



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Press Statement

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Colombia: U.S. Citizens Pass Five Years as Hostages of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

Today marks the fifth anniversary of the kidnapping of Marc Gonsalves, Thomas Howes, and Keith Stansell by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a Foreign Terrorist Organization designated by U.S. law. The American contractors were conducting a joint U.S.-Colombian aerial counternarcotics reconnaissance mission on February 13, 2003, when their aircraft made an emergency landing due to mechanical failure. FARC members patrolling the area reached the aircraft and murdered two crew members, Thomas Jannis, the American pilot, and Luis Cruz, a Colombian Army sergeant. Marc, Thomas, and Keith were taken hostage by the FARC terrorists, beginning what is today a five-year ordeal.

The United States calls on the FARC to immediately release all hostages so they may be returned safely to their families. We hold the FARC responsible for the health and well-being of all hostages. The United States firmly supports the Government of Colombia in its efforts to achieve the safe recovery of all of the hostages, some of whom have now been held for ten years. We have supported and continue to support any credible initiative by any leader or organization, in coordination with the Government of Colombia, to achieve the safe recovery of all of the hostages. Our thoughts and prayers remain with the hostages and their loved ones.

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