



U.S.-Colombia Trade Agreement: Vital for U.S. National Security and U.S. Leadership in Our Hemisphere

“As your national security advisor in that region, I will tell you that it is very important that the free trade agreement be passed from a national security perspective. And, I hear that not just from senior people in Colombia, but from my interlocutors in the region. They’re watching very closely to see what happens to a nation that stands with the United States for a decade or more.”

– Admiral James Stavridis, currently Supreme Allied Commander-Europe, speaking in 2008 as then-commander of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM)

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“This vital agreement will advance U.S. interests in Colombia, a strategically located country that is arguably our closest ally in Latin America ... [and] advance U.S. security and economic interests by forging a deeper partnership.” – Generals James Hill, Peter Pace, Charles Wilhelm, Barry McCaffrey and George Joulwan, in 2008 as former SOUTHCOM commanders (1990-04)

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“Further delay in ratifying these agreements risks damaging our relations with Colombia, Panama, and throughout the hemisphere by raising doubts about America’s reliability as a partner ... [W]e respectfully urge [the President and Congress] to agree on a firm deadline for ratifying the Colombian and Panamanian Free Trade Agreements within the first half of 2011.”

– Bipartisan group of six U.S. Trade Representatives, two Ambassadors at Large to Latin America, and eleven Assistant Secretaries of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs (Mar. 2011)

After decades of violent insurgency, peace has increasingly returned to Colombia, in part with our help through Plan Colombia – a dividend on our investment that we must not squander

- The United States invested over \$8 billion in aid through *Plan Colombia* and the follow-on efforts of SOUTHCOM, USAID, and other agencies – thereby giving Colombia hope in the depths of civil strife. In return, Colombia has more than matched our assistance, with U.S. security cooperation funds amounting to less than 5 percent of the Colombian defense budget in 2010.
- The U.S. State Department reports that, between 2002 and 2008, homicides fell by 44 percent, kidnappings by 88 percent, terrorist attacks by 79 percent, and attacks on the country's infrastructure by 60 percent. The homicide rate has fallen to 32 per 100,000 people, according to SOUTHCOM.
- Now is the time to build upon this strong foundation, which we assisted the Colombians in building, rather than risk undermining the relationship by appearing to pull away.

U.S. leadership in our hemisphere is under threat from competitors & the Administration’s inattention to Latin America, but the Colombia agreement signals our reengagement

- *“Absent the [trade agreement], the U.S. Government will likely lose political leverage with Colombia apart from historical ties that count for less each day. Colombia ... is increasingly looking outward for both new commercial relations and political support.”* – From *Losing Jobs and Alienating Friends: The Consequences of Falling Behind on Free Trade with Colombia and Panama*, Minority Staff Report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Feb. 8, 2011).

- Colombia is a robust democracy with strong ties to the United States in a region that includes several increasingly anti-American governments – especially Venezuela. While Colombia and Venezuela have traded accusations over border incursions and alleged Venezuelan financing of insurgents in Colombia, Colombian President Santos had no choice but to engage in extensive diplomacy to soothe bilateral tensions since taking office in 2010.
- China’s investment in Latin America doubled from 2008 to 2009 alone, and Latin American exports to China increased by 900 percent from 2000 to 2009. While China is now the largest trading partner of Brazil and Chile, the United States continues to be Colombia’s largest trading partner. However, U.S. exporters’ share of Colombian imports fell 17 percent between 2001 and 2009, while Chinese exporters’ share nearly tripled.

By providing Colombians with alternatives to the drug trade and by building on a key alliance in the war on drugs, the Colombia trade agreement will help keep drugs from our children

- *UN International Narcotics Control Board* (March 2011): Removed Colombia from its “special observation list,” citing institutional improvements and a 50 percent reduction in coca cultivation in the past decade. Noted that Colombia continues to be the world’s largest cocaine producer – which shows much collaborative work remains to be done.
- *CIA’s Crime and Narcotics Center*: Reported that coca cultivation fell 29 percent and cocaine production 39 percent in 2008. Opening markets will further expand alternatives to the drug trade.
- *Colombia’s National Narcotics Directorate*: Raided and destroyed 36 percent more clandestine drug laboratories in 2008 than in 2007. Interdicted \$117 billion in cocaine from 2002 to May 2009.
- *U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency* (2010): U.S. price of cocaine rose over 75 percent, while its purity fell over 31 percent – demonstrating that efforts in Colombia are making an impact here at home.

Through the Colombian agreement, we stand with a strategic ally that has stood with us

- Colombia is a longstanding military ally of the United States. Colombian troops served with distinction alongside U.S. troops in the Korean War, and Colombia offered military personnel for current U.S. operations in Afghanistan. Colombian troops also serve under the UN mandate, including in the Sinai, where they have been deployed since 1956.
- Colombia has been training militaries and police in counternarcotics & counterinsurgency measures in Afghanistan, Mexico, Haiti, Central America, the Caribbean, Paraguay, and Africa.
- “[T]his agreement will meet our duty to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Colombians as they have stood by the United States as friends and allies.” – Generals James Hill, Peter Pace, Charles Wilhelm, Barry McCaffrey & George Joulwan, in 2008 as former SOUTHCOM commanders.

The Colombia agreement enhances U.S. energy security by expanding trade with a country that is a reliable, friendly, democratic, nearby source of energy products

- Colombia is Latin America’s 3rd largest provider of energy products to the U.S., behind only Mexico and Venezuela, and exported over 40 percent of its petroleum production to the U.S. in 2009.
- In contrast, China lent Venezuela \$20 billion in April 2010 to secure a ten-year supply of Venezuelan-produced crude oil.
- Colombia is the world’s fourth largest exporter of coal, and the United States depended on Colombia for 80 percent of its coal imports through the first nine months of 2009. However, Colombia began making substantial coal exports to China in 2009, according to a March 2010 report by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Energy Information Administration.
- Rare earth finds in the South American Andes suggest Colombia could eventually source the United States if U.S. firms receive adequate opportunity to help Colombia explore and develop the sector.