



## THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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Office of the Press Secretary  
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### **Press Availability with President Bush and President Uribe of Colombia**

Escuela Naval de Cadetes Almirante Padilla  
Cartagena, Colombia

2:40 P.M. (Local)

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** Mr. President, Mrs. Laura Bush, members of the delegations of the U.S. and Colombia, friends from the media, citizens of the United States, and my fellow citizens of Colombia: Mr. President, Mrs. Bush, welcome to the historic city of Cartagena de Indias -- an expression of this Colombia, full of possibilities, with many problems to resolve and with citizens who are happy, who are joyous, and who have not been made bitter by terrorism and the poverty that it has brought with it. Thank you, President Bush, and thank you, Mrs. Bush, for honoring us with your visit. We greatly appreciate the support of your government and of the U.S. people.

While the Colombian people fight for democracy, terrorism has assassinated democratic fighters. While the Colombian people fight for growth, employment, and social justice, terrorism has halted our economy, it made poverty more acute, and produced internal displacement and a stampede towards other countries. While the Colombian army destroys the antipersonnel land mines and gives the world the example of facing the terrorist threat by following the rule of law and respecting human rights, the terrorists have killed 600 Colombians over the last year, especially members of law enforcement forces. While the Colombian people love to live in peace and respect the ethical rule of not hurting your neighbor, terrorism only wreaks havoc and destruction.

The drugs that finance terrorism have sacrificed generations of Colombians, with thousands of young people who have been assassinated or put in jail, and their families are saddened. The drugs that finance terrorism threaten to destroy the Amazonian jungle. They already tried this by eliminating 1.7 million hectares of tropical forests in Colombia.

The support of the United States left behind speeches and has become an effective type of help. And we trust that the United States and President Bush will continue with that help until Colombia is free of the scourge of terrorism and drugs. We cannot stop this task halfway through. We will win, but we have not won yet. We have made progress, but the serpent is still alive.

President Bush, our success against terrorism will be the success of the people, of democracy, of the supremacy of law. Our success will be the guarantee for the happiness of our children and future generations. Our success will avoid contagion to other neighboring countries. And our success will be a reason for pride in the U.S. and Colombia for those who have suffered from the scourge of drugs.

The negotiation of a free trade agreement is a step in the process to unify the Americas, and we are sure that it will be an agreement reached with equity, offering opportunity for the agricultural sector, for

small business, activities that we need to bolster in order to provide true alternatives of vindication for the poor and to foster the creativity of our social enterprises that are based on our capitalist society. The respect for intellectual property must be joined to the rights of researches so that science can move forward and so that the people will have the right to have universal access to new medications and welfare.

We attach great importance to this visit, President Bush, just after your new victory and at the beginning of your second term. This is a new example of your friendship for Colombia, and a clear indication of a renewed interest in Latin America. Latin America needs social cohesion, good governance and trust in integration. The role of the United States in the multilateral institutions, in the IMF, your signals to the markets will be definitive so that this continent can build social justice.

The role of the United States in the struggle against terrorism and in the respect for the tolerant debate of opposing ideas is definitive for good governance on the continent. The equity we need to guarantee in the free trade agreement is going to be a beacon to establish the necessary confidence for all the Americas to become integrated.

In the same spot your father stood, President George Bush, along with President Virgilio Barco, at a summit meeting against drugs, this historic city is pleased to show you its past and its promise for the future, endowed by nature like other parts of Colombia, is grateful for the generous help of the United States. This beautiful city, which is now adorned by your visit, wants you to take back to the people of the United States an invitation to come and visit.

In order to do so, and with your help, we have made a major effort, Mr. President, which translates into greater security. We welcome you, President Bush, with gratitude and with friendship, in the midst of our emotional reflections of Abraham Lincoln and Simon Bolivar, both of them paradigms of a commitment to their peoples, and the idea of authority and order to respect the law.

In Gettysburg, President Lincoln made the democratic statement that establishes that the government of the people, by the people and for the people must never parish from the face of this Earth. The message to the Ocaza Convention by the liberator, Bolivar, is, for us, a proposal that the strength of the state must guarantee the life of the weak and must guarantee the government and the strength of institutions as a warranty of virtue and the permanence of our nation.

Thank you very much, President Bush, for this wonderful visit. Thank you, Mrs. Bush.

**PRESIDENT BUSH:** I appreciate those kind words. Laura and I are so honored to be here. We want to thank you and Mrs. Uribe for such warm hospitality, such gracious hospitality. I want to thank your Cabinet, and thank the Colombian people, as well.

I'm proud to be with my friend, President Uribe. El es mi amigo. He's a strong -- and he's courageous, like the nation he leads. He has been tireless in the fight against terror, and he's making progress on behalf of the people of Colombia. President Uribe and the Colombian people are dedicated to the triumph of democracy and the rule of law against the forces of violence. And the United States stands with you.

Our two nations share in the struggle against drugs. The drug traffickers who practice violence and intimidation in this country send their addictive and deadly products to the United States. Defeating them is vital to the safety of our peoples and to the stability of this hemisphere. President Uribe and I also share a basic optimism. This war against narco-terrorism can and will be won, and Colombia is well

on its way to that victory.

During the President's tenure in office, he's built an impressive record. Kidnappings in Colombia are significantly down; terrorist attacks and homicides have declined; cocaine seizures have risen dramatically. And since July of last year, dozens of leaders and financiers of the FARC narco-terrorist organization had been killed or captured. President Uribe has also reformed Colombia's judicial system, and is aggressively fighting corruption.

My nation will continue to help Colombia prevail in this vital struggle. Since the year 2000 when we began Plan Colombia, the United States has provided more than \$3 billion in vital aid. We'll continue providing aid.

