

Western Hemisphere

“Human rights will not be guaranteed if we always hope that someone else will step forward.... The whispered resolve of the individual becomes the roar of collective action.”

Oscar Arias
President of Costa Rica 1986-1990
and Nobel Peace Laureate in 1987





Chinautla, Guatemala

Young woman votes for mayor and city council at a polling station six miles west of Guatemala City.

AP Photo

The Western Hemisphere has transformed itself over the last two decades from a region dominated by repressive, authoritarian regimes to one in which 34 out of 35 countries have democratically-elected governments and growing civil societies. Despite this favorable trend, many countries in the hemisphere continue to struggle to consolidate democratic reforms and ensure respect for fundamental human rights.

During the year, Haiti faced political upheaval and internal strife. Following former President Aristide's resignation and departure in late February, a constitutionally-mandated interim government (IGOH) was named on March 17. With the assistance of the international community, the IGOH took significant steps to rebuild democracy and the rule of law over the course of the year. In Bolivia, where citizens remain skeptical of their government's ability to provide accountable, responsive leadership, public unrest in 2004 diminished compared to previous years. Cuba's ongoing repression of pro-democracy dissidents and human rights activists remained a serious problem. Confronting the Venezuelan Government's increasingly authoritarian rule, citizens went to the polls in August in an effort to resolve Venezuela's political impasse over the country's leadership in a peaceful and democratic manner.

Recognizing these ongoing challenges, the United States in 2004 continued its efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, promote good governance and transparency, support the rule of law, and encourage greater respect for human rights. United States efforts included both high-level diplomatic engagement and grassroots-level work with civil society actors.

The United States provided support throughout the region for key democratic institutions, including political parties and civil society. Political party initiatives focused on internal democratization, outreach to marginalized groups, responsiveness to constituent needs and greater accountability. Civil assistance and training promoted greater inclusion in the democratic process. As a result of U.S.-sponsored programs, citizens in many countries were able to call for greater transparency and accountability in government. In Jamaica, U.S. assistance increased civil society's ability to influence the Government, resulting in stronger policies to combat violent crime. In the Dominican Republic, U.S. diplomatic and programmatic support were instrumental in paving the way for elections which were recognized internationally as free and fair. In preparation for Haiti's municipal and national elections, the United States provided funding for voter registration, political party development and voter education.

The United States buttressed regional efforts to resolve internal conflicts, strengthen the rule of law, protect human rights and promote worker rights. The U.S. Peace Program in Colombia evolved in 2004 in response to the Government's efforts to expand peace negotiations with illegal armed groups. The United States established Peaceful Co-Existence Centers in seven of the most conflict-ridden municipalities in Colombia. Throughout the region, the United States assisted government efforts to reform judicial codes and procedures, resulting in greater efficiency and access to justice. The United States coordinated projects throughout the region to strengthen labor systems and markets through promotion of freedom of association, collective bargaining and protection of core labor standards. In addressing trafficking in persons (TIP), U.S. efforts were often regional, reflecting the fact that TIP is a problem that by definition spills over national borders. Anti-TIP efforts funded by the United States were particularly robust in Brazil, Peru, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Honduras. Combating child labor often goes hand-in-hand with combating TIP, since children are frequently the victims of exploitation in both situations. To address this combined threat, the United States supports projects designed to raise awareness and reduce instances of TIP and child labor throughout the region.

Strengthening Political Parties in Latin America

In recent decades, Latin America has experienced a wave of democratization as the region moves away from the dictatorships of the past. However, the democratic process remains fragile. Many citizens in Latin America view political parties as out of touch with the populace, driven by the interests of the elite, plagued by corruption and unable to deliver on promises or demonstrate leadership. To counteract these concerns, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has undertaken a project designed to rejuvenate and strengthen political parties in Argentina, Bolivia and Peru.

Using an interactive, participatory methodology to impart 'best practices' in democratic governance, NDI held regional workshops in February for 18 representatives of organizations that specialize in training political parties. The U.S.-funded NDI initiative asked each participant to create and implement a project designed to improve their clients' internal democracy, transparency and outreach to constituents. While this project faced challenges in Bolivia - pointing to the need for re-doubled efforts at political party revitalization there - the initiative was a clear success in Argentina and Peru. Participants took the 'train the trainer' model to heart, adapting NDI's curriculum for local use. During the workshop sessions, NDI provided training methodologies and materials to help the participants carry out their projects which included instruction on solving political problems, providing solid policy recommendations and outreach to youth. As further resource for political party reformers, NDI posted a number of case studies representing highly successful best practices on its website in Spanish.



Argentina

The Government of Argentina generally respected the human rights of its citizens. Argentina continued to recover politically and economically from its recent economic crisis, although widespread poverty and high unemployment levels remained. Argentina's press was free and independent, frequently critical of government policy and personnel, and civil society remained extremely active and engaged. Despite these trends, problems remained.

There were instances of killings and brutality by police and prison officials. Although police and prison officials faced prosecution and convictions for offenses, impunity remained a serious problem, as did allegations of corruption.

Overcrowding in jails and prisons, as well as substandard conditions within those facilities, persisted. This problem was exacerbated by inordinate delays in investigations and trials and lengthy investigative detention periods. Lack of resources, the need for judicial reforms, and a weak investigative infrastructure make significant short-term improvements unlikely. Anti-Semitism remained a concern. Domestic violence and sexual harassment against women were problems. Coordination in combating trafficking in persons remained an issue, despite the fact that the Government of Argentina increased its efforts to combat trafficking and the sexual exploitation of minors.

The United States worked with the Argentine Government, media, civil society and security forces to strengthen democratic institutions, encourage civil society participation, and fight corruption. These efforts aimed to increase transparency, strengthen the judiciary, and combat trafficking in persons.

Throughout the year, U.S. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, engaged in a continuing dialogue with Argentine policy and opinion makers on human rights, democratic governance and rule of law issues. Embassy Officials maintained a high profile with national and provincial officials, press

and civil society groups in investigating and following up on allegations of torture, abuse and extra-judicial killings. The United States engaged with national and provincial government authorities on specific human rights cases and maintained close contact with major human rights and civic education NGOs. Through its annual country reports on human rights, religious freedom and trafficking in persons, the United States maintained these issues in the public and official discourse. The Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission and other Embassy officers were in a continuous dialogue with the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding issues before the UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly to ensure Argentina's support for improvements of human rights practices in the region and worldwide.

Argentina has an active and engaged civil society, but some of its most marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as indigenous communities, need assistance to support their efforts to organize. Several Native American speakers offered Argentine indigenous communities practical steps for reviewing and shaping sustainable plans for community development. Using experiences of U.S. tribes, these speakers illustrated the importance of citizen participation by indigenous peoples in their communities to ensure sustainable development. They shared success stories for building sustainable communities and starting small businesses. The programs included visits to some of Argentina's poorest indigenous communities. Their message of focusing on building strong communities through ethical leaders, good governance and the establishment of long-term, responsible public policies was well received by indigenous Mapuche and Wichi audiences. Shortly after this program, the indigenous community of Amaicha del Valle dismissed their corrupt chief of over 20 years, established a committee to review their constitution, and elected a new chief.

On judicial reform, the United States sponsored several speakers who engaged local audiences on such issues as continuing education for judges, and conducted a series of digital video conferences with a local consortium under the rubric of "Justice Undergoing Change," which provided a

20-hour "train the trainer" course. As a measure of its success, one of the Argentine participants in the course was invited to Guatemala to conduct a conflict-management session with that country's 22 provincial governors. Two speakers discussed Argentina's transition to jury trials. One speaker addressed the Senate, which is considering a bill to introduce the use of jury trials in cases of public corruption and other serious crimes. The second spoke to large and enthusiastic audiences in Buenos Aires (including members of the Supreme Court, the Senate, City Council members, NGOs and members of the legal community) and engaged audiences in Cordoba, Mendoza, Misiones, Neuquen and Entre Rios through digital video conferences.

Transparency and accountability in the public sector are essential elements in democratic governance and the protection of human rights. The United States continued to enhance transparency and public participation in the policy process by hosting International Visitors (IVP) trips, programming U.S. speakers, and distributing materials. Melanie Ann Pustay, Deputy Director of the U.S. Department of Justice's Freedom of Information Office, conducted a week-long workshop for some 100 Argentine Ministry of Justice officials on Freedom of Information Act issues and practices. Ms. Pustay, the Ambassador, and the Legal Attaché also participated in a WORLDNET interactive program on anti-corruption with some twenty Argentine NGOs and Anti-Corruption Office officials. In November, The Trust for the Americas/Organization of American States, together with the Argentine NGO Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth and with U.S. Government support, began implementing an initiative to improve the quality of journalism in Argentina as a tool to fight corruption, both in the public and private sectors.

A Principal Advisor to the State Department's Anti-Corruption Program spoke to Argentine audiences to discuss the progress made at the Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey on anti-corruption issues and the challenges still to be faced. He opened Argentina's Catholic University's graduate program on public ethics and engaged with NGOs and government officials.

The United States continued to ensure that civic education programs, emphasizing respect for human rights and civilian control of the military, were an integral part of training provided to Argentine military personnel and Ministry of Defense (MOD) civilians. The United States applied vigorous and comprehensive vetting of all military and MOD civilian participants in international military education and training programs, in compliance with the Leahy Amendment.

Combating trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a top U.S. priority in Argentina. The Deputy Chief of Mission led U.S. inter-agency engagement with Argentine government officials, NGOs and international organizations. A representative of the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons visited Argentina twice in 2004 to raise awareness of the issue and meet with officials, prosecutors, the International Organization for Migration and NGOs. He gave an interview to a major entertainment and news network, effectively explaining U.S. policy and ongoing programs. The United States lobbied the Argentine Government to formalize its inter-agency coordination process and appoint a central coordinator of activities. At the end of the year the Federal Office of Victim's Assistance under the Attorney General's Office was identified as the coordinator of anti-TIP efforts.

Bolivia

In 2004, Bolivia had fewer episodes of social unrest than during the previous year, when in October protestors forced President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, who had been elected in free and fair elections in August 2002, to resign from office. Since then, the Government of Carlos Mesa Gisbert has generally respected the human rights of its citizens, though serious problems remained, due in large part to weak institutions, pervasive corruption, a violent political opposition and limited resources.

In July, the country held its first national referendum in many decades. There continued to be credible, though fewer, reports of abuses by security forces, including use of excessive force, extortion, arbitrary arrest and detention, and mistreat-

ment of military conscripts. Prison conditions remained harsh, and violence in prisons and prolonged pre-trial detentions were problems. Other problems included pervasive domestic violence and discrimination against women, the abuse of children and widespread child labor, discrimination against and abuse of indigenous people, discrimination against Afro-Bolivians, and brutal working conditions in the mining industry and trafficking in persons (TIP).

The highest priorities of the United States in Bolivia were to promote democracy and political and social stability and to ensure that the police and military respect human rights and cooperate with investigations and prosecutions of alleged violations of human rights. The U.S. Government's strategy aimed to increase citizen participation in democratic processes and improve local government, as well as improve the judicial system and ensure the rule of law. The United States also promoted women's rights and assists in combating corruption, child labor and potential TIP.

The Ambassador and other Embassy officials worked with government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations to identify areas of particular human rights concern and encourage needed reforms. To build international support for the new Government, Secretary of State Powell and then-Deputy Secretary of State Armitage hosted a January 2004 Bolivia Support Group meeting in Washington, with the participation of 19 countries and six international organizations.

The United States supported democratic order and social stability in Bolivia in a variety of ways, through funding programs to strengthen municipal governments, legislative development, political party reform and anti-corruption. These programs encouraged the participation of women and indigenous people, particularly in the city of El Alto. The Embassy also hired native language-speaking indigenous advisors to help it better understand and broaden links with this large and under-represented segment of the population. In the past year, U.S. programs trained nearly 2,000 representatives of indigenous groups. In the peri-

od prior to the December 2004 municipal elections, USAID programs trained over 2,700 women candidates and potential candidates for office. In addition, USAID through the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) focused the majority of its transition assistance on supporting better economic opportunities and increasing political participation for indigenous communities. Bolivia's nationwide municipal elections, held in October 2004, were without serious incidents and met international standards.

