



## EMBASSY of COLOMBIA

W A S H I N G T O N

### **COLOMBIA: A STRATEGIC U.S. ALLY A Nation that Shares Our Values, Supports U.S. Policies and Serves as an Important Economic Ally**

*"The Colombian political, military, human rights, diplomatic, economic, and police leadership is really superb. In a general sense, they have turned around the disastrous situation of 1998 and created a momentum of greater security, justice, and economic well-being... They deserve our continued support. It is their dedication and ingenuity and blood that has created this growing sense of opportunity which has replaced the national despair I encountered in 1998 thru 2001. We serve our own interests by standing behind this remarkable leadership of a nation at war -- which is three flying hours from Miami."*  
*General Barry R. McCaffrey  
October 3, 2007*

Colombia is an important strategic ally to the United States in Latin America. Unlike other governments in the region, Colombia shares America's values, supports U.S. policies and is an increasingly important economic partner.

#### **COLOMBIA SHARES US VALUES**

Colombia shares America's values. It has stood with the United States in to combat drug trafficking and narcoterrorism, working hand-in-hand with the US Government. It has reformed its government strengthening its democratic institutions and procedures, and established free and open elections, a transparent judicial system and citizen participation in policymaking.

Development programs to encourage education, work-skills training and legal agriculture, combined with employment programs in all regions, have resulted in a more vibrant population and a strong GDP. Colombia believes in global security, robust democracy and economic prosperity; values that are shared with United States and bind the two countries as they pursue common goals.

#### **THE COLOMBIA SUPPORTS US POLICIES**

Under President Bill Clinton, the United States partnered with Colombia on a comprehensive strategy of shared policy priorities for social development and counter-narcotics. The strategy, known as Plan Colombia, has successfully reduced the number of illegal drugs grown, helped revitalize Colombia's economy, strengthened its democratic institutions, and improved the security of its people.

With the help of the US Department of Justice, Colombia has adopted a more transparent method of arbitrating justice, resulting in an increased number of prosecutions and convictions. Between 1999 and 2006, there has been an 88% reduction in extortive kidnappings. There has also been a 50% reduction in homicides and terrorist attacks to their lowest levels in twenty years. The country's GDP has increased steadily since 2000, as have imports between the US and Colombia.



## COLOMBIA IS AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ALLY

As the fifth largest economy in Latin America, Colombia is increasingly an important market for the United States. Colombia's economy has expanded each year since 2000; in 2006, the **economy grew by 6.8%; among the highest rates in Latin America** and five times Colombia's economic growth rate in 2002. It is the fourth largest market for U.S. goods in South America and **bilateral trade between Colombia and the United States has expanded by 75% over the past decade** and is now equal to bilateral trade between the US and Russia. Between 1996 and 2006, US imports to Colombia have increased from \$4.77 billion to \$6.71 billion. Colombia is also a strategic energy exporter to the United States. The **dominant Colombian export to the US is crude oil** (37% of US imports from Colombia in 2006) Coffee, commonly thought of as the largest export to the US from Colombia, only accounts for 6% of the total.

The Government's ambitious programs to increase exports, bolster internal investment and tightly monitor government spending have paid dividends in an expanding economy that boasts a diversity of flourishing industries that are beneficial to US markets, including energy, manufacturing, telecommunications, transport, agro-business and business and financial services.

## LOOKING TOWARD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Colombia has long struggled to defend itself from a terrorist insurgency group that operates within its borders and calls itself the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). In recent years, Colombia has made significant gains against this terrorist group and others like it. Colombia will continue to combat paramilitary terrorism on the ground, but the most effective tool against its spread is economic development.

In an effort to defend itself against drug trafficking terrorist organizations that have kidnapped innocent civilians, including American citizens, committed countless murders and seek to create a climate of fear throughout the region, Colombia looks to increase stability within its country and the Andean region through efforts like the Free Trade Agreement (FTA). **This agreement, with its long-time ally, the United States, would secure the nation economically and politically. By providing jobs to citizens so they are lured from violence and integrated into society and a legitimate industry, the FTA exhibits a true investment in the region's well-being.**

Unlike other governments in the region, Colombia has long stood with the United States. Colombia shares America's values, supports U.S. policies and is an increasingly important economic partner. Its vigilance against the spread of illegally armed groups, the drug trade and violence has contributed to the stability of the entire region, despite the detrimental influences of some neighboring countries.

Colombia has practiced tireless pursuit of perpetrators of violence and terrorism, which has contributed to a 40% reduction in homicides over six years, a government security presence in every territory and the demobilization of over 40,000 illegally armed fighters.

Now is the time to encourage economic growth in both Colombia and the United States through actions like the FTA, which will simultaneously combat terrorist violence.