

the United States to escape the violence and instability.

It is this combination of factors that led President Pastrana, working closely with our administration, to propose Plan Colombia. To many, Plan Colombia is only about drugs, but in reality it is a broad plan that addresses five key areas: the peace process; the Colombian economy; the counter-drug strategy; justice reform and human rights; and democratization and social development. It is this broad based plan to rebuild the Colombian state that needs our support.

Some have said that Plan Colombia is only about providing military equipment to Colombia. Indeed, Plan Colombia is much more comprehensive and far-reaching. But, the United States contribution to Plan Colombia is heavily weighted toward military equipment. There is a good reason for this. Plan Colombia is a \$7.5 billion plan, of which the Colombians themselves will provide over \$4 billion. They are looking to the United States to provide about \$1.6 billion and to international community for the remainder.

It is appropriate that the portion of the funding being provided by the United States focus on the counter-drug part of Plan Colombia since this is of particular interest to us and since we are the only country that can supply that type of support. It is also the part of Plan Colombia that is most compelling for U.S. involvement, since it involves keeping drugs off of our streets.

Some have argued that there are risks associated with providing this type of support to Colombia. That is true, but there are also risks associated with doing nothing, and I believe that the risks associated with doing nothing are far greater than the risks involved with helping the Colombian Government and the Colombian people.

We have important national interests at stake in Colombia that would be critically harmed were the current situation in Colombia to continue. First, Colombia is the oldest democracy in South America and has been an important partner in bringing democracy and democratic values to all of our hemispheric neighbors, with the exception of Cuba. We must act to preserve democracy.

Second, the entire Andean region is threatened by instability and Colombia is the center of that instability. Failure to stem the crisis in Colombia could lead to increased instability in Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Panama, and Venezuela. A stronger Colombia means a stronger region and a stronger Western Hemisphere.

Third, a complete breakdown in Colombia would make it even more difficult to control the drug trafficking. And the illegal networks that are set up by drug traffickers also involve other illegal activities that threaten

our security, such as money laundering and financial crimes, arms trafficking, human smuggling, cargo theft, and terrorism.

Fourth, Colombia is an important trading partner for the United States. It is South America's fourth largest economy and the fifth largest export market in Latin America for the United States. Colombia has the potential to be an economic engine for the Andean region and an even bigger market for U.S. goods. The violence and instability in Colombia are preventing economic growth, including the exploitation of large, newly discovered oil fields that would help to reduce gasoline prices in the United States.

Fifth, the exodus of Colombians, nearly 1 million in the past 5 years, further exacerbates our own immigration problems. A further downturn in the Colombian situation could lead to an immigration crisis that would directly impact the United States.

Finally, for those concerned about human rights, and I consider myself in that category, the deteriorating human rights situation in Colombia can only be reversed through the implementation of Plan Colombia, with the government gaining affective control over its national territory. President Pastrana has demonstrated his will to improve the human rights situation in Colombia, and has taken concrete steps, including dismissing senior military officers, to demonstrate his determination.

With all of this at stake it is hard to understand why we have not been able to move faster to approve this assistance package. And there are direct costs associated with this delay. Last December I visited the first of the Colombian counternarcotics battalions that are to be trained and equipped by the U.S. as part of Plan Colombia. The U.S. Special Forces soldiers who were training them reported that their moral was excellent and they were as capable at their tasks as any soldiers they have ever trained.

Unfortunately, this battalion has been doing very little other than calisthenics since my visit, largely because of our failure to move this assistance package. They are limited to where they can reach by foot, since they have no mobility capability. They have no fuel for the helicopters they were given on an interim basis by the State Department. The valuable training they received is wasting away, and their skills are fading from lack of practice.

In addition, the second Colombian counternarcotics battalion has been vetted but are unable to begin training. Eradication of coca and opium poppy has been halted. Crop substitution and alternative development programs are also on hold, as are the human rights and judicial reform programs that are included in the legislation. Meanwhile, the guerrillas and the drug traffickers

continue to strengthen and expand their operations. The peace process has floundered and the violence has escalated. Each day we wait the situation worsens, the regional instability increases, the drugs flow out of Colombia, and the money and effort required to turn the situation around increases.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to act now and support this vital package of assistance for Colombia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky has 2 minutes remaining.

Mr. McCONNELL. I reserve the remainder of my time.

VISIT TO THE SENATE BY A DELEGATION FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I am pleased to welcome a delegation from the European Parliament to the U.S. Senate. The parliamentarians are in the United States for an important interparliamentary meeting.

Europe continues to move forward with economic integration and the European Parliament's role is increasingly important. As the European Union, like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization expands, the role of the European Parliament will become even more important.

The United States and the European Union have the world's largest commercial relationship, with trade and investment approaching \$1 trillion.

I believe increased interaction between our legislature and the European Parliament will serve the interests of both sides.

I urge my colleagues to greet this delegation, led by Ms. Imelda Mary Read of the United Kingdom.

I take note that the delegation has more women than men and one of the youngest Members attending the interparliamentary meeting is from the European Parliament. Obviously, great progress is being made in this parliamentary body.

I ask unanimous consent the list of all the delegation be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT—DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

Ms Imelda Mary Read, Chair, United Kingdom.

Mr Bastian Belder, 1st Vice-Chairman, Netherlands.

Mr James E.M. Elles, United Kingdom.

Mr Bertel Haarder, Denmark.

Ms Magdalene Hoff, Germany.

Ms Piiia-Noora Kauppi, Finland.

Ms Erika Mann, Germany.

Ms Arlene McCarthy, United Kingdom.

Ms Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl, Germany.

Mr Peter William Skinner, United Kingdom.

Mr Dirk Sterckx, Belgium.