As part of its outreach to the indigenous program, the U.S. Embassy sent various members from the indigenous community and officials to participate in 2004 International Visitors Programs on topics such as democracy and civic education. The Embassy also invited guest speakers and published op-ed pieces on supporting democracy, indigenous issues and fighting corruption. The Embassy produces radio programs, news and coverage of significant events in indigenous languages of Quechua and Aymara. USAID/OTI funded indigenous language radio producers for the communications office of the executive branch to ensure outreach to widest population. In 2004, indigenous and Afro-Bolivian groups participated in workshops on democratic values, as well as a U.S.-funded education-based program to promote improvements in political access and responsible civic and political participation among rural and indigenous populations.

Because many human rights abuses occurred within the justice system, the Embassy has focused major human rights and democracy efforts in that sector. The U.S. Government's support for justice system reform, initiated in the early 1990s, continued to support consolidation of the new Code of Criminal Procedures (CCP). The Mesa Government continued to implement a new Public Ministry Law adapting the prosecutorial function of the judicial system to the requirements of the CCP. United States programs helped strengthen the Public Ministry as well as other key justice sector institutions through extensive training and technical assistance. Among other achievements, the reform created a new Public Defense function to ensure citizens' access to due process in criminal trials as required under the Bolivian Constitution.

To date, several thousand judges, prosecutors, police, public defenders, lawyers, law students and NGO representatives have received training on the new CCP.

The United States also made a major contribution to establishing Bolivia's new Forensic Institute, which will greatly increase the quality of evidence used in the criminal justice process and contribute to fairer and more expeditious trials. The U.S. Government worked closely with civil society to help educate citizens about their rights under the reformed criminal justice procedures and strengthen their support for these important reforms. Thanks to increases in efficiency brought by the new CCP, criminal trials became more transparent at the same time that the costs and time spent in those trials were substantially reduced.

The United States helped to expand access to justice services for poor Bolivians by helping to establish eight new Integrated Justice Centers in areas of conflict, including the coca-growing regions of the Chapare and Yungas, and El Alto. These centers provided citizens with access to mediation and other legal services, and established a positive presence of the Bolivian Government in areas where respect for the rule of law is fragile.

The United States also helped to establish a new Office of the Presidential Delegate for Anti-Corruption and provided technical assistance to initiatives undertaken by the office. Among other initiatives, the Office worked together with the Attorney General's office and the national police to establish three pilot interdisciplinary anti-corruption task forces to pursue emblematic corruption cases. The United States also supported an initiative led by the Carter Center to support passage of an access-to-information law.

To strengthen its capacity for monitoring and acting on cases of alleged human rights abuses, the Embassy hired a Bolivian attorney to focus exclusively on human rights issues. The attorney worked with the Bolivian military, police, judiciary and other officials to track human rights cases and investigations for the Embassy database and reporting and to support diplomatic outreach on this critical issue.

The Embassy routinely raises the importance and provisions of Leahy legislation and other human rights conditions on U.S. security assistance in ongoing contacts with civilian and military officials and collaborated to help create the Government's own human rights database. The Embassy conducted interagency vetting on all security forces considered for U.S. training and/or support. The United States also provided ongoing training and seminars to the Bolivian military, including regional Human Rights Consensus Document Implementation conferences. The Bolivian military recently assigned a human rights officer to every command. The Embassy continued to assist the National Police with its National Directorate of Professional Responsibility to investigate allegations against police officers of malfeasance, wrongdoing and human rights abuses, and encouraged the establishment of the first national human rights office for the police. During the year, policemen and military personnel received crowd control training emphasizing respect for human rights and internationally accepted principles of crowd control. Narcotics police officers also received training on human rights issues as a key part of counter-narcotics training; basic training included a 40-hour human rights module.

The United States repeatedly raised with Bolivian officials the need for comprehensive action on TIP and related child labor and prostitution concerns. The Embassy promoted passage of a model anti-trafficking law with senior officials and lawmakers and helped fund a newly-created trafficking in persons investigation unit in the police. A U.S. Government grant continued to support a CARE project to keep the children of Potosi miners in school and out of the mines. The United States funded a project to improve workplace safety and to promote tripartite dialogue among workers, businesspeople and the Government.

Brazil

In October 2002, Brazil's constitutional Government held its fourth general election since the end of military rule in 1985, electing President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva ("Lula") and members of the legislature in accordance with the 1988 Constitution. In October of 2004, nationwide municipal elections elected mayors and city council members in each of the country's 5,563 municipalities. Both elections were held without serious incidents and met international standards.

The Government of Brazil generally respected human rights, and there were improvements in a few areas. However, serious problems remained, and the human rights record of several states remained poor. Police continued to commit numerous abuses, including unlawful killings, torture and excessive use of force. Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. The judiciary was inefficient, lacked resources and was often subject to political and economic influences - especially at the state level. Judicial officials were often poorly trained and the judicial process remained slow. In many instances, poorer and less educated citizens made limited use of an appeals process that could have ensured their right to a fair trial. Violence and discrimination against women, indigenous people, Afro-Brazilians and homosexuals remained a problem. Child abuse and prostitution, human trafficking, and internal slave and forced labor continued, as did intimidation and killings of rural labor organizers.

The United States human rights and democracy strategy for Brazil focused on increasing political participation of underrepresented persons (mainly women and Afro-Brazilians), strengthening the judiciary, improving access to education and employment for Brazil's poor youth, and especially combating trafficking in persons (TIP) and internal slave labor.

In August, Ambassador Siv, the U.S. Representative to the UN Economic and Social Council, along with Ambassador Danilovich, met with several high-level Brazilian officials involved in promoting human rights and democracy, including President Lula's Foreign Policy Advisor.

In celebration of Brazil's Black Awareness month, former Congresswoman Cardiss Collins spoke at the Federal Senate in Brasilia and addressed groups of students and academics in Brasilia and Salvador, Bahia. Congresswoman Collins spoke about the role of African-Americans in the passage of civil rights legislation during a series of professional training programs on race and gender equality. The Public Affairs Section in Brasilia sponsored both events.

High profile cases charging judges with corruption and influence peddling were common and impunity seemed widespread. At the end of 2004, approximately 115 senior judges throughout the country were under investigation. To address problems in the judiciary, the U.S. Government sponsored a number of guest lectures by professors from Harvard University Law School, the University of Texas Law School and Columbia University to promote civil and political rights and judicial reform.

The Embassy in Brasilia and a local non-governmental organization held the first ever U.S.-Brazil Constitutional Dialogue on The Contemporary Meaning of the Constitution. Professors from the University of Texas Law School and Brazilian Supreme Court Justices discussed the importance of freedom of speech, human rights, and individual and social rights before an audience of judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law students.

The U.S. Government's Disadvantaged Youth Program actively worked to ensure that children and adolescents received access to basic rights by providing at-risk youth with increased access to viable training and employment opportunities. Activities during the year included technical training and life-skill building, corporate mentoring, paid internships and on-site formal sector training. In addition, the United States provided information and communication technology training to 1,000 youth and educators. Trainees conducted market surveys to identify key factors and barriers considered during the hiring process, and launched a campaign to decrease prejudice against young workers from poor communities.



Igarape Grande, Brazil

A local man carries an electronic voting booth that was delivered by a mailman on a small boat to a tiny Amazon river community in northern Brazil.

AP Photo

Brazil has a significant domestic and international TIP problem. It is a major source country for women trafficked into prostitution in Europe and bordering countries. Men and children are forced into agricultural labor schemes on farms in the country's interior. The U.S. Government considered combating TIP a priority and made substantial efforts in this field. To further reduce child labor and associated human rights abuses, the Embassy teamed with Partners for the Americas, the Ministries of Labor, Education and Social Assistance and the Government of Brazil's National Human Rights Secretariat to implement a U.S. Labor Department grant to target child labor in northeast Brazil.

Additional U.S. funding supported International Labor Organization programs working to combat child and forced labor. In addition, Catholic Relief Services began a program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to combat forced labor by working with cities that traditionally provided victims for slave labor. The Embassy reinforced the

Brazilian Ministry of Justice's efforts at increasing awareness of the human trafficking problem by educating both Brazilian officials and target groups. During the year, Brazil was selected by the U.S. Government as one of eight countries to receive aid under President Bush's Anti-Trafficking in Persons Initiative. The Departments of Homeland Security and Justice consulted with Brazilian officials in preparation for significant grants for projects to help Brazilian authorities combat trafficking under the President's Initiative Program.

In May, the U.S. Consulate General in Sao Paulo and the Sao Paulo State Secretary of Justice inaugurated the Sao Paulo State Office for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons. This office conducts public education campaigns, assists victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation and refers individual trafficking cases to the Brazilian federal police and state attorneys. The office will also have a center at the Sao Paulo international airport to assist victims return to

Brazil after being trafficked abroad. The office was the first of its kind in Brazil, and because of involvement by Brazil's Ministry of Justice, serves as a model for similar offices that will be opened nationwide. United States Government assistance to the Sao Paulo Secretary of Justice allowed the office to purchase essential equipment.

The United States also promoted several human rights and democracy programs throughout the year and actively worked to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Activities of the U.S. Government included direct service assistance to human trafficking and sexual exploitation victims, shelter strengthening in target areas, referrals to appropriate legal and law enforcement services to facilitate prosecution of perpetrators and dismantle human trafficking networks. The United States also promoted increased coordination between stakeholders and service providers at the local level, and technical assistance to improve the Brazilian human trafficking and sexual exploitation notification system.

The United States funded anti-trafficking activities that led to a number of significant achievements during the year. Under the umbrella of a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Brazilian Secretariat for Human Rights and the Ministry of Social Development, the United States worked to strengthen the nationwide network of government centers that provided emergency health, legal, and psychosocial services to human trafficking victims. Over 1,300 public agents, including social workers, psychologists, physicians and teachers received U.S.-sponsored training during the year, which allowed for the design of local operational plans and strategies for 2005. During the year, local partners identified over 700 cases of commercial sexual exploitation, of which 108 involved illegal trafficking.

The Government of Brazil regarded the anti-trafficking program as a model for the country. A report issued during the year by the Brazilian General Accounting Office stated that the program is the most successful and effective initiative that combats human trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors in the country.

At the invitation of the Brazilian Government, USAID held a seat, for the second year, on the Inter-Sectoral Commission on Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. This Commission is responsible for coordinating anti-trafficking activities.

In November, the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia took part in an anti-trafficking seminar sponsored by the Embassy of Sweden with participation from the Brazilian National Secretary of Justice Claudia Chagas, the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security, Labor and State, NGOs and the diplomatic community. The U.S. Departments of Labor and Homeland Security presentations addressed an audience composed of the Brazilian federal government officials, NGO representatives, human rights activists, diplomats and law enforcement officials. The presentations outlined the U.S. Government's commitment to the fight against human trafficking through the prosecution of offenders, protection of victims and creation of programs to prevent future trafficking.

Special Ambassador John Miller, head of the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, toured Brazil to survey Brazilian efforts at combating human trafficking. Ambassador Miller met with several high-level Brazilian officials, NGO representatives, public prosecutors and consular representatives. He participated in a joint press conference with the Sao Paulo State Anti-Trafficking Office, gave an interview to Brazil's largest daily newspaper, and provided an op-ed piece following his visit to continue to raise public awareness of the problem.

Colombia

Although serious problems remained, the Government's respect for human rights improved in some areas. Colombia is a democracy that has been ravaged by an internal armed conflict financed by drug trafficking and other criminal activities for over 40 years. The percentage of reported human rights abuses attributed to security forces was low; however, some members of the security forces continued to commit serious abuses, including unlawful and extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances. Some members of the

security forces collaborated with the paramilitary terrorist group the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), which committed serious abuses. There were allegations of arbitrary arrests and detentions, and prolonged pretrial detention remained a fundamental problem. Illegal paramilitaries and guerrilla terrorist groups committed numerous human rights abuses, and methods to deal with these threats through the civilian judiciary were complicated by corruption and a cumbersome inquisitorial justice system. In order to better address these issues and resource constraints, the Government began a move to an adversarial judicial system in January 2005 with the hope of strengthening the power of the judiciary, increasing the efficiency with which these cases are handled, eliminating impunity from punishment and bolstering respect for human rights.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Colombia was both proactive and responsive, tackling the root causes of human rights violations and social unrest, while continuing to invest in short-term emergency humanitarian assistance. Key strategic objectives included promotion of democracy and good governance, support for judicial reform and the rule of law coupled with increased access to the justice system, protection of vulnerable populations, promotion of peace initiatives and provision of humanitarian assistance.

