

July 15, 2015

Advisory Council:

Rev Daniel Berrigan S.J.
Activist, Writer, Poet

Larry Birns
The Council on
Hemispheric Affairs

Blase Bonpane
The Office of the Americas

Herbert (Tico) Braun
University of Virginia

Noam Chomsky
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology

Rev. John Dear S. J
Activist, and writer

John Dugas
University of Kalamazoo

Al Gedicks
University of
Wisconsin La Crosse

Rev. Thomas Gumbleton
Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit

Edward Herman
Activist and Writer

Adam Isacson
Colombia Expert

Dan Kovalik
Activist, Attorney, Writer

Robert McChesney
University of Illinois

David Newby
President, Wisconsin
Fair Trade Coalition;
President Emeritus,
Wisconsin AFL-CIO

Mark Pocan
Member, U.S. Congress

Organizations listed for
identification purposes only

Hon. Kevin Whitaker
U.S. Ambassador to Colombia
Bogotá, Colombia

Dear Ambassador Whitaker:

As you may know, the Colombia Support Network (CSN) is a national nonprofit NGO, based in Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin. By resolution of the Dane County Board of Supervisors, Dane County is the sister community of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, Antioquia, Colombia. Representatives of CSN have been exchanging visits with residents of San José de Apartadó since the early 1990's, even before the Peace Community was organized. Luis Eduardo Guerra, a leader of the Peace Community, who was murdered in a 2005 massacre, had visited us in Madison not long before he was killed. Representatives of CSN attended the Peace Community's observation of the tenth anniversary of the massacre just last February 21, and we are in regular contact with the Community by telephone and internet. You are probably also aware that the Peace Community maintains a regularly updated web site and that there are also several other organizations whose web sites contain current information about the Peace Community.

Thus you will understand why we are asking that all U.S. financial assistance to the Colombian military be halted. We have examined the 2014 State Department report on the state of human rights in Colombia and we believe that the report contains plenty of support for our request. Our request is based on three concerns: the horror of the "false positives"; the continuing power of paramilitaries and the Colombian Army's support of them; and the corruption in Colombian Army procurement and weapons management.

The State Department Human Rights report for 2014 does not use the term "false positives", and it is true that that expression has been widely criticized. The report does, however, make reference to killings that are generally referred to as "false positives". Because, as required, the report focuses primarily on 2014, it identifies only 100 or so such killings. But in total, there are more than 3,000 victims known so far and there are more than 5,000 members of the Colombian military being investigated for such crimes. As pointed out recently by columnist Antonio Caballero in *Semana.com*, on June 27, 2015, those 3,000 civilian victims constituted 20% of all the enemy combat deaths reported by the Colombian military between 2002 and 2008.



**Colombia
Support
Network**

P O Box 1505
Madison, WI
53701-1505

Street Address
29 E. Wilson St # 202
Madison, WI 53703

(608) 257 8753
Fax (608) 255 6621

www.colombiasupport.net
csn@igc.org

Chapters

Central New York
(Cortland, Ithaca,
Syracuse)

Kansas City MO, KS

Dane County, WI

This is how U.S. taxpayer funds were spent.

It is appalling that the United States has continued to provide military assistance to Colombia after U.S. intelligence, military, and diplomatic officials became aware of the existence of “false positive” killings. We have been told that the 17th Brigade has been denied U.S. financial assistance since 2005 because of its record of shocking human rights violations. Yet the 17th Brigade is not among the Brigades with the greatest number of “false positive” killings. It would seem that the Brigades with higher numbers of “false positive” killings should also be denied U.S. military assistance. Since it now appears that higher authorities in the Colombian military, those in command of more than one Brigade, even one in command of the whole Army, were involved in or at least had knowledge of the situation, it is only rational that U.S. funds be withheld from the entire Colombian military.

Next, we would like to call your attention to the extensive power and control exercised by paramilitaries, with the full support of the 17th Brigade, in Urabá, where members of the Peace Community live and work. The 2014 Human Rights Report refers to “. . . organized criminal gangs which include some former paramilitary members . . .”. According to the Report, the Colombian government has stated that these gangs are not really paramilitaries because “. . . the gangs lacked the unified command structure and ideological agenda that defined the former United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC).” That lack does not seem to exist in Urabá.

The paramilitaries’ control and their support by the Army is such that they have been allowed to undertake actions that, under Colombian law, would and should be taken by a municipality, namely building roads and developing housing units. For more details, see an article by Juan Diego Restrepo, “Y entonces quien manda en Urabá?” in *Semana.com*, August 9, 2014.

Because the Colombian Army grants the paramilitaries the liberty to do as they wish in Urabá, they patrol in uniform, carrying weapons. They actually capture and detain residents, usually letting them go after they make threats and steal their food, animals, farming tools or other belongings. They frequently set up illegal checkpoints, stop public transportation vehicles, and even require campesinos to attend meetings. They circulate pamphlets that illegally defame the Peace Community and threaten violence.

The United States government has identified paramilitaries as a terrorist organization. Yet the Colombian government allows them to perform governmental activities, and to violate the human rights of the people who live and work in Urabá.



