



THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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President Bush Welcomes President Uribe of Colombia to the White House

The South Lawn

 [In Focus: Global Diplomacy](#)

7:51 A.M. EDT

PRESIDENT BUSH: It's been my honor to welcome a true democrat, a strong leader, and a friend, the President of Colombia. We had a long discussion.

First, Mr. President, Laura and I remember fondly our trip to your beautiful country. It was my second trip to Colombia, my first to your capital, and it was a very special occasion. And we thank you and the First Lady for such gracious hospitality.

Secondly, we had a discussion today about an important vote that our Congress must take, and that is a vote to confirm a free trade agreement with Colombia. This agreement is good for the United States. It's good for job creators, farmers, workers. This agreement is good for Colombia. It's good for job creators, and workers, and farmers.

This agreement has strategic implications. It is very important for this nation to stand with democracies that protect human rights and human dignity; democracies based upon the rule of law.



So the free trade agreement with Colombia and Peru and Panama, these agreements are more than just trade votes. They're signals to South America that we stand with nations that are willing to make hard decisions on behalf of the people. The President is here to speak strongly about his record, and it's a good, solid record. I thank the members of Congress for giving him a hearing. We expect them to be open-minded, to listen to his record. And I urge the Congress to pass a trade agreement with Colombia and Peru and Panama because it's in our interest that they do so.

And so Mr. President, it's great to see you. Bienvenidos.

PRESIDENT URIBE: Muchas gracias, Presidente.

Good morning, distinguished journalists. I want to thank President Bush for the new meeting. It has been, as always, very constructive. This meeting has given my team and myself the opportunity

to reiterate our commitment with democracy.

We have three main objectives in our administration: to consolidate democratic security, to create more and more confidence in Colombia for people to invest in our country, and to fulfill very important social goals, to fulfill social goals before the deadline of the social millennium goals.

Many people ask me why you call your policy on security democratic security? Because it is security with human rights, because it is security for all Colombians, because it is security for trade union leaders, for those members of the opposition, for those who agree in their ideas with my government, security for all Colombians.

During my five-year term, we have healthy elections, and Colombians have enjoyed effectiveness of our freedoms because of our policy on security. Before my administration, many Colombians had the idea that the only way for my country to reach peace, it was by private criminal organizations. Today, because of the efficacy of our administration, the vast majority of Colombians are convinced that we will defeat terrorists by institutional ways; that the only way Colombia has for the future is the way of our democratic institutions.

It is very important that the United States considers the necessity to advancing Plan Colombia. We haven't won yet in eradicating illicit drugs, but we are winning. And it is very important, the free trade agreement. I will explain in Capitol Hill, and I will explain to the American citizens the same I explain to President Bush this morning: The more our country can export, the better for my country to have high quality jobs, with affiliation to the social security system.



We are doing our best to defeat terrorists in a open country. Everyone in the world can go to Colombia, can oversight what our country is doing. And what our country does today is in favor of democracy.

I want to thank President Bush, his team, the people of Congress, and the American citizens for the help all of you have given our country. This integration is very important to promote democracy, to promote freedoms -- freedom, to promote social justice. This is -- these are our commitments.

Thank you President Bush.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Gracias, amigo.

END 7:58 A.M. EDT