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SCHAKOWSKY SAYS NO MORE PRIVATE MILITARY CONTRACTORS FLYING OVER PERU AND CALLS FOR HALT TO U.S. "FORCE-DOWN" POLICY

STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT LAYS BLAME ON U.S. AND PERU FOR DEATH OF AMERICANS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today said that the U.S. must share the blame for the death of two American citizens, Veronica Bowers and her infant daughter Charity, whose plane was shot down over Peru. The Joint U.S.-Peruvian "force-down" Intercept Program allows the United States to employ private military contractors who have the authority to target any given plane as suspicious, leading to possible military action.

On April 20, 2001, private military contractors flying for the CIA provided the information to the Peruvian Air Force, which shot down a plane carrying missionaries. Today, the State Department finally released its report on the incident.

"The death of an American mother and her daughter occurred, in part, because the United States is engaged in a flawed and irresponsible policy. It was only a matter of time before a tragedy of this sort would occur, and the American people would realize what their tax dollars are funding," Schakowsky said.

"It is shameful that the United States is a willing participant in a policy that puts at grave risk the lives of innocent civilians. What is worse is that we use taxpayer dollars to hire private military companies to carry out this failed policy and refuse to take responsibility for our actions. Unless we change our course, more innocent lives will be lost," Schakowsky added.

Schakowsky, who had called on the President to release all materials relating to this shutdown and other similar incidents, is the author of H.R. 1591, the Andean Region Contractor Accountability Act (ARCAA), legislation that would prohibit the federal government from funding private armies in the Andean region.