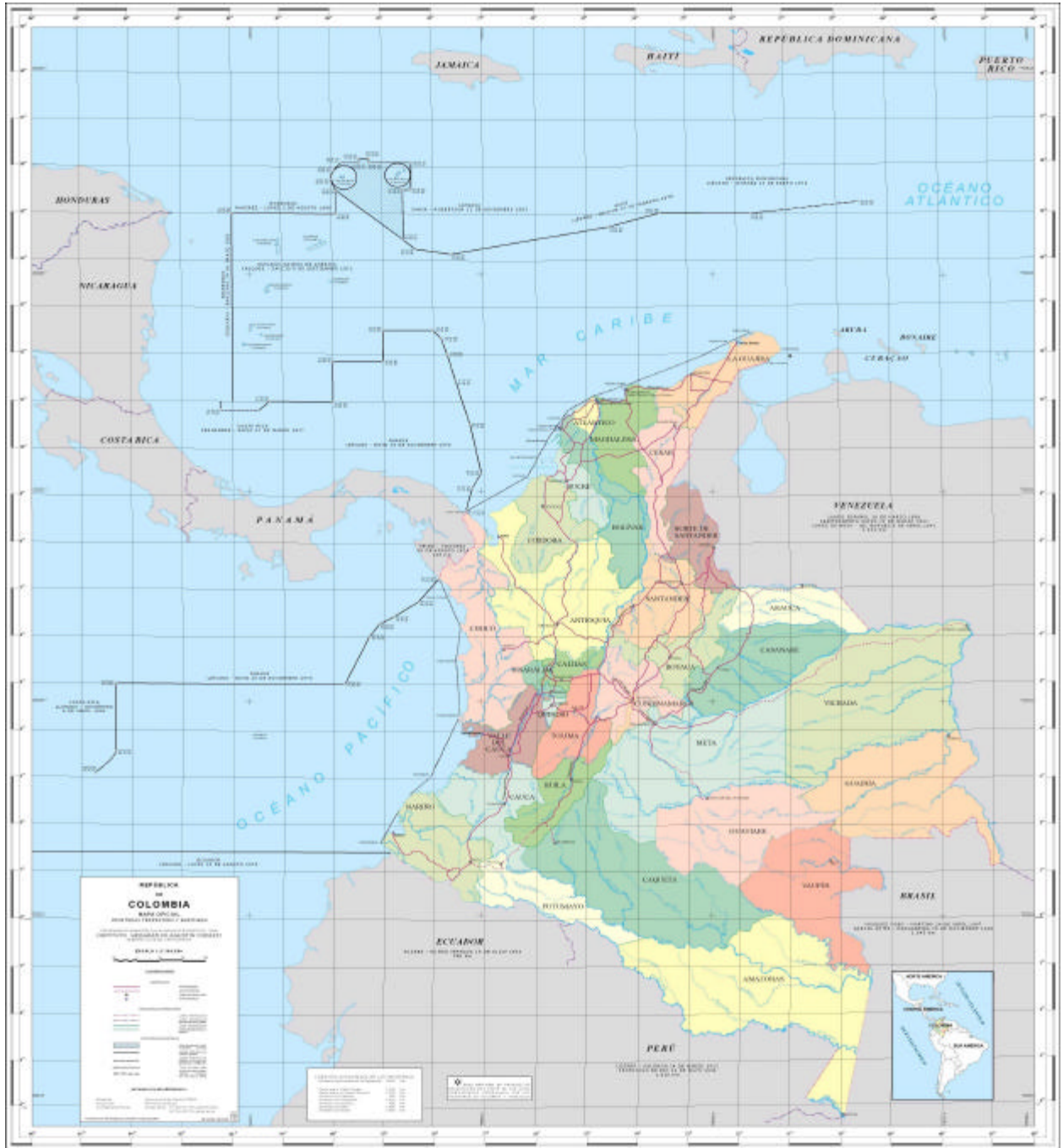
Social recovery under the Uribe administration, particularly in education, has been significant. In 2003, the government created 477,598 new spaces for students at primary and secondary institutions, as well as 34,858 places for postsecondary education. Furthermore, 198 libraries throughout Colombia were provided with materials and equipment. (See attachment N°1)

The President's commitment to this task has required an extraordinary amount of hard work. His efforts have achieved positive results, which are acknowledged by the people of Colombian. Hence, opinion polls show that 70% of the population supports the President of the Republic of Colombia, even 2 years after he started his administration.

