



OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2004 FEB 21 PM 12: 29

(11)

February 16, 2001

Dear Mr. Rumsfeld,

I just returned from 10 days in Colombia including 4 days in Putumayo. We found that the U.S. military are package is a failure. In addition to human suffering and ecological destruction caused by fumigation, armed escalation, and displacement, the war package is strategically flawed. Military and will escalate rather than demand the current conflict. At the end of the day, the Colombian conflict will only be solved by negotiations. Plan Colombia will not reduce production or drug use in the U.S. I urge you to seriously reconsider current US policy in Colombia. Plan Colombia is a quagmire. The US should support drug treatment in Colombia and stop building in Colombia. Sincerely, Paul Althouse

SOUTHEAST REGION

1105 Sapling Place Raleigh, NC 27615 (919) 856-9458

U034547/01

PLAN COLOMBIA A QUAGUIRE?

"All my crops were food crops - corn, yucca, bananas, cattle, fish, I grew no coca," Rosa a 70 year old woman from La Hormiga in Putumayo told us. "And yet they fumigated my land destroying everything! Now what will I eat?"

I was part of a Witness for Peace delegation, which visited Colombia January 7-17 to assess for ourselves the impact of the \$1.3 billion dollars in support of Plan Colombia on the people of Colombia. Seventy percent of this aid is for military assistance.

Before leaving the states each of us wrote a farewell letter to our families to be sent if we did not return. While in Colombia, we kept a "crash pack" at our feet at all times filled with the most basic necessities.

While there we met with many sectors of society including Gonzalo de Francisco of the Colombian government, the Colombian military and the US Ambassador Anne Harrison and her staff. We also met with human rights and peace activists, Afro-Colombians displaced by the war as well as indigenous people from the Amazon rainforest. We spent 4 days in the province of Putumayo where aerial fumigation of crops is occurring.

While we were in Putumayo, helicopters and planes flew overhead enroute to spray fields with glyphosate in the nearby village of La Hormiga. The campesinos told us that aerial spraying with Round-up is destroying food crops such as corn, yucca, bananas, fisheries, cattle and the environment along with patches of coca plants. These small farmers told us, "We do not accept aerial fumigation. We have begun manual eradication of the coca. Manual eradication of coca does not need helicopters and guns and glyphosate. It is more effective and costs less. Fumigation only causes the coca crops to move someplace else. It does not end the drug trade."

An indigenous leader from the Amazon rainforest told us, "We do not understand what the government wants from us. We eradicate manually and the government comes and fumigates us. We are worried about the survival of our people - the women and children and elders. We are worried about mother earth."

The human rights ombudsman in La Hormiga told us, "In three months, we will suffer a great hunger here in Putumayo. Help us so that our children do not die of hunger!" The small farmers do not trust government programs. How can they stop producing coca and trust that they can live off of other licit crops if they have not roads or other infrastructure to get their crops to market? "The solution is a practical one," they told us. "An Army has invaded us. We need support for small

projects and substitute crops: heart of palm, chontadura, and gardens. We need help with roads and getting our crops to market."

Back in Bogotá, analysts told us that they fear that U.S. political support for the peace process is undermined by the militarized counter narcotics program call Plan Colombia. The armed conflict has no military solution. Only negotiations will end the violence and hopefully lead to greater social justice.

Helicopters and guns will not solve the problem of poverty in the Andes and addiction in the United States. U.S. support for Plan Colombia is a vicious cycle. It will require more and more money and deeper and deeper involvement. The U.S. should refocus its war on drugs". It has been a failure. Our emphasis should be on drug treatment in the United States. According to Sanho Tree of the Institute for Policy Studies in Wash. DC, half the people who want drug treatment cannot get into treatment centers.

Colombia is the most fumigated country in the world and yet the amount of land being cultivated in coca continues to expand and grow. As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said recently we have a demand problem not a supply problem. If the effort to eradicate the cultivation and production of coca in Colombia is successful, production will simply move to another country -- Ecuador, Venezuela, and Brazil -- the potential list is endless. As long as demand persists a supply will be found.

Money would be better spent on drug treatment on demand here in the United States instead of incarceration. "We jail about 450,000 people every year in the United States for non-violent drug offenses," says ex-drug czar Barry McCaffrey.

Secretary of State Colin Powell and the Bush administration face a quagmire in Colombia. Fighting a war is not the solution. As long as Americans crave cocaine, farmers in Colombia and elsewhere will continue to cultivate the lucrative leaves.

Colombia poses a major challenge for the Bush administration. Secretary Powell could help lead the United States back from an ill-conceived, expensive military intervention that threatens to spill into other Andean countries.

In the end, only a negotiated peace settlement that addresses land reform and economic inequality will end the 36-year-old civil war that has devastated Colombia.

Gail S. Phares

Witness for Peace SE 1105 Sapling Place Raleigh, NC 27615

February 1, 2001

WITNESS-FOR-PEACE
SOUTHEAST REGION
1106 SAYLUNG PLACE
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27615



*Mr. Donald Rumsfeld
Dept. of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Arling. Dc*

20301

1106 SAYLUNG PLACE