

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
February 5, 2001

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Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary,

As you consider the future direction of US policy towards the Andes, we ask you to send US aid for Colombia back to the drawing board.

We are deeply concerned about the threat that illegal drugs and drug violence pose to our children and our communities. There is no choice but to work together, within the United States and across borders, to reduce the harms associated with drugs. However, we do not believe our government should invest enormous resources in ill-considered and ineffective programs simply to show effort in the war on drugs. Now is the time to rethink our approach at home and abroad and to devise more compassionate and effective solutions.

We believe that the policy embarked upon by the United States with the allocation of \$1.3 billion to Colombia and the Andean region is a mistake which, if unchecked, could have disastrous consequences for decades to come. The policy's focus on military force and aerial fumigation will escalate armed conflict, harm the environment and increase forced displacement of people, as well as undermine efforts for peace, the only lasting solution to Colombia's conflict. It risks these impacts without an exit strategy for US involvement or any guarantee that military aid will result in strategic success against insurgent forces and drug traffickers.

Moreover, this policy will do little to reduce the flow of illicit drugs into the United States. At best, it will displace drug production in Colombia to neighboring countries at tremendous financial, environmental and human cost. Over the last decade, the United States has spent over \$25 billion in international drug control efforts. These efforts have at times temporarily succeeded in curbing production in a particular country, but have failed to stop the tide of drugs. Diminished coca production in Bolivia and Peru, for example, resulted in dramatic increases in Colombia. Drugs remain cheap and plentiful within the United States.

Current counternarcotics assistance can undermine democracy and the rule of law, by strengthening source-country militaries' role in internal policing and undercutting respect for civil liberties and human rights. In Colombia, this policy has associated the United States with an army closely tied to paramilitary forces responsible for horrific acts of violence against the civilian population.

In the United States, an emphasis on law enforcement strategies has failed to reduce demand or minimize the harm associated with drugs. The number of people who die from drug-related causes has increased every year since 1979. The availability of drugs to high school students has increased. Moreover, mandatory minimum sentencing laws result in nonviolent drug offenders serving longer jail terms than violent criminals. These laws have contributed to making the United States the country with the largest per capita incarcerated population. Racial and economic disparities in enforcing drug laws have torn apart the very families and communities hardest hit by drug-related violence. At the same time, addicts desperate for support services cannot get treatment.

Colombia and the Andean region need and deserve the support of the international community in confronting their myriad challenges, which include not only drug production and trafficking, but also fragile democratic institutions and profound economic inequality. But effective solutions cannot be devised by the top-down decisions of national governments, excluding local governments and affected communities from participation. Rather than escalate the failed policies of the past, we ask the United States to work with Andean governments to develop realistic proposals in consultation with local governments and civil society to curb drug production through manual eradication, replacing it with

adequately funded, community-based economic alternatives. Equal weight must be given to strengthening democratic and judicial institutions and promoting a negotiated solution to Latin America's longest running conflict.

At the same time, we must develop viable solutions to our nation's demand for drugs. We should review law enforcement policies that have a disproportionate impact upon minorities, but redouble efforts for treatment and prevention. We must provide treatment for every addict who seeks it-the most effective drug policy available-and invest in afterschool programs and jobs for at-risk youth.

Our national and international drug control strategy is not working, and the answer is not more of the same. Now is the time to work together for a new, effective and compassionate approach.

Sincerely,

Kathleen W. Smith

Professor

Chair, International and Area Studies Program



OFFICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COORDINATOR
FOR DRUG ENFORCEMENT POLICY AND SUPPORT

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WASHINGTON DC 20301

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OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Professor Kathleen W. Smith
Chair, International and Area Studies Program
Kalamazoo College
1200 Academy Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49006-3295

Dear Professor Smith:

The Secretary has asked me to respond to your letter of February 13, 2001 regarding the U.S. Government's policy toward Colombia.

From your letter, you know that Colombia faces multiple challenges that threaten its existence as a nation. To address these challenges, President Andres Pastrana crafted *Plan Colombia*, a strategy to revive Colombia's economy, strengthen democratic institutions and defend human rights, combat narcotics trafficking, and achieve a negotiated peace with Colombia's insurgent groups. The Government of Colombia dedicated \$4 billion to the execution of this \$7.5 billion dollar plan. U.S. support amounted to just under \$1 billion of the \$1.3 billion emergency supplemental Appropriation of Fiscal Year 2000. Of this support, a significant portion is devoted to the provision of helicopters to the Colombian National Police and the Colombian Army's counterdrug Brigade. Additional assistance in the form of training and equipment to the Colombian Army's Counterdrug Brigade is also provided. Of note, \$230 million is allocated for social and economic development programs, such as humanitarian relief for displaced persons, helping small farmers and low level coca workers finding legitimate alternatives to the drug trade, and to strengthen governance, the rule of law and human rights. An additional \$180 million is provided for regional support to nations such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. Colombia is attempting to gather the remaining funds for *Plan Colombia* from the international community.

As you state in your letter, Colombia and the Andean nations deserve the support of the international community to confront their myriad challenges. A well-tailored mix of support to strengthen democratic institutions, improve respect for human rights, stabilize the economy and stem the unchecked production of narcotics and the lawlessness it breeds is absolutely required to help Colombia pull itself out from the "death spiral" of problems it now faces. That, combined with an aggressive effort to reduce demand in the United States and other nations, will contribute to the stabilization and democratic growth of the region.

I appreciate your interest in the Department's programs to counter the threat posed by the trafficking of illegal narcotics.

Sincerely,

Deborah G. Rosenblum
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for
Drug Enforcement Policy and Support



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CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL WORKSHEET

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