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President Bush, President Uribe of Colombia Discuss Terrorism and Security

Bush Ranch
Crawford, Texas

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VIDEO Multimedia

President's Remarks
 [view](#)

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you all. Welcome. Laura and I are very pleased to welcome President Uribe and his gracious wife, Lina, to our home here in Crawford. President Uribe is a strong and principled leader. I admire his determination; I appreciate his vision for a peaceful and prosperous Colombia.



Our two nations are working together to fight drug trafficking and terrorism, and to promote security, democracy and the rule of law throughout the Americas. President Uribe's leadership and the courage of the Colombian people are creating a bright future for Colombia. The Colombian government implemented a comprehensive strategy, known as Plan Colombia, to reduce the illegal drug trade, revitalize Colombia's economy, strengthen its democratic institutions, and improve the security of its people. The United States provided critical assistance for Plan Colombia, and the plan is producing results.

Violent crime in Colombia is at its lowest level in 16 years. Since 2002, murders, kidnappings and terrorist acts in Colombia have all declined significantly. Colombia is also making great progress in reforming its justice system. These gains in security and the rule of law are helping the Colombian economy grow by more than 4 percent last year. And as Colombia has improved its security and economy, it has also emerged as a leader in our hemisphere.

Colombia shares our commitment to advancing economic growth, trade and democracy in the Americas. Colombia is also sharing its expertise with Afghanistan to combat terrorism and narco-trafficking in that new democracy. And America is very grateful for your support.

America will continue to stand with the people of Colombia. I will ask the Congress to sustain our commitment to follow-on programs for Plan Colombia so Colombia can build on its progress and win its war against the narco-terrorists. Our strategic partnership is vital to the security, prosperity and freedom of both our countries and the Americas. Mr. President, thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your friendship, and welcome.

PRESIDENT URIBE: (As translated.) Mr. President, thank you very much, and I also want to thank your wife, Laura, and all of your team. Thank you for welcoming Lina, my delegation and myself to your home here, and for sharing with us here in this wonderful place in Texas.

As you have well said, both of our countries have a strategic relationship that is based on mutual trust, which is aimed at deepening democracy, at combating terrorism, and on building social cohesion. Our agenda is very important for the present and the future of both of our peoples, so that Colombia can free itself from the scourge of terrorism.

The great enemy of Colombian democracy is terrorism. And our great partner in defeating terrorism has been the government and the people of the United States. Allow me to say here to the rest of the world that U.S. cooperation has been exemplary. It has gone beyond rhetoric, and it has, in fact, been cooperation that has been put in practice. And all democratic countries need to know that, that cooperation should be realistic and put into practice.



We have made progress, and we are winning, but we have not won yet. And that is why it is important to continue with this cooperation, as you have said, that you have asked from the Congress, President Bush. We cannot leave this task half-finished. We must take it all the way to the end. We

need a definitive victory for both democratic peoples of Colombia and the United States, and also, we must keep that objective in mind as we build upon our results to keep moving forward to that final goal.

We trust that we will soon be able to announce the successful completion of our free trade agreement -- an agreement built on trust; an agreement that can help bring our democratic peoples closer together and in more solidarity. The key word in Colombia today is "trust." This is the mutual trust that is the basis of the relationship with the United States. It is trust that we want to create among Colombian people, themselves.

So that Colombians can gain trust in their homeland, we are working on five elements of a modern democracy. Number one is democratic security: security for all citizens, security for pluralism, security for all ideas and for all citizens.

The second element is respect for public freedom. In Colombia we've had a dictatorship of terrorism, but the people, the government, and the nation of Colombia that are fighting terrorism will do so by respecting public freedom. They want to serve as an example, because that's the difference between what has happened in our country and in other Latin American countries, where it was government dictatorships. Here we have a democratic government that has full respect for public freedom and that fully intends to defeat terrorism.

The third element is to build social cohesion, which is necessary in order to have sustainable democracy and a sustainable security policy. The election of Ambassador Moreno, as President of the IDB represents a great opportunity for our continent. It represents a new hope for us to combat poverty, and to build social cohesion.

The fourth element is transparency. The fifth is respect for the independence of institutions. Transparency in public affairs, transparency in friendship, transparency in partnership and in agreement and in disagreement. Transparency is critical for modern democracies in order for the people to have trust in the government that guides them.



The fifth element is respect for the independence of our institutions, which is important for the rule of law. This is critical for a modern democracy. Colombia deepens its respect for its independent institutions, especially now that we're combating -- in this moment of time, when we're combating terrorism.

Thank you once again, President Bush, for your friendship, for your solidarity, and you honor us by welcoming us here to your home.

PRESIDENT BUSH: We'll answer two questions a side. Nedra.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. The Discovery Space Shuttle mission has been dominated by repairs and questions about safety. Do you think the return to space was premature? And are you worried about Discovery's return next week?

PRESIDENT BUSH: First of all, I had the honor of speaking to the -- the folks of -- that are on that mission. And it was a great experience to be talking to bold explorers. And, secondly, like a lot of Americans, I was amazed at the procedures that took place to repair the craft. It's pretty remarkable. I believe that -- I believe that the mission is important, and I know that the mission directors will make the right decision about how to proceed.

Ours is a country that values the safety of our citizens, particularly those we ask to take risk in space. And there will be a lot of deliberation, a lot of thought that goes into the decision as to whether or not those brave souls can -- should return on that vehicle. And I know that NASA has been very closely in touch with the White House. Andy Card has been in touch with the Administrator on a regular basis. But I've got the confidence -- all the confidence that they will make the right decision.

Let me also say that it is important for our fellow citizens to understand that we're going to take the NASA mission beyond the current mission, that we'll be using -- we want -- the plan right now is to phase out the shuttle by 2010, and then begin to put a strategy in place that will use the moon as a launching spot for further exploration.