The United States supported a Local Governance Program, which worked to improve the capacity of municipal governments to involve citizens in local decision-making, provide services and manage resources effectively and transparently. The Local Governance Program supported the establishment of 244 social and productive infrastructure projects in 2004. These projects were administered through local citizen oversight committees that established project priorities and oversaw their management and financing. In addition, the United States successfully completed a nationwide public awareness anti-corruption campaign that reached six million citizens through radio, newspaper and television messages. The United States also completed the standardization of internal control units in the last two of a total of 26 government agencies.

The United States Government provided assistance that was instrumental in drafting a new criminal procedure code and paving the way for the new adversarial judicial system. The Colombian Congress approved the draft code in July 2004, which was signed into law by President Uribe in August 2004. This code has been used since January 2005 in Bogotá and the districts of Manizales, Pereira and Armenia. The United States organized joint trial technique courses for judges, prosecutors, police, defense attorneys and investigators. United States assistance funded visits for judges and legislators to observe the adversarial judicial system in practice in Puerto Rico. The United States also implemented an instructors' course at the Prosecutor General's training facility, which trained instructors to conduct their own courses in forensic specialties, basic investigative skills, trial techniques, interview techniques and crime scene management. In cooperation with the Colombian Justice Sector High Level Commission, the United States funded the construction of an additional seven trial courtrooms in 2004, for a cumulative total of 35, to complement the shift toward an adversarial judicial system.



Columbia

Voters cast their ballots.

IFES

In 2004, four additional U.S.-funded Justice and Peace Houses - one-stop legal assistance shops - were established, raising the cumulative total to 37. The Justice and Peace Houses handled 746,000 cases during 2004, and since their inception in 1997 they have increased access to the justice system for more than 2.7 million poor and marginalized Colombians. In addition, the United States assisted in the certification of another 571 dispute resolution experts, for a total of 1,048. The United States developed and implemented a multi-faceted strategy to strengthen the Government's capability to investigate and prosecute human rights cases, providing Colombian judicial police investigators, forensic examiners and prosecutors with necessary training, technical assistance and equipment to enhance and upgrade their individual skill levels. The strategy employed a task force concept, whereby personnel from 11 satellite Human Rights Units in the Prosecutor General's Office train and work together, resulting in a more effective case flow from initial criminal investigation to final case resolution. In 2004, the Office of the Prosecutor General conducted major operations against guerrilla and paramilitary criminal organizations, bringing charges for murder, assault, extortion and drug trafficking.

The United States trained 840 police officers assigned to rural outposts with little or no previous police presence, 400 police in adversarial judicial system trial techniques, and more than 5,000 prosecutors, judges, investigators and defense attorneys. Specialized training and state of the art equipment donations enabled Colombian forensic labs to investigate human rights violations more effectively. These included the enhancement of DNA analyzers and the Combined DNA Index System database, upgrading of the Integrated Ballistics Identification System, updating of forensic imaging and document analysis systems, upgrading of the automated fingerprint identification system, and installation of a wireless network providing inter-agency connectivity and information sharing. In addition, at the request of Prosecutor General Osorio, the United States conducted polygraphs of 446 prosecutors and investigators from the National Human Rights Units and their eleven Human Rights support units. The

Prosecutor General imposed this requirement to combat widespread corruption in the organization. Polygraphed officials included office directors, senior prosecutors and members of the anti-narcotics, anti-kidnapping and anti-corruption units, all of whom received U.S. assistance. Ninety five percent of those tested passed.

Working with the Colombian Ministry of Interior and Justice, the United States provided security protection assistance to 556 people in 2004, for a cumulative total of 3,701 people, and hardened an additional 25 offices in 2004, for a cumulative total of 96 offices that had been under threat by paramilitary and guerrilla terrorist groups. The protection program included threatened human rights workers, union leaders, journalists, members of the left wing Patriotic Union Party, mayors, city council members and municipal human rights workers. The U.S.-funded Early Warning System expanded to 21 regions. In 2004, the system determined that 18 of the 89 alerts it received required a government response to prevent potential massacres, forced displacements or other egregious human rights violations. The Government of Colombia has responded to 195 of the 323 alerts emitted by the system since it began in 2001.

Although NGO statistics indicate kidnappings have dropped approximately 42 percent in 2004, kidnapping remains a significant problem in Colombia. The United States assisted the Government in developing and implementing a comprehensive program to investigate and prosecute kidnapping and extortion offenses. Six courses in the areas of Human Resources Intelligence Management, Racketeering Enterprise Investigations, Kidnapping and Ransom Investigations, and Interviewing and Interrogation were held for 180 law enforcement, prosecutorial and military personnel. The intimidation of witnesses and judicial sector personnel remained a serious problem. The United States provided training and equipment for Government of Columbia protective force personnel in both the witness and dignitary protection areas, including personnel from the Bogotá mayoral and other Government ministerial security details.

The United States Peace Program underwent significant change and growth in 2004. While it continued to support civil society initiatives to promote peace and conflict resolution, the program also developed a working relationship with Colombia's new High Commissioner for Peace to design and implement initiatives to support peace negotiations with illegal armed groups. As negotiations began between the Government and paramilitary groups, the United States provided advice regarding policy and programmatic parameters for a possible demobilization initiative. Also, in conjunction with the High Commissioner and Ministry of Interior and Justice, the United States established Peaceful Co-Existence Centers in seven of the most conflict-ridden municipalities in Colombia. These centers provided communities with a neutral space for dialogue, conflict resolution and social services.

The rate of displacement of people due to armed conflict fell sharply in 2003 and 2004, according to official government figures, but the internal conflict in Colombia has displaced over 2 million people since 1995. The United States supported six international organizations and NGOs in Colombia that provide emergency humanitarian assistance such as food, temporary shelter, hygiene and household kits, psycho-social counseling, health care and temporary employment to newly displaced persons. The United States also provided mid- to long-term assistance to displaced persons focused on economic reintegration of displaced persons, to include a smaller but significant returnee component. Program activities include micro-credit programs, vocational training and job placement, health care, shelter, income generation, improved education and basic community infrastructure. Through these programs the United States assisted more than 581,000 internally displaced persons in 2004. In addition, in 2004, the United States assisted more than 774 former child combatants to leave illegal armed groups and transition into regular society, for a cumulative total of 2,085 assisted by the Child Ex-Combatant program. Assistance includes basic shelter, food, education, job skills training and psycho-social assistance.

The United States also worked with the Government to combat trafficking in persons (TIP). In July 2004, the International Organization of Migration hosted a conference with U.S. funding on the application of justice in fighting TIP. This conference was attended by government officials from Colombia and the Dominican Republic.

Although labor union-related homicides and kidnappings in 2004 were lower than in previous years, violence against labor union leaders and activists continued to be a serious problem. Through a U.S. grant, a U.S. organization provided U.S.-based training and technical education to nearly 40 Colombian trade union leaders who were under threat. The United States also funded an International Labor Organization (ILO) project designed to improve labor relations and generate quality employment for women. A second U.S. grant provided funding to the ILO's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor. In 2004, nearly 3,000 or more children left their work in low-tech open-pit mines under an IPEC-funded pilot project. However, the project was closed at the end of fiscal year 2004. A new educational program, "Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor through Education in Colombia," was implemented to assist at-risk youth employed in the cut flower sector in Colombia. These youth were almost entirely employed in small family businesses producing flowers for local sale. The majority of these children were victims of poverty, and in many cases, the parents were convinced that survival required the economic contribution of their children. Eliminating this form of child labor required working with the entire family in order to get the children to school.

Cuba

For 46 years, the Cuban Government has consistently spurned domestic and international calls for greater political tolerance and respect for human rights. Cuba's human rights record remained poor in 2004. The Cuban Government ignored or violated virtually all of its citizens' rights, including the fundamental right to change their government. Indeed, the Government has quashed all efforts to initiate a public debate on how Cuba can prepare for a peaceful transition, in general by forbidding

open speculation on possible political changes after Castro's demise, and in particular by rejecting the constitutionally permissible Varela Project petition drive that called for basic political and economic rights.

As part of a March 2003 crackdown, the Government of Cuba arrested 75 pro-democracy and human rights activists, most of whom remain imprisoned. The Government maintained a tight media monopoly, and harassed and imprisoned pro-democracy activists, independent journalists and librarians, often forcing them into exile. Accused dissidents received sham trials and their prison conditions remained life threatening. Domestic violence against women continued, and child prostitution was a problem, as the Government refused to acknowledge Cuba's status as a major destination for sex tourism, including sex with minors. The Government of Cuba severely restricted worker rights, dismantling independent unions in 2003, and then claiming that they did not exist.

The priorities of the U.S. Government in Cuba are to encourage a peaceful transition to democracy and to direct international attention to the severe human rights crisis on the island. While the Castro brothers remain in power, any movement toward an open society and democratic political processes is slow to non-existent. Significant human rights improvements are also difficult to achieve under current conditions. A May 2004 government-organized protest required a million Cubans to march past the United States Interests Section (USINT), and December 2004 television broadcasts sought to portray U.S. diplomats as engaged in inflammatory activities.

To focus international attention on Cuba's deplorable human rights situation, the United States has greatly increased high-level public statements on ongoing abuses and encouraged other governments to do the same. In May 2004, the President approved the recommendations of the report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, a comprehensive plan to accelerate a peaceful democratic transition in Cuba and coordinate U.S. support to a free and democratic Cuban Government. In January 2004, the President condemned Cuban human rights violations in a

speech to at the Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey, Mexico. Secretary of State Powell authored an editorial in support of democracy in Cuba in March, and State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher frequently called attention to the deteriorating condition of political prisoners such as Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet. Chief of Mission James Cason focused on human rights themes in all his media interviews and in major addresses in Miami and Tampa. The U.S. Government worked actively to help achieve passage of a resolution on the situation of human rights in Cuba at the UN Commission on Human Rights in April.

The United States helped increase the flow of accurate information concerning democracy, human rights, and free enterprise to, from, and within Cuba. Specifically, U.S. Government grants to fifteen U.S. universities and U.S. NGOs helped build solidarity with Cuba's human rights activists, give voice to Cuba's independent journalists, develop independent Cuban non-governmental organizations, defend the rights of Cuban workers and provide direct outreach to the Cuban people.

To break the Cuban Government's stranglehold on all forms of public discourse, USINT mounted a major effort to increase Cuban access to information about events inside and outside Cuba. Consistent with the presidential directive to make Radio and TV Marti more effective, the Interest Section actively solicited audience preferences concerning format and content. Despite the Government's prohibition on the commercial importation of books on democracy, economics, human rights and other topics, the United States distributed more than 300,000 media items in 2004, including books, magazines, newspapers, news clips and articles. The United States also distributed several thousand radios to help Cubans obtain information on the outside world. USINT offered more than 6,000 hours of free Internet access to members of civil society in 2004. To educate Cubans on democratic processes, USINT invited members of Cuba's civil society to watch U.S. election night returns, observe a televised presidential debate and the results of the New Hampshire primaries, and participate in a seminar on the U.S. electoral process.

The U.S. Interest Section's human rights initiatives seek to send a message to the oppressors as well as the oppressed. In March, the State Department announced that the U.S. Government would not grant visas to those who helped the prosecution in the show trials of the 75 imprisoned activists. The United States urged other countries to adopt similar measures.

Because U.S. statements cannot reach Cubans through the state's media monopoly, USINT found creative ways to disseminate messages that promote human rights and democratic reforms. When words are blocked, powerful symbols and images have taken their place. USINT held an internationally televised ceremony to mark the burial of a time capsule that included messages of hope from Cuba's leading pro-democracy activists, to be read on the eve of Cuba's next free and fair elections. The Interests Section installed a mock jail cell exactly replicating the one inhabited by human rights activist Dr. Biscet, a poignant exhibition of the inhumane conditions in which Cuba holds its prisoners of conscience. In December, USINT included a lighted number "75" in its outdoor holiday lights and decorations, to remind the public of those still imprisoned unjustly. The intensity of the Government's campaign against USINT efforts to publicize the plight of the prisoners ensured that the average Cuban learned about the incarceration of the 75 pro-democracy activists.

