

Mrs. Pouncy on their 50th Wedding Anniversary—the world is a better place because of their contributions.

FAILURE OF “PLAN COLOMBIA”

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the following article detailing the complete failure of “Plan Colombia” into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. As the article points out, despite more than 4 billion dollars being sent to Colombia to fight the “war on drugs,” the coca crop grew by 21 percent last year. After six years of massive wealth transfers from U.S. taxpayers to the Colombian government, not only has no progress been made, but in fact things are getting worse. Unfortunately, with the way things are done in Washington, this failure of “Plan Colombia” will likely result in calls for even more money to be tossed in the black hole of the drug war. It would be far better to learn from our mistakes and abandon the failed “Plan Colombia.”

[From the Houston Chronicle, April 16, 2006]

COCA CROP JUMPS DESPITE U.S. AID

(By John Otis)

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA.—In a blow to the United States’ anti-drug campaign here, which cost more than \$4 billion, new White House estimates indicate that Colombia’s coca crop expanded by nearly 21 percent last year.

Figures released late Friday by the Office of National Drug Control Policy indicate Colombian farmers last year grew 355,680 acres of coca, the raw material for cocaine. That represents a jump of nearly 74,000 acres from 2004 even though U.S. funded cropdusters destroyed record amounts of coca plants in 2005.

Washington has provided the Bogota government with more than \$4 billion, mostly in anti-drug aid since 2000 for a program known as Plan Colombia—which was supposed to cut coca cultivation by half within six years.

Yet according to the new figures, more coca is now being grown here than when Plan Colombia started. “This is going to turn heads” on Capitol Hill, said Adam Isacson, a Colombia expert at the Center for International Policy in Washington and a longtime critic of U.S. counterdrug strategies in Latin America.

“You’re talking about \$4.7 billion spent on Plan Colombia, and this is all we have to show for it?”

The Bush administration downplayed the significance of the coca crop survey, an annual study of parts of Colombia carried out by the CIA using satellite imagery and on-the-ground inspections.

Rather than an increase in the crop’s size, the higher numbers may reflect a more thorough job of surveying the Colombian countryside, the White House said in a news release.

The statement said the area of Colombia sampled for the 2005 coca estimate was 81 percent larger than in 2004.

“Because of this uncertainty and the significantly expanded survey area, a direct year-to-year comparison (of the size of the coca crop) is not possible,” said the statement.

However, when year-to-year drug crop comparisons have reflected positive trends, U.S. officials have loudly touted the numbers as clear proof of success.

In 2002, for example, the CIA survey showed a drop in coca production and White House drug czar John Walters declared: “These figures capture the dramatic improvement. . . . Our anti-drug efforts in Colombia are now paying off.”

But some U.S. officials and drug policy analysts claim that Colombia has likely been producing far more coca over the past five years than the CIA surveys have indicated.

“The cultivation numbers, wherever they seem to be headed, need to be taken with a grain of salt,” said Joy Olson, director of the Washington Office on Latin America, a think tank. “In reality, coca cultivation and cocaine production exceed the official estimates, perhaps by wide margins.”

What’s more, she said, cheap, potent cocaine remains readily available on U.S. streets, indicating that the drug war in Colombia is having little real impact.

Some U.S. officials have forecast a gradual reduction in assistance for Colombia, starting in 2008. This year, Washington will send about \$750 million in aid to Colombia, the source of 90 percent of the cocaine sold on U.S. streets.

The centerpiece of the U.S. anti-drug strategy here is a controversial aerial-eradication program in which crop-dusters, escorted by helicopter gunships, bombard coca plants with chemical defoliants. But the program costs about \$200 million annually and many critics say the money would be better spent elsewhere. The idea of eradication is to persuade peasant farmers to give up growing coca and to plant legal crops. But funding by the U.S. and Colombian governments for crop-substitution programs pale in comparison to the eradication budget and most efforts to develop alternatives have failed.

