

**United States Department of State**

*Under Secretary of State  
for Political Affairs*

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

December 30, 2004

As we approach the New Year, I want to thank you again for your continued support for Colombia. As I have done since 2001, I am writing to give you an update on the progress we are making and the challenges we still face.

Our partnership with Colombia helps advance our interests and defend our shared values. President Uribe is one of our strongest allies. U.S. support has enabled his government to continue to make great strides against narcotraffickers and terrorists, to strengthen Colombia's democracy and to improve the day-to-day lives of Colombia's citizens.

Over the past two years, our commitment has helped the people of Colombia make real progress:

- **Security:** Violent crime is at the lowest level in 16 years. According to the Colombian Presidential Program for Human Rights, between May 2002 and September 2004, Colombia saw homicides decrease by 17.6%, massacres by 55.4%, kidnappings by 35.1%, and acts of terrorism by 18.4%. Statistics for 2004 to date indicate that compared with 2003, homicides have fallen by 12%, massacres by 43.5%, kidnappings by 42.4%, and acts of terrorism by 36.7%.
- **Counternarcotics:** Drug crop eradication, narcotics interdiction, and related arrests are at record-high levels. The aerial eradication program in Colombia has sprayed 130,896 hectares of coca and 3,080 hectares of opium poppy in 2004 as of December 14. Recent Government of Colombia statistics indicate that 123 tons of cocaine have been interdicted and 1,581 drug labs have been destroyed.

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- **Social and Economic Development:** The Colombian economy grew by 3.7 percent in 2003, and the same is expected for 2004. Colombia is a key trade partner for the United States and our ties will only expand as we conclude negotiations for an Andean Free Trade Agreement next year. U.S. exports to Colombia in 2003 were \$3.8 billion. U.S. imports from Colombia totaled \$6.4 billion in 2003 of which \$2.76 billion (43.3 percent) was oil, ranking Colombia as the 12<sup>th</sup> largest oil supplier to the U.S. Foreign direct investment has increased accordingly to the highest levels in a decade. USAID-sponsored alternative development projects are providing economic, institutional development and humanitarian assistance to families that have been affected by narcotrafficking and terrorists groups' activities, and are helping the government of Colombia to reinforce the core functions and values that strengthen civil society. Justice Department programs are helping Colombia strengthen and modernize its judicial system through code reform, support for human rights units, and prosecutor training.

These are all indicators of a successful strategy. The job is not finished, however. Colombia still faces a wide variety of challenges:

- According to the DEA, approximately 90% of the cocaine, and as much as 50% of the heroin smuggled into the United States is produced in Colombia.
- Terrorism in Colombia supports and draws resources from the narcotics industry, kidnapping, and extortion, threatening U.S. citizens and economic interests. We continue our efforts to achieve the safe return of Keith Stansell, Marc Gonsalves, and Thomas Howes, the three American citizens that have been held hostage by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) since February 2003
- The Colombian government's peace processes with the illegal armed groups are critical to sustained success. An ambitious demobilization effort has removed approximately 2,600 paramilitaries from combat this year and a nascent peace process has begun with the National Liberation Army (ELN).
- Promoting respect for human rights is central to our policy in Colombia. Although there has been progress, we recognize that more needs to be done to improve the human rights performance of the Armed Forces, including ending military-paramilitary collaboration and impunity. We believe that the ongoing U.S. role in vetting and training units of the Colombian military

is a positive factor in improving the Colombian military's human rights performance.

Strong, bipartisan support from the Congress has been an integral part of our shared success with Colombia. Our future assistance will center on solidifying the gains Colombians have made, with our support, under "Plan Colombia." President Bush said during his November visit to Cartagena that he is committed to working with the Congress to continue our support for the Government of Colombia.

I look forward to continuing our work together. Please do not hesitate to call me if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,



Marc Grossman

Thanks for your  
interest +  
support.  
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Enclosures:

1. Plan Colombia Accomplishments 2004
2. Chart tracking progress in Uribe's Agenda

## **PLAN COLOMBIA ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2004**

Programs implemented under Plan Colombia, including counternarcotics efforts, continued to make significant progress over the past year. Statistics reported by credible NGOs and the Government of Colombia indicate a reduction in crime and measurable progress toward demobilization of illegal armed groups and reinsertion of former combatants. The scope and delivery of key government services have been extended and the availability of justice institutions has been increased.