To document the cases of Cuba's prisoners of conscience - the highest number per capita in the world - and to provide moral support, U.S. officers followed more than 350 cases and met with the prisoners' families. Officers also met with any Cuban wishing to discuss human rights violations in Cuba, receiving over 300 visits in 2004. Officials from USINT invited human rights and pro-democracy activists and political prisoners' spouses to representational events to underscore their legitimate place in Cuban civil society. In January, U.S. officials invited the children and mothers of political prisoners to a Three Kings Day celebration, and in December, the Chief of Mission received them for a holiday party. Interests Section Officers also countered Government propaganda by briefing thousands of visitors from the United States and other countries on local human rights condi-

tions and by consulting closely with other Cuba-based diplomats.

The Cuban Government has refused to recognize the extent of child prostitution or conduct public awareness campaigns to combat it. The United States has consulted closely with international NGOs and other diplomatic missions to promote increased awareness of the child prostitution problem on the island.

To recognize the important role of Cuban religious figures in society, USINT invited a broad range of religious leaders to representational events. Mission officers also provided information and humanitarian assistance to religious organizations. Although the Cuban Government has eased curbs on religious worship, it restricted the importation of religious materials, the arrival of foreign priests and missionaries to serve in Cuba, and the authorization of new places of worship, particularly for those religions not officially registered with the Government.

To help advance labor rights in a country where most leading independent union organizers are in prison, U.S. officials met with dozens of independent labor leaders and disseminated information on international labor issues, including the 2004 report of the International Labor Organization's Committee on Freedom of Association, which cited Cuba's failure to meet internationally recognized labor standards. In December, U.S. officials organized a teleconference between labor experts in the United States and Cuban independent union leaders.

Dominican Republic

Although there were some improvements in a few areas, overall the Dominican Republic Government's human rights record remained poor. The Dominican Republic enjoys a democratically elected government and a robust, multiparty system. In August, President Leonel Fernandez retook office after a generally free and fair election, replacing President Hipolito Mejia. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, internal corruption and interference from outside authorities remained a problem.

Members of the security forces committed unlawful killings. The police and, to a lesser degree, the military, tortured, beat or otherwise abused suspects, detainees and prisoners. Prison conditions ranged from poor to harsh. Lengthy pretrial detention and long trial delays continued to be problems. Domestic violence, trafficking in persons (TIP) and discrimination against Haitian migrants were also serious problems. Child labor remained a cause for concern. The Government made some advances in improving respect for human rights and worker rights. Notably, in September, a new Criminal Procedures Code that provided suspects with additional protections took effect. In October, a new Code for Minors took effect, providing increased protections and stiffer sanctions in cases of sexual or commercial exploitation. The judiciary continued to consolidate its independence and carry out reforms aimed at greater efficiency and due process. Additional military and police units received training in human rights. A new penitentiary school began training guards and administrators.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aimed to strengthen democratic institutions, encourage enforcement of the rule of law and support governmental and non-governmental efforts to increase understanding and respect for human rights. In addition, the human rights strategy increased the Government's capacity to enforce its own proscriptions against child labor and TIP, fight corruption and comply with international labor standards. Throughout 2004, U.S. officials frequently highlighted human rights and democracy concerns, both privately and in public events. Ambassador Hertell and other Embassy officials stressed the need to respect individual rights and the importance of strengthening democracy and democratic institutions. These efforts contributed directly to the successful organization of a peaceful election and change of government and to visible steps toward enhanced respect for human rights by the authorities, including through the implementation of the new Criminal Procedures Code. Additionally, the U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (OAS), Ambassador Maisto, used public presentations to encourage the Dominican Government and civil society to augment their

efforts in anti-corruption, education and basic human rights.

Electoral assistance and support from the United States, which included direct observation of the May 2004 presidential elections, was instrumental in promoting an election widely considered to be one of the freest and fairest in Dominican history. The press praised U.S. Government efforts. For more than a year in advance of elections, U.S. officials - including the Ambassador, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Noriega and others - met with presidential candidates and media sources to encourage a free, fair and transparent electoral process. A U.S. grant to a Dominican NGO led to documented improvements in the Dominican electoral process. The NGO monitored the 2004 electoral process, from logistic preparations to training of polling station officials.

On election day approximately 6,500 volunteers trained with U.S. assistance observed and reported on the elections, which resulted in improved voter confidence in the electoral process and in the tabulation of results. Though less visible, this grant gave a Dominican NGO the ability to recruit, train and encourage smaller civil society groups throughout the country to participate in election activities. This tangential impact of the U.S.-funded grant served to broaden and deepen civil society activism on governance issues. Through this grant, the United States also promoted government responsiveness to the electorate by training civil society groups to monitor the performance of elected officials in 15 selected municipalities of the country.

The United States provided funding to the OAS and U.S.-based NGOs to monitor the 2004 election. On election day, international observers - including more than 50 U.S. Embassy community members accredited by the OAS - monitored voting and the tabulation of returns at election sites across the nation. During preparations for elections, U.S. officials spoke publicly about the importance of free and fair elections. On election day, the Ambassador, accompanied by other Santo Domingo-based Ambassadors, personally visited several polling stations and monitoring headquar-

ters, and publicly supported a transparent election process.

The efforts of the United States strengthened the Government's enforcement of the rule of law. Technical assistance and training provided by the United States helped the Dominican Republic begin implementation of the new Criminal Procedures Code. Specialists supported with U.S. funding assisted in the drafting of the new Criminal Procedures Code, which the Government implemented in September 2004. The new code, based on the U.S.-style adversarial model, provides suspects with considerably more legal protections than the previous Napoleonic-style code.

Technical assistance has been provided by the United States for a number of activities to assist with implementation of the new code. Funding from the United States supported planning for staffing, training, supervision and performance monitoring in the Office of Public Defense, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the court system. The United States also supported the creation of peer advisory groups around the country to support effective implementation of the new code and improve inter-institutional coordination. To prepare judicial officials to handle new oral trial requirements and additional constitutional protections afforded by the code, the United States provided specialized training for judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys. A U.S.-funded series of week-long "public education" seminars were developed, and described the advantages of the new adversarial justice system provided by the new code. The United States also provided support for civil society efforts to monitor the implementation of the code to train community leaders, grassroots organizations and lawyers. A local outreach program disseminated information about the code through radio spots, brochures and newspaper advertisements.

Technical assistance from the United States had a direct and profound impact on the rights of persons whose cases had been languishing in the Dominican judicial system. With U.S. funding, teams performed an inventory and purged about 300,000 pending criminal cases from the judicial system. In many cases, affected prisoners had

been in detention for years waiting for initial hearings on their cases. The case inventory was lauded by justice sector officials, as there was no existing record of the number of cases pending in the criminal justice system. This purging process, in addition to increasing productivity of public defenders, resulted in a decrease in criminal case processing time from 33 months in 2003 to 15 months in 2004.

The United States provided technical assistance to a Dominican judicial institution that offers free legal assistance and representation to the poor and disenfranchised in the Dominican Republic. This assistance included the merit-based selection of 21 new public defenders and two investigators, as well as their training in the National Judicial School. The rising number of public defenders, combined with greater efficiency, resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of indigents receiving free legal defense (1,992 in 2004 as compared with 866 in 2003).

The United States urged the Government to improve its human rights record in several areas, including assistance in development of programs to reduce unlawful killings, torture and unwarranted violence by members of the National Police and military. During 2004, the United States provided start-up funding to two NGOs and the National Police to create a Police Abuse Reporting Center, which began receiving and registering complaints of human rights violations in the first quarter of 2005. This information will enable police and other groups to concentrate investigations and human rights programming funds on problem areas. The United States sponsored a series of human rights training seminars for approximately 450 officers. The United States also funded the production and nationwide distribution of small, portable cards to the National Police that contain a list of Miranda-style rights affirmed in the new Criminal Procedures Code.

Projects funded by the United States continued to encourage the Dominican Government's support for efforts to eliminate child labor. The United States funded a multi-year program to address the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and dangerous agricultural

work. Through this program, more than 1,500 children have been removed or kept from hazardous work environments since 2001. The United States also implemented the Combating Child Labor through Education project to fund educational programs for exploited and at-risk children and provide educational opportunities. Since 2002, more than 1,100 children have been placed in educational programs as part of this project.

In order to call attention to a marginalized and discriminated sector of society, the Ambassador visited workers at a sugarcane plantation near San Pedro de Macoris in February. The visit received national press coverage and prompted the decision of the plantation operators to improve facilities for some sugarcane workers.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials spoke out about the dangers of illegal migration and TIP and sponsored speakers and conferences to call attention to these issues. The Ambassador gave the opening remarks at an international conference on best practices for combating TIP in October. The Embassy offered several training sessions for incoming administration officials regarding TIP and encouraged the government to consolidate TIP-fighting resources into one organization under the auspices of the attorney general. The United States sponsored a local NGO to give seminars and training for prosecutors and judges with respect to prosecutions under the 2003 anti-TIP and alien smuggling law. The Embassy funded a public campaign that used posters, radio ads and other media to discourage prospective migrants from risking their lives to travel illegally to the United States.

Ecuador

Ecuador has a democratically elected government that generally respects human rights. However, its weak government institutions, widespread corruption and severe inequities in distribution of income contributed to human rights abuses. There were credible reports that security forces killed citizens using unwarranted lethal force (although members of the security forces did face prosecution and prison sentences for some violations). Police tortured and otherwise mistreated prisoners

and detainees. Prison conditions remained poor. Persons were subject to arbitrary arrest and over 70 percent of the detainees in jail had not been formally sentenced. Although there was a free and vigorous press, some self-censorship occurred in the print media. Pervasive discrimination against women, the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians continued to occur and included occasional violence. Child labor and trafficking in persons (TIP) remained problems.

The U.S. Government's human rights and democracy strategy in Ecuador is to support democracy, good governance and advocate respect for democratic institutions. The United States efforts included helping strengthen the judicial system and the rule of law, promoting human rights education, assisting Colombian refugees, protecting the human rights of migrants and combating child labor and TIP.

A wide range of U.S. programs supported Ecuador's democratic institutions, and throughout the year the Ambassador, other embassy officials and visiting high-level U.S. officials publicly advocated respect for those institutions and constitutional processes. The United States sponsored Ecuadorian participants in programs providing in-depth looks at the administration of justice, responsible policing, grassroots democracy, drug control policy, responsible media, indigenous community development, economic and agricultural development and improving educational systems. Experts from the United States worked with local leaders on judicial ethics and citizen participation in democratic processes, and participated in an international youth conference on leadership. The Embassy sponsored performances of "Dialogues of Liberty," which emphasized the importance of individual liberty and personal responsibility in a democracy through dramatic speeches by Ecuadorian historical figures. Embassy officials advocated stronger workers' rights protections and development of legislation and a national plan to combat TIP.

Ecuador's judicial system is plagued by inefficiency and corruption that undermine the rule of law and hinder speedy and fair trials. In 2004, the United States supported a number of projects to

strengthen judicial effectiveness and fight corruption. With U.S. funding, judicial reform programs helped train police, prosecutors and judges in criminal justice reform and the proper application of the legal system, including the oral accusatory system and oral litigation skills. Although the Ecuadorian Government has made little progress in advancing its anti-corruption program, the United States implemented programs at the local level to improve transparency and accountability.

With U.S. assistance, Ecuador's multi-institutional commission to advance criminal justice reform developed a detailed action plan, made some progress on improving coordination among judicial institutions and wrote a bill to reform the criminal code. The United States developed and distributed a multimedia training package to inform civil society about applying the criminal procedures system. To strengthen an inadequate public defense service, the United States provided funding to expand citizens' access to justice, especially that of poor people in rural regions of the country.

The United States, through USAID, expanded its program to increase effectiveness and transparency in government, working with 48 local governments and three additional provinces. The program also increased citizen participation through citizen audit committees established to oversee implementation of local assistance projects and development of legal proposals to decentralize government. Additionally USAID launched a project to train teachers on their constitutional rights and responsibilities and a separate program to lobby Ecuador's Congress for passage of a Freedom of Information Act (which occurred in May 2004 and was signed by the president in January 2005). The program will train citizens on their rights and institutions on application of the law.

The United States continued military-to-military contact focused on promotion of fundamental human rights and humanitarian outreach, including medical assistance and peacekeeper exercises. The Embassy coordinated interagency human rights' vetting of military units proposed for U.S.



Ecuador

Cayambe women arrive at a polling station during the presidential election.