Part of the problem is that coca is often grown in remote jungles and mountains that are controlled by Marxist guerrillas, contain few roads or markets, and have almost no government presence. Thus, even as crop-dusters have killed off record amounts of coca, farmers stay a step ahead of the spray planes by pushing deeper into the wilderness to grow more.

In 2000, Colombian farmers attempted to grow about 450,000 acres of coca, about one-third of which was wiped out by the spray planes, according to U.S. government figures. Last year, by contrast, they tried to grow a whopping 780,000 acres. “People with no economic alternatives have not been deterred by fumigation,” said Isacson of the Center for International Policy. “Fumigating an area is no substitute for governing it.”

Despite the rise in coca cultivation, Anne Patterson, a former U.S. ambassador to Colombia who heads the State Department bureau that runs the eradication program, told a congressional hearing in Washington last month that the Bush administration was considering “stepping up” the crop-dusting campaign.

Beyond the drug war, Patterson said, the overall U.S. aid program “has benefited Colombia in ways we had not anticipated.”

She cited better security conditions in the cities and the countryside, where the number of kidnappings and murders has dropped, as well as recent blows to the nation’s narcotics traffickers and guerrilla groups.

RAMSEY, INDIANA WILFRED EDWARD “COUSIN WILLIE” SIEG, SR. POST OFFICE

HON. MICHAEL E. SODREL

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

Mr. SODREL. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor I introduce this bill to recognize the accomplishments of one man by naming the Ramsey, IN postal facility after a beloved member of our community, “Cousin Willie”. The privilege to introduce this bill with the support of the entire Indiana Delegation makes it all that more special.

If you asked someone in Ramsey who Wilfred Edward Sieg, Sr. was or what he was about, some may not be able to tell you. But if you asked them about “Cousin Willie”, that’s a different story. “Cousin Willie” and Wilfred Edward Sieg, Sr. are one in the same.

Wilfred Edward “Cousin Willie” Sieg, Sr., son of the late Edward and Agnes Gettelfinger Sieg, was born March 16, 1931 in his life-long home of Ramsey, IN. After finishing High School at Corydon High, “Cousin Willie” went on to graduate from Indiana University in 1953 with a degree in marketing. Upon graduation, Cousin Willie served our country as First Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. He continued to serve his country through 1968 as a member of both the Air Force and the Air Force Reserves.

After his active-duty service, Cousin Willie returned home to help run the family business, Ramsey Popcorn Company, alongside his parents and brothers. “Cousin Willie’s” parents started Ramsey Popcorn in 1944 going door to door selling raw popcorn kernels out of the back of their truck. The business soon grew and in the early 1960’s, “Cousin Willie”, along with his three brothers, took over day-to-day operations of the business from his parents and eventually served as President of Ramsey Popcorn Co., Inc. Under his guidance, Ramsey Popcorn Co. grew to become one of the top four producers of popcorn in the world. The company sells roughly 50 million pounds of popcorn a year and exports to over 20 countries throughout the world. Ramsey also sells to house-hold name snack food manufacturers and supermarkets including Kraft, Frito Lay, Campbell’s, The Kroger Co. and Target as just a sample.

Before graduating from IU, “Cousin Willie” married his High School sweetheart, Doris Marie Byrum. “Cousin Willie” and Doris were the proud parents of 13 children. Cousin Willie was a firm believer in hard work and was known to put his kids to work on the family farm doing tough and unwanted jobs. “That way, by the time they get to working at the popcorn plant, they like it just fine.”

Mr. Sieg was truly proud of his small community and felt compelled to become involved in any way he could. In addition to employing many members of his community, he was also a member of the Ramsey Lion’s Club, the Ramsey-Spencer Grange and local Farm Bureau. He was a Rotarian and actively involved in local and state politics as well as the area schools’ athletic programs. He also served as a Member of two Boards; the Ramsey Water Company and the North Harrison Community School Board.

Mr. Sieg passed away on February 2, 2006 at the age of 74 after losing a battle with lung