**Colombia
Support
Network**

P O Box 1505
Madison, WI
53701-1505

Street Address
29 E. Wilson St # 202
Madison, WI 53703

(608) 257 8753
Fax (608) 255 6621

www.colombiasupport.net
csn@igc.org

Chapters

Central New York
(Cortland, Ithaca,
Syracuse)

Kansas City MO, KS

Dane County, WI

Advisory Council:

Rev Daniel Berrigan S.J.
Activist, Writer, Poet

Larry Birns
The Council on
Hemispheric Affairs

Blase Bonpane
The Office of the Americas

Herbert (Tico) Braun
University of Virginia

Noam Chomsky
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology

Rev. John Dear S. J
Activist, and writer

John Dugas
University of Kalamazoo

Al Gedicks
University of
Wisconsin La Crosse

Rev. Thomas Gumbleton
Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit

Edward Herman
Activist and Writer

Adam Isacson
Colombia Expert

Dan Kovalik
Activist, Attorney, Writer

Robert McChesney
University of Illinois

David Newby
President, Wisconsin
Fair Trade Coalition;
President Emeritus,
Wisconsin AFL-CIO

Mark Pocan
Member, U.S. Congress

Organizations listed for
identification purposes only

Advisory Council:

Rev Daniel Berrigan S.J.
Activist, Writer, Poet

Larry Birns
The Council on
Hemispheric Affairs

Blase Bonpane
The Office of the Americas

Herbert (Tico) Braun
University of Virginia

Noam Chomsky
Massachusetts Institute of
Technology

Rev. John Dear S. J
Activist, and writer

John Dugas
University of Kalamazoo

Al Gedicks
University of
Wisconsin La Crosse

Rev. Thomas Gumbleton
Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit

Edward Herman
Activist and Writer

Adam Isacson
Colombia Expert

Dan Kovalik
Activist, Attorney, Writer

Robert McChesney
University of Illinois

David Newby
President, Wisconsin
Fair Trade Coalition;
President Emeritus,
Wisconsin AFL-CIO

Mark Pocan
Member, U.S. Congress

Organizations listed for
identification purposes only

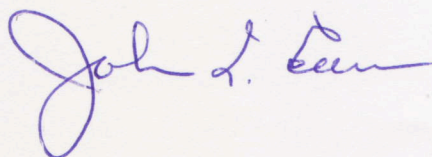
Finally, the United States should cease all military assistance to the Colombian Army because it is clear that that Army cannot be trusted with money or weapons. As recently as June 13, 2015, *Semana.com* reported that hundreds of weapons plus a machine gun and three tons of explosives are missing from military installations in Bogotá, Pereira, Cali and Tolemaida, among others. It reports that in two years, 957 firearms have disappeared from military storage. According to *Semana.com* there is no real inventory of the weapons captured and stored, and officials are aware that members of the Armed Forces are involved.

Late last year, 30 members of the military were found to be selling military explosives to private mining companies. See *Semana.com*, December 10, 2014. You are certainly aware of *Semana's* disclosures in February of 2014 of millions of dollars' worth of "skimming" on military contracts, large and small. Worse still, on August 25, 2014, *El Tiempo* of Bogotá reported that Colombian Army Col. Róbinson Gonzalez Del Río, supposedly confined to a military prison for "false positive" killings, had sold weapons, including 3,000 fragmentation grenades, 100,000 rifle cartridges, four MGL grenade launchers, and 20 rifles with replacement parts, to the guerrillas! *Semana* and *El Tiempo* had no reason to find out which of the many "skimmed" contracts were funded by U.S. taxpayers, or which of the stolen weapons were bought with U.S. funds, but that should be a matter of great concern to U.S. officials.

We believe that the shame of "false positives", the oppression of Colombian citizens by paramilitaries working hand-in-hand with the Colombian Army, and the shocking extent of corruption in military procurement ought to require the end of U.S. taxpayer funding of the Colombian military.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,



John I. Laun
President, Colombia Support Network



**Colombia
Support
Network**

P O Box 1505
Madison, WI
53701-1505

Street Address
29 E. Wilson St # 202
Madison, WI 53703

(608) 257 8753
Fax (608) 255 6621

www.colombiasupport.net
csn@igc.org

Chapters

Central New York
(Cortland, Ithaca,
Syracuse)

Kansas City MO, KS

Dane County, WI

Advisory Council:

Rev Daniel Berrigan S.J.
Activist, Writer, Poet

Larry Birns
The Council on
Hemispheric Affairs

Blase Bonpane
The Office of the Americas

Herbert (Tico) Braun
University of Virginia

Noam Chomsky
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology

Rev. John Dear S. J
Activist, and writer

John Dugas
University of Kalamazoo

Al Gedicks
University of
Wisconsin La Crosse

Rev. Thomas Gumbleton
Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit

Edward Herman
Activist and Writer

Adam Isacson
Colombia Expert

Dan Kovalik
Activist, Attorney, Writer

Robert McChesney
University of Illinois

David Newby
President, Wisconsin
Fair Trade Coalition;
President Emeritus,
Wisconsin AFL-CIO

Mark Pocan
Member, U.S. Congress

Organizations listed for
identification purposes only

Cc: President Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia

President Manuel E. Ventura Robles, Inter-American Court of Human Rights

Honorary Tammy Baldwin, U.S. Senate

Honorary Mark Pocan, U.S. House of Representatives

Secretary John Kerry, Secretary of State

Chairman Bob Corker, U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Chairman Ed Royce, House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Representative Todd Howland, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights



**Colombia
Support
Network**

P O Box 1505
Madison, WI
53701-1505

Street Address
29 E. Wilson St # 202
Madison, WI 53703

(608) 257 8753
Fax (608) 255 6621

www.colombiasupport.net
csn@igc.org

Chapters

Central New York
(Cortland, Ithaca,
Syracuse)

Kansas City MO, KS

Dane County, WI