AP Photo



Quito, Ecuador

A group of Ecuadorean women in funeral attire march through the streets protesting the low number of female candidates in elections.

AP Photo

training and/or support, and human rights training was integrated into all U.S.-supported military exercises and operational training conducted in the country.

The United States implemented two programs to fight sexual and domestic violence against women and children. A domestic violence and gender program in Quito continues to improve the city's monitoring of domestic violence cases and processing of sex crime cases.

As of November 30, almost 8,000 Colombians had sought refugee status in Ecuador. (The actual number of displaced Colombians who entered Ecuador was much larger, due to people entering without documentation.)

To help this vulnerable population, the United States, via the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, provided funding to the UN High Commission for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the American Red Cross and the Pan American Health Organization to support refugee centers and services for Colombians seeking refuge in Ecuador.

The United States funded two major programs to support Ecuadorian Government efforts to combat child labor. A grant provided to Catholic Relief Services will administer a four-year project aimed at meeting the educational needs of child laborers and children at risk of entering the banana and flower industries. An ongoing project targets the worst forms of child labor in the agricultural and construction sectors, as well as the exploitation of minors in the commercial sex industry. The United States advocated the strengthening of Ecuador's labor laws and practices, including reform of Ecuador's outdated labor code to ensure the right of association without fear of retribution, and requested action by the Government in specific labor rights cases.

In addition to working against the worst forms of child labor, the United States repeatedly raised with Ecuadorian officials the need for coordinated action against the broader problem of trafficking in persons. The United States funded a grant to the American Bar Association to review proposed TIP legislation and coordinate efforts to combat trafficking. The United States also began work with local governments to fight TIP. Since alien smuggling networks made migrants in Ecuador vulnerable to human trafficking, USAID assisted host government efforts to dismantle alien smug-

gling organizations; cooperation between U.S. and Ecuadorian officials led to the dismantlement of 27 alien smuggling rings and the arrest of 128 alien smugglers. The United States also provided equipment for airports and border crossings to allow authorities to better monitor travelers in part to limit human trafficking.

Guatemala

The Government of Guatemala generally respected the rights of its citizens; however, very serious problems remain. State institutions charged with enforcing the rule of law remained weak. Police brutality and prison conditions were concerns. Arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detentions were problems. Intimidation and corruption of judges and other law enforcement officials was widespread. Threats against non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights workers by unidentified persons remained approximately the same as the previous year. The Berger Administration took significant steps to downsize and reform the military. There was progress investigating official corruption and efforts to reform the judiciary continued. Impunity for offenses of criminal violence was pervasive.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy is targeted toward encouraging and supporting the Government's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, improve the rule of law and transparency and supporting key human rights initiatives.

In an effort to strengthen democratic gains made over the last decade, the United States provided political party development training to parties across the political spectrum. Assistance focused on identifying root causes of political party weakness and promoting party reform, internal democratization and accountability mechanisms designed to modernize parties and encourage constituent outreach. Using USAID's decentralization and local governance program, the United States worked to strengthen national policies that promote decentralization (e.g. Municipal Tax Code) and at the local level, in targeted geographic areas, to improve resource generation, management efficiency and transparency, responsiveness to citizen

needs and citizen participation in determining local priorities.

In September 2004, the United States initiated a new program focused on strengthening the rule of law, which builds on past justice reform efforts to improve the transparency and efficiency of criminal judicial processes, implementing crime prevention programs, increasing the use of alternative dispute resolutions and developing stronger leadership and support for justice reform in Guatemala. To address profound problems in the country's judicial system, the United States funded the expansion of a network of Justice Centers to improve access to justice and modernize the justice sector by implementing administrative reforms to improve judicial operations.

In coordination with the Villa Nueva Justice Center, located in a suburb of the capital, the United States funded intensive training of the police, especially focused on the problem of combating the frightening gang violence that plagues much of Central America. The United States provided material support to the Guatemalan Public Ministry's Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Human Rights Workers. To support investigation of police officers implicated in crime or corruption, the United States provided training and material support to the National Civil Police's Office of Professional Responsibility, the equivalent of an Inspector General. United States assistance also supported a crime prevention coalition, which opened a self-help and training center for disadvantaged youth on the grounds of a former presidential retreat facility.

President Bush, then Secretary of State Powell, then-Undersecretaries Bolton and Grossman, and Undersecretaries Dobriansky, and Assistant Secretary Noriega, Deputy Assistant Secretary Fisk and others raised human rights concerns during meetings with President Oscar Berger, Vice President Eduardo Stein, Members of Congress and other high-level Guatemalan officials. The Embassy expressed interest in key cases to authorities investigating human rights abuses during the year. Authorities were generally cooperative and in several cases shifted resources to investigate cases of particular concern. Ambassador Hamilton frequently met with human rights lead-

ers and publicly expressed U.S. support for their work by hosting a reception in honor of the Guatemalan human rights community. The Ambassador has advocated for numerous human rights initiatives with the Government, including the establishment of a local UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Commission to Investigate Clandestine Groups proposed by civil society, stronger legislation for prosecution of traffickers in persons (TIP) and improved labor legislation. The Embassy continued to urge the Government to investigate threats against human rights defenders, journalist, and justice workers and to provide protection to the victims when warranted and feasible. Through the International Visitors Program, the Embassy sponsored trips focused on human rights and free press for civil society leaders, giving them the opportunity to interact with parallel organizations in the United States and interchange experiences.

The United States completed a three-year human rights program in September 2004. Through this project, the United States supported grassroots human rights efforts, including through the training of local human rights promoters, media campaigns and targeted support for the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (limited training and equipment). The project also supported the Human Rights Movement, a coalition of human rights NGOs. The program has improved awareness and increased demand for training and knowledge about human rights laws and treaties, especially regarding the indigenous population, women and children. Grantees disseminated information about the civil conflict to over 44,000 persons. The program and its counterparts influenced the creation of a National Reparations Program and Commission. Rosalina Tuyuc, one program counterpart, was chosen by the president to lead the Commission and several others are members.

President Berger appointed Frank LaRue, a key leader in the human rights movement, to direct the Presidential Human Rights Commission in January 2004. It is encouraging that civil society has blossomed in Guatemala since 1996 and is now a major contributor to the new Government's human rights policies.

Since 1999, the United States has funded the exhumation of mass graves from Guatemala's internal conflict, providing closure for families and religious burials for thousands of victims. Forensic scientists have exhumed more than 2,857 remains from more than 321 sites since exhumations began in 1992. During the year, forensic scientists exhumed 433 remains from 71 different sites. The project also offers mental health services in connection with the exhumations.

The United States funded negotiations between civil society and the Government to create a National Reparations Plan, which was established to compensate victims of the civil conflict. In March 2004, the United States announced that it would support a program to provide systematic advocacy and pressure for legal follow-up on human rights abuse cases from the civil conflict. The project will also develop restorative justice processes and alternative dispute resolution at the local level.

The United States provided assistance to the UN Development Program that supports civilian-military relations by strengthening the capacity of civil institutions to understand and engage in dialogue on security and intelligence issues. The work of a preparatory commission funded by the United States led to the installation of a civilian Security Advisory Council to the president in June 2004.

The United States began an initiative to resolve land conflicts through mediation. These conflicts have, led to government evictions of squatters occupying plantations and, on one occasion, violence.

The United States supported the Presidential Commission against Racism and Discrimination against Indigenous Groups and the appointment of a National Indigenous Assembly. The United States participated in a donor dialogue on indigenous issues to prevent duplication of efforts. The United States also sponsored a digital video conference between indigenous leaders in Panama, Guatemala and the United States to discuss obstacles currently facing these populations.

To foster a more professional security force and to reduce human rights abuses, the United States worked with the Defense Ministry to develop a Human Rights Initiative Consensus Agreement with the Army. In December, civil society leaders and the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office worked alongside military officers to design a plan to systematize the military's observance of human rights in civil-military relations, and to establish training and education, human rights doctrine and internal controls to prevent abuses. United States Southern Command Brigadier General Wendell Griffin attended the event to express support for the Guatemalan Defense Department's efforts on these reforms. The United States printed and disseminated copies of the "White Book," the new military code of conduct, which was praised by the UN Verification Mission in Guatemala.

The United States is engaged in two regional projects to strengthen the enforcement of labor standards. The United States has entered the second year of a four-year project to strengthen labor inspectorates in Central America. 2004 marked the inauguration of a second four-year project to promote labor rights education. Among other activities this year, the project supported the creation of a website to disseminate accurate information about labor law. The United States negotiated the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with Central American nations, which incorporated labor rights protections. If ratified, the CAFTA will supersede existing labor condition regulations under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). An inter-agency U.S. delegation conducted bilateral labor consultations in May. In February 2004, the U.S. Trade Representative held hearings on open GSP labor petitions. In all these exchanges, U.S. officials expressed concern about the need for the Government to fully investigate past violence against trade union leaders, reform its labor justice system and reinstate workers illegally fired for unionizing activities. The Embassy continues to express concern to the Government over the potential for anti-union violence in the maquila sector, where union formation is almost non-existent. In March 2005, the United States committed to finance a labor rights enforcement program for Guatemala and El Salvador.

Guatemala was rated a Tier II country Watch List in the State Department's 2004 Trafficking in Persons Report to Congress. United States officials briefed the Government on the implications of the report and urged the Government to step up its efforts to prevent, prosecute and punish this crime. United States officials also urged Guatemala to implement the Memorandum of Understanding it signed with Mexico to aid victims along the border areas of the two countries. In response, the Government formed an inter-agency working group, composed of ministries, Congress, the Attorney and Solicitor General's Offices and the judiciary. The Embassy actively participated in this process, to help coordinate these efforts. The Embassy has urged the Government and Members of Congress to stiffen sanctions against traffickers, to which they responded with new legislation passed in February 2005 to expand prosecutorial powers to fight TIP. To support these increased Government efforts, the United States announced several integrated programs to combat TIP. These programs supported efforts by the Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Women and the Secretary for Social Welfare as well as a 3-year regional project for the development of regional, national and local networks to prevent TIP and protect trafficking victims. The latter project also includes support for the continued development and implementation of improved TIP legislation and a media campaign to increase awareness of the perils of trafficking among vulnerable populations. The United States is scheduled to carry out training workshops for justice workers and the courts on dealing with trafficking victims.

Haiti

The Government of Haiti's human rights record remained poor. During the year, various actors perpetrated numerous human rights abuses, particularly during the armed revolt and the authority vacuum that followed. The year began with a continuation of the political impasse and violence stemming from controversial results of May 2000 legislative and local elections. The human rights record of the Aristide Government remained poor. There were numerous credible reports of extrajudi-

cial killings by members of the Haitian National Police (HNP). Police officers used excessive, sometimes deadly, force in making arrests or controlling demonstrations and were rarely held accountable for such acts. Attacks on and threats to journalists and political dissenters by members of popular organizations and by supporters of the President's party, Fanmi Lavalas, increased. Systematic, state-orchestrated abuses stopped under the Interim Government of Haiti (IGOH). Nevertheless, there were credible allegations of HNP involvement in extrajudicial killings during attempts to quell pro-Lavalas incited violence during the fall of 2004. Incidences of retribution killings and politically motivated violence, particularly in the provinces, also resurfaced following Aristide's departure. Prison conditions remained poor. Legal impunity remained a major problem, and police and judicial officials often failed to respect legal provisions or pursue and prosecute suspected violators. Child abuse, violence and societal discrimination against women, trafficking of children and child domestic labor remained problems. Endemic corruption, a deteriorating judiciary and worsening economic and social conditions exacerbated this situation.

On January 31, President Aristide accepted the Caribbean Community Secretariat's Prior Action Plan, committing the Government to a number of measures necessary to create a climate of security for elections. Aristide failed to take steps to fully implement the plan, despite numerous assurances that he was committed to its implementation. Opposition political parties and civil society organizations rejected the plan. Moreover, Aristide's Government continued to condone and sometimes participate in human rights abuses, including violent suppression of legitimate peaceful dissent. Anti-government armed rebels along with members of the former military mounted a major insurgency in early February, ultimately resulting in Aristide's resignation and departure from Haiti on February 29, 2004. The IGOH was formed and installed on March 17, 2004.

