

But the 1990s were not good to the people of Colombia. It was during this time, President Bill Clinton working with his Colombian counterpart, President Andreas Pastrana, created Plan Colombia—an investment of U.S. resources, both military and economic, to help restore peace and stability to this democracy.

President Bush continued and built upon this successful program with his counterpart, current President Alvaro Uribe, who was just re-elected less than 2 weeks ago to another term overwhelmingly by his citizens in an election all consider to have been fair and free. The election was independently confirmed by the well respected Human Rights Watch.

We need to continue to build upon this relationship.

President Uribe will be visiting the United States next week, and we should welcome him as a friend of our country—because he is.

If one reviewed the committee report from this subcommittee, one would see that it actually starts with a statement highlighting that USAID needs greater emphasis in Latin America, as U.S. influence and interests in the region are waning—cutting funds from our strongest ally and a country in need does not send the right message. In fact, this bill rejiggers our aid appropriations to Colombia, reflecting a nonnalization of relations and the massive progress Colombia has made in the past 5 years. Colombia continues to build strong democratic institutions, while curbing violence and drug trafficking.

Plan Colombia has been working, including limiting the drug trade in the U.S. We will hear occasional statistics on the drug war—the detractors will ignore the demand side of the cocaine issue, and solely focus on the supply side.

On the supply side there have been numerous victories—not as big as hoped but victories none the less. We will not achieve full victory until we curb the demand and that involves an active role in the bane of drugs here in the U.S. We can all rattle off data, but the facts show the path is moving towards progress.

Is fumigation the best approach? That can be debated, but not in a way that we strip funding from an ally who is working with the United States of America to end the flow of drugs to the United States of America.

Additionally, Colombia has complied with 433 extradition requests from the U.S. since August 1998; no country has cooperated more than Colombia with extradition requests. Some of the biggest drug dealers, and some of the biggest terrorists, including 2 FARC leaders are in jail today in the DC area—too bad we cant say the same thing about Osama bin Laden.

And Plan Colombia has worked domestically in Colombia as well. In the Department of Public Safety, Colombia provides protection to labor leaders, human rights workers, and journalists. There has been an 80 percent decrease in kidnappings since the initiative of Plan Colombia in 2000; there has also been a 63 percent decrease in terrorist attacks.

Last year, one journalist was killed in Colombia and 21 since 2002 according to the State Department. While sad, this death toll has steadily decreased every year since that time. While still too high, the facts prove that the democratically elected government of President Alvaro Uribe is fighting a winning battle against terrorism in Colombia, making

his country safer for all of its citizens. In 2000, the Colombian government created the Journalists Protection Program to protect journalists from attack. During 2005, the Direction of Human Rights of the Ministry of Interior and Justice provided direct protection to 113 journalists. The situation in Colombia for journalists has vastly improved over the past 4 years. This success is owed both to the security initiatives implemented by their democratically elected President, as well as the support provided by the United States under Plan Colombia.

Plan Colombia has been a foreign policy success for the United States of America and a domestic security success for Colombia. Started by President Clinton and continued by President Bush, Plan Colombia has made measurable progress in Colombia's security, as seen through decreases in violence, murders and kidnappings as well as the eradication of drug crops.

The streets of Colombia are safer—some will argue that the victories achieved by Plan Colombia have only effected the cities so far—but that's where 75 percent of the people live—and they are living safer, better lives today.

It isn't a complete victory, I agree, but we cannot cut Colombia, our ally, off at the knees as they approach victory.

I urge a "no" vote on the McGovern amendment.

TRIBUTE TO ARMY SPECIALIST
DANIEL GIONET

HON. MARTIN T. MEEHAN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 12, 2006

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the sacrifice of an American hero, Army Specialist Gionet, who gave his life in service to our country.

Specialist Gionet was born in my hometown of Lowell, Massachusetts and grew up in the area. He was fulfilling his second tour of duty when he was killed in service to our country. Daniel died Sunday, June 5, while on patrol in Taji, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device exploded near his tank. He was 23.

Daniel married his wife, Katrina, on November 26 of 2005 before being deployed for the second time. He had been looking forward to buying a home, going to college, and starting a family. Daniel enjoyed fishing, fixing cars, and was a fine cook. On his first tour, he put his culinary talents to work in Afghanistan as a chef based at the Kandahar Air Field. In between his first and second deployment, Daniel decided that he wanted to more directly help his comrades in the field and volunteered to re-train as a medic. His selflessness should be an inspiration to us all.

Daniel served the United States Military courageously. He enlisted in the Army in 2001 and served in Afghanistan. In 2004, he went above the call of duty and reenlisted, this time deploying to Iraq. Specialist Gionet comes from a long line of distinguished service to country. His grandfather served in the Air Force during the Korean War and his father was a Marine.

Daniel graduated from Pelham High School in 2001. He was an athlete and distinguished

himself on Pelham's baseball, football, and wrestling teams. He envisioned a career in criminal justice or the culinary arts. Daniel joined the Army, in part, to help finance a college education.

Daniel Gionet's family is proud of him for the supreme sacrifice he made on behalf of his country. He is lovingly remembered by his family and friends as a selfless, brave, and a genuine "angel," as his mother, Denise Gionet, described him. He will be dearly missed.

I have requested that an American flag be flown over our United States Capitol in memory of Specialist Daniel Gionet to honor his noble service to our country. This flag will be delivered to his family. Daniel died fighting for the country he loved, alongside comrades he respected, and with the family he adored looking on. Our Nation is humbled and grateful for his sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, I request that we take a moment to recognize Specialist Daniel Gionet, United States Army, who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to his country.

CONGRATULATING LOUIS
BUCKALEW ON RECEIVING THE
2006 PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF
COMMUNITY AWARD

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 12, 2006

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a young man from Coden, Alabama, on his exemplary work towards improving his community.

Last month, Louis Buckalew was honored at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and awarded \$1,000 for his outstanding volunteer efforts. The 2006 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program, conducted in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals and created by Prudential Financial, Inc., has honored more than 70,000 young volunteers at the local, State, and national levels for 11 years. Louis was chosen from nearly 20,000 candidates from across the country.

Louis just completed the eighth grade at Clark School of Math and Technology in Chickasaw, Alabama. He has volunteered with several organizations over the past 3 years to clean up the gulf coast shoreline and roadways near his home. Louis was first inspired to help his community's environment through his involvement with the Boy Scouts. Louis has also worked with the Coast Guard, Mobile Bay Estuary Program, and local government to improve his community, even recruiting friends to join in his efforts.

Mr. Speaker, it is my great honor to recognize Louis Buckalew and to commend him for his hard work and this well-deserved award. I know Louis's family and friends join me in praising his accomplishments and extending thanks for his efforts on behalf of the citizens of Coden and Alabama's First Congressional District.