

Center for American Progress



**THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS
AND ITS AMERICAS PROJECT PRESENT:**

**“THE UNITED STATES AND COLOMBIA:
WHAT COMES NEXT?”**

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MR. JOHN PODESTA: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm John Podesta and on behalf of the Center for American Progress I want to welcome you all to today's event on U.S.-Colombia relations. Today, the Center is pleased to present a distinguished panel of policy experts who will explore the nature of our two countries' current relationship and what will shape it going forward. But before we hear from our panel, I want to take a couple of minutes to make two introductions: one, to the Center's newly launched Americas Project and, of course, the other to our featured speaker this afternoon, former president of Colombia and my good friend, Andres Pastrana.

I'm personally honored that the Center could host His Excellency this afternoon as he so graciously hosted me and my former colleagues on many occasions before including a trip I took with President Clinton, Speaker Hastert, Senator Biden, Congressman Farr, the attorney general, Barry McCaffrey, and others to Cartagena in 2000. And I'm particularly pleased that President Pastrana could join us today as he prepares to return to Colombia to begin yet another chapter in his long service to his country and his ideals, although I did offer him a desk in the back, so maybe – who knows. (Laughter.)

President Pastrana's vision, his political courage, and his leadership have been essential to forging a stronger, more robust relationship between our respective countries, a relationship that has and will continue to grow in importance and our interdependence on one another increases with each passing day. In fact, that interdependence is not unique to the United States and Colombia, rather it's true of our relationship with all of the Americas. Consider that approximately \$24 billion in foreign direct investment was made by the United States in Latin America in 2005; two of the top four U.S. oil suppliers are from Latin America; the United States two top trading partners are our hemispheric neighbors; more than 40 million Latinos live in the United States, comprising 14.2 percent of our overall population. By 2040, the U.S. Census Bureau expects Hispanics to comprise fully a quarter of our overall population.

As we draw closer to the rest of the Americas in many ways, it's important to note that at the same time political rifts have emerged between the United States and many of our neighboring countries to the south. Perhaps, with the notable exception of Colombia, our relationships with our neighbors to the south seem to be going in one direction, and that's south. Examining this trend and its implications are key to formulating and implementing an international, forward-looking, progressive agenda and to this end the Center for American Progress is pleased to host today's event as part of its newly launched Americas Project and I want to congratulate the project director, Dan Restrepo, who will be chairing the panel, on getting this effort off the ground and running in such an impressive and substantive manner.

Under Dan's leadership and through rigorous research and open collaboration with experts like those joining us this afternoon, the Americas Project will seek to more fully explore and understand the changes in the United States' relationship with Latin America. It will endeavor to formulate innovative policy recommendations to address changing realities, and through active engagement in all forms of media effectively communicate those proposals to a wide range of audiences.

We're glad that you're all here with us today to take part in this endeavor and before more formally introducing our featured speaker, I want to thank the panelists who will follow, and in particular Representative Sam Farr for joining us today. Since his days as a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia, Representative Farr has been committed to helping Colombia find a successful path for lasting peace and stability. He's a good friend of mine, a good friend of the Center's. I thank you, Congressman, for being with us.

As the Center for American Progress works towards its Americas Project to better understand the United States' relationship with and its place in the Americas, I could think of few people more qualified to speak to this effort than former President Pastrana. During his time in office from 1998 to 2002,

President Pastrana successfully and strategically worked to enhance peace and stability within Colombia. He advanced peace talks between Colombia's two major rebel groups. As you all know, it was his leadership that Plan Colombia – a comprehensive strategy for improving the economy, promoting peace, and combating narco-trafficking within his country – was launched. I was with President Clinton in Africa yesterday – when we went to Colombia to Cartagena, we also came from Africa and went to Cartagena, so it's maybe appropriate – and I was talking to him about this and he remained so proud of this initiative to stand with Colombia and President Pastrana in the fight for peaceful democracy and renewed bilateral cooperation.

During his term, President Pastrana also dedicated much of his time to improving bilateral relations with the United States. For instance, he was successful in securing bipartisan support for \$4 billion in U.S. military and development assistance to address Colombia's security problems. Colombia went from a pariah to the third largest recipient of U.S. aid during his tenure. President Pastrana has had a long and distinguished political career marked by both physical and political courage and an unwavering commitment to his country and his fellow citizens. He began his career in 1982 on the Bogotá city council. In 1988, at the age of 34 he was kidnapped by the Medellín drug cartel during what turned out to be a successful campaign to become the first elected mayor in Bogotá's history. He then went on to serve in the Colombian senate from 1991 to 1993 and was a consultant to the United Nations Young Leadership Program.

More recently, President Pastrana has ably represented his country during his service as Colombia's ambassador to the United States. As I noted, he recently announced that he will be departing that post; and while America will miss him, we wish him well and know that he will undoubtedly be successful in his future endeavors. Few people today have the breadth of experience or the political insight and intelligence on U.S.-Colombia relations as does President Pastrana and we are truly honored to hear his remarks today.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming former President Andres Pastrana.

(Applause.)

MR. ANDRES PASTRANA: Good afternoon. John, thank you very much for your kind words and it's a pleasure to be here this afternoon with so many friends. For me, it's really a pleasure to be here at the Center for American Progress, as I've said before, with so many good friends of Colombia to examine the state of our bilateral partnership and discuss what lies on the horizon.

First of all, I want to thank my very good friend, John Podesta, for his thoughtful invitation to (speak?) among such a qualified team: Russell Crandall, Nelson Cunningham, my good friend Congressman Sam Farr, and Isaac Lee. I am here. This is going to be a very interesting discussion.

Americans and the world recently witnessed the strength of Colombia's commitment in our own democracy. Our recent elections for Congress and the presidency were contested by candidates from several political parties representing a variety of different policies and ideologies. These campaigns were conducted with a very high degree of transparency, fairness, and with respect for the election laws and regulations. They offered a spirited political debate with the electorate. They were free of violence. Colombian voters participated in the record turnout. The results have been accepted by both winners and losers, all sectors of Colombian society, and by the international community.

In a country where violent terrorist groups have sought for many years to undermine our democratic foundations and institutions, we have seen once again the resilience and determination of the Colombian people. Our democracy is not designed to win favor or approval from international audiences.

It is deeply embedded into the political and social fabric of the nation. Thousands of Colombians have given their lives to defend it. Many millions of citizens renewed a firm commitment to it when they went to the polling stations this year.

To look ahead where Colombia is heading in the next four years, it is important to look back at the progress achieved over the past eight years. The Colombian nation has undergone a dramatic change in this period. Public confidence in public institutions has risen considerably. The population and government are united behind a strategy and a political leadership that is working to curb drug trafficking and violence, improving living standards, and build a strong economy and society.

U.S. support for Plan Colombia has been a critical component of this sea change in Colombia. This program, as John said before, passed in 2000 by bipartisan majorities in both chambers of the U.S. Congress and has been implemented by two administrations in Bogotá and in Washington. The U.S. has provided about \$4.5 billion in social, economic, and security assistance to date while Colombia has invested \$7 billion. By way of comparison, the \$4.5 billion that the United States has invested in Colombia over the past six years is equal to about what the United States spends in Iraq every 22 days.

Plan Colombia has provided many benefits, but perhaps most importantly, it has enabled both our governments to agree on a core strategy for addressing the goals we share for peace, democracy, institution building, and economic growth in Colombia. It has offered a roadmap for progress, one embarked on in 2000 by my administration and that of President Bill Clinton, which has been continued and implemented by our successors, President Alvaro Uribe and President George Bush, and the U.S. Congress.

Plan Colombia has provided a continuity of policies and priorities in our bilateral relationship over these past eight years. Plan Colombia required both of our nations to make difficult commitments and to share in the burden of working for peace and reducing drugs, violence, and poverty.

