



With the help of CIA spotters, the Peruvian air force shot down 15 small civilian aircraft suspected of carrying drugs, in many cases without warning and within two to three minutes of being sighted, a U.S. lawmaker said Thursday.

It was the first public disclosure of the number of planes shot down between 1995 and 2001 as part of the Airbridge Denial Program, a CIA counternarcotics effort that killed an innocent American missionary, Veronica Bowers, and her infant daughter in 2001. A State Department investigation at the time said that Peruvian fighter jets forced another 23 planes to land.

Michigan Rep. Pete Hoekstra, senior Republican on the Intelligence Committee of the House of Representatives, told The Associated Press most of the 15 planes shot down with the help of the CIA crashed in the jungle. The wreckage has not been or could not be examined to ascertain whether narcotics were aboard the aircraft.

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