

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 15, 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.<sup>1</sup> The Colombia Support Network has documented literally hundreds of incidents of abuse by the Colombian Army over the past three years<sup>2</sup>, 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.<sup>3</sup>

---

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

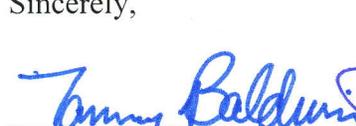
<sup>2</sup> See: [http://colombiasupport.net/2009/colombian\\_army\\_csn\\_report\\_08\\_09.pdf](http://colombiasupport.net/2009/colombian_army_csn_report_08_09.pdf)

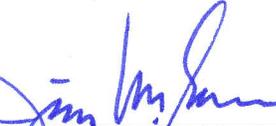
<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/06/26/obamas-chance-shift-gears-colombia>

In the recent summit of the Union of South American Nations, called expressly to address Colombia's military agreement with the United States, every other nation in the region except for Peru expressed serious concern about the terms of the agreement and the manner in which it was negotiated. This pact threatens to make your efforts to re-engage with our neighbors in the hemisphere on terms of mutual respect much more difficult.

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,

  
Tammy Baldwin  
Member of Congress

  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

  
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

  
Russ Feingold  
Senator

  
Raúl Grijalva  
Member of Congress

  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

  
George Miller  
Member of Congress

  
Jose E. Serrano  
Member of Congress

  
Lynn Woolsey  
Member of Congress

  
Rush Holt  
Member of Congress

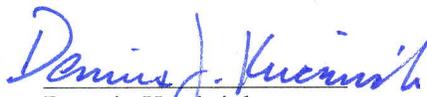
  
Chaka Fattah  
Member of Congress

  
Pete Stark  
Member of Congress

  
James L. Oberstar  
Member of Congress

  
Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

  
Bob Filner  
Member of Congress

  
Dennis Kucinich  
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Hillary Clinton  
The Honorable Robert Gates