For many years, the United States urged Colombia to invest more in its own defense. Today, Colombia has a very different military and police than before Plan Colombia. We have increased defense spending every year since 2000. This year, defense in Colombia is almost 20 percent of our national budget. As a result, Colombia has 60 percent more combat-ready troops today than when Plan Colombia was enacted. Every municipality in rural Colombia has a permanent government and police presence. This is making a difference in reducing rural violence.

A critical factor in improving our military forces is improved air mobility. For the first time, Colombia has established air sovereignty through most of its national territory. We have reduced drug trafficking flights within Colombia and we're able to move military resources more freely and quickly around the country to where they are needed. Improved air mobility has given us a competitive advantage against drug trafficking and terrorist groups.

Colombia and the United States are implementing a drug strategy based on four fundamental elements. The first is aerial and manual eradication of coca and poppy crops – the raw materials necessary for illegal drug production. Our aerial spraying has increased from 47,000 hectares in 2000 to 139,000 hectares last year. Manual eradication destroyed an additional 21,000 hectares of coca and 497 hectares of poppy last year. Second, there is a heightened focus on interdiction of illegal drugs at their source in Colombia before they reach the (vast?) of the U.S. market. Colombia forces interdicted 223 metric tons of coca last year. This is an estimated \$3 to \$4 billion in street value of drugs that did not reach American streets, schools, and communities. Since the year 2000, we have seized between \$35 to \$40 billion in street value of cocaine in the region.

Third, Colombia has extradited 446 individuals on drug trafficking charges to the United States since the beginning of Plan Colombia. Prior to Plan Colombia, only one suspected drug trafficker was extradited to the United States. Our joint extradition policy impacts the war on drugs in Colombia in two ways. It brings criminals to justice, removing them from the production and trafficking in illegal drugs, and it serves to break up and dismantle trafficking cartels and networks – no wonder extradition is the judicial tool that drug traffickers fear the most. No country in the world cooperates more with the United States in extradition than does Colombia.

And fourth, we have in Colombia a larger, more professional, and effective military and police, which I have previously outlined. Judicial cooperation is also an important part of our bilateral relationship. The United States' support and training is helping Colombia make a successful transition from an (inquisitorial?) to an accusatory criminal justice system. Since Plan Colombia began, the United States has offered almost 600 courses of training for transition to accusatory system to more than 18,000 prosecutors, judges, and criminal investigators. This is an enormous and difficult task, but it will make our judicial system more efficient and more effective.

Colombia's fight against drug traffickers and illegal groups has been waged according to the democratic and human rights values we share with the United States. Our security forces are both more professional and capable and have greater respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Training from the United States has contributed to this trend. There are still instances of abuse, including isolated incidence by Colombian security forces, but we're putting into place the mechanisms and we have in place already the political will to achieve a goal of zero tolerance for abuse of human rights and international humanitarian law. In addition to a greater commitment by both my government and Uribe government, there is today a vibrant activist NGO community working in support of human rights. Their efforts and those of the government have made the Colombian public more aware of the importance of protecting the human rights of all our citizens to a democracy and social fabric.

In addition to the problems in security, Colombia has made significant progress in several economic and social development areas. Colombia has created more than three million jobs in the last four years and unemployment has fallen from high 20 percent in the late '90s to around 10 percent today, and so we saw poverty declining. Colombians living below the poverty rate fell from 57 percent of the population in 2002 to 49.2 percent last year and Colombians living in extreme poverty declined even further from 20 percent in 2002 to 14.7 percent last year.

Over the past year, we have been discussing how to make United States' assistance to Colombia even more productive. We have argued that increased flexibility in implementing Plan Colombia programs can ensure the investment achieves the best resource. For this reason, we are pleased that the House of Representative this year has earmarked \$135 million for Colombia in the economic support fund rather than the Andean Counterdrug Initiative.

Economic growth in Colombia has been strong for the last six years. GDP rose by 5.2 percent last year and a similar growth rate is expected in 2006. Inflation remains modest, and Colombia last year attracted a record level of foreign investment in a variety of sectors including energy, infrastructure, manufacturing, and services and we are particularly experiencing renewed interest by foreign investors in our oil and gas sector in the wake of Colombia offering a more attractive contract regime to encourage new exploration and production. This is good news for Colombia, but also for the United States as it seeks to diversify its energy imports.

Colombia's rural agriculture economy has been a part of the country's economic resurgence. This is important because we need to provide opportunities for rural peasants to grow legal crops instead of coca and poppies. Colombia's agriculture production rose from 28.7 million metric tons in 2002 to

33.3 million metric tons last year. Colombia's improved fiscal condition is enabling the government to make a long-term investment in important social areas such as education, housing, and healthcare.

Last year, student participation in mandatory education rose to 90 percent; compare this to 1990 when the student participation was only 53 percent. Today, 73 percent of our total population, or 35 million citizens, have healthcare coverage. This year the Colombian's government central budget for education, healthcare and social programs will be \$12.7 billion. This is a significant amount of investment in an economy with a total GDP of about \$100 billion.

The Colombian-U.S. economic relationship is dynamic and promising. Our bilateral trade today exceeds \$12 billion. As the Colombian economy has improved over the past five years, its imports from the United States have risen significantly including a 21.9 percent increase in 2005.

The recently negotiated Colombia-U.S. trade promotion agreement, which will establish a permanent free trade agreement between our countries, will provide reciprocity in our bilateral trade relationship for the first time. Several United States business sectors will benefit from immediate improved access for exporting their goods and services into Colombia, and Colombia exporters will be assured permanent, tariff-free access to the United States market. The current Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act expire at the end of this year. And an important component of the trade promotion agreement is the transparency, predictability, and increased confidence it will provide to a new generation of American investors in Colombia.

The stock of the United States investment in Colombia today exceeds \$3 billion, mostly in the energy, mining and manufacturing sectors. However, there is a significant capacity for expanded United States investment across all business sectors and the result will be to create thousands of new jobs in Colombia. Colombia companies will benefit from establishing new partnership with the United States (entitles?). In this sense, the TPA will be the real alternative development program in Colombia. As we demobilize thousands of illegal actors and convince peasant families to give up growing illegal crops, we have to provide them with jobs and a livelihood. More than any single action, the trade promotion agreement can help us achieve this.

There is hope in the United States Congress that Colombia will be able to take over the funding of Plan Colombia in future years. That is a goal we share, but we are not there yet. Successful implementation of the TPA will determine how quickly we can reach this point. The TPA must now be ratified by both the Colombian and the U.S. Congress. The Colombian government will be meeting with Congress in the weeks and months ahead to discuss how this agreement benefits both our nations, not only in advancing bilateral trade and investments, but in solidifying the partnership between our two countries in democracy, security, and stability. No doubt some will raise questions about Colombia's improving its performance in areas such as protecting intellectual property, in promoting labor rights, and the environment. This agreement includes strong provisions in each of these areas and Colombia's determined to live up to all its obligations.

Looking ahead over the next four years, I can envision the following scenarios for Colombia and our relationship with the United States. First and foremost, there will be a continuity of policy goals and direction between Bogotá and Washington because our societies share the same values. And because our respective political leadership share similar strategic objectives, we will be able to build on the strong foundation that has been constructed over the past eight years. Here in Washington, we hope that the United States policy towards Colombia will continue to have strong bipartisan support from both Republicans and Democrats.

Second, we envision continued progress to demobilize and disarm illegal actors in Colombia. The goal of the Colombian peace process is to complete the demobilization of the AUC and make progress in demobilizing the ELN and the FARC. The size and scale of these demobilizations are extraordinary, and so are the challenges they present to both our society and economy. We will need extensive support from the United States and the international community to be successful.

