

Remarks Following Discussions With President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia

May 2, 2007

President Bush. It's been my honor to welcome a true democrat, a strong leader, and a friend, the President of Colombia. We had a long discussion.

First, Mr. President, Laura and I remember fondly our trip to your beautiful country. It was my second trip to Colombia, my first to your capital, and it was a very special occasion. And we thank you and the First Lady for such gracious hospitality.

Secondly, we had a discussion today about an important vote that our Congress must take, and that is a vote to confirm a free trade agreement with Colombia. This agreement is good for the United States. It's good for job creators, farmers, workers. This agreement is good for Colombia. It's good for job creators and workers and farmers.

This agreement has strategic implications. It is very important for this Nation to stand with democracies that protect human rights and human dignity, democracies based upon the rule of law. So the free trade agreement with Colombia and Peru and Panama, these agreements are more than just trade votes, they're signals to South America that we stand with nations that are willing to make hard decisions on behalf of the people.

The President is here to speak strongly about his record, and it's a good, solid record. I thank the Members of Congress for giving him a hearing. We expect them to be openminded, to listen to his record. And I urge the Congress to pass a trade agreement with Colombia and Peru and Panama because it's in our interest that they do so.

And so, Mr. President, it's great to see you. *Bienvenidos.*

President Uribe. *Muchas gracias, Presidente.*

Good morning, distinguished journalists. I want to thank President Bush for the new meeting. It has been, as always, very constructive. This meeting has given my team and myself the opportunity to reiterate our commitment with democracy.

We have three main objectives in our administration: to consolidate democratic security, to create more and more confidence in Colombia for people to invest in our country, and to fulfill very important social goals, to fulfill social goals before the deadline of the social millennium goals.

Many people ask me, why you call your policy on security democratic security? Because it is security with human rights, because it is security for all Colombians, because it is security for trade union leaders, for those member of the opposition, for those who agree in their ideas with my Government, security for all Colombians.

During my 5-year term, we have healthy elections, and Colombians have enjoyed effectiveness of our freedoms because of our policy on security. Before my administration, many Colombians had the idea that the only way for my country to reach peace, it was by private criminal organizations. Today, because of the efficacy of our administration, the vast majority of Colombians are convinced that we will defeat terrorists by institutional ways, that the only way Colombia has for the future is the way of our democratic institutions.

It is very important that the United States considers the necessity to advancing Plan Colombia. We haven't won yet in eradicating illicit drugs, but we are winning. And it is very important, the free trade agreement. I will explain in Capitol Hill, and I will explain to the American citizens the same I explain to President Bush this morning: The more our country can export, the better for my country to have high-

quality jobs with affiliation to the social security system.

We are doing our best to defeat terrorists in an open country. Everyone in the world can go to Colombia; can oversight what our country is doing. And what our country does today is in favor of democracy.

I want to thank President Bush, his team, the people of Congress, and the American citizens for the help all of you have given our country. This integration is very important to promote democracy, to promote freedoms—freedom, to promote

social justice. This is—these are our commitments.

Thank you, President Bush.

President Bush. Gracias, amigo.

President Uribe. Muchas gracias.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:51 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lina Maria Moreno de Uribe, wife of President Uribe. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to the Associated General Contractors of America and a Question-and-Answer Session

May 2, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Please be seated. Steve, unlike you, I have trouble finding the front end of a front-end loader. [Laughter] Thanks for having me. I'm proud to be here with the AGC. It's the oldest and largest construction trade association in our country. I understand I'm not the first Bush to have ever addressed the AGC convention; a person I now refer to as 41 addressed you. [Laughter] And I appreciated your hospitality to him then, and I appreciate your hospitality to me today.

I want to talk about—a little bit about our economy, and I want to talk a lot about our security. And I thank you for giving me a chance to come by. What I thought I would do is try to keep my remarks relatively brief and then maybe give you all some time to ask some questions.

First, I want to thank Steve. Steve is a Virginia Tech grad, and our hearts are still heavy as a result of that terrible incident there on the campus. And yet the amazing thing about that campus—and a lot of other places around the country—is we've got a great resiliency; people bounce back from tragedy. And so, Steve,

you can tell the Virginia Tech community, we're still thinking about them and appreciate very much the great kind of strength of spirit there—at least I saw that there in Blacksburg, Virginia.

I want to thank two Members of the Senate who have joined us. First, John Warner, from Virginia. Senator, thank you for coming; ranking member of the House military committee he is a—Armed Services Committee—he is a strong supporter of the troops. And I appreciate Senator Joe Lieberman. John's a Republican; Senator Lieberman is an Independent. Joe Lieberman is one of these—I would call him a unique soul who followed his conscience, stood for what he believed in, in the face of a political firestorm. And he proved that if you stand on conviction, the people will follow. And I look forward to working with these two really fine public servants to make the decisions necessary to protect the United States. And I'm honored you all are here, and thank you for coming.

I like to be in the room of builders and doers and problem-solvers and entrepreneurs. And I thank you for what you