

**Remarks to the House Committee on Government Reform
By Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno
Ambassador of Colombia to the United States
On Plan Colombia**

June 17, 2004

Good afternoon. Let me begin by thanking the United States Congress for their support in Colombia's on-going fight against drugs and terror, and express our appreciation to the Committee [on Government Reform](#) for holding this oversight hearing on Plan Colombia's progress. [Over the last years both the Committee and its Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources have shown a remarkable degree of interest with regard to this matter and it pleases me, as Colombian Ambassador to the U.S., to pay tribute to their respective Chairmen, Representatives Tom Davis and Mark Souder, for their personal commitment to these efforts.](#)

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to report today that the U.S.-Colombian partnership under Plan Colombia [and its successor programs](#) has been a sound investment for both our nations. Now in its fourth year of implementation, Plan Colombia has played a significant role in combating terrorism and narco-trafficking, restoring economic growth, and strengthening the rule of law, human rights and alternative development opportunities. In the spirit of burden sharing that Plan Colombia envisioned, the United States has provided more than [\\$2.53.2](#) billion in assistance to date, while Colombian resources have totaled [\\$46](#) billion.

Plan Colombia's integrated program of military equipment and training and social and economic assistance remains at the core of the U.S.-Colombia bilateral relationship. The Colombia-U.S cooperative effort to defeat terrorism and narco-trafficking is not only leading to a more peaceful and prosperous Colombia, but is enhancing stability and security across the Andean region.

The illegal, violent actors in Colombia's conflict have close ties with international networks that engage in drug and arms trafficking, money laundering and other criminal actions. Through Plan

Colombia, the United States is helping Colombia cut off the resources these terrorist groups use to wage their war against the Colombian people. Every day, thousands of Americans and Colombians work side-by-side building a more secure and prosperous Colombia, and by extension help advance U.S. strategic interests in the hemisphere.

The Eradication and Interdiction of Illegal Drugs

Under Plan Colombia, Colombia has seen dramatic results in the eradication and interdiction of narcotics. Here are some relevant statistics and facts:

- Colombia is on track to meet and surpass ~~met and surpassed~~ its goal of reducing the country's illegal coca crop by 50% from December 2000 levels in five years. ONDCP numbers showed a reduction of 33% in the country's illegal coca crop as of December 2003, while UN numbers for the same period show an even greater drop. The 50% reduction goal should be achieved this year, ~~was achieved~~ one year ahead of schedule. In 2003, ~~125,000~~132,817 hectares of coca and 3,830 hectares of opium poppy were eradicated.
- Since the launch of Plan Colombia in January 2001 and through May of 2004, Colombian military and law enforcement have interdicted 317 tons of cocaine with an estimated street value of \$9.5 billion. Seizures of cocaine were up 20% in 2003 and 50% in the first 5 months of 2004. ~~interdicted 114 tons of cocaine in 2003, a 20% increase of 2002. The seized cocaine had an estimated street value of \$3.4 billion~~
- Spraying operations ~~were also~~have also targeted ~~against~~ illegal opium poppy ~~crops~~ crops. In 2003, 2,995 hectares were destroyed through aerial spraying and a significant number were destroyed manually. This effort potentially removed approximately 9 metric tons of heroin from the U.S. market.
- Our efforts continue this year. ~~During~~ During the first five months of 2004, 59,134 hectares of coca and 1,814 hectares of opium poppy were eradicated, ~~5049.6~~ tons of cocaine ~~were~~ seized ~~interdicted~~ and 899 drug laboratories were destroyed.

Alternative and Economic Development Programs

As part of Plan Colombia, the U.S. and Colombia have successfully implemented alternative and economic development programs to help coca and poppy farmers transition to legal economic activity:

- ☐ Since 2001, Colombia and the United States have cooperated to support the cultivation of 43,951 hectares of legal crops [more than 95,000 acres]. These efforts have benefited more than 31,170 families, who have committed to give up the cultivation of illegal crops.
- ☐ Plan Colombia has successfully completed 630 social and economic infrastructure projects. These include building roads, schools, health clinics and sewer systems in rural, isolated communities in the southern region of Colombia, where this development leads to reduced dependency on illegal drug cultivation and production.
- ☐ Plan Colombia has provided assistance to more than 1.2 million internally displaced persons in Colombia — individuals and families who have been forced to flee their homes and communities because of violence.

Enhanced Military and Police Readiness

Strengthening of the Rule of Law, Public Safety and Human Rights

The Two separate initiatives — Colombian Government's Democratic Security and Defense Policy, with key U.S. cooperation, has significantly enhanced the size, training and capabilities of Colombia's armed forces and police and the social and economic development programs of Plan Colombia — are together helping strengthen rule of law and our legal institutions, improve public safety and advance human rights:

- In August 2002, 158 rural municipalities in Colombia had no police presence. Today, every municipality has a police presence – a first for Colombia. In total, 16,304 police officers

have been added since 2000.

- In our effort to regain control over all of the Colombian territory, we have added 52,269 combat-ready troops since 2000 – a 60% increase. In addition, our armed forces have greatly improved their mobility and ability to move rapidly to conflict areas because of U.S.-provided helicopters and other specialty aircraft. U.S.-provided aircraft have been particularly critical in the success of Colombia’s aerial spraying program, both for the actual spraying of illegal crops as well as protecting personnel engaged in this dangerous activity.

Progress against Terrorism

Enhanced military and police readiness has shifted the balance in the fight against narco-terrorist groups responsible for much of Colombia’s violence and civil rights abuses to the government’s advantage. These groups include a paramilitary group called the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the two guerrilla groups – the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). The AUC is responsible for the majority of human rights abuses in Colombia, and, together, the three groups are the worst violators of human rights in the Americas. As a result of Plan Colombia, the Colombian Armed Forces and National Police have intensified military operations against these organizations.

- Captures of members of guerrilla organizations were up by 85% in 2003, while captures of members of illegal self-defense groups increased by 133.5%.
- Guerrilla casualties reached 1,919 members in 2003, a 14% increase on 2002. Similarly, illegal self-defense groups casualties totaled 346 last year—an 85% increase over the previous year.
- Moreover, 1,841 members of guerrilla organizations and 1,739 members of illegal self-defense groups demobilized voluntarily in 2003.
- Progress on this front has continued this year. In the first five months of 2004, captures, kills

and demobilizations of members of narco-terrorist organizations were up 49%, 34% and 62%, respectively, on the same period of 2003.

- Importantly, with invaluable U.S. intelligence and training assistance, the Colombian Military is being increasingly successful in going after high-value targets in the terrorist leadership. In the last five months, two high-ranking members of FARC have been captured.

Improved Security and Public Safety

The Government's aggressive campaign against terrorist organizations and its efforts to reestablish effective control throughout the national territory have translated into improved security for all Colombians.

- Kidnappings, which are used by guerilla and other criminal organizations as a source of funding and to create fear and terror, have declined by 53% since 2000—from 3,706 that year to 1,737 in the last twelve months through May 2004.
- Homicides have fallen by 25% since 2002 – from 28,837 in that year to 21,659 in the last twelve months through May 2004. In fact, Colombia's homicide level per 100,000 inhabitants is now at its lowest level of the last 17 years.

Finally, there has been a significant decline in terrorist incidents in Colombia over the past two years. Incidents of terrorism declined from 1,645 in 2002 to 1,010 in the twelve months through May 2004—a decline of 39%.



Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights

Improving Colombia's Judiciary System and ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights in the country is a central element of Plan Colombia and Colombian government policy.

➤ U.S. training and equipment has produced a more professional, efficient military. They are more motivated, better equipped and more respectful of their obligation to human rights and international humanitarian law. The U.S. Government has provided training for Colombia's national police and armed forces in a variety of specialized areas, including anti-terrorism, anti-kidnapping, bomb disposal and protection for senior political and government officials. Furthermore, in 2003 alone, 73,000 members of the Colombian military received training in Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

➤ A vast program of judicial reform is under way, in order to adapt the legal system to a major reform of the criminal codes, which is currently being discussed by Congress. When this amendment enters into force, Colombian criminal procedure will follow the accusatorial system used in common law countries, a change that is expected to enhance the effectiveness of the administration of justice. To that end, U.S. agencies like the Department of Justice and USAID have provided the means to set up 30 new oral trial courtrooms. Likewise, training has been provided for 3,400 prosecutors, judges, magistrates and defense attorneys, as well as 707 community-based conciliators.

~~28 new oral trial courtrooms have been established to facilitate legal procedures. Training has been provided for 3,400 prosecutors, judges, magistrates and defense attorneys, as well as 707 community-based conciliators.~~

~~☐ Money laundering prosecutions rose by 25 percent in 2003, while asset forfeitures cases increased by 42%.~~

➤ Since the beginning of Plan Colombia, nearly 90-200 persons have been extradited to the United States for criminal prosecution for crimes that include murder, kidnapping, money laundering, and drug trafficking. Money laundering prosecutions rose by 25 percent in 2003, while asset forfeiture cases increased by 42%.

~~☐~~

➤ There was a significant decline of human rights violations in Colombia during 2003, including a 48% decrease in extra judicial executions. To cite an example, Homicides of

trade unionists fell ~~5760%~~ during 2003, and were down a further 25% in the first 4 months of 2004. More than 100 significant cases against illegal self-defense groups, guerrilla organizations and Government of Colombia officials for human rights' violations were advanced in 2003.

☐ Under Plan Colombia, we are providing increased security for persons at high risk, including labor leaders, local government officials, journalists, human rights workers and NGO leaders. During 2003, special security was provided for 5,221 high-risk individuals, up from 880 in 2000.



~~☐ Kidnappings, which are used by guerilla organizations as a source of funding and to create fear and terror, have declined by 50% (from 3,706 to 1,827) since 2000. In the first five months of 2004, total kidnappings fell another 43%.~~

~~Homicides have fallen 25% since 2002 — from 28,837 to 21,690. In the first five months of 2004, homicides fell by another 13%~~

~~The Fight against Terrorism~~

~~The fight against the narco-terrorist groups responsible for much of Colombia's violence and civil rights abuses has intensified over the past two years. These groups include a paramilitary group called the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the two guerrilla groups — the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). The AUC is responsible for the majority of human rights abuses in Colombia, and **the** together the three groups are the worst violators of human rights in the Americas. As a result of Plan Colombia, The Colombian Armed Forces and National Police have been more successful in capturing members of illegal guerrilla and self-defense groups.~~

☐ ~~A total of 6,967 members of guerrilla organizations were captured during 2003, an increase of 85% over 2002. In addition, 3,166 members of illegal self-defense groups were captured in 2003, a 133.5% increase over the previous year.~~

- ☐ ~~Moreover, 1,841 members of guerrilla organizations and 1,739 members of illegal self-defense groups demobilized voluntarily in 2003.~~

- ☐ ~~In the first five months of 2004, 1,047 narco-terrorists were demobilized, an increase of 62%; and, 5,058 were captured, an increase of 49% over the same period in 2003.~~

- ☐ ~~Finally, there has been a significant decline in terrorist incidents in Colombia over the past two years. Incidents of terrorism declined from 1,645 in 2002 to 1,226 last year, a decline of 25.4%.~~

Economic and Social Development Programs

As part of Plan Colombia, the U.S. and Colombia have successfully implemented alternative development and other social programs to help coca and poppy farmers transition to legal economic activity, and provide relief to other citizens affected by terrorism and crime.

- Since 2001 and through March 31, 2004, Colombia and the United States have cooperated to support the cultivation of 45,456 hectares of legal crops [more than 112,000 acres]. These efforts have benefited more than 34,348 families, who have committed to give up the cultivation of illegal crops.

- Plan Colombia has successfully completed 835 social and economic infrastructure projects. These include building roads, schools, health clinics and sewer systems in rural, isolated communities in the southern region of Colombia, where this development leads to reduced dependency on illegal drug cultivation and production.

- Plan Colombia has provided assistance to more than 1.6 million internally displaced persons in Colombia – individuals and families who have been forced to flee their homes and communities because of violence.

- Two additional statistics are particularly relevant to Colombia's social development: 1) 920,000 more children have been enrolled in public schools since 2000—increasing coverage to 85% of the population. 2) 2.4 million more people have been enrolled in the public health care system since 2000—bringing coverage up to 57.5% of the total population. While Plan Colombia did not fund these initiatives, U.S. support for other military and economic programs has enabled the Colombian Government to earmark the necessary resources for education and health care.

Restoring Economic Growth

A strong, growing Colombian economy is important for stability and defeating drugs and terror. While Plan Colombia was not designed as an economic growth initiative, it has contributed significantly to restoring investor and consumer confidence and fueled economic recovery. the resulting improvement in Colombia's security situation and social environment is having a positive impact on macroeconomic conditions.

- In 2003, Colombia's GDP grew by 3.86%—the highest level—rate since 1995. Growth continued at a similar pace in the first quarter of this year, and tThe Government is currently forecasting an even higher GDP growth figure in excess of 4% for 2004.
- More than 1.2 million new jobs were created in Colombia in 2003. Unemployment declined from 15.6% in December 2002 to 12.3% in December 2003.
- Following renewal of the Andean Trade Preferences Act in 2003, Colombia-U.S. bilateral trade grew 10% in 2003 to \$10.1 billion, contributing to the creation of thousands of jobs in both countries.
- Last month, Colombia and the United States, along with Ecuador and Peru, launched free trade negotiations. A Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. will significantly enhance Colombia's long-term economic prospects and security, and create a positive and predictable environment for new foreign and domestic investment.

~~Imports from Colombia rose 20% between January–November 2003, compared to the same period in 2002. Bilateral trade between Colombia and the United States rose 14% in January–November of 2003 compared to the same period of the previous year.~~

~~□ Last month, Colombia and the United States, along with Ecuador and Peru, completed the first round of trade negotiations. An agreement will significantly enhance Colombia's long-term economic prospects and security, and create a positive and predictable environment for new foreign and domestic investment.~~

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~~□ Two additional statistics are particularly relevant to Colombia's social development: 920,000 more children have been enrolled in public school since 2000 and 2.3 million more people have received access to health care than in 2000. While Plan Colombia did not fund these initiatives, U.S. support for other military and economic programs has enabled the Colombian Government to earmark the necessary resources for these important education and health care initiatives.~~

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The Challenges Ahead

While significant progress has been ~~made~~ under Plan Colombia, the ~~challenge in the~~ battle against narcoterrorism is far from over. Colombia and the U.S. need to consolidate. As we continue to the gains in terms of achieve security, law and order, and economic growth, we need and begin to look ahead to ensure lasting peace, and stability and prosperity in the long-term. Specific challenges ahead include:

➤ Sustaining the military offensive against narcoterrorist groups: As Colombia continues to take the fight to the terrorists, the country will need sustained U.S. assistance in the medium term. This assistance is vital to consolidate the security gains achieved so far, and to

ensure the success of ongoing military operations in remote areas of the country—which pose significant logistical and intelligence challenges. U.S. know-how and equipment will be crucial to the success of these operations. Moreover, continued U.S.-Colombia cooperation on the counter-narcotics and transnational crime fighting fronts will help to starve narcoterrorist groups of the drug-proceeds they need to maintain their fighting and logistical apparatus.

➤ **Consolidating economic recovery through an FTA with the U.S.:** Expanding international trade and attracting foreign investment remain critical to promoting economic growth, employment and security in Colombia. The Uribe Government strongly supports trade liberalization throughout the hemisphere, both through bilateral agreements and the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas. In this context, a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.—by far Colombia’s largest trade and investment partner—is a critical component of the country’s development strategy. An FTA with the U.S. will not only increase exports and promote job creation in Colombia, but also help attract Foreign Direct Investment to the country in such crucial sectors as oil and gas, where Colombia has enormous untapped potential.

➤ **Advancing peace talks and demobilizing illegal actors:** While Colombia continues to exert military pressure on narcoterrorist organizations, the government has opened the door for talks with groups and individual combatants genuinely interested in giving up arms. The government is determined to seek a peace agreement with these groups, but not any peace agreement. Peace and reconciliation must be achieved in accordance with our constitutional provisions and be respectful of the demands of justice and international humanitarian law. It will also require the support of the international community.

Within this framework, a peace process with the AUC is currently underway. An agreement has been reached on a cease of hostilities and the concentration of AUC members in a small area located in the Province of Córdoba. The implementation of this agreement - due to start any moment now, will be subject to close verification by a Mission sent by the Organization of American States, pursuant to an agreement between the Colombian Government and this

institution's Secretary-General.

On a different track, just last week the Mexican Government announced that it was willing to host and sponsor a negotiating process with the ELN guerrillas and the first steps are being taken in that direction. The Government believes that this group is genuinely interested in conducting peace talks and has already expressed its willingness to authorize it to hold a "National Convention", a longstanding demand made by its leadership.

As part of any agreement, demobilizing illegal combatants must be realized on a scale never before attempted in Colombia. Past demobilizations of the M-19 and EPL, as well as current demobilization efforts, involve only a small portion of the combatants that would be involved in comprehensive peace agreements. Therefore, these processes will pose enormous challenges and require significant financial resources.

