

Perspectives in Military History

49th Annual Lecture Series

Drugs, Thugs, and Diplomats: The Origins and Impact of Plan Colombia

Dr. Winifred Tate

Associate Professor of Anthropology, Colby College

The leadership at the top of the United States' military and government attempted to solve the problems in Colombia once and for all in 2000. The strategy, dubbed Plan Colombia, would cut drug trafficking, support peace, build democracy, and defeat the guerillas terrorizing the countryside. Unfortunately, the program has increased the militarization of drug policy, allowed fear of Colombian security forces to overcome human rights, and generally worsened the crisis it was designed to resolve. This lecture, from Dr. Winifred Tate, will detail the history of the U.S. involvement in Colombia's internal drug wars, while also examining the U.S. policymaking process through a unique anthropological lens.

In her new book, *Drugs, Thugs, and Diplomats: U.S. Policy Making in Colombia*, Dr. Tate discusses how more than 80 percent of the assistance provided by the U.S. through Plan Colombia was military aid, despite the Colombian security forces link to abusive, drug-trafficking, paramilitary organizations. This talk examines the design, implementation, and assessment of this aid package. Challenging the conventional wisdom about Plan Colombia, which has been widely praised by pundits and policymakers in Washington, Tate will argue that the security challenges presented by Colombian paramilitary forces continue to be underestimated.

Winifred Tate is an associate professor of anthropology at Colby College and the author of *Drugs, Thugs and Diplomats: U.S. Policymaking in Colombia* (Stanford University Press 2015) and the award-winning *Counting the Dead: The Culture and Politics of Human Rights Activism in Colombia* (University of California Press 2007). Dr. Tate has more than 25 years' experience with issues regarding Colombia, beginning with an extensive period of volunteer work and study abroad in the 1980s. She spent another three years working with human rights NGOs in Guatemala and Colombia, after completing her Bachelor's Degree. In addition, she worked for three years as the Colombia policy expert at the Washington Office on Latin America, before completing her doctorate at New York University.

DATE: Wednesday, April 20, 2016

TIME: Doors open at 6:30 PM and the talk begins at 7:15 PM

PLACE: USAHEC, Visitor and Education Center, Multi-Purpose Room

For updates and any last-minute changes in "Perspectives" meeting times and places, please check the USAHEC homepage: www.USAHEC.org or call the Information Desk: (717) 245-3972.