

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 3, 2009

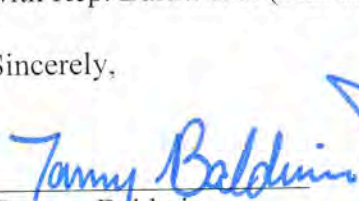
Dear Colleague:

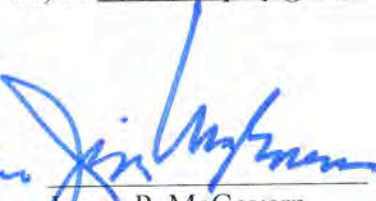
As you may know, the U.S. and Colombia are in negotiations to increase U.S. access to an expanded network of Colombian military bases to support counter-narcotics efforts. We are very concerned that increased U.S. military involvement in Colombia will exacerbate the failures of Plan Colombia and continue to overemphasize funding to Colombia's armed forces rather than needed development and rule of law efforts. Please join us in sending the attached letter to President Obama urging him to exercise caution in negotiating any increase in U.S. military aid to and presence in Colombia.

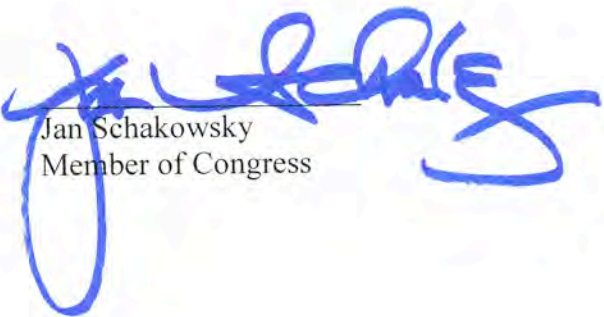
Between fiscal years 2000 and 2008, the United States provided over \$6 billion in military and nonmilitary assistance to Colombia as part of Plan Colombia. Despite the billions of dollars spent by the U.S., Plan Colombia has not succeeded in its counter-narcotics efforts according to the GAO. In addition to serious questions about the value of eradication efforts, we have strong concerns about human rights violations perpetrated by the Colombian military. Human rights organizations have documented Colombia's military involvement with illegal paramilitary groups that on many occasions carried out extra judicial murders, disappearances, and displacement of Colombian peasants, Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples.

We hope you will join us in sending the attached letter to President Obama supporting a cautious approach to negotiating any increase in U.S. military aid to and presence in Colombia. If you have any questions, or to sign the letter, please contact Amber Shipley with Rep. Baldwin at (5-2906) or amber.shipley@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,


Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress


James P. McGovern
Member of Congress


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

September xx, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

It is our understanding that the U.S. and Colombia are in negotiations to increase U.S. access to an expanded network of Colombian military bases to support counter-narcotics efforts. We write to urge caution regarding any increase in U.S. military aid to and presence in Colombia due to concerns that increased U.S. military involvement will exacerbate the failures of Plan Colombia.

Between fiscal years 2000 and 2008, the United States provided over \$6 billion in military and nonmilitary assistance to Colombia as part of Plan Colombia. This funding supported the eradication of coca and opium poppy crops, the interdiction of narcotics shipments, and the training and material support for Colombia's security forces. U.S. assistance also supported alternative crop development to give coca and opium poppy farmers alternative sources of income.

Despite the billions of dollars spent by the U.S., Plan Colombia has not succeeded. According to a GAO report released in October 2008 (GAO-09-71), "Plan Colombia's goal of reducing the cultivation, processing, and distribution of illegal narcotics by targeting coca cultivation has not been achieved." In fact, according to the report, coca cultivation and cocaine production have increased in Colombia.

In addition to serious questions about the value of eradication efforts, we have strong concerns about human rights violations perpetrated by the Colombian military. Human rights organizations have documented Colombia's military involvement with illegal paramilitary groups that on many occasions carried out extra judicial murders, disappearances, and displacement of Colombian peasants, Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples. For example, Amnesty International found that, between June 2006 and June 2007, at least 280 civilians were extra-judicially killed by Colombian security forces and that many of them were subsequently presented by those forces as guerrillas killed in conflict.¹ The Colombia Support Network has documented literally hundreds of incidents of abuse by the Colombian Army over the past three years², and according to Human Rights Watch, the Colombian Armed Forces engaged in "'systematic' killings of civilians" and the Colombian Attorney General's Office (La Fiscalía) is investigating cases involving more than 1,700 alleged victims.³

¹ See: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/colombia/report-2008>

² See: http://colombiasupport.net/2009/colombian_army_csn_report_08_09.pdf

³ See: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/06/26/obamas-chance-shift-gears-colombia>

These failures of Plan Colombia underscore our concern that increased U.S. military presence in Colombia will continue to overemphasize funding to Colombia's armed forces rather than needed development and rule of law efforts. We hope you will exercise caution in negotiating any increase in U.S. military aid to and presence in Colombia.

Sincerely,

Cc: The Honorable Hillary Clinton
The Honorable Robert Gates