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Plan to step up anti-drugs campaign

Bush is willing to send troops to Colombia

By Ian Brodie and Hugh Davies in Washington

PRESIDENT BUSH made clear last night that, despite America's tragic experience in Vietnam, he would be willing to risk sending combat troops to Colombia to join the war against the cocaine cartels. At the same time, he outlined a new anti-drugs plan that included greatly increased military and economic aid to help the Latin American nations that supply most of the cocaine sold in the United States. Military aid provided for in the plan will be in the form of equipment and non-combat advisers already being sent to Colombia under emergency measures announced by Mr Bush last month.

Police and Customs link up in 'crack' war

By Neil Darbyshire
Crime Correspondent

THE CREATION of a unique drugs squad, combining units from Scotland Yard, Customs and regional crime squads, is expected to be announced this week to combat the spread of cocaine and its highly addictive derivative "crack" in Britain.

It will be the first time police and Customs — traditional rivals in drug enforcement — have combined on a regular operational basis and could be the first step towards a unified national investigative force, like the American FBI.

The formation of a national force was proposed by Sir Peter Imbert, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, in a speech to the Police Foundation two months ago and the idea is known to have some support from the Home Secretary.

The squad, which would probably be based at or near Heathrow airport, would have unprecedented powers to allow drug consignments to enter Britain under covert surveillance, in a bid to trap not only the importers but also the distribution networks.

Police have long complained that their investigations have been hampered because Customs will not allow drugs to come into the country on so-called "controlled deliveries".

Mr John Major, the Foreign Secretary, will discuss the war on drugs with Mr Bush in Washington next week during his first overseas visit since his appointment in July.

Mrs Thatcher ordered top-level contacts this week between British and Colombian officials as the international drive against the cocaine cartels intensifies. She also has promised extensive aid to Colombia's President Barco in his fight against the drugs barons.

One hundred American military advisers are in Bogota helping to train Colombian soldiers in the use of Pentagon-supplied UH-1 Huey helicopters, C-130 transport planes, A-37 fighter jets, armoured cars and grenade launchers.

The Americans are under orders to steer clear of the fighting, and to stay in Bogota when not on air training exercises.

For several days close associates of the President, among them Mr John Sununu, the White House chief-of-staff, and Mr Dick Cheney, Defence Secretary, have hinted that Washington was ready to become even more directly involved in the Colombian crisis.

Finally, in an interview with David Frost, carried on America's public TV stations yesterday, Mr Bush stressed that he was not ready to rule out the use of ground troops.

"I don't think the President of Colombia (Mr Barco) wants American troops. In fact, I know he doesn't. But if he changes his mind, fine."

Mr Bush reminded viewers that, when seeking election, he talked of "the possibility" of America helping countries bereft of the military power to "go in there and wipe out some of these (drug) factories of death".

drugs in the United States by 50 per cent over the next 10 years. The plan included a package of proposals for fighting drugs in the United States with get-tough measures against dealers and stiffer penalties against users, including revocation of driving licences.

Political foes complained that Mr Bush's goals were stunning in their modesty and questioned where he will find enough money to pay for the plan without raising taxes.

But Mr Bush's resolve has struck a responsive chord among voters who worry about the effect of drugs on their children. To be sure, the plan carries a political risk if it goes the way of every other failed war on drugs dating back 25 years to President Kennedy.

Yet despite the increasing drugs violence in Washington and other American cities, there is evidence that this time Mr Bush's hopes may be within the bounds of possibility.

A new Government study on drug abuse has found a 37 per cent decrease since 1985 in the number of people saying they use illicit drugs.

Other studies also indicate a gradual decline under the drumbeat of anti-drugs warnings directed at the young. Even so, an estimated 24 million Americans retain their appetite for

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El Salvador visit draws protests

By Clare Hargreaves
Foreign Staff

PROTESTS are expected today at the presence in London of Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, founder and president of El Salvador's ruling Right-wing Arena party, reputed to be linked with political death squads.

Major D'Aubuisson is a member of El Salvador's delegation to the centenary conference of the inter-parliamentary union.



Labour and TUC divided on union law

By Martin Whitfield
and David Millward

MR KINNOCK arrived in Blackpool last night to find Labour's plans to overhaul trade union law thrown into disarray as a rift emerged between the unions and some of his closest aides.

As the TUC called for the scrapping of the Government's anti-union laws, Labour sources moved quickly to distance themselves from the party's industrial arm, to the concern of Mr Meacher, Shadow Foreign

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