And third, we must continue to strengthen Colombian security forces. We must ensure that our military and police are strong enough to fill the void that will be created as we disarm thousands of guerilla and paramilitary forces. Demobilized (combatants?) might not be replaced by a new generation of drug traffickers or terrorist groups. As long as there is a demand for drugs in the world, someone in Colombia will seek to provide them. We will need continued U.S. financial and technical aid, as well as judicial intelligence and law enforcement cooperation, to ensure that a new generation of traffickers does not emerge.

Fourth, the Colombia economy will continue to grow at a healthy, sustainable rate. The benefit of this expansion will reach rural areas of economy and society, raising income and creating jobs and opportunities. A success implementation of the Colombian-U.S. trade promotion agreement that not only increases bilateral commerce, but also attracts new investment could reduce unemployment in Colombia from us current level of 10 percent to 5 percent in the first four or five years after it comes into force. This will have a very real and lasting benefit for both fostering peace and alleviating poverty in Colombia. And finally, I believe Colombia will continue to be one of the United States' strongest and most reliable allies and friends in the Western Hemisphere.

We know there is a battle for hearts and minds across the region. There is some frustration that the benefits of globalization and democracy are not reaching all sectors of our societies across Latin America. The fundamental values which both of our nations share – democracy, free markets, human rights, among others – must prevail in this struggle. And they will if we are a positive example of the how those values improve lives and how to build strong societies and a dynamic economic system.

In conclusion, Colombia is on a solid path to peace and progress. Colombians are grateful for the strong support of the American people as we work to address those difficult challenges. There is still much hard ahead of us in the next four years, but we can succeed because we know that our bilateral relationship today is a true and valued partnership.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. DAN RESTREPO: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Again, as John mentioned at the top, I'm Dan Restrepo. I'm the director of the Americas Project. I'm going to have to bear – I'm going to ask everyone, President Pastrana included, to bear with me for a moment as we have fallen victim to the whims of the congressional calendar – the congressional floor schedule. I'm going to very quickly introduce Congressman Sam Farr and ask him to make his comments because he's going unfortunately have to head back to the Hill for a vote that is looming on the horizon.

As John mentioned at the beginning of the program, there are lots of interconnections between the United States and Latin America and in particular Colombia, and as President Pastrana just discussed. Those connections exist not just as the macro-level, but the micro-level as well. All of us seated here at this table are representations of that. My last name is a dead giveaway that my roots run deep in Colombia. My grandfather once held a position that President Pastrana is in the process of leaving as

ambassador to the United States from Colombia, and I could go on for quite a while, but we're going to get back to the program.

Among those who have had a deep and abiding connection with Colombia is Congressman Farr, first elected to the United States House Representatives in 1992. He served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia, apparently in my dad's hometown of Medellin I learned earlier today. And I'm going to turn over to him and then I will introduce the rest of the panel after that and we will take questions for everyone toward the end of the program.

Thank you.

REP. SAM FARR: Well, thank you very much, Dan. I apologize for sort of jumping in front of the line here. That is a problem we have when we have votes on the floor. I want to say that I'm here not only as a member of Congress, but I just have a profound love for the country of Colombia. Not only did I spend two years there during – I entered the Peace Corps when Kennedy was president, but bringing my whole family down, I had a tragic accident when my younger sister at 17 was riding a horse in (unintelligible) I think in – near Monteria and was thrown from a horse and died from an operation in the hospital in Cuernava in Monteria. And I remember at the time flying back to Colombia thinking why am I doing this? Why am I coming back to this country? You know, why did I – why did we have to go through this? And I realized that was the reason I joined the Peace Corps, that when people don't have access to healthcare and don't have access to the kinds of things we take for granted in the United States that we need to make sure that the whole world has access. And Colombia and the Colombians who were so supportive in that and all the time I was in the Peace Corps, but particularly in that incident, just made our whole family become muy Colombiano.

So I wanted to be here on this panel because I think people want to know where is Congress going? What does the future hold? You know, Congress has a sort of short-term agenda and for us, you know, we only have five more weeks of session before we adjourn and what are we adjourning for? Elections. So our whole focus is on the November elections and we tend to look at the world through the eyes of our constituency and that is what's important to them is important to us, and I think that the old adage that all politics is local wasn't said about President Pastrana, but one of the ways he was so effective as president of the country – he had been mayor of Bogotá, and when he was mayor of Bogotá, he paid attention to the all politics being local.

If you look at his résumé, what he did with the water systems and school systems and so on, and violence in Bogotá, he paid attention to those details and from that got elected president of the country, and I think that that's what's happening in the House is that whatever is on the front page is on members' minds because that's what their constituents are. And I think in the last – since we started Plan Colombia that it's really shifted under this administration. I think the mind of the voters is trying to figure out where the middle of the Middle East is and not where – what's happening in the southern hemisphere and that bothers me.

Congress responded to Colombia because it was seen as a problem on Main Street at home with all the law enforcement talking about coca addiction and cocaine trafficking and so our plan was all about trying to not really solve the civil unrest in Colombia, but to try to deal with the root causes of the selling of coca and the obscene amount of money that went into corrupting political systems and so on with that money and what it was doing to really destabilize the wonderful country of Colombia.

Well, that drug – interestingly the issues now among our local law enforcement, it isn't coca anymore; it's methamphetamines and Colombia isn't getting blamed for methamphetamines. So you end up with this sort of shifting of priorities, I think, in Congress thinking: "Well, why hasn't – why aren't we

finished – why hasn't Colombia been able to this plan? It was a six-year plan. The time has run out,” and this shift is coming and I just feel it in Congress, and some of that shift is good because the shift is saying let's get on the domestic side of it, let's deal with the investment in alternative crops. We don't think that the spraying and hand eradication has been very effective. We really ought to deal with the root causes of poverty and dealing with the legitimacy of alternative crops and getting those crops to market and so on, building the infrastructure for that. And I think that's why you're seeing a shift in the emphasis on – and certainly I'm leading a lot of that – is to put the emphasis on dealing with reinvestment in the rural areas and to alternative crops and so on.

I think there's also a frustration that in Plan Colombia, which I – one of the few members of Congress probably read the whole plan; I was very impressed with the domestic side of it especially the social services that was going to be a lot of investment into rural Colombia and into building up social institutions in rural Colombia – very impressed when I was invited to go down with President Clinton to visit the Casa de Justicia, which had been very – part of the USAID program to bring essentially to the rural area – to the barrios a one-stop center for social and civil problems that seemed to be working out really well. In fact, I wish we had some Casas de Justicia in the United States. It would be a lot easier to solve some of our constituent problems.

So what I'm seeing is that there's kind of a tide that's shifting in Congress to away from South America, not so much away from Hugo Chavez, but from Colombia and perhaps Hugo's taking some of the heat for that, but the – there's a need now to see how Colombia can better step up to the plate and deal with the displaced persons. And I say this as a sort of a constructive criticism because I think that if Colombia had the image of the world as a safe place to go, it will be the number one tourist attraction in the Western Hemisphere. It is such a beautiful country with so much diversity and could have an economy thriving on tourism, which really helps the rural areas and local areas. So that's one of the interesting ways that I want to see bring peace. But I think you have to secure the displaced. I mean, it still has the largest number of displaced persons in the Western Hemisphere – in the millions. These people caused their own problems. They've not a place to live or to educate their kids or access to healthcare and/or jobs and so you end up with internal problems of security just with the amount of displaced persons. We need to really invest in this legitimacy of alternative crops.