~~□ **Continued eradication of transnational crime:** Defeating terrorism in Colombia means attacking transnational crime at all levels. This means the smuggling of precursor chemicals used for drug production, arms and explosives trafficking and money laundering. There is already extensive cooperation and success between Colombian law enforcement, police and judicial officials and key U.S. agencies such as the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the U.S. Treasury. The Uribe Government is committed to enhancing these initiatives wherever and whenever necessary.~~

~~□ **Continued restoration of Colombia's economic health:** To continue the growth of Colombia's economy, bilateral trade and investment with the U.S. is critical. The Uribe Government strongly supports trade liberalization throughout the hemisphere, both through bilateral agreements and creation of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. Negotiations for a U.S. Andean trade partnership are underway and must be completed successfully next year.~~

~~□ **Further developing Colombia's oil infrastructure:** U.S. companies have been important partners in Colombia's development, contributing to Colombia's energy, infrastructure,~~

~~manufacturing and services sectors. The Uribe Administration is working to improve security conditions in regions of the country where oil infrastructure has been targeted by guerrillas. Oil generates substantial fiscal revenues for the Central Government and Colombia has become an important and reliable source of foreign oil to the U.S. market.~~

➤ **Addressing the humanitarian and ecological challenges wrought by narcoterrorism:**

We must continue to provide help to thousands of Colombian families who have been displaced by terrorism and violence. This means returning them to their homes and communities, helping them find productive employment and generally enabling them to restart their lives. At the same time, it is imperative that Colombia work to repair the damage done to our valuable rain forest ecosystems by terrorists and drug traffickers, both in terms of forest destruction and the widespread dumping of precursor chemicals into Amazon river systems. The Uribe administration is developing reforestation programs to rehabilitate forestlands destroyed by drug traffickers and create employment for former coca peasants to manage these lands sustainably. U.S.-based environmental groups are providing assistance and technical support to repair the damage done to Colombia's environment

~~☐ **Rehabilitating Amazon forest lands destroyed by drug traffickers:** Guerrillas and drug traffickers are destroying Colombia's valuable Amazon forestlands to create industrial coca plantations. In addition, widespread dumping of precursor chemicals into Amazon river systems creates enormous pollution. The Uribe administration is developing reforestation programs to rehabilitate forest lands destroyed by drug traffickers and create employment for former coca peasants to manage these lands sustainably. U.S.-based environmental groups are providing assistance and technical support to repair the damage done to Colombia's environment.~~

~~☐ **Advancing peace talks and demobilizing illegal actors:** We are determined to seek a peace agreement with these groups, but not any peace agreement. Peace and conciliation must be achieved in accordance with our constitutional provisions and will require the support of the international community. As part of any agreement, demobilizing illegal combatants must be realized on a scale never before attempted in Colombia. Past demobilizations of the M-19 and ELF, as well as current demobilization efforts, involve only a small portion of combatants that~~

~~may be involved as we demobilize the FARC, ELN and AUC. This will be an enormous challenge, one requiring significant financial resources.~~

~~Within this framework, a peace process with the illegal armed actors grouped under an umbrella organization called “Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia” or AUC, is in full motion. An agreement has been reached on a cease of hostilities and the concentration of AUC members in a small area located in the Province of Córdoba. The implementation of this agreement — due to start any moment from now, will be subject to close verification by a Mission sent by the Organization of American States, pursuant an agreement between the Government and this body’s Secretary General. — On a different track, just last week the Mexican Government announced that it was willing to host and sponsor a negotiating process with the ELN guerrilla and the first steps are being taken in that direction. The Government expects that this group is genuinely interested in conducting peace talks and has already expressed its willingness to authorize it to hold a “National Convention”, a longstanding demand made by its leadership.~~

~~As part of any agreement, demobilizing illegal combatants must be realized on a scale never before attempted in Colombia. Past demobilizations of the M-19 and EPL, as well as current demobilization efforts, involve only a small portion of combatants that may be involved as we demobilize the FARC, ELN and AUC. This will be an enormous challenge, one requiring significant financial resources.~~

~~☐ **Providing additional assistance to Colombia’s internally displaced population.** Finally, we must continue to provide help to thousands of Colombian families and individuals who have been displaced by terrorism and violence. This means returning them to their homes and communities, enabling them to restart their lives.~~

Colombia looks forward to ~~developing and implementing a second phase~~ working on the consolidation of Plan Colombia, in ~~order to build on the~~ sustain the ~~which we will work with~~

~~United States to consolidate the~~ progress we have realized to date and develop new, cooperative efforts to address the changing nature of the conflict, so that we may achieve true national reconciliation in Colombia. As President Uribe put it, during his recent visit to the U.S., we are determined to stay the course.

Thank you. I ~~am happy~~will be glad to answer your questions.