

JULY 10, 2003

**SCHAKOWSKY: PLAN COLOMBIA GETS A FAILING GRADE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined members of Congress and organizations opposed to current U.S. policy in Colombia to unveil a report card which found that Plan Colombia has failed to meet all its stated goals. Below is Schakowsky's statement:

*As we gather to mark the three-year anniversary of Plan Colombia and to evaluate the result of U.S. policy in Colombia over the last few years, I am sad to say that my worst fears have come true.*

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*In the summer of 1999, before the Congress voted on Plan Colombia, I warned my colleagues that passage of that first round of aid would be the first in a series of blank checks that would drag the United States into the decades-old civil war of another country with no foreseeable end game or exit strategy. And this exactly what is happening today.*

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*I warned that our efforts would actually make the situation in Colombia worse and that American and Colombian lives would be lost because of U.S. military involvement. Sadly, such tragedies are occurring on a regular basis.*

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*Plan Colombia was sold to the American public and to Congress as a way to help reduce the flow of drugs to our nation. But I expressed concern that the policy would be ineffective, that it would not reduce the availability or consumption of drugs in the U.S. or their cultivation in the Andean region. And it has not.*

*It was originally promised to concerned members of Congress that this aid would not be used for counter-insurgency purposes, but I objected because the aid did not include adequate controls on the use of U.S. military resources. And along with several other members of Congress and human rights experts, I knew the plan and the policy were about more than just drugs. I knew the plan and the policy would change and expand. Unfortunately, that is exactly what is happening today - our mission in Colombia has turned from counter-narcotics to counter insurgency.*

*Sadly, those of us here today who are committed to human rights, democracy, the environment, and peace, have no choice but to give Plan Colombia a failing grade.*

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*Three years, over 3 billion dollars, and countless lost lives later Plan Colombia has failed miserably.*

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*It has failed to strengthen Colombia's democratic institutions.*

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*It has failed to reduce drug production, use, and availability.*

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***It has failed to reduce violence and the loss of innocent civilian lives in Colombia.***

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***It has cost the lives of Americans.□□***

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***It has ruined precious lands and endangered human health and the health of already endangered species.□□***

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***It has promoted the employment of U.S.-hired mercenaries, private armies that operate above the law and below the radar with no accountability for their actions.□□***

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***It has not achieved any of its stated goals.□□***

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***Plan Colombia has in fact made a bad situation in Colombia worse, and it has not provided any measurable benefit to the American people.□***

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***Plan Colombia was bad enough to start with and the Bush Administration has made it worse.□ Instead of putting precious dollars into measures that will really protect the United States from actual threats to our national security and improve the lives of people around the world, the Bush Administration has insisted on throwing good money after bad in Colombia.□□***

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***It is not too late.□ The President and the Congress can acknowledge the errors of their ways, reevaluate our Colombia policy and reverse course.□ We all want to help the Colombian people.□ Congressman McGovern and I have traveled there and we have met with them.□ They are beautiful people and we should spend time and money to improve their lives.□ We know how to do it.□ We just need to do it.□***

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***I want to thank my colleague Jim McGovern for being here today and for their leadership on this issue.□ And I want to commend the many committed organizations and activists that have devoted themselves to correcting our deeply flawed approach to Colombia.□ Some of them are here today.□ Without their assistance, members of Congress would have a censored, one-sided view of the situation in Colombia.□□***

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***I will continue working with each of you to help move the United States off the dangerous path we started on three years ago.***