



Center for International Policy

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New Ideas for U.S. Policy toward Colombia: Exploring the Alternatives

A conference hosted by the Center for International Policy

Washington, DC – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1779 Massachusetts Ave NW,
Root Room (Second Floor) – October 14, 2005, 8:30AM - 5:00PM

Objective: The United States has given Colombia over \$4 billion in aid since 2000, 20 percent of which has gone to non-military purposes. After five years, this mix of priorities has not reduced the availability of drugs in the United States. Regions of Colombia that have received the most U.S. military focus are no more secure. Impunity for abuses and corruption is as serious as ever. Prospects for a negotiated peace with guerrillas, meanwhile, remain distant. Yet the conventional wisdom sees no viable alternative to “Plan Colombia” in its present form.

We disagree: alternative strategies, which rely far less on the use of force, hold more promise of helping Colombia to achieve peace, security and development. Throughout Colombia, citizens are pursuing and promoting conflict resolution, local development, and a broader definition of security and how their government can guarantee it. These efforts deserve much more U.S. support than they have been getting, and in fact point the way to a new, better policy. This one-day conference will provide a forum for some of Colombia’s most innovative practitioners to share their ideas and experiences with a U.S. audience.

For reasons of menu planning and building security, we ask that you let us know in advance if you plan to attend. You may RSVP by sending an e-mail with name and institutional affiliation to isacson@ciponline.org.

Agenda:

8:30-8:45 Introductions and opening remarks

8:45-10:45 Panel 1: Peace initiatives. Civil-society, religious and local government leaders are promoting renewed negotiations with guerrilla groups, while seeking to ensure that talks with paramilitary groups lead to the groups’ full dismantlement while respecting victims’ rights. Several have developed conflict-resolution models that can be replicated elsewhere in the country, or blueprints for an end to hostilities at the national level.

Speakers:

- Álvaro Leyva, former senator, minister and peace negotiator: possibilities for renewed national-level talks with guerrilla groups, including the difficult question of an accord to release guerrilla hostages.
- Ana Teresa Bernal, REDEPAZ, member of the National Commission for Reparations and Reconciliation: local and municipal efforts to reduce violence and shield civilians.
- Iván Cepeda, Manuel Cepeda Foundation: as talks with paramilitaries proceed, how to maximize reparations to victims, balance justice and peace, and dismantle the AUC.
- Ángela Giraldo, peace advisor, government of Valle del Cauca department: the guerrilla hostage crisis, movement toward dialogues with the ELN, and regional dialogues.

10:45-11:00 Coffee break

11:00-1:00 Panel 2: Security. Years of military offensives, usually unaccompanied by any other government presence, have failed to recover or pacify territory held by illegal armed groups. Several Colombian analysts, local leaders and politicians insist that real security will only come through the introduction of civilian government institutions and services.

Speakers:

- Col. (R) Carlos Velásquez: confronting the challenges of governability in zones dominated by illegal armed groups.
- Arquímedes Vitonás, mayor of Toribío, Cauca: the “indigenous guard,” a model of local, non-violent security.
- César Rodríguez Garavito, Universidad de los Andes and Center for the Study of Law, Justice and Society: the challenge of establishing the rule of law.
- Ricardo Esquivia, Montes de María Peace and Development Network: “*convivencia*” in the Montes de María.

1:15-2:30 Lunch Speaker: Implications for U.S. Policy.

Speaker:

- Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Massachusetts): broad outlines of an alternative U.S. policy, and possibilities for change in the current political climate.

2:45-4:45 Panel 3: “Alternative” Development. Analysts and practitioners from several regions will present models for improving the economic viability of Colombia’s rural sector, thus making illicit drug-crop cultivation a less attractive choice.

Speakers:

- Nancy Sánchez, MINGA: lessons learned from U.S.-supported alternative-development programs in the department of Putumayo.
- Pedro Arenas, member of Congress from the Department of Guaviare: alternatives to aerial eradication.
- Alfredo Witschi-Cestari, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative for Colombia: recommendations from the UNDP’s 2003 *Human Development Report* for Colombia.
- Yamile Salinas, consultant and former *Defensoría del Pueblo* official: combining voluntary eradication with alternative development.

4:45-5:00 Closing remarks

The Center for International Policy thanks the Compton Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the General Service Foundation, and the Samuel Rubín Foundation for the generous support that made this event possible.