And in Colombia, frankly, when you think about prior to Plan Colombia, the most effective country at marketing an agricultural product, which was Colombian coffee – has its own label on the crop exchange or the coffee exchange. The amount of advertising we saw from the success of Colombian coffee with Juan Valdez, we haven't seen Juan – you know, the industry because of world coffee prices flattening out just wiped out Colombia's advantage in that and we've been able to get United States back involved with the coffee – in international coffee organization and I think that out of that, we're – Colombia's going to be much – as well as other Central and Latin American countries – is going to be much better off, but that is part of this attempt to bring price back to alternative crops in Colombia and find others.

I think we really – Colombia has to really ensure the world that they're prosecuting corruption, whether it's in the military or with the members of the paramilitaries that are leaving and coming in to taking advantage of laying down their arms, but I think that that has to be – there also has to be prosecuted and shown that there's really – those who have committed crimes are held accountable for that.

So I think Colombia has in this very delicate transition right now where to those of us in Congress have to prove that they're stepping up to the plates for the alternatives, for the domestic side, for the human rights side, for the insurance of the indigenous people and Afro-Colombians that the mayors and a lot of the (unintelligible) and coastal cities have been coming up to Congress and talking about their

concerns that they have. We certainly are in good contact with labor leaders in Colombia and know that threats and loss of lives that they've had that there has to be assurance of security there. And I don't think that the Andean trade agreement is going to be brought up in this – we only have, as I said, five weeks left and with the controversies in the labor part of our – as we saw, CAFTA only passed by one vote – so I think the Andean trade pact right now without more assurances that the labor issues will be taken care of cannot pass Congress.

And I think that the demobilization – that the Colombians have to get tougher with those that have been demobilized and who have corrupted the law, otherwise you're just going to add to a criminal state that is – that really concerns me. So I think that where you're all seeing is the shift – and I'll end with this – that the shift for the voice of Colombia is coming from – has moved away from just the military support, as President Pastrana said – Ambassador Pastrana said, they've professionalized their military. You know, part of the recommendations were to professionalize all the institutions of Colombia and I think Congress was ignoring the military in favor of just trying to give everything to a national police. Now, both have been upgraded and professionalized and now the shift is going to come to the domestic side and so it will be less of a support for the military and more support for the domestic agenda and I think that the voices for that domestic agenda are going to be nongovernmental organizations and human rights organizations that are very active within Congress and their voices will get louder as the other voices get calmer, and that's my opinion.

So thank you for having me here today and I hope I can stay for some questions as well.

(Applause.)

MR. RESTREPO: Thank you very much, Congressman.

I'm going to ask the rest of the panel to give their presentations now hoping that that will work from a scheduling perspective. To very briefly introduce them from your right to left: Isaac Lee is the editor-in-chief of *Page One Media*, a company he founded in 2005 in Miami. It provides the editorial content for many of the leading Hispanic-oriented magazines in the United States. Isaac was born and raised in Colombia. He was named editor-in-chief in *Semana*, Colombia's most prestigious news magazine, at the age of 26.

Seated next to Isaac is Nelson Cunningham, a managing partner of Kissinger McLarty Associates, the international global strategic advisory firm headed by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former White House Chief of Staff and Special Envoy for the Americas Thomas F. "Mack" McLarty. Nelson served in President Clinton's White House as special advisor to the president for Western Hemisphere affairs, among other positions. He was raised throughout Latin America, spending I think two years living in Colombia. His sister, like mine, was born in Colombia. Mine was born today many years ago in Colombia.

Finally, seated to my immediate left is Russell Crandall, an associate professor of political science at Davidson College and an adjunct professor at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins. In 2004-2005, Professor Crandall served as the director for the Western Hemisphere at the National Security Council and as special assistant to the deputy director for counterterrorism at the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Again, like the rest of the panel, Professor Crandall has also lived and worked in Colombia, in his case as a human rights official or human rights worker with Catholic Relief Services. He's just published *Gunboat Diplomacy: U.S. Intervention in the Dominican Republic, Grenada and Panama*, and is working on the second edition of his book, *Driven by Drugs: U.S. Policy Toward Colombia*.

I'm going to ask each of the panelists to make their presentations in the order that I just introduced to you, which is yet another improvisation, and if you all could keep to our time limits so we can get to the questions, that'd be great. Thanks.

MR. ISAAC LEE: Thank you. I will speak very briefly, so don't worry. In order to understand what will happen in the future, it's important to make a little bit of history. The relationship between the Colombian government and the U.S. government has always been a good one and with President Barco we had a good relationship, with President Gaviria we had a good relationship. There was a very tense moment when Pablo Escobar fled from the jail, but very quickly there were 1,000 people sent by the U.S. government to work with the Colombian authorities in tracking down Pablo Escobar and it was a joint effort.

When President Samper became president right after that, it was very clear that he received \$6 million from the Cali Cartel. The country was dormant for a while and we were resistant to believe that that was true. However, U.S. sources had that very clear and it became very evident as some of the judicial sources and the evidence came out. There was an internal process in the U.S. and for the first time in the history of Latin America or in the Americas, the United States government took away the visa of our president. The only other case that I can think of is the one of Kurt Waldheim, who was a Nazi officer in the World War II – that they took away his visa as well. It was a – it was a shame for our country to have a president who couldn't come to the U.S. with his children to go to Disney World or to the White House to meet with the U.S. president. That was a big no.

So when President Pastrana became president, it was a relief to see that our president could land in the U.S. and go and meet with the president at the White House, and so we – I mean, the country, the government – started to rebuild a relationship and start from scratch and actually it went very well very quickly.

At the end of the Clinton government, there was a huge concern with more than 50 percent of the cocaine coming into the country from Colombia and between the Pastrana government and the Clinton government worked on the Plan Colombia. The Plan Colombia was a \$7.5 billion plan that was supposed to come – \$4 billion of that was supposed to come from Colombia and the rest was going to come from outside investment. The plan was launched at July of 2000 and although the main focus of President Pastrana's government was the search for peace, the government hasn't been given enough credit for the strengthening of the military forces and the police that they did during that time. It is not that they were trying to make a peace process and just forget about the armed forces; the money of the Plan Colombia was used to give better equipment to train and to have more soldiers and that is the reason why the army and the police can have better results today.

Uribe won because he was campaigning against the peace process and that's where the mood of the pendulum of the voters went, and he was actually campaigning for a military option. 9/11 was a turning point for the bilateral relations of Colombia and the United States and that cannot be taken apart from the equation. President Uribe was very smart in changing the vocabulary and using the moment to adhere to the campaign against terrorism and we started to call the FARC and the ELN and the paramilitaries terrorists, and that became something that generated a lot of sympathy from the Bush government. And after 9/11, the president became a good ally for the U.S. government. It was the only country that I can think of in Latin America that supported the war in Iraq. Just to give you a comparison: Mexico, the very good neighbor and Texan friend of Mr. President Bush did not support the war, so it was a huge act of friendship, if you want to call it like that, but it was a very good political opportunity for the Colombian president to get close to this administration. So that brought a lot of – I don't know – personal relationship and the two administrations started to like each other very much. There were less questions and more cooperation.

There are some challenges and it is true that the armed forces are doing much better; however, it's still to be seen concrete results in the war against the FARC. You cannot tell that the army is winning the war. You can say that the guerillas are doing less attacks, that it's true that to travel within the country is more secure, that there are less kidnappings, but none of the top commanders of the guerillas have been murdered or captured. So if you measure just by results, they are contained, but they are not – they haven't been – I mean, the war is not over.

Also, there are very worrisome episodes like the one that happened a couple of weeks ago in the outskirts of Cali in Jamundi, where there was a patrol unit of the police – of an elite force of the police that is dedicated to fight narcotrafficking and they were an elite unit very much respected by the U.S. government, had worked very closely with U.S. agencies, had extradited 20-something narcotraffickers, and they were assaulted by an army unit by an overwhelming force with grenades and machine guns and they were murdered. So when you have the Colombian army murdering the Colombian police, this is very worrisome.

