



***believe that implementation of this plan will benefit the people of Colombia. I urge you to reconsider this policy. At the very least, I hope that you will work to make sure that there is an adequate opportunity for full and fair debate and a separate vote on this significant and controversial proposal.***

***As you know there is no real way to fight the "drug war" in Colombia without also getting involved in that country's decades-old civil war. My constituents and, I believe the American public generally, are concerned about a policy that risks drawing U.S. troops into a counterinsurgency war with no foreseeable end and no exit strategy. I share that concern. There appears to be little justification for making such a major investment that could lead to such enormous risks.***

***In recent weeks, the United Nations and Human Rights Watch have released studies that are extremely critical of Colombia's lack of progress on human rights issues. I agree with their conclusions that right wing paramilitary groups have been responsible for the vast majority of human rights abuse, extra-judicial killing, and displacement of indigenous people that takes place in Colombia. As the reports also suggest, collusion between Colombia's military and right-wing paramilitary units is a serious problem. While President Pastrana has taken steps to remove some of the worst human rights violators from the military, I do not believe that there has been sufficient progress made to warrant such a massive increase in the aid we already provide to Columbia. I was disappointed to see that there are no measures included in your proposal to address the problem of the military's relationship to paramilitary groups, to curb paramilitary violence against civilians, and to ensure that U.S. aid does not end up supporting human rights abusers.***

***Mr. President, the goals of this aid seem to be unclear. Are we trying to defeat the guerrillas in Colombia? Are we trying to eradicate coca crops? Are we trying to stop the drug problem here in the United States? Are we trying to help the Pastrana government win its battle with the FARC and others? What new safeguards will exist to ensure protection for innocent civilians in Colombia? What kind of human rights monitoring infrastructure will be employed? What is our exit strategy? How will we define victory or success in Colombia? What if consumption of cocaine and other drugs in the U.S. does not decline? What if the center of cocaine production in Latin America shifts from Colombia to another location as it did from Bolivia and Peru to Colombia? If our helicopters are shot down, will we send more or respond in some other way? Will there be an equal investment in education, prevention and treatment efforts to curb domestic drug use?***

***Mr. President, I believe that these are serious questions that require a thoughtful and careful discussion. This aid package is too large and too important an issue to be considered on an emergency basis that prevents us from having this debate or prevents us from considering this proposal on its own merits. For that reason, I urge you to withdraw the Colombia aid request as part of your emergency supplemental appropriations request and to do everything possible to ensure a separate and complete debate and vote on the Colombian aid package.***

*Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.*

*Sincerely,*

□

*Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress*