

HONORING THE GRADUATES OF
THE 90TH PRECINCT

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 10, 1999

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I ask you and my colleagues to join me in congratulating special graduates of the 12th Congressional District of New York. I am certain that this day marks the culmination of much effort and hard work which has led and will lead them to continued success. In these times of uncertainty, limited resources, and random violence in our communities and schools, it is encouraging to know that they have overcome these obstacles and succeeded.

These students have learned that education is priceless. They understand that education is the tool to new opportunities and greater endeavors. Their success is not only a tribute to their strength but also to the support they have received from their parents and loved ones.

In closing, I encourage all my colleagues to support the education of the youth of America. With a solid education, today's youth will be tomorrow's leaders. And as we approach the new millennium, it is our responsibility to pave the road for this great Nation's future. Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, I ask you to join me in congratulating the following Academic Achievement Award Recipients:

Christian Nitti and Joshua Romero—PS 16.
Massiel Santana and Josette Dueno—PS 18.

Pearl Ramos and Andrew Vasquez—PS 19.
David Rodriguez and Cindy Escoboza—PS 84.

Lasnette O'Garro and Jose Lozada—PS 147.
Steven Rodriguez and Jamyra Quinones—PS 196.

Giselle Burgos and Christina Santiago—PS 250.
Kimberly Gonzalez and David Quinga—PS 257.

Michelle Rivera and Ior Kretowicz—Most Holy Trinity R.C.

Jennifer Pascual and Nicole Medici—St. Nicholas R.C.

Marcus Copeland and Ann Liriano—PS 380.
Kaity Cheng and Yu Chen—I.S. 318.

Sabrina Ramphal and Yamil Tavarez—I.S. 49.

Fances Dover and Wendy Morel—J.H.S. 50.
Abner Rodriguez and Monica Aldana—I.S. 71.

Nella Bastien and Raquel Aponte—H.S. Enterprise Business & Tech.

Essanai Velasquez and Luis Ramos—El Puente Academy/Peace & Justice.

Keith Madden and Zorielle Rodriguez—Transfiguration R.C. School.

Desirae Nazario and Joann Danio—Saint Peter & Paul R.C.

Jennifer Chavez and Gabriella Padilla—All Saints R.C.

WAGING THE DRUG WAR

HON. RANDY "DUKE" CUNNINGHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 10, 1999

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, last week a Narcotics Eradication Task Force from the

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

Republic of Colombia visited Washington. The Task Force included three retired Colombian Generals, a former Minister of Defense, the ex-Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, the Army's former Inspector General, journalists, academics and a Magistrate from the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. They came to Washington at the request of the bipartisan National Security Caucus with an important and powerful message for all of us.

I hope all of my colleagues will pay careful attention to the alarming statistics they provided:

Eighty percent of the world supply of cocaine is produced or transits through Colombia, and over 75 percent of the heroin seized on the U.S. East Coast is from that nation.

Over 20,000 Americans die every year from abusing illegal narcotics. Drug abuse is also the main reason America's prison population has doubled between 1988 and 1998 and our nation has to spend over \$35 billion on its correctional system.

There has been a 27 percent increase in drug use among 12–17 year olds, and 78 percent of American students report that drugs are bought, sold or used in their high schools.

According to the most recent reports issued by the Clinton Administration, there has been an incredible 378 percent annual increase in the use of pure Colombian heroin. Heroin use has become an epidemic in almost every town, big or small, in our country. It is cheaper, purer and easier to obtain than ever before.

A recent report released by the Colombian Army demonstrates that the FARC rebels have earned more than \$5.3 billion over the last eight years through drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortion.

Colombia has one of the highest rates of murder and kidnapping in the world. Attacks by rebel forces displaced over 300,000 people last year and 95 percent of all crimes go unpunished. The number of outstanding arrest warrants is over 150,000 and the judiciary has a backlog of over 3.5 million cases.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we can win the war on drugs but it will take a real commitment. We cannot just wish it away, and education alone is not going to stop drugs. Furthermore, interdiction alone will not stop the drug lords.

Almost every American family has been affected negatively by drugs, including my own, not only from usage but from the sale of drugs. I want to tell you how disappointing, how hurtful it is and how damaging it is to a family. The Narcotics Eradication Task Force from Colombia expressed sincere gratitude for the economic assistance of the United States, but they also demonstrated that we need a real and comprehensive war on drugs.

The Task Force members reminded us that many brave Colombian soldiers, policemen, judges and statesmen have lost their lives in the War on Drugs. They reminded our colleagues of heroes such as Enrique Camerino, a Border Patrol agent from just east of my district. He was buried alive after being tortured by Mexican drug loads.

The Narcotics Eradication Task Force met with Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) and our colleagues Cass Ballenger (R-NC); Ciro Rodriguez (D-TX), Joe Crowley (D-NY),

Kevin Brady (R-TX), Cliff Stearns (R-FL) and Mark Sanford (R-SC). According to the Task Force, the Colombian cartels processed coca paste flown from Peru and Bolivia for over a decade.

It was not until the 1990s that the cartels promoted the planting of coca in the remote and sparsely populated eastern plains and jungles of Colombia, where the guerrillas had strong influence. Initially the guerrillas were content to protect laboratories and "tax" the different phases of the production process. They have since moved into direct involvement in the whole production process. They provide a good share of the cocaine produced in Colombia and collect protection money for the rest. The same holds true for the more recent production of heroine.

However, as their income from drugs increased the guerrillas' kidnaping activity did not diminish. Around 1,600 people were reported kidnaped in 1997 and over 2000 were abducted in 1998. The true figure is unknown but probably much higher, since families are routinely ordered not to inform the authorities and many heed this warning. Guerrillas are believed to be responsible for 60% of the kidnaping in Colombia and collect more than 200 million dollars annually from these activities.

The Colombian guerrillas are thought to be the world's richest and most powerful criminal organization. But guerrillas combatants do not operate in a vacuum. Although the various legal Marxist parties have had little success at the polls, their unarmed supporters have infiltrated many government organizations. They also have permanent representatives abroad that run, with the collaboration of the extreme left in the United States and Europe, a powerful propaganda and disinformation operation.

The visit of the Narcotics Eradication Task Force was made possible by the Colombian non-profit organization, Forum Interamericano. The Task Force also expressed its concern over the excessive concessions made by President Pastrana to the FARC rebels in a well intentioned but badly planned peace initiative. As an inducement to the FARC to sit at a negotiating table Pastrana ordered the withdrawal of the Armed Forces from a coca producing region the size of Switzerland, 16,000 square miles. This has given the terrorist guerrillas a safe sanctuary where the rebel group is recruiting combatants, keeping kidnap victims and has continued to produce drugs.

HONORING MT. MORIAH CHRISTIAN
CHURCH

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 10, 1999

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to applaud the efforts of the Mt. Moriah Christian Church in Centralia, Illinois for their strength and dedication in rebuilding after vandals set a fire that destroyed the church in August of 1997.

Mount Moriah believed to be the first church in Marion County was built in 1829. The May