So when we talk about human rights, it's very hard to think about how we can do well with human rights when we are not respecting the human rights of our own forces. However, there needs to be done a cleaning of the house within the military forces and we have to apply the law. There are some challenges within the free trade. The growth of the local economy is going to require less foreign aid, but in the short term it's going to hit on the peasants – there is no question. There is subsidies of the – of the U.S. on agriculture are going to hit on the peasants and that is going to create a problem because they are going to work on whatever they can and coca pays well. So we have to think about short-term solutions for that problem.

I'm going to stop now because they are telling me to do so and I will continue later. (Laughter.)

MR. RESTREPO: Thank you, Isaac.

Nelson?

MR. NELSON CUNNINGHAM: Well, first of all, thank you, Dan. Let me say what a real pleasure it is to be here, and actually sort of a sad pleasure to be here on one of President Pastrana's final public appearances here in Washington due to the unexpected events of last week. Every problem that we talk about today was one that he inherited in 1998 when he became president and all of the good things that we talk about today are things that he got started as president in 1998 and afterwards. So President Pastrana, you're going to leave a hole here in Washington in U.S.-Colombian relations and thank you for everything you've done to build the relationship between the two countries.

The piece of what comes next that I would like to talk about briefly today is the trade and economic piece and I think it's fair to say that we're not where we thought we would be with a Colombian free trade agreement when this process started several years ago. I recall in 2004 when then Colombian Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno – I was then working on Senator Kerry's campaign as a part time adviser. He called me over to say, "Now, you know, if President Kerry wins – if Senator Kerry wins and becomes president, I want you to be clear that the Colombian – the Colombians are ready to negotiate a free trade agreement. We're very advanced on this. We shouldn't be held back by the other countries in the Andean region." Sadly today, we find ourselves with Peru ahead of where Colombia is in its negotiations. The current state of play with the Colombian free trade agreement is the agreement was decided upon in February and then disputes arose over whether the English words matched the Spanish words and that lingered for some six months and has just been resolved in the last week, I'm sure in part due to President Pastrana's intervention.

So we find ourselves now finally with agreed upon text in July and then the calendar of the TPA and of the Congress steps in. When the president notifies Congress that the agreement is complete, then Congress has 90 days to consider the agreement. Only then can the president and the Colombian president sign the agreement. So that even if this process started today, that would take us to mid-October. The International Trade Commission then has up to 90 days to do its trade impact review. Say they take five weeks, which might be record time: that would get us up to Thanksgiving. Then we have six hearings and two floor votes to take place. So even if there were a lame duck session before the free trade agreement could become law, clearly that's not going to happen this year and that's a disappointment to all of us who have been following this closely for years. It puts us in a double or a triple whammy because on December – because obviously we have elections in November. What the outcome of the Congress will be is anyone's guess at this point in either House.

The current set of preferences for Colombia and its Andean neighbors, the ATPDA – expired December 31st and everyone has been banking on free trade agreements to replace those at least with some of the nations. That may not happen at all. So the new Congress, whatever composition it may have, is going to be faced with dealing with a Colombian FTA. If we can't get the Peru agreement through this year, they'll also be facing a Peruvian FTA. And they'll be dealing with the lingering question of what to do with the extension of the ATPDA trade preferences, which are now in effect for Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia at a time when Bolivia and Ecuador have generated substantial issues and problems in the U.S. relationship. And there's considerable debate in Congress on whether or not ATPDA should be extended at all or certainly whether it should be extended for Bolivia and Ecuador, which complicates matters enormously for Colombia and Peru. So we're finding ourselves on the trade and economic front, again, not where we want to be, but certainly this is the hand that we're currently being dealt and that the Congress going forward is being dealt.

I'll close with two comments. First, it is daunting to sit up in front of a room like this that contains so many experts on Latin America, including people who at various times have been mentors to me like Mark Schneider, Hattie Babbitt, and Randy Beers, who I see sitting in the back of the room – people who know a great deal more about many of these issues, certainly, than I do.

The second is that when Congress – when Congress takes up these contentious matters of trade agreements as well as the future of Plan Colombia, which is looked at every year and the results of Plan Colombia are scrutinized by both sides, I hope that we can return to the spirit of bipartisanship that existed in 1998 when President Pastrana came up when he and President Clinton initiated the Plan Colombia process and really looked to rebuild the bipartisan U.S. relationship with Colombia. I fear that that partisan differences, perhaps fostered by both sides, are getting in the way of dealing responsibly and straightforwardly with the important issues that we have to deal with in helping Colombia advance and deal with its problems.

So I hope that in the new Congress we can find that bipartisan spirit, we can deal with the Colombian FTA in a straightforward fashion, we can deal with the ATPDA extensions and we can also move forward with the goals of Plan Colombia even as we work to improve its execution.

Thanks, Dan.

MR. RESTREPO: Thank you very much, Nelson.

Russ?

MR. RUSSELL CRANDALL: Thanks. Thanks, Dan. And Nelson and I were kidding right before this talk that after President Pastrana and Congressman Farr, we're going to have to pick up the scraps that's left to talk about. I'm certainly scraping the bottom of the barrel here, but let me spend just a few brief moments to go back to Plan Colombia. It seems as though we've heard a lot about it this

afternoon, most of it in the positive light and I think it's interesting for our purposes to go back even a few years before Plan Colombia – back to the mid-1990s when things weren't as optimistic, rosy in Colombia certainly with respect to the U.S.-Colombia relationship.

As I'm sure most of you recall, the now quite forgettable relationship with Ernesto Samper – it was all forgotten about until very recently with some particular events close to some of us, but with those decertifications with a U.S. policy that was unquestionably narcotized. The only – if you boil it down, the only concern that Washington had both the administration and Congress in particular – Republican drug hawks – was the war on drugs in the way that it isolated a clearly compromised Colombian president, but nonetheless that the chill in relations came at a time – I don't believe necessarily caused, but came at a time when violence both from the left and the right was erupting in Colombia. And if I think there's any silver lining in the story is that the Clinton administration in its last years realized its wavered course and adjusted, and adjusted in a very aggressive sense, and that was Plan Colombia.

But I think it's also worth going back to revisit exactly what the impetus for Plan Colombia was because the conflict in Colombia has changed in marked ways subsequently and so has the U.S. attitude about terrorism, about violence after – especially after 9/11, and if you recall the summer of 1999 and onwards, the Clinton administration floated Plan Colombia as a shot in the arm to save what appeared to be at least a faltering democracy and the way that it packaged this program was about drugs, and I think looking back it's pretty understandable why. At the time, you have a Democratic administration, the idea of another Vietnam, body bags (unintelligible) – it's a slippery slope, it would have been very politically difficult to sell Plan Colombia anything other than an anti-drug strategy in a way quite deftly took the wind out of the sails of the Republican critics of the administration.

I think if you walk down the halls of Congress, you'll find many Republican staffers who are still furious that their plan had been co-opted in a very Clintonian sense by the administration, but I think what the administration did wisely and quite presciently is instead of selling it, even though it was largely about drugs or exclusively about drugs, it's sold as much – something much broader: about saving Colombia. And so it allowed – it gave Plan Colombia a little bit of wiggle room and I think most of the Clinton officials would agree with a nod-nod and a wink-wink at the time that yes, you know, when it's all about drugs and it's going to pass Congress because it's about drugs, but if some of this obliquely hits the FARC or the paramilitaries where we'd like it to, we're not going to stop that. But I think what – if anything, and maybe it's just because it was the end of the second term of President Clinton, what that administration never really did fully was to give it comprehensive, intellectual defense of its policy. “Yes, yes. We understand Colombia is a mess and we're going to fight it, but it's going to be about drugs.”

