

MARCH 22, 2002

STATEMENT OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY ON U.S. POLICY SHIFT IN COLOMBIA BY BUSH ADMINISTRATION

CHICAGO, IL - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued the following statement after the Bush Administration announced its intention to change current U.S. policy in Colombia. Schakowsky is a member of the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Drug Policy and is a critic of the current policy. She is also the author of the Andean Region Contractor Accountability Act (ARCAA), legislation that would prohibit the federal government from funding Private Military Contractors (PMCs) in the Andean region.

"U.S. policy has failed to achieve its stated goals in Colombia of helping to stabilize that nation, increase the rule of law, reduce drug production and protect civilian life. Instead, taxpayer dollars have contributed to the escalation of the conflict and the situation has gotten worse. Coca production has increased, human rights abuses continue, and the paramilitary groups in Colombian are brutalizing innocent civilians with impunity.

"The Bush administration provided no real assistance to President Pastrana during the peace negotiations. Now that this process has collapsed, the Administration is preparing a major shift in policy and is signaling its willingness to move closer toward U.S. military involvement in a major ground war.

"Using the tragedy of September 11 to further prolong the Andean region's longest civil war is misguided foreign policy. I will vigorously fight any plan by this Administration that will risk additional American lives and waste billions of taxpayer dollars on private military contractors and other misuses of American dollars. Instead, we must help the people of Colombia achieve the peace that has escaped their nation for the past 40 years."