

COLOMBIA: WHERE U.S. POLICY KILLS

U.S. MULTINATIONALS IN COLOMBIA: PROFITS AND PLUNDERING

U.S. multinational corporations in Colombia include:

Drummond Coal, ExxonMobil, Enron Corp, Occidental Petroleum, Dole, Chiquita, and Coca-Cola.

Colombia is rich in natural resources—from coal and oil, to biodiversity and tropical foods. Multinational corporations (MNCs) view Colombia as prime land for exploitation of raw materials for exportation. Their “investment” in Colombia is little more than the minimum infrastructure to be able to export and they rarely invest in local communities (creating jobs for local citizens or in the needs of the communities) that would improve Colombians’ quality of life. MNCs have taken advantage of and participated in Colombia’s long and complicated armed conflict to increase resource extraction and to repress civilian opposition.

US POLICY: PLAN COLOMBIA AND THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

U.S. policy focuses on improving the Colombian investment environment. In 2000, the U.S. began funding **Plan Colombia**, a primarily military aid package sold as a “**development strategy**” that seeks to stabilize the country to increase foreign investment.

Going hand in hand with Plan Colombia is the **U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**. The FTA is a proposed bilateral agreement that would further facilitate trade between the countries and create **increased protections for U.S. corporate investment**. Under the FTA, U.S. companies would also receive special concessions and investment protections that would make them essentially untouchable by Colombian laws.

U.S. COMPANIES IN COLOMBIA HAVE POOR HUMAN RIGHTS TRACK RECORDS

In prioritizing their profits over their workers’ rights, several U.S. companies have reportedly maintained relationships with paramilitary death squads to intimidate unionists. Workers have been tortured, kidnapped, and/or unlawfully detained in order to encourage them to cease their trade union activities.

- In 2001, Coca-Cola was sued for allegedly hiring paramilitaries to kill, threaten, torture, and kidnap Colombian trade unionists.
- In 2007, Drummond was sued for allegedly hiring paramilitaries to assassinate three union leaders.
- In 2007, Chiquita was fined for financing paramilitaries with \$1.7 million.

These cases all show a trend of MNC’s using violence to increase profits. Workers often do not have the ability to stand up for their rights due to threats and violence. Corporations must ensure the welfare of workers and the communities where they operate. Unfortunately instead in case after case companies allegedly collaborate with armed actors to deter resistance to MNC’s increasing their profit margins.



“For us, Plan Colombia is not about coca, and it’s not about the fight against terrorism, we see it as a strategy to displace us off of our lands, so they can be taken by corporations,”
- Indigenous leader in southern Colombia.

OPEN MARKETS HAVE INCREASED POVERTY AND WEAKENED COLOMBIAN LABOR LAWS

Since 1990, when Colombia first began to open its markets to the U.S., **over 140,000 agricultural jobs have been lost, the unemployment rate has nearly doubled, and the level of absolute poverty has increased dramatically**. Additionally, laws that once guaranteed workers the right to overtime pay, worker compensation, and collective bargaining have been cut to make Colombia’s work force attractive to foreign investors.

U.S. INTEREST IN COLOMBIAN OIL

Due to current U.S. interest in oil sources outside of the Middle East, oil-rich Colombia receives a lot of attention. U.S. military aid has included hundreds of millions of U.S. tax payer dollars to protect the oil pipeline of L.A.-based Occidental Petroleum. Oil exploration and extraction is a highly toxic industrial activity and drilling has been done on indigenous lands without their consent. Many farmers have been forced to sell their land or have been displaced by paramilitary violence making way for the oil extraction. The oil royalties that allegedly benefit the communities are rarely seen as a result of decades of corruption.

“What does the U.S. spend money on? They spend it on sending their own men down to train our soldiers; they spend it on their own helicopters. What are Colombians getting? Little. The resources that have been designated are for the pipeline...for the benefit of the U.S. and Colombian governments and the U.S. corporations.”