Nonetheless, it did provide the foundation upon which the Bush administration came in, the foundation upon which this drastically changed and it apparently much more violent situation by the end of President Pastrana's term – late 2001, 2002 – the breakdown of the peace process, the events – the tragic events of September 11th, to where when the Bush administration came in they – the foundation was ready made with Plan Colombia. And I think for many Bush administration officials, they came in to this question not knowing much about Colombia and assuming that it's a very kind of sticky case, one that will take a long time to get their hands around. But once they were briefed on it, for them at least the continued response was easy. We need to expand this. Why are we only about drugs? We need to move this to counterinsurgency. And if you can imagine, for the Bush administration this was quite easy.

So I think there's a seminal departure from Clinton to Bush, it was the summer of 2002 when Congress approved the legislation that would allow U.S. assistance to go directly to training of counterinsurgency efforts, but I think what's also interesting and instructive to kind of think of that – the hypothetical: “How would have a Gore administration – how would have, more recently, a Kerry

administration responded?” And I don’t think it’s out of the question that would have responded in a quite similar fashion given the events of Colombia, given 9/11.

But I think if we’re to look at contemporary policy and kind of really at the crux of some of what the panelists are getting at, a microcosm might be the effort to fund and train the infrastructure protection, I believe it was called, battalion that would – was outfitted and trained to help reduce the bombings of the Caño Limón pipeline.

If you recall, back in the ‘90s – a time when I was working in human rights in Colombia and visited children who had literal shellshock from all the bombing of the pipeline from largely the ELN, but the pipeline had been bombed close to 1,000 times over the years with virtual impunity. Ninety percent, I believe, of the government revenue for the department of Arauca came from pipeline revenues, and I can’t think of a devastating impact – environmental, social, economic – that these bombings were having, and the United States got its hands dirty. They got involved in this and this was – and I think it – this kind of starts with Plan Colombia – a gamble. You know, no one knew how it was going to turn out. This was a big bet on the Colombian people and in particular the Colombian political class. You know, could they handle this? Could they handle the hardware? Could they handle the Black Hawks? Could they handle the training? Or would it get dirty, as so many of the critics had expected? You know, would this turn into the death squads and just make a bad situation worse?

But I think fortunately as many of the panelists and President Pastrana has pointed out, it has not turned out that way. And one slice of Colombian reality in the pipeline – bombings have dropped precipitously, revenue is up. Unfortunately, the insurgents are bombing other parts of the pipeline now, but I think it does suggest that engaged U.S. involvement, assistance can make a difference.

That said, where do we go from here? And I think that’s where this might be – at one point, Plan – I think in many academic circles or nongovernmental circles it remains this, but Plan Colombia was political Kryptonite. It was like one of those terms you just had to mention it – globalization, neoliberalism, depending on your political affiliation – and everyone kind of in the room knew what you were talking about: it’s kind of the just evil incarnate. And now the champions of Plan Colombia are beginning to speak up and the stock seems to be going up, but I think what we might be looking at now is it – we largely have – you know, we’re still concerned about impunity and the paramilitary demobilization, still concerned about the incestuous relationships with the government and the military. It’s not a perfect scenario by any stretch and much more needs to be done, but I think there is a growing – and I think Congressman Farr echoed this – a growing bipartisan – fortunately – consensus that engagement has worked and that was the appropriate response, starting with Clinton and again fortunately, in my estimation, continued with the current president.

But I think it’s also clear, and I’m certainly not the first person to make this point, that we need to make it – we, the United States government needs to make it overwhelmingly clear to the Colombians that this is their struggle. The next step if things don’t go well in the upcoming years is not American troops or Marines coming into the country. This is it for Colombia and if they want to save their own country, they’re going to have to do it themselves and we as Americans certainly bear a fair amount of the responsibility in terms of in particular our drug habit that fuels what is a decades long and very Colombian conflict, but certainly our drug habit fuels that in terms of the revenues that go in the hands of these unsavory and very violent characters, but it – you know, this will continue to be and should be a Colombian solution and I think this is one that in the seven or so years since the Clinton administration decided to engage and to take that gamble that it can feel quite proud of.

MR. RESTREPO: Russ beat me to the punch of handing him the one-minute piece of paper. I am going to invite President Pastrana back to the microphone and we’re going to do or attempt to do a

question and answer, not just for President Pastrana, even though I imagine he'll get most of the questions.

I'm going to actually take the prerogative and ask the first question and actually I've been surprised by our commentary today – how little the paramilitary demobilization in Colombia has been mentioned. It is obviously a process that is of fundamental importance to a lasting and peaceful Colombia, a lasting stability in the country, and I think there's a real concern – I know I have and I think others do as well – that the process as it exists today is – to the extent that it is demobilization, it is not a dismantlement of the paramilitaries in Colombia. And we seem to be running the risk, as many in Colombia have said, of the paramilitary structures kind of formally embedding themselves into the power structures of the country. Is that happening? Is there a possibility of that happening? And how is the Uribe government dealing with the demobilization process, particularly in light of the recent court decision with respect to the so-called justice and peace law?

MR. PASTRANA: Maybe before, Dan, to pick up some of the things that were said here, I think it's important to (unintelligible) point to this. Plan Colombia was born as a – but in my government we start talking about the theory of co-responsibility: that it was not just for Colombia to get involved in a problem of fighting drugs. We were fighting the largest criminal organization in the world; that is, drug trafficking – \$500 billion a year – because of the United States were consuming drugs in Colombia. So that's why for the first time, we come here and said to President Clinton, "Why don't we work together to solve a mutual problem," but also we need to invite the Europeans to get involved in this because in four or five years those are the ones that are going to have the big problem and that's what is happening today. You could either see the figures that maybe sometimes think Colombia there is a big discussion if we had eradicate 100, 120,000 or 180,000 hectares, but consumption in the United States is (equal?), but now you have new business in Europe – 80 percent of the coca is going through Spain. You have the Russian mafia now involved in this business, so they open a new market.

So that's why we have to think that the problem that really will change the equation in Colombia, it's drugs, because that's the one that is financing guerrillas, but also the one that is financing the paramilitaries. I use the figures, as Russell was saying, 1994, Colombia cultivated 40,000 hectares of coca – 40,000. 1998, we cultivate 180,000, but if you see the figures of the growing of the guerrilla, you could see also that between 1994 and 1998, we (unintelligible) of having maybe 8,000 members of the FARC to almost 20,000 members of the FARC. We had 2,000 members of the paramilitaries; 1998 (we finished?) with 12,000 members of the paramilitaries. The ELN – always they had big problems now (unintelligible) from 2,000 to maybe 6,000 – 8,000 members of the ELN at that time, but you could see exactly the relationship with growing of coca, (unintelligible) hectare is (unintelligible) growing of the paramilitaries and growing of the guerillas. So I think that's important point.

Second, I don't think there's a Colombian solution because if really we were egoist and we could see only what is happening in Colombia – I always said to my friends in the United States, "Imagine a farmer in Colombia when I arrive as president of Colombia say, 'Mr. President, you are investing \$4.5 billion avoiding the drug to go into the streets of the United States. That's your problem; that's not our problem. I don't have a house here. I don't have a farm. I don't have a way of getting some resources for a sewage system. I don't have clean water. I don't have education. I don't have housing. And why you are investing in avoiding the drug to go to the United States?'" Because people don't realize that 75 percent of the Plan Colombia was a social side or maybe 70 percent and 30 percent was the military side.

What was the problem? That the only hand that we got when we started Plan Colombia was the United States and the problem is that in the United States the proportion of Plan Colombia is exactly opposite: 70 percent on the military side and 30 percent on the social side, but that was very important because before 1998 when we started with President Clinton, what happened was 100 percent of the aid

was on the military and we should have it \$250 – \$300 million dollars on the social side, but that make the change in Colombia. If you see today President Uribe social problems – all of them are Plan Colombia; all the social problems of President Uribe's, familias en acción, jóvenes en acción – all the programs that we started with Plan Colombia.

When people – when we started Plan Colombia, we say in the agriculture, which product are we going to cultivate that could be a real alternative crop in Colombia? And I started thinking with my advisors and I said, “Palm oil,” and people said, “What?” If you see Malaysia – 1950, it was exactly the same problem that we were having in Colombia – violence, guerilla – and now you could see a complete different country, and that's why I said, “Why don't we start with palm oil?” We have right now we start with palm oil, we had, I think 130,000 hectares; 1998, we're close to 300,000 hectares. We could cultivate about one to 1.5 million hectares of palm oil and with a free trade agreement, palm oil, as you well know, in the process could be a biodiesel fuel. So that is going to be – imagine if 1.5 million hectares in Colombia cultivated with palm oil, that's going to be the real, real alternative crop solution for the country. What's the problem with palm oil? When we talk now palm oil, the problem is that palm oil is concentrated in the paramilitary areas and there (is stigmatizing?) power. Sometimes they were right because some years ago the paramilitaries threw out the farmers and the peasants off their cultivation, and I think that's one of the things the government should go back to give the land, as President Uribe said two weeks ago, that they were going to give back the land to the palm oil farmers, to the real farmers and not to the guys who are wearing (unintelligible). But I think there's a real, real big, big solution for Colombia with palm oil.

Only to say that we need the social side of Plan Colombia and I think that's what we agree always with President Clinton when we start working with President Bush is that we need to get more investment in social side. Every time we need to get more – less and less investment at the military side and get more and more money for the social side. And one of those things that you said before also is that with the free trade agreement we will get the resources. Sometimes people don't realize that when we came with Plan Colombia, free trade agreement was a fundamental part of Plan Colombia and we always said to the U.S. government: “We don't want aid, we want trade,” and that's why we proposed Plan Colombia and we proposed a free trade agreement at the same time in 1998. When we started with President Clinton in 2000, free trade was one of the important sides of Plan Colombia. And as I said in my speech, free trade agreement is going to change completely Colombia, and that's why I think we need the support of the United States because the real, real change of Colombia – even as you said, Isaac, that some of the problems of the peasants and the farmers in the rural sides, we are going really to have a big change.

The other day I was talking to Undersecretary Shannon and he said something, you know, “President Pastrana, I was reading an article the other day some months ago – I don't know where – the title I think of the article was ‘Why We Lost America?’ And the answer,” Under Secretary Shannon said, “because of cheap importer (unintelligible).” We've been discussing this for one year and people don't realize the importance for us for the free trade agreement, what we need and what we are given.

And as you said (unintelligible), I was very impressed last week with the last poll in Colombia: approval of Plan Colombia, 73 percent. I think the military's around 80 percent; Plan Colombia is 73 percent; the church is 74 percent. No?

So I think still there's a lot to do and I think there's a lot of things that we have to. As you said, what's going to happen to the demobilization process? I think that we were all expecting the sentence of the constitutional court. I think there are – there's one very important thing in the sentence of the constitution, at least what we haven't read yet all the sentence because I think it took like one month or two months after – I don't know if it's already released. I don't think yet it's not public or I think that yesterday or two days before – three days? I haven't read the whole of it, but what I heard when I'm

talking to some of the friends of the constitutional court, one of the important things was that in the law, I think there was a big, big hole in the (administration?) side for the (victims?). I think that it was in the lower left on one side and I think in the constitutional court sentence, it's going to get a lot of support and resources and legal mechanisms to pay for the victims, to be aware of the victims and the (endammization?) of them, so I think that's going to be very, very important.

On the other side, I think that right now it's very important and that's what we've been talking with the U.S. government is the support for the judicial system and the attorney's office have been working very, very close with the Fiscalia General de la Nacion in Colombia to give support basically on the software side for the Fiscalia and people say, "Why in the software side?" Because it's a way of really crossing all the information of all the processes in which all this new structure of the Fiscalia is working. I think it's going to be very important to have all these resources, these software, so that we really could identify and take to jail really the people that commit all these crimes and crimes against humanity and crimes that were committed by the paramilitaries. So I think that's going to be very important and I said that's why we work very close with the U.S. government to get these resources very quickly for computer software to help and support the judicial side in Colombia. That is going to be fundamental for this process.

I think that even in Colombia inside the government and with the president when I accept the embassy to the United States, I proposed to President Uribe to create an international commission to verify the peace process with the paramilitaries and that's – this is something that I think I want to point out because people talk about the demobilization process and I think it's a peace process. We have (a law?) to bring these people back into civil society, but, for example, I always said that tomorrow if the FARC decides to go into a peace process, this is the law that is going to be applied or are we going to think of a different one? I don't think so. What happened if the ELN took the position tomorrow saying I'm going to the peace process tomorrow? This is the law that we're going to use to get these people into a peace process.

So that's why I think it's very important to talk about a peace process. And I proposed to President Uribe why don't we create an independent international commission to verify the application of this law? And I think we were working on that. Unfortunately, now I'm out of the government, but I think it's good that we could promote this type of independent commission that will help the government, will help the country. We need to show to the world that we're committed in this process – that we want clarity, transparency in this process for the good of Colombia, for the good of the future of Colombia and I think that's why the president said, "Go forward," and we would hope to – that we'll continue working on that to give, you know, the international community a real, real transparency in the process that is moving in Colombia right now.

MR. RESTREPO: I'm going to take a couple of questions, and to start if anybody from the media has a question for President Pastrana or anyone else? In the second row.

Q: Yes, Maria Pena with EFE News Services. You've said that – you obviously came here to pitch the free trade agreement and continued support for Plan Colombia before you leave, but you've heard Representative Farr saying, you know, forget about it for this year for both the pragmatic reasons – you know, the legislative calendar – and also the fact that Colombia has not made enough effort in some of Congressman's views with regards to human rights and labor rights. What are your thoughts on that? I mean, it's just basically that for this year.

MR. PASTRANA: I want to think more positive. I think it's very important for us, as the panel said today, that for us free trade is fundamental and we hope – I think that if the government sent the agreement to the Congress this week, I think we have the time if there is a lame duck Congress to get into

the lame duck Congress. I think that's something that we're planning and working with. It's not going to be easy and we hope then if we could have then starting next year, but we're working to get into the lame duck Congress get the free trade agreement with Colombia into that session. That is going to be very important for us because what's happened with the ATPDA? That's a big problem that we're suffering today. What's going to happen? Because what we're proposing to the U.S. government and to the Congress is why don't we put what happened when we – before we had the extension of the ATPDA, the possibility of the retroactivity of the pay of the tariffs to – Colombians are exporting to the United States? That could be involved into agreement that is going to be sent to the Congress.

So that's what we want to try to work in the case of Colombia. Maybe they're going to do the same in the case of Peru. We don't know what's going to happen with the ATPDA with Bolivia and with Ecuador. As you will know and as the panel was said, there's a lot of problems – internal problems in these countries and we don't know what the United States is going to do directly with the ATPDA.

On the other side on your question, I think that in the last three weeks, I think I've wrote two letters to the *Washington Post* and to the *New York Times* on that issue of human rights and labor union (leaders?). I always said to my friends on the Hill, I said, you know – and to my friends in Washington, when I go to the Hill, depends on the office of the congressman or the senator that I knock, I have a different point of view of Colombia. Sometimes I go to a friend's office and he says, "Mr. Ambassador, they're killing journalists in Colombia." I said, "Yes." On the other office, they said, "Mr. Ambassador, they're killing labor union leaders." That's true. "Mr. Ambassador," in the other one, "they're killing politicians in Colombia." Yes, that's true.

