

# COLOMBIA TODAY

A Weekly Update from the Embassy of Colombia

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## Colombia Participates in White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism

Last week, **Colombian Ambassador to the United States Luis Carlos Villegas** represented Colombia at a [Summit on Countering Violent Extremism](#) hosted by the White House. The three-day summit, which included around 100 presentations, panel discussions and small group discussions, highlighted international and U.S. efforts to prevent violent extremists from gaining additional supporters to commit acts of violence in any country. Opening [remarks](#) were delivered by **President Barack Obama**. **U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry**, **U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder** and **White House National Security Advisor Susan Rice** also participated.



*Ambassador Villegas represents Colombia at summit.*

**Ambassador Villegas** during the summit spoke on Colombia's success in countering violent groups over the past 17 years. He highlighted that the Colombian government's progressive agenda, in addition to this success, has allowed for progress and optimism in the ongoing peace talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

**Alejandro Eder**, the former head of the **Colombian Agency for Reintegration**, participated as an expert on the "Rehabilitating and Reintegrating Violent Extremists" panel. He spoke on the success of Colombian reintegration policies that have demobilized 56,000 illegal armed rebels to establish peace and greater security in Colombia.



*Alejandro Eder (far right) participates in panel discussion at summit.*

**Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Richard Stengel** highlighted Colombia's progress to conference participants and said it *"is a country that has much to teach those present."*

Colombia indeed has an important story to tell the world about combatting violent extremism. Decades ago, the country was on the verge of becoming a failed state. Through a series of reforms and progressive policies like the reintegration program, as well as international cooperation and support from the United States, Colombia turned the page. The Colombia of today is a New Colombia – a Colombia that is safer, that is now a regional and global leader and a country that is firmly on the path to lasting peace and prosperity.

Click [here](#) to read a White House fact sheet on the summit.

## Secretary Kerry Names Special Envoy for Colombian Peace Process

On Friday, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry [announced](#) that Bernie Aronson, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, will serve as special envoy for the Colombian Peace Process.

**Secretary Kerry [stated](#):** *“Today, Colombia is a critical ally for the United States. And we are working hard together to promote security and economic prosperity throughout the Western Hemisphere and the world. ... After careful consideration, President Obama has come to the conclusion – which I share, needless to say – that first, while significant obstacles remain, a negotiated peace in Colombia is absolutely worth pursuing and absolutely worth assisting if we are able to; and second, as Colombia’s close friend and ally, the United States has a responsibility to do what it can in order to help Colombia to achieve that peace.”*

**Aronson** stated: *“As you said, for 50 years Colombians have sacrificed their blood and treasure to defend their democratic institutions. Now the Colombian people have a real opportunity for peace, and you have made it clear and the President has made it clear if President Santos believes the United States can help this administration, we’ll spare no effort, and I’ll take that as my charge.”*

Click [here](#) to watch the announcement.



*From left to right: Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson, Special Envoy for the Colombian Peace Process Bernie Aronson, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, and Colombian Ambassador to the U.S. Luis Carlos Villegas.*

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