### **ERADICATION AND INTERDICTION**

- In 2003, we sprayed over 127,000 hectares of coca and 2,821 hectares of opium poppy. Current 2004 figures are 130,896 hectares of coca and 3,080 hectares of opium poppy sprayed as of December 14. Both of these numbers have already exceeded the joint USG-GOC goals for 2004.
- The Airbridge Denial Program, re-started in August 2003 following a two-year hiatus, has disrupted aerial narcotrafficking events, seized suspect aircraft at legal and illegal airstrips, and denied traffickers the use of many clandestine airstrips. The Colombian Air Force forced 18 suspect aircraft to land, destroyed 18 suspect aircraft on the ground, seized 7.9MT of cocaine, and captured one pilot in 2004.
- Our spray fleet consists of eight OV-10's, seven AT-802's, and four T-65's. 2004 hostile ground fire hits against counternarcotics aircraft are down (166 impacts compared to over 300 impacts during the same period last year, as of November 24, 2004). However, continued security issues are expected as we spray in dispersed fields in more conflictive areas including the traditional FARC and narcotrafficking strongholds in southeastern Colombia where Plan Patriota phase IIb is taking place.
- We are firmly committed to ensuring that our spray program is environmentally sound and does not threaten human health. To this end, we provide equipment, training, and other assistance to the Government of Colombia's Ministry of Health to help them perform soil and water sampling, human health tracking, and other designated responsibilities under the Government of Colombia's improved interagency Environmental Management Plan.

- Our discussions with the GOC continue on how best to eradicate the coca growing illegally in national parks. The Colombian Interior, Justice and Environmental Ministers recently announced that the GOC policy will be to manually eradicate this coca and consider aerial eradication in the parks only after all other feasible options have been considered.
- The Plan Colombia Helicopter program that provides helicopters, equipment, training, and technical assistance to the Colombian National Police and the Colombian Army for counternarcotics missions has flown over 51,000 flight hours with only one accident, despite the fact that 37,555 of those hours have been in combat operations. U.S.-supported and maintained Colombian Army (COLAR) helicopters were on average 83.9% mission capable in 2004, and supported over 1,000 counter-narcotics operations, 259 MEDEVAC operations, and training operations for over 150 helicopter pilots.
- USG alternative development programs manually eradicated over 956 hectares in FY 2004 (712 hectares of coca, 244 hectares of poppy), leading to a cumulative total of 22,803 hectares (20,659 hectares of coca, 2,144 hectares of poppy) that have been manually eradicated since 2001.

### **PUBLIC SECURITY**

- There is an increased sense of security; Colombians move about the country more freely, leading to increased commercial activities in locations that depended for years exclusively on the illicit narcotics trade.
- With Plan Patriota, the Colombian Military (COLMIL) has dealt significant blows to the FARC's military and financial infrastructure, allowing the GOC to recover large amounts of territory previously controlled by the FARC.
- The Colombian National Police (CNP) is enhancing public security with an expanded presence throughout the country and a campaign to establish public confidence in the police. The CNP maintains its permanent presence in every municipality in the country and is stressing prevention, rather than reaction, as a means of combating criminal activity.
- Since the inauguration of President Uribe's Democratic Security Policy, the CNP has trained and deployed 9,176 officers to work in rural areas, 8,166 to

protect major roadways, and 397 to defend 12 of the country's 16 petroleum pipelines.

- The CNP has six special units assigned to counternarcotics efforts: maritime and airport police, a chemical substance control unit, an intelligence unit, an investigations unit, and an anti-heroin unit. Interdiction units are critical to undermining the financial base of the country's illegal armed groups. The CNP has 22 fixed-wing aircraft and 62 helicopters dedicated to spraying, interdiction, logistics, and intelligence collection.
- With USG assistance the CNP has trained and equipped 62 Carabinero Mobile Squadrons (16,500 police in all) for assignment to rural Colombia.
- According to the Colombian Ministry of Defense, kidnappings have dropped 42% since 2003. Colombia still has the highest rate of kidnapping in the world (projected over 1,500 this year). To break the cycle of kidnapping, Colombia's U.S.-supported Anti-Kidnapping Initiative (AKI), which was inaugurated in August 2003, has trained and equipped military and police anti-kidnapping units, as well as established a permanent training facility and developed an interagency kidnapping database – the only one of its kind in the world. These units have conducted several successful rescue operations, freeing hostage victims and dismantling kidnapping rings. In the last year, these special units have run 11 successful rescue operations in addition to several extortion interventions. Two of the successful rescue operations freed US citizens. This initiative complements other ongoing USG counterterrorism-related assistance, including reintegration of CNP into all municipalities, VIP security, and bomb squad training.
- The USG has provided training in Judicial and Dignitary Protection to over 270 Colombian officials from police and government agencies and supplied 60 armored vehicles and 600 armored vests in 2004. Our Embassy has provided protection for 821 individuals and 22 offices, enabling Colombian leaders to conduct activities in a more secure environment. In 2004, the Justice Sector Reform Program (JSRP) has provided 60 courses and trained 2,147 individuals on topics such as judicial/dignitary protection, counterfeit detection, bomb detection, prison personnel operations, and anti-kidnapping measures.
- We have trained and equipped over 150 bomb disposal technicians from GOC agencies in 2004. Deaths incurred during bomb deactivation declined from seven in 2002 to zero in 2004.

## ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND RULE OF LAW

RESULTS	2003	2004
Number of families benefited from USAID alternative development assistance	44,015	12,845
Number of hectares of licit crops supported	55,071	16,508
Number of hectares of forest maintained / protected	N/A	25,820
Number of social and productive infrastructure projects completed	874	244
Number of citizen oversight committees formed	221	58
Number of municipalities with improved public services	38	2

- The USG has provided assistance to more than 2 million internally displaced and other vulnerable persons since FY 2001 (581,337 in 2004). There were 70,000 new individuals displaced compared to 75,000 in 2003, in large part due to the decrease in both FARC and paramilitary offensives.
- According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) the rate of massive displacements has decreased in large part because of the paramilitary peace process and the decrease in paramilitary offensives. Individual displacement continues to be a problem, however, as are humanitarian blockades. ICRC's 2004 figures show 70,000 new individuals displaced compared to 75,000 in 2003 in the 16 cities where ICRC has a presence.
- Since 2001, USAID and DOJ have supported the establishment of 35 oral trial courtrooms (seven in 2004) to facilitate Colombia's transition from an inquisitorial to an accusatorial system of justice, and trained more than 14,613 prosecutors, judges, investigators and defense attorneys (over 6,213 in 2004) for their new roles in the framework of an accusatorial criminal system.
- Since 1997, the USG has established 37 justice houses throughout the country (four in 2004) that have handled over 2.7 million cases (746,000 in 2004), providing access to justice and government services in areas that were previously underserved and had little state presence.
- We have also trained a similar number of judges, magistrates prosecutors, and judicial police in Colombia's new Asset Seizure Law and trained 500 justice officials in basic financial and accounting principles and financial analysis. There was a 25 percent increase in money laundering prosecutions and a 42 percent increase in asset forfeiture cases in 2003. Also, U.S. assistance has

trained 1,048 conciliators (571 in 2004) in order to increase Colombians' access to community-based conflict resolution services.

- The USG and Colombia have an excellent extradition relationship. The Uribe Administration has extradited over 180 persons (116 so far in 2004, 64 in 2003) to the United States for a variety of serious crimes, including murder, kidnapping, money laundering, and narcotics-related offenses. President Uribe shows no indication of slowing down. The highest profile extradition to date was that of Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, leader of the Cali Cartel, who was extradited on December 5, 2004, on drug trafficking and money laundering charges.
- The USG is providing training and in witness protection and supplied vehicles to the Inspector General's Office.
- We are assisting the Ministry of Defense restructuring process to enhance civilian policy development and oversight and encourage more efficient management of resources.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS**

- Twenty-one major human rights investigative commissions in areas of minimal GOC presence received Plan Colombia operational funds and equipment support in 2004. These commissions advanced more than 100 significant cases against paramilitary groups, guerilla organizations, and GOC officials and military personnel involved in homicides, torture, extortion, kidnapping and money laundering.
- Reports published by the GOC and third parties confirm that our human rights efforts are producing significant results on the security front. According to Colombia's Ministry of Defense, the national homicide rate fell by 38 percent in the first ten months of 2004 relative to 2003. The Center for Popular Research and Education (CINEP), the NGO that manages Colombia's largest and most influential human rights violations database, recorded that extrajudicial executions fell 48 percent while assassinations of protected persons declined 41 percent, during the same period.
- The USG-supported Human Rights Protection Program has protected over 3,700 individuals since 2001 (556 in 2004) and has "hardened" and protected more than 96 offices (25 in 2004).



- The National Labor College (ENS), Colombia's most influential labor NGO, noted that homicides of trade unionists are down 38 percent through the first nine months of 2004. The GOC reported a 42 percent decline in kidnappings in the first nine months of 2004.
- Since 2001, the USG has helped to establish 21 regional offices (one in 2004) for the Early Warning System (EWS). The EWS has issued over 323 alerts of serious human rights abuses (89 in 2004) and potential forced mass displacements. The GOC deemed critical and responded to nearly 195 of these alerts (18 in 2004).
- The USG has assisted over 2,085 former child combatants (774 this year) to reintegrate back into civil society through the child ex-soldier program.