-A member of the police in Arauca, Colombia

Organize to STOP the U.S.-Colombian Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and its prioritization of corporate profits over people!

CASES OF U.S. MULTINATIONALS IN COLOMBIA

MONSANTO MAKES MILLIONS

One of Plan Colombia's goals is to reduce coca production—the raw material of cocaine. Their chosen and repeatedly proven ineffective method has been aerial fumigation of coca crops using a high-powered version of Monsanto's Roundup, an herbicide called glyphosate.

In the first year of Plan Colombia alone, over 145,750 gallons of Roundup were used and the company has already received \$25 million tax dollars from the Plan. These fumigations have NOT reduced coca production or U.S. cocaine consumption. Instead, they have resulted in displacement, environmental contamination, destruction of food crops, and detriment to human health.

Monsanto is now pushing **Roundup-resistant, genetically modified, patent-protected seeds**: the company sells agrochemicals and transgenic seeds together to create a system of dependency. Monsanto's transgenic cotton and corn crops already arrived to Colombia. Their patents on these staples insure that poor farmers pay the company each time they plant the seeds, thus preventing seed saving, and destroying farmers' food autonomy.

DYNCORP: #1 CONTRACTOR IN COLOMBIA

Much of Plan Colombia spending goes straight to U.S. MNC's bank accounts. For example, in 2006 Congress spent \$632 million in military aid, more than 58% of which went to MNCs that profit off of war.

Dyncorp is a private defense company that has received hundreds of millions of dollars to run the fumigations program as well as "security" contracts since Plan Colombia began in 2000. In 2006 Dyncorp received 26% of the total U.S. military aid to Colombia. The MNC Lockheed came in second with over \$70 million in contracts. Despite this massive MNC investment, fumigations in Colombia have completely failed to stop cocaine flow in to the U.S.

OXY: OIL IN ARAUCA

Los Angeles-based **Occidental Petroleum** (Oxy) is part owner of the Caño Limon-Coveñas oil pipeline from Arauca (a Eastern province bordering Venezuela) to the Caribbean coast.

Oxy spent nearly \$4 million on lobbying the U.S. Congress to expand military funding in Colombia after Oxy's pipeline was attacked repeatedly by left-wing guerrillas, which caused more than \$500 million losses between December 1999 and December 2000. The investment paid off when Congress approved hundreds of millions of U.S. tax payer dollars going to protect the pipeline. Along with pipeline protection funds, the 18th Brigade in Arauca has received military aid, equipment, and training from the U.S. government. With this aid, the U.S. government provided corporate welfare to Oxy to enable them to extract oil in a conflict zone—an area where the 18th Brigade has been convicted of grave human rights violations, including attacks against trade unions and other members of civil society. Increased militarization of Arauca has brought a surge of human rights violations by the Colombian armed forces', including mass arrests and extrajudicial executions in an attempt to silence indigenous communities and other social movements.

This violence is exemplified in the Colombian Army's August 2004 killing of three trade union leaders. Soldiers from the 18th Brigade broke into a house where three trade unionists were sleeping and then made them go out in to the street in their underwear, where the soldiers then executed them.



Paintings of the three trade unionists assassinated in Arauca, Colombia, August 5, 2004.

JOIN WITNESS FOR PEACE IN THE STRUGGLE TO STOP HARMFUL U.S. POLICIES IN COLOMBIA!

- ◆ **Pressure your U.S. legislators** to stop supporting the Colombian military through Plan Colombia (part of the Foreign Operations bill) and oppose the U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement due to labor rights violations. Colombian trade unions and civil society are calling for a different trade model to be implemented and for an end to military aid in Colombia.
- ◆ **Educate your community** about unjust U.S. policies in Colombia and how to address the problems of drugs domestically through events and media.
- ◆ **Join Witness for Peace and learn more about U.S. policy in Colombia!** Find your local WfP regional organizer on the WfP website: www.witnessforpeace.org.