### **MAP No. 1**



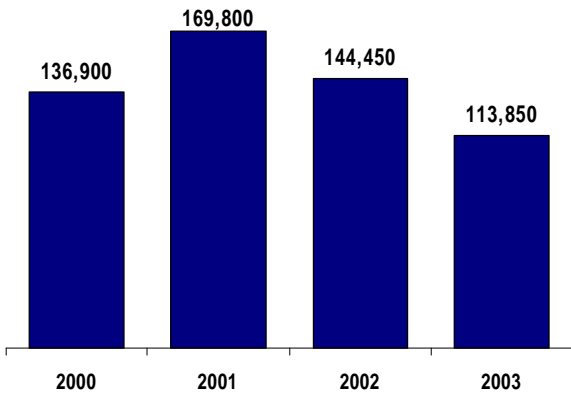
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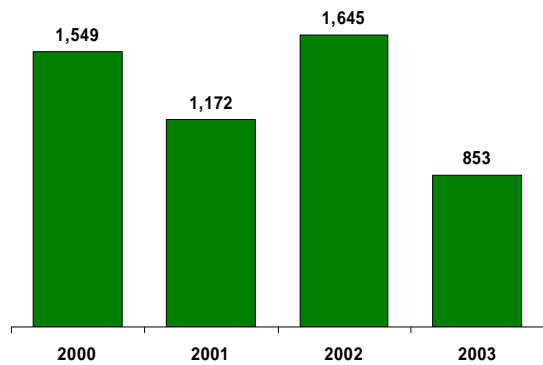
**ATTACHMENT N°1**



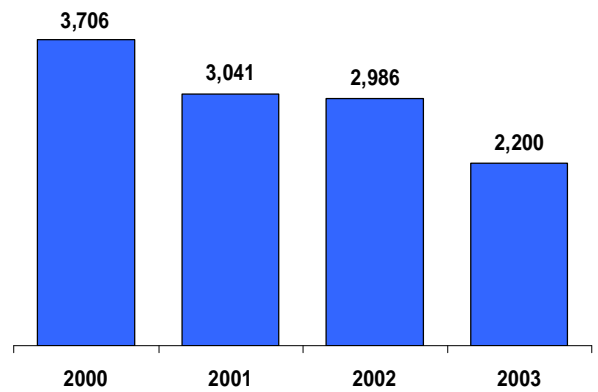
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**COCA CROP (hectares)**

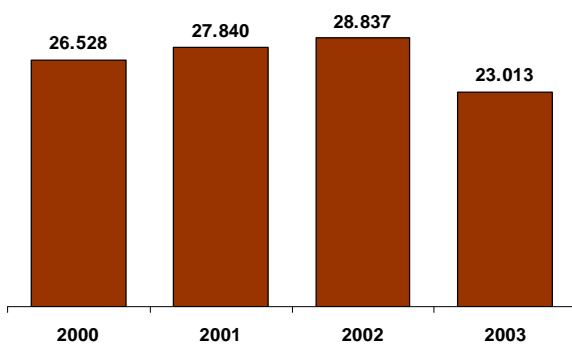


**INCIDENTS OF TERRORISM**



**HOMICIDES**

**KIDNAPPINGS**



**SOLDIERS & POLICE**

**GDP GROWTH (%)  
4.06% without illegal crops**



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