After the departure of President Aristide in February 2004, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Haiti focused on providing stability and assisting in the reconstruction of democracy

in Haiti, including respect for the rule of law and for human rights. Given the security and political situation on the ground, the initial focus was on assisting the IGOH election efforts, reconstructing the criminal justice system (including police, judges and prosecutors), disarming all non-governmental forces, supporting good governance, assisting human rights organizations and supporting reconciliation, reconstruction and social reintegration efforts.

In preparation for national and local elections, which are scheduled for the fall of 2005, the United States has provided technical assistance, training and support for elections planning and administration, development of a new electoral law, implementation of a voter roll and creation of a Provisional Electoral Council. Efforts by the United States to increase voter awareness and political representation in Haiti included support for political party development, civic and voter education and political polling programs. Additional efforts are underway to ramp up current election support and provide international election observers and training for domestic partisan and non-partisan poll watchers for upcoming elections.

The Embassy sent 62 Haitians - attorneys, civil society leaders, judges, journalists, scholars, government officials and human rights activists - to attend seminars in the United States on human rights practices and advocacy, campaigns and elections, anti-corruption, responsible media, judicial reform and public administration. To demonstrate the mechanisms of a sustainable democracy to a large audience, the Embassy funded the live Creole-language interpretation of the U.S. presidential debates and assisted several stations in broadcasting the President's inaugural address live. A radio play based on Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," and focused on his writings on non-violence and civic engagement, was written, produced and distributed throughout the country. The Embassy's civic education program "Democracy for All" was expanded to include creation of Creole-language radio skits, production of a four-hour televised series of interviews and student-written skits outlining citizen participation in a democracy.

During 2004, the Ambassador promoted the rule of law in Haiti through frequent high-level meetings and public statements. On December 1, 2004, Secretary of State Powell and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs Assistant Secretary Noreiga traveled to Haiti and emphasized to the IGOH the importance of an independent judiciary and police enforcement of court orders, the arrest of criminals with outstanding warrants and the release of those still in detention despite valid release orders. Following the departure of Aristide, the United States initiated a comprehensive, long-term administration of justice assistance program with the Haitian Government. In 2004, U.S. assistance for the HNP included technical assistance, equipment, training and vetting for new recruits. In early 2005, the United States initiated a training program for judges and prosecutors to improve their capacity to investigate and prosecute criminal cases. Throughout 2004, the United States conducted seminars and workshops for more than 40 civil society organizations advocating the rule of law and judicial independence. Among other benefits, this program resulted in the formation of a new federation of bar associations and the creation of an active coalition of civil society organizations promoting judicial reform.

In public statements, the Ambassador constantly condemned politically motivated violence, stressing the importance of general respect for the human rights of all Haitians. During a press conference in recognition of International Human Rights Day on December 10, 2004, the Ambassador issued a call for unity among Haitians in their mission to create a democratic future free from repression. In conjunction with the press conference, the Ambassador presented certificates to the winners of an Embassy-sponsored essay contest on the subject of human rights. The winning eight youths, four each from secondary and university levels were subsequently highlighted on media programs throughout Port-au-Prince in the following months. The Embassy held three book discussions on the topics of non-violence, conflict resolution and the U.S. judicial system. Under the Victims of Organized Violence program in 2005, the United States will partner with four local non-governmental organizations to assist 550 victims of violence and human rights abuses.

Despite the political crisis that plagued the country in early 2004, combating child labor practices in Haiti, particularly internal and external trafficking of children as domestic workers or “restaveks,” remained a U.S. focus. The United States provided funding to the Pan-American Development Foundation to implement an anti-trafficking program to shore up government efforts. Embassy and other U.S. officials participated in the anti-trafficking training programs for government officials held around the country during the year.

Honduras

Honduras' constitutional Government is headed by President Ricardo Maduro, elected in November 2001 in elections that domestic and international observers judged to be free and fair. Since its inauguration in 2002, the Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there are serious problems in some areas. Members of the police were accused of committing extrajudicial killings. Organized private and vigilante security forces were believed to have committed a number of arbitrary and summary executions. Human rights groups accused former security force officials and the business community of colluding to organize “death squads” to commit extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, particularly of youth. Prison conditions remained harsh and detainees often did not receive due process. The administration of justice was problematic due to inefficient, understaffed, and under-funded police, Public Ministry (prosecutors) and judiciary, all of which were subject to corruption and political influence. Members of the economic, military and official elite enjoyed considerable impunity. Other human rights problems included violence and discrimination against women and discrimination against indigenous people. The Government did not effectively enforce all labor laws and child labor remained a serious problem. Honduras is a source and transit country for trafficking in persons (TIP), including commercial sexual exploitation.

The U.S. strategy in Honduras includes supporting democratic political processes and drawing

attention to the need for improvements in human rights conditions, particularly in the areas of the rule of law and combating TIP. The Ambassador and other officers of the U.S. Mission worked closely with Honduran government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions and other organizations to discuss areas of particular concern and to encourage reforms. Secretary of State Powell discussed human rights and democracy issues on October 21, 2004, during meetings with senior Honduran Government officials in Washington. The Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs on September 16 in Washington and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs also discussed these issues during his September 8-10 visit to Honduras. The Mission is also sending various civil society leaders and government officials on International Visitors Programs in 2004-2005, on topics such as the administration of justice and the rule of law, anti-corruption, civil society and democracy and journalism.

With national and municipal primary elections set for February 20, 2005 and general elections set for November 27, 2005, the United States dedicated resources for assisting the Honduran Government's ability to conduct the elections and increasing the voting public's awareness of recent significant electoral reforms. Under the new electoral law, voters will be able to select candidates based not only on their names but also on their photographs, a process without precedent in Honduras. This new method for the direct election of congressional members contrasts with the old system, in which candidates were elected on party rank-ordered congressional lists. The United States, through USAID is providing assistance for the elections by supporting the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and the National Registry of Persons. The United States, through USAID is also providing financial support to the IFES and for a Cooperative Agreement with the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights' Center for Electoral Assessment and Promotion, to allow these organizations to provide advisory assistance to the TSE. The United States is also providing funding to the Honduran Federation of NGOs (FOPRIDEH) to support its nonpartisan voter edu-

cation campaign. The United States also gave funding to the Organization of American States for its election observation mission for the primaries. The U.S. Government continued its efforts to promote democracy through the development of transparent and accountable democratic institutions at the local level. The United States, through USAID is providing funds for municipal development efforts to promote decentralization and increase municipalities' capacity for basic service delivery. In many cases, these projects demonstrated a positive correlation between the transparency and accountability with which municipal governments are being administered. Citizens' growing confidence in the work being performed by their local governments has increased their faith in democratic governance.

The Embassy expended a significant amount of its human rights and democracy promotion effort on various aspects of promoting the rule of law and administration of justice, in areas such as police reform, judicial reform and anti-corruption. To foster more professional police and reduce human rights abuses, the Embassy provided The U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) Police Assistance Funds to assist the Police Internal Affairs Office with investigating complaints, including those from private citizens, and to make recommendations for substantiated complaints, ranging from administrative disciplinary action to criminal charges.

The United States is providing significant financial assistance for administration of justice measures. Over the last several years, USAID funding has supported the development and implementation of a new Criminal Procedure Code, which introduced oral, adversarial trials, more effective and transparent procedures and greater protections for individual rights. The United States funded the training and distribution of materials for judges, prosecutors, public defenders and forensics experts. The USAID-designated pilot courts in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula concluded an impressive total of 948 trials and another 4,219 cases were closed through non-trial procedures during the year. The Supreme Court-run and USAID-funded "purging unit" is clearing back-

logged cases from prior to the implementation of the new code. By year's end, 73 percent of 140,000 pending cases under the previous procedure had been dismissed or resolved. The FOPRIDEH, with USAID assistance, has been dynamic in promoting broader and more effective civil society participation in justice sector reforms and monitoring, and in exercising oversight of the public policy process.

To improve the country's fight against corruption, the United States is providing funds for Transparency and Anti-Corruption efforts. Activities under these programs include: improving the capacity of the Government's Superior Audit Institution, developing and implementing a Transparency and Anti-Corruption Public Awareness Campaign, strengthening independent national and local anti-corruption institutions and supporting civil society social auditing efforts to provide oversight and monitoring of the use of public funds. The Mission has encouraged the Government and the Attorney General's office to vigorously pursue cases that involve corruption, particularly cases involving government officials. The Embassy also brought in a U.S. consultant expert as a speaker on anti-corruption in October 2004.

The United States is executing a project to assist the Honduran Government in addressing financial crimes and money laundering in the country. The project includes technical assistance in the operation of the Financial Information Unit, technical assistance to the investigative and prosecutorial agencies that have responsibility for the cases of money laundering and financial crimes, and training of judges, bank officials and other entities involved in the fight against financial crimes.

The Embassy provided funds for "Si Se Puede," a government program coordinated by the Vice President's office that seeks to prevent drug use and gang membership among vulnerable sectors, such as youth at risk. Many of these youth are targets of violence, including extrajudicial killings, if they join gangs. In order to allow wide participation, NGOs, police, community leaders and teachers assist in carrying out the projects.

Several U.S. officials engaged government, private sector and labor union officials on the importance of enforcing labor law and ensuring that core labor rights are protected, which has been particularly important given the U.S-Central America Free Trade Agreement, which is awaiting ratification. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded proj-



Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Women participate in the 50th anniversary celebration of women's right to vote at the Plaza Capitol Centro.

AP Photo

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

The 50th anniversary celebration of women's right to vote in Tegucigalpa.



AP Photo

ects to strengthen Labor Systems in Central America (Cumple y Gana); Freedom of Association, Collective Bargaining and Industrial Relations in Central America Project; and a Regional Occupational Safety and Health Project. USAID is supporting efforts to improve the functioning of regional labor markets while strengthening the protection of core labor standards, through assistance to the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration and alliances with international private businesses and NGOs, including the Continuous Improvement in the Central America Workplace project.

Child labor is a significant problem in Honduras. The DOL grants supported the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Eradication of Child Labor (ILO/IPEC), as well as other organizations conducting projects aimed at combating and gathering information on the worst forms of child labor. Ongoing projects in melon production and combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children are implemented by ILO/IPEC. In addition, the Government of Honduras is participating in a DOL-funded regional project implemented by CARE USA to combat child labor through education, which includes direct action in Honduras.

Honduras is a source and transit country for trafficking in persons for sexual and labor exploitation. Most victims are young women and girls, who are trafficked to Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Mexico, the United States and Canada. Women and children are also trafficked internally, most often from rural to urban settings. The Embassy brought in a U.S. NGO expert twice, as well as a State Department official, to be keynote speakers at seminars organized by the Honduran Government on the prevention and eradication of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking in women and children in San Pedro Sula, Santa Rosa de Copan, Puerto Cortes and Tela. The Embassy is spending funds from the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to provide training, technical assistance and equipment to police investigators and prosecutors working to combat TIP, as well as public awareness campaigns on TIP. The Embassy is also providing INL Police Assistance

Funds to support the Frontier Police to, among other goals, prevent and interdict the transportation of illegal immigrants, including trafficked persons. The State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat TIP funded classes in the Department of Justice Office of Prosecutorial Development and Training to educate Honduran judges on TIP cases.

Jamaica

The Government of Jamaica generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. Members of the security forces committed unlawful killings. Mob violence against, and vigilante killings of those suspected of breaking the law remained a problem. Police and prison guards abused detainees and prisoners. Although the Government moved to investigate incidents of police abuses and punish some of those police involved, continued impunity for police who committed abuses remained a problem. The judicial system was overburdened and lengthy delays in trials were common. Discrimination against women and homosexuals was common. Discrimination and violence against individuals living with HIV/AIDS also continued. Child labor and trafficking in persons (TIP) continued to be problems in Jamaica.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Jamaica is to promote democracy and good governance and increase the Government's ability to enforce the rule of law and protect the human rights of Jamaican citizens. Target areas included support for civil society, improving community-police relations, building capacity within the security forces and addressing the rights of children and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

The United States provided assistance to civil society through the institutional strengthening and capacity-building of civil society groups. Through coalition-building, networking, and advocacy, these groups pioneered policy changes that combat the high levels of crime and violence in Jamaican society. Embassy-organized democracy

programs focused on fighting corruption in government and law enforcement, and educating Jamaicans about the 2004 U.S. presidential election and the democratic process in the United States.

