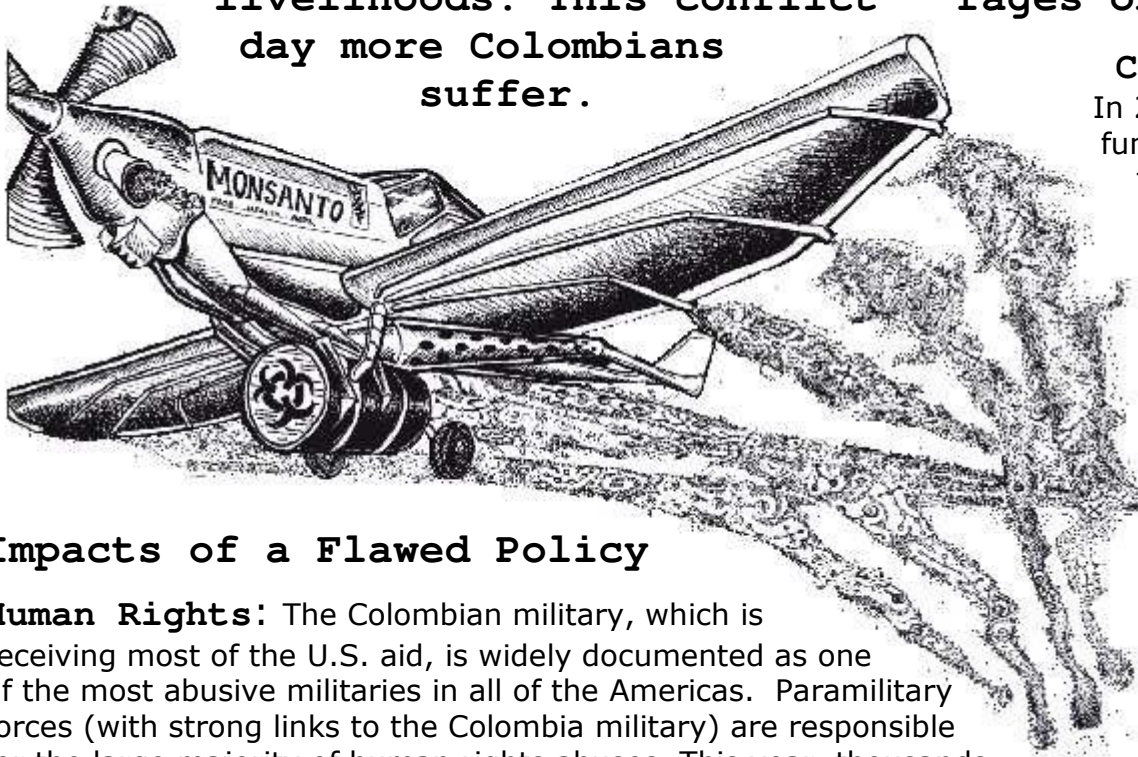


No to Plan Colombia

Colombia has been fighting a brutal civil war for over four decades. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of Colombians, mostly innocent civilians, have been killed, and more than two million have lost their homes and livelihoods. This conflict rages on, and every day more Colombians suffer.



Impacts of a Flawed Policy

Human Rights: The Colombian military, which is receiving most of the U.S. aid, is widely documented as one of the most abusive militaries in all of the Americas. Paramilitary forces (with strong links to the Colombia military) are responsible for the large majority of human rights abuses. This year, thousands of innocent Colombians will be killed. Human Rights reports from and about Colombia are citing consistently U.S. trained soldiers (e.g. at the SOA/WHISC) for atrocities and the collaboration with paramilitary groups.

Fumigation: Plan Colombia is also causing ecological destruction in the Amazon basin. The herbicide glyphosate (known in the U.S. as Roundup and produced by the U.S. Corporation Monsanto, which also produced Agent Orange for the Vietnam war) is being widely used to eradicate opium poppy and coca plants. This year, tens of thousands of gallons of toxic herbicides will be sprayed on coca plants, family farms, bean fields, banana plantations, community wells, and the Amazon rainforest. This has disastrous effects on Amazon biodiversity and legal crops. In addition to affecting the livelihood of legal farmers and leading innocent families to starvation, there is evidence that glyphosate is making people and animals sick. And fumigation does not stop production of coca; it merely moves it to another area.

Drug abuse: U.S. military aid to Colombia will not help the U.S. war on drugs. A 1994 RAND Corporation study found that it is 23 times more cost effective to reduce drug consumption by treatment than coca crop eradication in other countries. With the shift of US foreign policy from a War on Drugs to the War on Terror, the US military aid is now being used for counterinsurgency, with the FARC and the ELN, Colombia's two major guerilla organizations, being characterized by the State Department as terrorist organizations. In this manner, the US is being drawn deeper and deeper into a dirty civil war that can only be ended through solutions to Colombia's social problems.

Current U.S. Policy

In 2000, Congress approved a funding package for Colombia totaling \$1.3 billion, mostly for the Colombian security forces, but also with substantial funding for aerial fumigation of coca crops. Ostensibly to fight the War on Drugs, this aid package has done little more than inflame a complicated conflict that already places civilians in the crossfire, and destroy legitimate subsistence crops. The Bush administration beefed up this "Plan Colombia", renaming it the "Andean Initiative and expanding it to include more military help to Colombia's neighbors, supposedly to strengthen their borders, thereby turning the civil war into a regional conflict.

To learn more about Plan Colombia, visit www.lasolidarity.org and www.colombiamobilization.org or call (202) 588-1471