We've helped Colombia to strengthen this democracy to combat drug production, to create a more transparent and effective judicial system, to increase the size and professionalism of its military and police forces, to protect human rights, and to reduce corruption.

Mr. President, you and your government have not let us down. Plan Colombia enjoys wide bipartisan support in my country, and next year I will ask our Congress to renew its support so that this courageous nation can win its war against narco-terrorists.

Full and final victory also requires the spread of prosperity and progress throughout this nation and throughout this region. President Uribe's economic reforms have created jobs and improved living standards. Investor confidence is up, unemployment is down, and growth is strong.

Our two nations also share a strong commitment to advancing free and fair trade and economic growth throughout the Americas. We're working hard on a free trade agreement that will link the United States and Colombia, as well as other Andean nations of South America, in a wider economic partnership. As hope advances, violence and extremism will retreat. President Uribe has a vision for a better Colombia, a vision of peace and prosperity that he is pursuing with skill and energy. He is a fierce opponent of terror and drug trafficking. He's a defender of Colombia's democracy. And I'm proud to call him friend.

Gracias, SeZor Presidente.

PRESIDENT URIBE: Thank you, President. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Q Mr. President, President Bush, good afternoon. How far are you willing to pursue the groups that you have labeled as terrorists in Colombia, including the self-defense groups? And how do you see the peace process that is being carried out here with the self-defense groups?

And, President Uribe, what did President Bush actually say to you about helping Colombia and being a little more flexible with regard to the FTA, especially with the farmers in our country? Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: First, let me talk about the security situation, and the President's strategy to defeat groups like the FARC. If I didn't think he had an effective strategy and the willingness to fight the FARC, I wouldn't be standing here in this great nation saying I'm going to work with Congress to continue the support. In other words, I believe in results. My administration is a results-oriented administration.

And so when I first met with the President in the Oval Office, a couple of years ago, we talked about how to achieve results, for the good of Colombia and for the good of our hemisphere. And he said he's

going to do the following things, and he did. And so to answer your question, we will support him in this strategy, because it's working.

PRESIDENT URIBE: Thank you, President.

Can I answer him first? The issue of the free trade agreement -- we understand that the FTA has to be totally equitable; it has to be passed not just by the U.S. Congress, but also by Colombia's Congress; and also by the public opinion of the U.S. and of Colombia.

President Bush has understood throughout this process in assisting Colombia how important it is for the legal farming business in Colombia to prosper so that we have opportunities for our farmers. We understand that it's very difficult to negotiate an agreement where everyone is working in good faith. But we will be able to get ahead for our people. And this will build more trust between our nations, and it will be a reason for prosperity, but also it will be a major step forward in uniting the Americas.

Q The IAEA, Mr. President, has said that they apparently believe that Iran's claim they've suspended uranium enrichment is true. Are you skeptical at all of that, and if so, why?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, let's say I hope it's true. And I think the definition of truth is the willingness for the Iranian regime to allow for verification. You know, they have said some things in the past, and it's very important for them to verify and earn the trust of those of us who are worried about them developing a nuclear weapon. And that's just not the United States. It's France, and Great Britain, Germany and other nations around the world understand the dangers of the Iranian government having a nuclear weapon.

And so it looks like there is some progress, but to determine whether or not the progress is real, there must be verification. And we look forward to -- we look forward to seeing that verification.

Q President Bush has committed himself here broadly to extend Plan Colombia and to continue helping Colombia. I'd like to know how you're going to convince your Congress to continue helping us at a time that's so difficult with your own deficit after the war in Iraq, and how much assistance will there be? Is it going to be as much as the \$3 billion that has been given over the last four years? (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, I thought I'd go to the Congress -- look, here's what you've got to do with the Congress. You say, first of all, it's an important issue. And the issue is whether or not we're willing to stand with a friend to help defeat narco-trafficking. Most members of Congress understand it is important to help Colombia defeat the narco-traffickers. And so the first question is whether or not there will be a consensus about the importance. I think there will be.

And secondly, do we want to continue spending money on the project that's important? And the answer to that question is, only if there are results. And there have been significant results. A number of acres under cultivation are down significantly. The number of arrests are up. The number of murders is down. In other words, this man's plan is working. And there is a focused strategy. How do we know? Because our ambassador is working closely with the government. Southern Command is working closely with the government. We're very aware of not only the strategy, but the will of this government to implement the strategy.

And so, to answer your question, I'm very optimistic about -- about continued funding. And I look forward to working with Congress to achieve a level that will make the plan effective.

Martin -- Morgan, I mean. Morgan. Martin, Morgan -- what the heck.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Last night in Santiago, a dinner for 200 guests had to be scaled back dramatically after Chileans -- the Chileans objected to U.S. plans -- U.S. security plans that must have been in place for some time. And the night before that, you had to come to the rescue of your own security man. Why do you think there was such friction between the U.S. delegation and the Chilean delegation?

PRESIDENT BUSH: This is a question? (Laughter.) Look, we had a fabulous dinner last night. It was really wonderful to be in the presence of President Lagos and his Cabinet. And I thought the visit was a spectacular visit. And I appreciated the hospitality of our Chilean friends, just like I appreciate the hospitality of our Colombian friends.

You know, we're making good progress, thanks to strong leadership. The President said, thanks to America, things are going well. No, he got it backwards. It's not thanks to America, things are going well, it's thanks to strong leadership that things are going well. It's thanks to a strategy that's working. It's thanks to a Cabinet that is dedicated to what's best for the interests of the Colombian people.

Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT LAGOS: Thank you, Mr. President. Do you want to get in one more?

PRESIDENT BUSH: That's plenty. No, thank you. (Applause.)

END 2:59 P.M. (Local)