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## U.S. - Colombia: Support Free Trade

Dear Colleague:

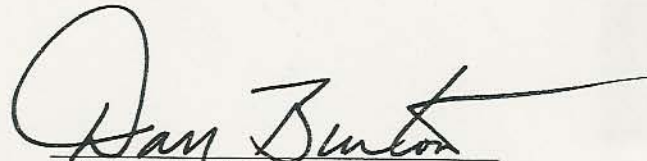
We would like to call your attention to a recent article that appeared in the Financial Times on August 9, 2006. The article, "Colombia ready to assist in Afghan battle against drugs," highlights the recent mission to Kabul by the Colombian National Police (CNP) anti-drug experts to share anti-narcotic techniques with their Afghan counterparts. As in Colombia, Afghanistan's cultivation and exportation of illegal narcotics funds terrorism and cultivates unlawfulness and corruption. This visit by the CNP, which hopefully will develop into a significant training and information-sharing program, shows the dedication and commitment the Colombian government has in winning the global war on drugs and terror.

Colombia has made great strides in the fight against drugs and terrorism. Since Plan Colombia went into effect and President Uribe took office, the country has seen a drop in incidents of terrorism, kidnappings, drug production, and homicides. This initiative in Afghanistan shows the Colombians are true partners in the global fight against terrorism, and the United States needs to continue to stand with the Colombian people as they fight against drugs and terror. In addition to the continued support of Plan Colombia, it is imperative to approve the U.S. - Colombia Free Trade Agreement. This agreement will help create jobs and democratic security in Colombia, replacing an illicit drug economy – which supports terror – with a sustainable and vibrant economy.

Please support the U.S. - Colombia Free Trade Agreement and give Colombia, a true and valuable partner in the fight against global terrorism, a better opportunity to grow economically and its people an alternative to illicit narcotics and terror. They have earned our support.

Sincerely,

  
HENRY J. HYDE  
Chairman

  
DAN BURTON  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere

NATIONAL NEWS

## Colombia ready to assist in Afghan battle against drugs.

August 9, 2006

Colombia, the world's top producer of cocaine, may provide a permanent anti-narcotics training programme for Afghanistan, the world's largest supplier of heroin, to help it combat the flow of illegal drugs.

An agreement for such a plan could follow the return last weekend of an exploratory mission to Kabul by four Colombian anti-narcotics police and the scheduled arrival in Bogota yesterday of Said Tayeb Jawad, Afghanistan's ambassador to Washington,

Colombian police have stepped up anti-drugs efforts under the US-backed government of President Alvaro Uribe, who this week began a second four-year term.

The area in Colombia cultivated with coca, the shrub from which cocaine is derived, has dropped from about 358,000 acres in 2001 to 212,000 acres last year, according to official figures. Colombia is also close to wiping out plantations of poppies used to make heroin.

In Afghanistan, poppy crops have increased in recent years, according to the United Nations, from about 30,000 acres in 2001 to some 250,000 acres last year, posing a big problem for President Hamid Karzai.

Bogota is keen to share its anti-drugs experience with Afghanistan, and the approach has been brokered by Jose Serrano, Colombia's ambassador to Vienna.

Some US Congress members as well as the British government have backed the idea. Dennis Hastert, the speaker of the US House of Representatives, said in a letter last week to General Jorge Castro, Colombia's police chief, that, as a result of the initiative, "Afghan forces fighting narco-terrorism in their country are much better prepared to fight the growing opium trade in the region".

The Colombian police found that Afghan poppy plantations were protected by rival armed groups similar to those in Colombia, where coca fields and laboratories are largely controlled by guerrilla and paramilitary outfits. But the illegal heroin trade employs far more people and accounts for a larger proportion of economic activity in Afghanistan than in Colombia, making alternative livelihoods for poppy farmers crucial.

One Member of the Colombian police team told the Financial Times they also saw evidence that human couriers, or "mules", were using the same methods to transport drugs out of Kabul airport as they did from Bogota.

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