



## THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

[Home](#) > [News & Policies](#) > [June 2006](#)

For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
June 14, 2006

### President Bush Welcomes President Uribe of Colombia to the White House Oval Office

[In Focus: Global Diplomacy](#)

12:06 P.M. EDT

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you all for coming. It's my honor to welcome back to the Oval Office mi amigo, el Presidente. Mr. President, we're glad you're here. This is my first chance to be able to congratulate the President for a very strong victory. I asked him what it's like to win with a lot of votes. He was obviously a good campaigner that had a message that the Colombian people appreciated. So first of all, congratulations for a grand victory.

President Uribe is a personal friend. I'm able to talk very frankly with him about a variety of subjects. I told him that one of the things I admire is he's a strong believer in democracy, human rights, human dignity. He's got a tough job in dealing with narco-terrorist groups in his country, but he's committed to dealing firmly with narco-terrorism. He's committed to helping reconcile past differences. He's committed to helping people get back into society. And I appreciate those commitments. He's committed to human rights.



We talked about trade. We negotiated a free trade agreement. We've still got some details to work out, but we committed ourselves to working out those details and try to get this done as quickly as we can. I will submit the agreement to Congress once it gets done, and I would hope members of both political parties understand the importance of a free trade agreement with this vital ally of ours.

We talked about the neighborhood. We talked about -- he came from a meeting with some of the Andean neighbors and he brought messages and he shared some thoughts with me. I appreciate strategizing with the President about how to make sure our neighborhood is a peaceful and hopeful place.

I told President Uribe that one of the things I will do a better job of is communicating to the people of South America and Central America my country's desire to promote justice and education and health. We spend about \$1.6 billion a year in Central and South America. I want the people to understand that money is meant to help them, to help improve their lives. I want the people to understand America is a considerate country, that we care about justice.

And so, Mr. President, I am really pleased you're here. It's good to see you again. And, again,

congratulations on a great victory.

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** Thank you, Mr. President. I want to repeat my gratitude to your government, to you personally, to your Congress, to the U.S. public opinion, for the permanent support of my country. I appreciate your friendship, your permanent advice, and we have many challenges before us.

One challenge is that Colombia can overcome this long nightmare of terrorism. I understand the mandate my fellow country citizens have given me to work harder, and with better results, for my country to get peace, and the United States cooperation is necessary.

In the last two years we have not gotten the (inaudible) result in dropping the areas with illegal drugs. One point we have studied this morning with President Bush is how to speed up the eradication of drugs, because we need to show better results in this area.

And of course, as President Bush has informed to you, we spoke about our free trade agreement, and some pending points. And we spoke about the necessity in Colombia and to all the Central American and South American countries to improve social cohesion. For I thank President Bush, he's willing to bring (inaudible) and determination to help us in education, in social issues, because we need to conduct hand-in-hand our fight against terrorism with our fight to create social cohesion, not only in Colombia, but in the whole region, as well.

**PRESIDENT BUSH:** Gracias, amigo. Thank you very much.

END 12:12 P.M. EDT

