



# Press Release

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**WOLA** WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA  
*Promoting Human Rights, Democracy, and Social and Economic Justice in Latin America*

**For More Information Contact:**

**Gimena Sanchez**

[gsanchez@wola.org](mailto:gsanchez@wola.org)

(202)-489-1702

**WOLA: Bush Must Address Human Rights Situation in Colombia**

Washington DC, March 9, 2007-- The U.S. provides Colombia with a **“blank check”** for military aid and overlooks serious human rights concerns and links between top Colombian politicians and paramilitary groups, says the Washington Office on Latin America. President Bush, who arrives Sunday in Colombia, should demand accountability from the Colombian government.

The Bush Administration views Colombia as its greatest, if not only, ally in the Andean region. The U.S. has invested more than \$4 billion in Colombia since 2000, the great majority of that in military aid (about 80%).

**“The ‘para-politics’ scandal that has linked a long list of government officials to right-wing paramilitaries, and the emergence of new or re-armed groups after a controversial demobilization program, demonstrate why the U.S. must not be providing Colombia with a blank check in military aid,”** said Gimena Sanchez, Senior Associate for Colombia at the Washington Office on Latin America. **“President Bush should use this opportunity to demand accountability from the Uribe administration.”**

In a show of continued support for the policies of the government of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, the Bush administration’s recent budget request to Congress for FY 08 included more than \$600 million in aid to Colombia. However, only 20% of this aid will be invested in social and economic programs to improve Colombia’s critical humanitarian and human rights situation.

**“President Bush and other policy makers must change the balance of U.S. aid in favor of promoting peace and human rights in Colombia,”** said Gimena Sanchez, **“because it is clear that the military-heavy U.S. aid package is not meeting its intended goals of reducing drug production and improving human rights conditions.”**

Despite the aerial herbicide spraying of over 2 million acres of illegal and legal crops in Colombia, the availability of cocaine on U.S. streets remains virtually unchanged. Meanwhile, serious human rights violations continue to occur in Colombia and the majority of these cases remain in impunity; while Colombia’s over 3 million internally displaced persons, especially the Afro-Colombian and indigenous displaced, continue to suffer from lack of security and violations of their rights.

**“The President should treat his visit as a new opportunity to show public support for human rights, peace and justice for all in Colombia. Addressing these issues would make real the ‘commitment of the United States to the Western Hemisphere,’”** said Ms. Sanchez.

**To read more on Human Rights Issues in Colombia, and Foreign Aid Details, please go to the following link:**

<http://www.wola.org/Colombia/colombia.htm>