What I try to point out is that we don't have in Colombia a special group dedicated to kill labor unions, politicians, judicial, policemen. We – all Colombians – are suffering violence and that's why we want to finish violence in Colombia. Labor unions are killed every day, journalists are killed, politicians are killed, policemen, members of the army. So that's why we want to finish violence in Colombia. We know that we have advanced a lot. We know that we have a problem, but we know if you see the figures of Colombia, we have advanced a lot in those figures – in kidnapping, in violence even to labor union leaders, to politicians, to journalists. So I think that we have advanced. Still we have a problem and we know that, and that's why we are all Colombians very committed and to try to achieve a peace process in our country.

I definitely think one of the things that are going to bring peace to Colombia is going to be the free trade if we could start changing the figures. As I've said before, we have today almost 11 percent of unemployment. In the next four, five years, I think that we could be near 5 percent of unemployment. That's going to be a big change in the country. The same thing if we grow in Colombia rates over 7, 8 percent, we will have a different country. So that's why we're all committed on that.

But we hope that people in the Hill and in the United States see that there's been a big, big effort between Colombia and the United States – sometimes alone Colombia and the United States because that's why we're pushing a lot to Europe to help out in getting resources to the social side of this problem and at the end we hope that with what is happening on the military side, what is happening on the social side, what has happened if we have a free trade agreement with the United States, we will have a complete different country in 10 years and that's why we are expecting for.

MR. RESTREPO: As a time management tool, I'm going to take like three questions. I'm warning the panel that this is going to be our exit. So we're going to have three questions, a minute comment from each of the panelists, and then President Pastrana will close, if that works for everybody up here. Make sure you identify yourself, and questions rather than comments would be greatly appreciated.

Right in front of you, Antoine.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. RESTREPO: Just – sir, sir?

MR. PASTRANA: (Laughter.) Thank you.

Q: – so valuable that you know more than anybody. It's such a compliment that your country sent you to us as a former president, and I just don't understand it. I read the text about the Samper issue, but what's the real subtext? How could he possibly lose you at this time?

MR. RESTREPO: And we're going to stick to asking questions when you have a microphone in front of you if you can. Sir, go ahead, thank you.

Q: Hello, I'm Adam Isaacson from the Center on International Policy and I'd like to follow up on something that Congressman Farr was talking about. He does have a long concern about conditions in rural Colombia, which, you know, the problems in Colombia are largely not in the very livable cities or along the well guarded roads; it's in rural areas where the coca is, where the armed groups roam freely.

Now, Plan Colombia was supposed to strengthen the state – that was the subtitle of Plan Colombia – and a lot of Colombian investment is going into the civilian part of the state; very little relatively U.S. investment has gone into that. So in the opinion of the panelists, has governance in rural areas where the real center of the problem is improved significantly during the years of Plan Colombia? Are there conditions for a legal economy? Is there more peace, justice, and security for residents of rural Colombia than there was when Plan Colombia began?

I would personally say no. One barometer of that is the amount of coca being grown in rural Colombia, which if you believe U.S. figures is more than when Plan Colombia began. If you – whether you agree with me or not, though, how would you recommend changing or altering U.S. assistance to Colombia to improve rural governance? And I was pleased to hear Ambassador Pastrana mention giving less military and more economic aid.

Thank you.

MR. RESTREPO: All right. I'll try this once more with feeling: if we can keep these to short questions rather than statements. And, Antoine, we're going to go right up here.

Q: Mr. President, good to see you again.

MR. PASTRANA: How are you?

Q: I think that the question about the paramilitary demobilization is crucial in terms of the rule of law in Colombia, and I'm interested as to whether or not you've seen the recent comment from the National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation that the paramilitary apparently destroying graves and corpses so that the judiciary, in fact, can't do their job? There's also the – no one has mentioned the – I don't think – the investigation of the (GAS?) for its linkage; that is the FBI-CIA of Colombia – and its linkage to the paramilitary. If these issues are not dealt with, the problem for the future democratic institutions of Colombia is at risk and I'd be interested in your comments.

MR. CRANDALL: Oh, I agree with you and I agree with – sorry.

MR. RESTREPO: Sorry. I'm going to give each panelist a minute and by a minute, I mean 60 seconds to deal with obviously the large issues that have been presented to us, but we've taken up a lot of

folks' time this afternoon. So if we can do this in the same order: Isaac, Nelson, and Russ and then we'll give a couple of minutes to President Pastrana.

MR. LEE: We have a strategic position in Latin America. We are next to President Chavez. He threw the DEA out of Venezuela; 20 percent of the cocaine is going through Venezuela. President Uribe is an important ally of the United States. Relationships are going to continue to be good. The challenges are the execution of the Plan Colombia and the paramilitary process, and I guess that's it.

MR. RESTREPO: Thank you, Isaac.

MR. CUNNINGHAM: Dan, I've said my piece and I'll cede my time back to the chair. (Laughter.) Thank you.

MR. CRANDALL: Two quick points: one, to return to Adam's very important concern about the rural areas. I think, if anything, looking at Plan Colombia, we should mark it as a success that now we have areas that we can fill in with civil society and governance that until very recently were roamed with vigilantes and other illegal actors.

So I think we would all agree that any security – military approach is just a means to provide an end of less violence, greater democracy, and the rule of law in these areas that for decades have enjoyed almost none of it. So in that sense, I think the response might be: "Well, if there are areas that are still wanting, we need to do more, not less," and a security component is crucial, but certainly not exclusive to a long-term solution, especially any retrenchment it might have if we don't have government institutions to fill in these vacuums.

Two – and in the last 15 seconds, I'll steal ten of Nelson's – but the one thing I failed to mention in my comments, I'm sure most of you are aware or deeply engaged in the discussions about the type of foreign policy that Democrats, liberals should have, will have – for those speaking optimistically in 2008 – anti-totalitarianism, progressivism, and I think Colombia's a real case study of that because the Clinton administration's policies what has continued through Bush – these were controversial. There was no consensus on this. But it was one of engagement and it was one that put the moral question into play, and so the United States did have mud on its hands. And there are others – the Europeans, for example – and President Pastrana knows this better than any of us, who sat on the sidelines – now they might be jumping in, but there's a time when Colombia had was a very lonely and desperate and liberals, Democrats responded and I think if anything this is one data point to suggest that a robust, assertive, internationalist foreign policy is something that Democrats can take pride in.

MR. RESTREPO: Thank you, Russ. And the last word to President Pastrana.

MR. PASTRANA: Yes, only one minute also I think we'll –

MR. RESTREPO: You can take more if you want.

MR. PASTRANA: Something that is very important is what I said in my speech that changed today what has happened with Plan Colombia. When we started Plan Colombia, the aid was coming directly from counternarcotics aid. I think that now what we propose to the Congress – change into the economic support fund; \$135 million for Colombia – will give us flexibility to invest in the social side and that's why I think it's going to be very important for the second stage of Plan Colombia.

Now we have policemen in every municipality of Colombia – almost all municipalities of Colombia. We strengthened our army; we have a professional army. We strengthened our police. But now I think that with the change proposed to the Hill of getting the resources not from the

counternarcotics aid, but also putting some of them in economic support fund will give us the possibility to work closer in the social side.

And I agree with you, Mark, that we need transparency in this process with the FARC, with the AUC, with the ELN or the FARC and I think this is very important to solve and to know the truth of what happened in these cases because that would be in the (unintelligible) for Colombia and for the international community.

MR. RESTREPO: Thank you very much, and thank you all for coming. Thank you.