

COLOMBIA TODAY

A Weekly Update from the Embassy of Colombia

July 24, 2014

In Case You Missed It...

Colombia Celebrates 204 Years of Independence



Photo: President Santos attends Independence Day military parade Photo Credit: César Carrión, Presidencia de la República de Colombia; Photo: Members of the Police Force spell out the Spanish word for peace during July 20 parade Photo Credit: Policía Nacional

On July 20, from Bogotá to Washington, DC, Colombians around the world celebrated the nation's Independence Day.

In Colombia, accompanied by First Lady María Clemencia de Santos and their children, President Juan Manuel Santos began the day at the Cathedral of Bogotá. He then headed to the nation's Capitol for the installation of the 2014-2015 legislative session and to greet members of the Colombian Congress elected this year. Following his visit to the Capitol, President Santos attended the Independence Day military parade, where members of the police force spelled out the Spanish word for peace, "PAZ," a nod to Colombia's ongoing peace process aimed at ending the decades-long conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC by its acronym in Spanish).

In Washington, DC, Colombians from the local metropolitan area attended an Independence Day celebration at the Organization of American States (OAS), which was organized by the Colombian Embassy, the Colombian Mission to the OAS and the Consulate of Colombia in Washington. The festive event was held in the OAS's Hall of the Americas. During the celebration in Washington and in other events organized with the support of Colombian consulates across the United States, attendees watched a [recorded message from Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos](#), in which he highlighted the nation's progress and its steady movement toward continued prosperity and lasting peace.

In the video message, President Santos stated: **“We want to turn the page of war forever and be left only with a blank page for the future: a brilliant and joyous future if we aspire to reach it.”** Highlighting the nation’s progress, he said: **“In the first trimester of this year, the Colombian economy was the second in the world with the most growth and Colombia maintained its title as the country that is creating the most employment in Latin America.”**



Photo: Colombian Ambassador to the United States Luis Carlos Villegas addresses Colombian community at Independence Day celebration at the OAS in Washington, DC; Photo: Attendees enjoy traditional Colombian music and dancing.

Secretary Kerry Highlights Colombia’s Transformation, Strength of U.S.-Colombia Relations in July 20 Statement

On behalf of President Obama and the people of the United States, Secretary of State John Kerry issued the following [statement](#):

“... I send my best wishes to the people of Colombia as you celebrate your independence on July 20th.

“We celebrate 190 years of U.S.-Colombian friendship this year. This is an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of our relationship, which now extends far beyond security cooperation to include collaboration on issues such as environmental protection, renewable energy, entrepreneurship, bilingual education, and academic mobility.

“Last August, I took my first official trip to Colombia as Secretary. I was taken with the warmth and spirit of your country and have long been inspired by your resilience. Radio stations that once broadcasted messages of support from mothers to their kidnapped children instead play the popular music of the day. Bogota is a thriving capital where business booms and police patrol the streets. Colombians have an incredible story to tell the world about transformation.

“As you celebrate with your countrymen, the United States is proud to stand by all Colombians as you work to secure a peaceful future for your children and grandchildren.”

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