I know the -- at least the people I've talked to inside NASA are excited about the mission, the reinvigoration of the vision of exploration. And I appreciate the Administrator working on getting that strategy in place, so that when the decision is made to finally get rid of this phase of exploration, we'll be ready to take on the new phase. And that's important for the American people to understand, that, one, exploration is important; two, there will be some good coming out of exploration; and, three, that we've got a new vision embraced by NASA and its pioneers.

Go ahead and ask a question.

Q If you could answer in Spanish, that will be great. But, really, either one of you can answer. I was wondering if Venezuela came up at all, and whether or not you had a chance to discuss the advances in human rights investigations in Colombia?

PRESIDENT URIBE: (Question answered in Spanish.)

Q Did you discuss Venezuela and human rights?

PRESIDENT URIBE: (Question answered in Spanish.)

Q Mr. President --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Hold on a second. Why don't you translate that, please.

TRANSLATOR: Colombia faces a threat from terrorism from -- funded by drug trafficking. This is a threat that can affect the entire neighborhood, that can affect our entire continent, because when Colombian terrorists cannot kidnap within our borders, they're forced to kidnap outside in our neighboring countries. This terrorism -- this kind of terrorism knows no limits, it knows no ethics. And that is why it must be defeated in Colombia. And we must do this by getting cooperation from our neighboring countries. And that is what we aspire to at the highest levels.

As far as our human rights. This was discussed with great seriousness and with great respect. Our security policy must be sustainable. In order for it to be sustainable, there must be respect for human rights and there must be transparency for the -- so that it can be respected by public opinion. The respect for human rights needs transparency. This is what we work for in Colombia every day.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Steve.

Q Thanks, sir. Al Qaeda's number two, Dr. al-Zawahiri, is warning that attacks will continue until U.S. troops leave Iraq. How serious a threat is this? And after so many Marines were killed this week, what's being done to improve their safety?

PRESIDENT BUSH: First, let me say that we mourn the loss of every fallen troop. And the community outside of Cleveland, Brook Park, Ohio, suffered mightily over the last couple of days. It's -- the people of Brook Park and the family members of those who lost their life, I hope they can take comfort in the fact that millions of their fellow citizens pray for them. I hope they also take comfort in the understanding that the sacrifice was made in a noble cause.

We're laying the foundation of peace for generations to come. We're defeating the terrorists in a place like Iraq so we don't have to face them here at home. And, as well, we're spreading democracy and freedom to parts of the world that are desperate for democracy and freedom.

The comments by the number two man of al Qaeda make it clear that Iraq is a part of this war on terror, and we're at war. In other words, he's saying, leave. As I have told the American people, one, that people like Zawahiri have an ideology that is dark, dim, backwards; they don't trust -- they don't appreciate women; if you don't agree to their narrow view of a religion you'll be whipped in the public square. That's their view, and they have tactics to help spread that view. In other words, they've got goals. They want to spread that point of view throughout the world, starting in the broader Middle East. And part of their goal is to drive us out of the broader Middle East, precisely what Zawahiri said. In other words, he's threatening.

They have come up against a nation that, one, will defend itself. Zawahiri is a part of that team that attacked us on September the 11th, 2001. He was part of an al Qaeda group that said, well, we'll try to achieve our objective in attacking America. They must not have understood the nature of our country. I vowed then that we would stay on the offense against these people. We owe it to the American people, and other freedom-loving countries, to bring these killers to justice. And that's what they are: they're terrorists, and they're killers. And they will kill innocent people trying to get us to withdraw from the world, so they can impose their dark vision on the world. That's what they're trying to do. And the comments today by Mr. Zawahiri absolutely reinforce what I've just told you.

We will stay the course, we will complete the job in Iraq. And the job is this: We'll help the Iraqis develop a democracy. They're writing -- in the process of writing a constitution, which will be ratified in October, and then they will elect a permanent government. It's also important for our citizens to understand that progress has been made, particularly when eight-plus million people got to vote in the face of Zawahiri and Sarawak and these killers.

We're also training Iraqis. Our troops will come home as soon as possible. "As soon as possible" means when those Iraqis are prepared to fight. As Iraq stands up, our coalition will stand down.

The Iraqis want to live in a free society. Zawahiri doesn't want them to live in a free society. And that's the clash of ideologies -- freedom versus tyranny. We have had these kinds of clashes before, and we have prevailed. We have prevailed because we're right; we have prevailed because we adhere to a hopeful philosophy; and we have prevailed because we would not falter.

Go ahead and ask --

Q Also the question is for President Bush. Did you talk about the necessity and the importance of the creation of international community that can verify the application of the justice and peace law, and also its implementation?

PRESIDENT BUSH: We did talk about human rights. I talked about human rights. The Secretary of State Arrow -- (laughter) -- talked about human rights. The President assured us -- a couple of points that are important to understand -- one, that there is an independent judiciary, in other words, independent from government, that will adjudicate these disputes; secondly, that there is a new prosecutor reporting to the independent judiciary that will follow through on the cases; and, thirdly, that he is committed to seeing to it as best as possible that progress be made on these cases.

And we talked about specific cases. And I listened intently and believe that he is interested in following through on these cases, so that the world will hear loud and clear that Colombia is a nation of law and human rights and human dignity.

PRESIDENT URIBE: (Question answered in Spanish.)

PRESIDENT BUSH: You le compendia. Vamps a comer. (Laughter.) I told him I understood him. We're going to go eat. Thank you very much. Appreciate you. Gracias.

Q What's on the menu? What's on the menu?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Carne.

Q Carne.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Necesito preguntar a mi esposa. I've been thinking about business; she's been thinking about the food.

END 12:15 P.M. CDT

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