

March 14, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

Last week the U.S. State Department released its 2011 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, which focuses on the efforts of key countries in fighting international drug trafficking, including Colombia. One of the Report's conclusions is that:

- Colombia continues to make important advances in combating the production, exportation, and consumption of illicit drugs. These efforts have kept several hundred metric tons of drugs each year from reaching the United States, and have helped stabilize Colombia.

The State Department's conclusions are supported by last year's announcement by the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime that Colombian coca cultivation has decreased by nearly 60 percent since a decade ago. Recent reports from the Central Intelligence Agency's Crime and Narcotics Center also confirm the steady progress in Colombia.

The impact of anti-drug efforts in Colombia over the past decade are remarkable, and should be attributed not only to the will of the Colombian people and their government, but also to the steadfast support of the United States through programs such as Plan Colombia, and the Andean Trade Preference Act and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA). While Plan Colombia focuses on drug interdiction, the ATPDEA was enacted to help develop and strengthen legitimate industries by providing duty free access for certain products to the U.S. market. Originally enacted in 1991, the trade preference program has been a resounding success in helping Colombia to provide alternatives to the illicit drug economy.

As you know, the ATPDEA expired on February 12, 2011. We write today to urge Congress to take immediate action to restore the program.

Our joint counter narcotics program with Colombia, of which ATPDEA is a critical element, is a bipartisan foreign policy success story. If allowed to lapse, 20 years of progress will be put at risk – and America's drug interdiction efforts through Plan Colombia will be made all the more difficult. An immediate extension is necessary, and the right thing to do.

Sincerely,



General Barry McCaffrey
Former Director,
Office of National Drug Control Policy



John P. Walters
Former Director,
Office of National Drug Control Policy