

Open Letter to Congress

from Former Commanders of the U.S. Southern Command

Supporting the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement

We are writing to urge your support for the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. This vital agreement will advance U.S. interests in Colombia, a strategically located country that is arguably our closest ally in Latin America. It will also underscore our deep commitment to stability and growth in the strategically important Andean region, which depends on Colombia's continued progress as a resilient and democratic society.

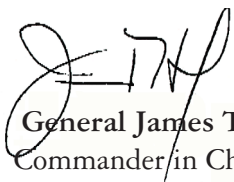
Colombia's transformation over the past decade is a triumph of brave and principled Colombians. It is also a remarkable achievement of bipartisan U.S. foreign policy. Violence has fallen to its lowest level in a generation, and 45,000 fighters have been demobilized as the country's narco-guerrilla groups have lost legitimacy. While drug-trafficking poses a continuing threat, Colombia's leaders have eliminated two-thirds of its opium production, and more than 500 traffickers have been extradited during the Uribe administration — by far the most extraditions from any country to the United States.

Colombia's economic resurgence has been a critical factor in its recent progress. Robust investment has boosted economic growth and development. The creation of new jobs has provided tens of thousands of Colombians with long-term alternatives to narcotics trafficking or illegal emigration.

The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement will build upon these recent advances to enhance the long-term prospects for peace, stability, and development in Colombia. Providing new incentives for investment and job creation, this landmark accord will help ensure that Colombia stays on the path of economic openness, the rule of law, and transparency.

It is in our national interest to help Colombia progress along the road toward democratic consolidation and economic development. This trade agreement will advance U.S. security and economic interests by forging a deeper partnership. Finally, approving this agreement will meet our duty to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Colombians as they have stood by the United States as friends and allies. For all of these reasons, we strongly urge Congress to approve the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement.

Sincerely,



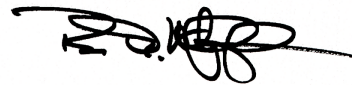
General James T. Hill
Commander in Chief,
United States Southern Command 2002-2004



General Peter Pace
Commander in Chief,
United States Southern Command 2000-2001



General Charles E. Wilhelm
Commander in Chief,
United States Southern Command 1997-2000



General Barry McCaffrey
Commander in Chief,
United States Southern Command 1994-1996



General George Joulwan
Commander in Chief,
United States Southern Command 1990-1993