In an effort to strengthen the capacity of the legal system, the United States provided seven case management systems to Jamaican courts. These systems greatly increased the ability of the local judiciary to track cases as they progress through the court system and expedite resolution of cases. Other projects increased the level of training for court reporters in an effort to increase the efficiency of record taking and storage. With U.S. funding, an online database containing all 587 Jamaican laws was established and a Justice Education Unit with public education and information dissemination capabilities is now operational. Both initiatives provide a valuable reference point for citizens requiring legal information and increase citizen access to public information.

To assist Jamaica in building a more professional police force, the United States provided support for a Law Enforcement Development Advisor (LEDA) position within the Jamaican Constabulary Force (JCF) to implement 83 recommendations for police reform from the Police Executive Research Forum. Working through the office of the JCF Commissioner, the LEDA submitted recommendations on how to restructure and reform the police and establish a system of accountability and transparency, including stronger internal affairs and personnel practices. In addition, the Commissioner updated the Citizens' Charter, which contains a Code of Conduct for police officers, incorporating the principles of human rights and democracy into each officer's daily routine.

Through a series of recommendations, the United States is assisting LEDA in its efforts to develop a professional, effective police force that respects the rights of citizens and is respected throughout Jamaica. In 2004, the JCF implemented a new policy on officers' use of deadly force, based on suggestions from the LEDA. Published copies of the new Human Rights and Use of Force Policy have been distributed to every member of the JCF and training on the new policy continued as a priority. During 2004, middle and upper management offi-

cers were introduced to Operational Planning Training that required extensive planning and supervisory approval prior to the execution of police operations. Further management skills training was provided in the areas of accountability, expectations and effective management of resources. In addition, the United States sought to change the perception of the police as a hostile force in the community and to foster organizational change from which both citizens and officers would benefit. An initiative of the LEDA for the creation of a Professional Standards Unit was developed and is gradually being implemented. The unit is responsible for complaints of misconduct and corruption, staff inspections, policy development, legal affairs, and planning and research. Both policy and training have been facilitated in the area of anticorruption and police misconduct. The United States worked closely with British counterparts in their efforts to modernize and reform the police force.

The United States provided grant funding to develop a community-based anti-crime program in the once-embattled Grants Pen inner city community located in Kingston. The grant provided the JCF with training in community policing and consensus-building. Local police were taught methods to promote safe encounters with citizens and community members received training in mentoring and problem solving.

The United States supported human rights education in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions with the goal of improving the understanding of human rights norms and the roles and responsibilities of the citizenry. Jamaican human rights NGOs work in a variety of areas to educate and protect citizens from abuses. With U.S. assistance, a Jamaican organization developed, produced, and distributed educational materials now used in primary schools throughout Jamaica. The books emphasize the inherent rights of children, allowing educators to incorporate human rights into the national curriculum.

Embassy officials remain in dialogue with Jamaican officials and civil society regarding respect for the rights of women, children and people with disabilities. The stigmatization of people

with HIV/AIDS in Jamaica is a critical issue, sometimes leading to mob violence and denial of police assistance. Through a series of events designed to confront the myths and misconceptions that promote HIV/AIDS transmission, the United States built a strong foundation in Jamaica for future collaboration and partnership to improve the conditions of those affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS. The United States funded public service announcements that sought to combat the stigma of those living with HIV/AIDS. In October 2004, an Embassy-funded conference brought medical professionals from the United States to meet with their Jamaican counterparts to discuss the myths and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, as well as the latest medical treatments for the disease. Through a unique public/private partnership, USAID and a U.S.-based pharmaceutical company agreed to provide technical assistance and program support to a Jamaican organization for at least the next five years to carry out its HIV/AIDS awareness, anti-stigma and persons living with HIV/AIDS care programs.

In 2004, U.S. International Military Education and Training assistance was provided to 78 members of the Jamaica Defense Force (JDF). JDF members received training in 105 total IMET courses, including human rights instruction. This training prepared enlisted personnel who assist local police units in patrolling high crime areas in Jamaica, and included units on basic leadership, due process, civilian control of the military and the role of the military in a democratic society. Those courses aimed at senior military officers highlighted the impact of the rule of law on human rights as well as how to incorporate human rights considerations into the planning and conduct of military operations.

Embassy officials maintained an open dialog with the Government on the prosecution and criminalization of TIP cases. The Embassy encouraged the Jamaican Parliament to pass the Child Care and Protection Act, which was voted into law in March 2004. Embassy officials worked with NGOs and relevant government ministries to press for vigorous enforcement of the law, particularly the clause

prohibiting the trafficking or sale of children. The United States provided funding for a TIP awareness program working with young people across the country to educate them about the risks of the island's sex trade and TIP.

In 2004, a U.S.-funded Border Security and Migration Management system was launched at both of Jamaica's international airports. The system allows the Government to monitor all international arrivals and departures through its airports and also tracks crew members of merchant and cruise vessels. By enabling the Jamaican Immigration Service to detect fraudulent documents and analyze immigration and migration patterns, the system assists officials to detect incidents of illegal migration and TIP. The project also includes important training components, such as seminars on TIP. By combining infrastructure with important training, the Embassy is increasing Jamaica's awareness of TIP, including seminars on TIP and providing officers and officials with the tools to combat the problem.

Peru

The Government of Peru generally respects the human rights of its citizens. Although the estimated real growth was 4.5 percent, the poverty rate was 54 percent, and the Government lacked revenues for social investment. Police on occasion tortured and abused detainees, and prison conditions were poor. There were charges that police officers sometimes harassed victims to keep them from filing charges. The judicial system suffers from inefficiency and corruption, and pretrial detention continued to be prolonged. Peru has a vital and diverse media and an active non-governmental organization (NGO) sector that closely monitors human rights. Impunity for past crimes committed during Peru's long war with terrorist groups remained a problem. Violence against women and children and discrimination against persons with disabilities, indigenous people and racial and ethnic minorities took place. Labor advocates alleged that labor laws restricted collective bargaining rights; however, a 2002 law addressed some of these issues. Child labor remained a serious problem in the informal sector.

The Government recognized trafficking in persons (TIP) as a problem and took steps to address it. Finally, while Peru remained committed to democracy and the country's economy grew, there was growing public impatience with perceived governmental inefficiency and the slowness with which the population felt the benefits of economic growth.

The United States fosters human rights and democracy in Peru by promoting good governance, especially at the regional level, and establishing programs to educate historically marginalized groups about the democratic process and encourage their political participation. The U.S. Government's other priorities include anti-corruption efforts, economic transparency, judicial reform and attempts to strengthen the national Congress in coordination with broader regional efforts as part of the Andean Regional Initiative. The United States strives to strengthen civil society and increase public awareness of human rights and democracy issues. The United States supported the efforts of Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to help Peru recover from the aftermath of terrorist violence. The United States worked to build the technical capacity of the Labor Ministry to encourage and teach the techniques of peaceful collective bargaining to leaders in business and labor. It helps to fight child labor (including in the mining industry), child sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons.

During August meetings with President Toledo and other officials, including important members of the opposition, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega encouraged continued efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and processes and cited the importance of press freedom and anti-corruption initiatives. Embassy officials and high-level delegations continue to raise these and other human rights issues both in public statements and private discussions with government officials and civil society.

Regional/municipal elections in late 2002 led to the creation of new regional governments in January 2003, with newly elected mayors - many in office for the first time - assuming their posi-



Peru

Polling officials wait for voting to begin.

IFES

tions. For a five-year period, from 2002-2007, the United States is providing financial support to the new regional governments, including training in budget preparation and responsible management of social programs transferred to the regions by the central Government. The establishment of a competitive Special Incentive Fund designed to cofinance small-scale infrastructure projects is being supported as well as special initiatives that benefit regions or municipalities. This fund is designed to implement a market-like incentive for good governance in areas outside Lima.

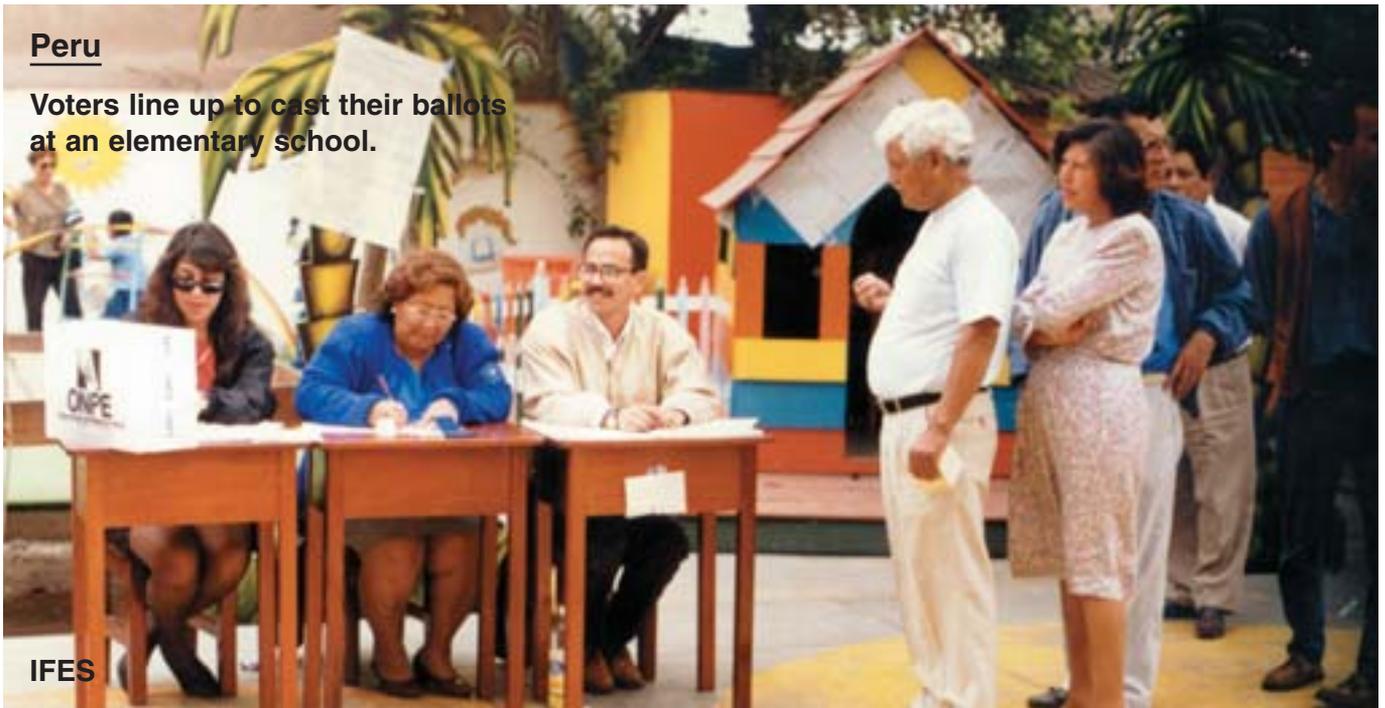
Peru is one of four nations worldwide participating as a pilot country in the G-8 Anti-Corruption and Transparency Initiative, of which a major goal is strengthening democracy. The United States provided technical and financial assistance to Peru in the preparation of its action plan, which proposes activities in citizen information/internet connectivity, improving central government fiscal transparency, development of GOP procurement systems, improving regional/local government transparency and management, improvement of transparency of extractive industry revenues and development of asset forfeiture systems and legislation. The United States is also actively working to help locate the resources still needed to fully fund activities under the initiative.

Over a five-year period (2001-2006), the United States is investing heavily in judicial sector reform. This aid is conditioned on political performance and continued political will. The United States provides technical assistance to a wide range of judicial institutions including the courts, the Public Ministry, the Ministry of Justice, the National Judicial Council, the Judicial Academy and the Ombudsman's Office. The program includes technical assistance to streamline the criminal and commercial proceedings and reduce caseloads in strategic courts, including Lima and Ayacucho, as well as measures to strengthen civil society oversight of judicial performance.

The United States is also providing funding over three years (2002-2005) to support essential reforms in the National Congress. Working with Peruvian civil society organizations and the State University of New York, USAID is providing technical assistance to increase Congressional transparency, strengthen congressional committees, capacity to produce solid legislation, and to enhance both citizen oversight of Congress and establish mechanisms through which members can better communicate with constituents. These efforts have already borne fruit in a reduction in the number of congressional committees and the establishment of a center for parliamentary research in Congress.

Peru

Voters line up to cast their ballots at an elementary school.



IFES

The United States promoted reforms in diverse areas intended to strengthen civil society and foster the rule of law. The Ministry of Education has formally incorporated into its national curriculum a class on "values and citizenship" at all grade levels that was based on an ongoing, U.S.-funded program for junior high students that promotes a culture of lawfulness. The United States worked to support ongoing restructuring of the police force, funding police training that included education on human rights and non-lethal crowd control. To establish police presence in lawless zones east of the Andes, the United States has funded two special academies that will graduate 400 new police officers in 2005. All U.S.-Peru military training missions incorporated human rights training and military and police units proposed for U.S. training and/or support received thorough interagency reviews consistent with Leahy legislation.

Other outreach and public awareness programs robustly supported structural reform efforts in Peru by working with civil society. For example, International Visitors Programs focused on decentralization, journalism, the media and NGOs, U.S. grants, speakers and public videoconferences with U.S. and Peruvian experts promoted better public awareness of race relations, domestic violence and anti-corruption issues.

In addition to promoting and financing key structural reforms, the United States was the largest single donor to Peru's TRC. The United States provided funding to the commission and to assist victims. The commission formally went out of existence in 2003, though initiatives inspired by its work continue under the direction of the Ombudsman, the UN Development Program and other civil society actors. During 2004, for example, the TRC along with the Ombudsman opened a documentation center that provides citizens with information on the violence perpetrated by domestic terrorist groups from 1980-2000. The Government has also established a multi-sectoral committee to implement some of the reforms recommended by the TRC. Support for the Ombudsman's Office has aided in the establishment of satellite offices in the interior of Peru, where they have helped prevent and manage conflicts, particularly in coca-growing areas.

During 2004, the Government recognized that trafficking in persons (TIP) in Peru was a major problem. During the year, President Toledo established a permanent, ministry-level, multi-sectoral committee to address this problem. Peruvian police are carrying out an increasing number of raids against clandestine brothels and have arrested both international and domestic traffickers who

are now awaiting trial. In addition, the Congress passed new legislation that not only significantly increased the punishments for traffickers of under-age sex workers but also, for the first time, sanctioned their clients. The Foreign Ministry also started a program to warn travelers of the dangers of trafficking and established a fund to help a Peruvian woman trafficked to Japan return home. Recognizing these efforts, the United States has agreed to support financially different programs to assist Peruvian NGOs in their efforts to implement anti-trafficking programs in alliance with the Government. These programs include the development of a statistical database and related police training for tracking TIP cases; specialized training for law enforcement, prosecutors and judges; campaigns to promote legislation and greater public awareness of this human rights issue; and establishment of a temporary care facility for victims.

As a result of these efforts, Peru has become an active participant in regional anti-trafficking initiatives. The Peruvian Government participated in a TIP Conference in La Paz, Bolivia, in November, sponsored by the Organization of American States and the International Migration Organization. The conference brought together representatives from Bolivia, Peru and Chile to discuss common approaches to this increasingly high-profile human rights challenge.

Suriname

The Government of Suriname, headed by President Ronald Venetiaan, is still in the process of consolidating democratic and constitutional rule. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, but there were problems in some areas. Police mistreated detainees, particularly at the time of arrest, and local detention facilities remained overcrowded. A shortage of judges resulted in a significant case backlog and lengthy pretrial detentions. Media self-censorship continued. Societal discrimination against women, minorities and tribal persons persisted, as did violence against women. While the Government took steps to combat trafficking in

persons (TIP), it remained a problem, with women and children in the commercial sex industry constituting the majority of the victims.

To strengthen human rights and democracy in Suriname, U.S. officials routinely and publicly highlighted the need for improvements in human rights conditions in Suriname. The Ambassador and other mission officers also worked privately with government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations to identify areas of particular concern and promote systemic reforms.

The United States also promotes a strong and independent media in Suriname. Two journalists participated in a U.S.-sponsored cooperative training program aimed at helping media effectively convey facts via television. A U.S. journalist trained 57 journalists and government public relations officials on radio and broadcasting techniques.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation remains a serious concern in Suriname. The United States strongly and consistently urged government action against TIP, and continued funding a two-year program with the U.S. Department of Justice to assist Suriname in that fight. As part of this program, the U.S. Government conducted two seminars on preventing and prosecuting TIP and protecting TIP victims with government and NGO participants, including members of the anti-trafficking commission founded in 2003 and composed of various ministries and a local NGO, headed by the Ministry of Justice and Police. A Ministry of Justice official participated in a U.S.-sponsored International Visitors Program aimed at promoting global cooperation to combat various forms of international crime, including TIP. The outcomes included the Government's adoption of a national action plan to combat TIP and issuance of two operations manuals for training police and immigration officials on identifying and prosecuting TIP. These processes accelerated momentum to improve currently available law enforcement mechanisms to combat TIP, resulting in the launch of a one-year-long pilot project directed by the

Ministry of Justice and Police. At year's end, the Suriname Police Corps arrested a prominent local government official for trafficking female victims into Suriname for sexual exploitation; the official remains in custody awaiting trial.

Venezuela

Venezuela's human rights record continues to be poor. In 2000, Venezuelans elected Hugo Chavez president in elections generally judged to be free and fair. Chavez was first elected in 1998, and re-elected in 2000, following the approval of a new Constitution. Over the past six years, Chavez increasingly has consolidated power within the executive branch, extending its control over the country's other branches of government. The political situation has at times been highly polarized and volatile, as Chavez has pursued his "Bolivarian" revolution and pursued policies opposed by many of those who first elected him. In 2002, the country's political polarization led to violent disturbances, a brief interruption of the

constitutional order and then a crippling national strike. Political violence, often by government supporters facing little resistance from security forces, became a part of the political landscape in 2003.

In 2004, the human rights situation deteriorated. The Government increased its control over the judicial system and its interference in the administration of justice. The National Assembly passed a law in May that enabled it to pack the Supreme Court with Chavez sympathizers and exert greater control over the justices. Judicial harassment and baseless political prosecutions against opposition and non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders proceeded. Such prosecutions intimidated NGOs, including human rights groups, who were also subject to threats by government supporters.

The legislature also passed a law in December that erodes freedom of speech. The new media law includes vague prohibitions against transmitting violent images or statements that might lead to



Caracas, Venezuela

Venezuelans check voter lists before voting in regional elections.

AP Photo

public disorder and stiff fines that have led to fears of self-censorship by media owners. The National Assembly also passed amendments to the penal code that provide for prison sentences for making statements through any media that “upset the public.” The law also criminalizes noisy public protests (“cacerolazos”).

According to press reports, Chavez vetoed some of the penal code amendments in February 2005 in response to prison strikes, asserting that some of the amendments violated the Constitution. Police and military units killed suspects in “confrontations,” which eyewitness testimony often categorized as executions. Such actions were rarely prosecuted or punished. In February-March, there were numerous complaints that members of the National Guard tortured demonstrators, often using similar techniques and methods. The condition of Venezuela’s prisons remained harsh, and the authorities were unable to contain prisoner on prisoner violence that contributed to 327 deaths and 655 injuries in prisons. Child labor and violence against women and children continued to be a problem, as did trafficking in persons.

The United States supports the efforts of the Venezuelan people to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Senior U.S. officials consistently have spoken publicly in favor of a peaceful, democratic solution to Venezuela’s political conflict and on behalf of freedom of the press and other human rights. United States diplomats worked closely with other governments to coordinate support for democracy and human rights in Venezuela, especially to help build international support for the referendum process, and in defense of the press and civic associations facing increased government pressure. The Embassy continues to express the U.S. Government’s concern to the Venezuelan Government that it is not doing enough to combat trafficking in persons.

In the first half of 2004, the opposition struggled to get the electoral authorities to hold a constitutionally-sanctioned presidential recall referendum. The U.S. Government supported this electoral solution as the best way to implement Organization of American States (OAS) Resolution 833, which called for a peaceful, democratic, elec-

toral and constitutional resolution to the political crisis in Venezuela. The Embassy worked to help strengthen democracy in Venezuela through various electoral projects, including working with electoral observation groups. Both the Carter Center and the OAS fielded teams of international monitors to observe the presidential recall referendum as well as electoral events leading up to it, such as the petition and signature verification process. Embassy officers also observed the referendum signature drive, the signature confirmation event, the referendum itself and regional elections during the year. The Embassy put together an International Visitors Program (IVP) on electoral procedures that included a pro-Chavez National Assembly Deputy and members of the opposition.

According to international observers, including the OAS and the Carter Center, the National Electoral Council (CNE) behaved in a partisan manner throughout this period, restricting avenues for the referendum, allowing massive last minute naturalizations and manipulating the electoral rules to disadvantage the opponents of President Chavez. Nevertheless, the referendum took place on August 15, and official results indicated President Chavez won 60 percent of the votes cast. There were widespread complaints from the opposition that the CNE engaged in vote fraud and pre-referendum manipulations. Although the Carter Center noted that “the referendum process suffered from numerous irregularities throughout the entire process,” the OAS and Carter Center declared that the vote represented the will of the Venezuelan people.

To help strengthen political parties in Venezuela, the National Democratic Institute promoted programs with political parties across the political spectrum focused on political party renewal and internal democratization. The International Republican Institute continued to provide technical assistance to political parties, training its members on issues such as how to choose and position a candidate, how to reach the masses with a campaign message and how to raise funds locally.

State Department spokespersons publicly expressed the U.S. Government’s concern that the media law passed by the National Assembly could

threaten freedom of the press. The Embassy distributed this statement throughout the media to send as strong a message as possible to the Venezuelan media that the U.S. Government supported its struggle to maintain press freedoms. The Embassy also hosted a digital videoconference on freedom of the press timed to coincide with the debate over the law. Embassy officials also have expressed the U.S. Government's concern over the law in private conversations with Venezuelan officials. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression also noted concern over the media content law, a concern the U.S. Mission to the OAS supported publicly.

To strengthen civil society overall, the United States worked to help strengthen the relatively weak human rights NGOs working in Venezuela, some of which have had to work in a climate of intense pressure and harassment by the Government of Venezuela. Freedom House began a program to teach human rights organizations and practitioners successful strategies employed by human rights defenders in other countries and to increase their institutional capacity through exchanges. This program is also solidifying links between Venezuelan human rights activists and other key human rights activists in Latin America. The Embassy brought speakers from the United States to talk about prison reform, indigenous rights and property rights as human rights.

The United States also worked to strengthen civil society groups by assisting local NGOs focused on supporting peaceful debate and conflict resolution, democratic institutions, promoting civic education and providing/increasing platforms for individuals of differing political ideologies to come together to resolve issues. The Embassy sent a group of student political leaders to the United States on an International Visitors Program to study grassroots democracy and another group to an OAS conference that taught them ways to strengthen democracy and learn more about their rights as citizens.

To reduce the instance of extra-judicial killings and torture, Embassy law enforcement representatives included human rights segments in all their training programs with Venezuelan law enforcement

agencies. The Embassy also sent Venezuelan police officers to the United States on IVPs, which included human rights components. In Caracas, the Embassy began a series of four digital videoconferences with the Police Chief of San Jose, California for 30 police officers on protecting human rights in daily police activities. Various Embassy sections vetted all candidates for military training in the United States for human rights violations, in compliance with the Leahy Amendment.

The Embassy worked to strengthen the democratic process and promote the rule of law by sending U.S. diplomats to criminal proceedings against opposition leaders to show U.S. Government concern over due process. Opposition leaders under investigation were invited to Embassy events, along with government supporters, to show U.S. Government support for democracy and political tolerance and rejection of judicial intimidation. State Department spokespersons called attention to the negative effect on judicial independence of the Supreme Court law. Embassy officers, congressional delegations and visiting State Department officials also delivered messages to Venezuelan government, judicial and prosecutorial officials in defense of NGO leaders accused of treason for accepting U.S. Government funding. The Embassy arranged a series of digital videoconferences on the adversarial system to help train Venezuelan judges and lawyers. It also brought two judges and a mediator from the United States to talk about increasing the efficiency of court proceedings to insure swift and impartial administration of justice and a court mediator to discuss alternatives to judicial proceedings.

The U.S. Government sanctioned the Venezuelan Government for inaction on the problem of trafficking in persons by placing Venezuela in the Tier Three list of countries not doing enough to fight trafficking in persons during the year.

