

Judge White's record can hardly be seen as a promising omen to those of us in the African American community who have worked so hard to integrate the Federal judiciary.

Second, given Senator Ashcroft's past record and statements at the hearings, I do not find his acknowledgment of a woman's constitutional right to an abortion as settled law under Roe and Casey as being at all credible. I say this because in 42 out of 43 Senate votes concerning reproductive rights, he cast a vote aimed at overturning Roe versus Wade.

Third, with regard to Senator Ashcroft's record of opposition to gun control legislation, I remain unconvinced that he is the appropriate person to uphold and enforce our Nation's firearms law. To me, Senator Ashcroft's past wholehearted embrace of an extreme view of the second amendment is active support for legislation in Missouri that would allow individuals to carry concealed weapons and his unwillingness to commit to relinquish his membership in the National Rifle Association, disqualify him as the person best charged with enforcing our gun laws. In sum, I have come to the reluctant conclusion that the Senator is the wrong man for the wrong job at the wrong time.

When our Nation urgently needs an Attorney General who can bring us all together, we have been offered a person known for extreme right-wing positions and divisiveness. I have spent my entire career fighting for the cause of civil rights, reproductive choice and common sense crime and gun safety laws. In my view, Senator Ashcroft's record is simply too inconsistent with these goals to justify our support for him.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to and commend the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) for calling this Special Order and bringing us all together this evening.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I would just state to the gentleman that I thank him for his leadership on the Committee on the Judiciary and trust that our work together will not allow this confirmation to proceed.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the nomination of John Ashcroft of Missouri to the crucial position of United States Attorney General. Mr. Ashcroft has a long and consistent record of conservative extremism, opposing civil rights as well as qualified Federal nominees, abortion rights, gay rights and environmental protection.

In his confirmation hearings last week, we saw a nominee on his best behavior, and yet, he could not acknowledge the possibility that he was wrong about the impeccable qualifications of federal judge nominee Ronnie White. We have a nominee who denies that sexual preference was an issue when he questioned James Hormel's "life-style" before rejecting his nomination. We have a nominee who claims that as Attorney General of Missouri he always upheld the law and did not try and impose his own personal beliefs while the record shows that just the opposite is true. In fact,

there is nothing in the record to indicate that Mr. Ashcroft has ever exhibited any flexibility in his ideology.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you should we support giving him the keys to our nation's laws with our eyes opened and our fingers crossed.

I cannot remain silent when the person who is nominated to be the chief law enforcement officer of this country and who will be responsible for defending the civil rights of all Americans has repeatedly demonstrated his personal animosity for those fundamental rights. I urge the Administration to live up to its promises to unite this country and withdraw this ill-conceived nominee from consideration. At the very least, I urge my friends in the other Chamber to do the right thing and reject this nominee.

THE WAR AGAINST DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I will not take the entire hour, but I did want to rise and summarize a trip that I took last week to Colombia and Ecuador to inform our colleagues and our constituents about the progress being made in the war against drugs.

To be honest, Mr. Speaker, last year I was concerned when the President and the administration requested \$1.3 billion to be used in the war against drugs in Colombia and South America. I was concerned because I was not sure that it was the right approach for us to be taking; that perhaps it would send the wrong signals, and that perhaps this should not be an issue in which the American military is involved.

Mr. Speaker, I went to Ecuador and Colombia to see firsthand what is happening with those dollars, what is happening with our effort to interact with the leadership of Ecuador and Colombia to see what role we are playing and what role they are playing in solving this problem. I came back, Mr. Speaker, convinced that we made the right decision.

I come to the floor this afternoon to encourage our colleagues to get more information about what is happening in Latin America, to better understand the type of threat that exists there, to understand the importance of what we are doing in Latin America in the war against drugs, and to understand that there will be additional requests for dollars this year in the President's budget and the requests coming to this Congress to continue this fight for at least a 5-year period.

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Mr. Speaker, I started my trip in Ecuador in Quito, the capitol, where I met with and had a briefing with our Ambassador, Ambassador Gwen Clare, and with her in-country team, including the military. I had a full briefing on the impact in Ecuador of the activi-

ties involved with Plan Colombia. I heard from the Ecuadorian leadership that while Ecuador did receive some support from this program, approximately \$20 million, there is simply a greater need, both in terms of supporting their military efforts and the economic efforts, particularly along the northern rim of Ecuador, in dealing with the overflow of the drug cartels in Colombia.

I also discussed with the Ecuadorian leaders, the issue of the Galapagos and the Environmental Damage being caused by the ship, that just a few days earlier, had crashed off of the coast of the Galapagos, and what we in America could do to assist Ecuador.

In fact, in coming away from that trip, I was convinced that Ecuador, being the key ally that it has been with America is, in fact, a country that we should renew our focus on. In meetings both before my trip and today, I met with the Ecuadorian ambassador to the United States, and I can tell you that she appreciates the effort that America has put forward and is willing to work with us on additional initiatives to cause further integration with the efforts of Ecuador in solving the drug problem and America in solving the drug problem.

In Colombia, Mr. Speaker, I met again where our in-country team, including our Ambassador, Ann Patterson, a very capable lady under very difficult circumstances. I met with our leadership, military leadership. I met with our CINC, our commanding officer for that region. I met with our military leaders from all the services.

I spent an hour meeting with the Defense Minister from Colombia, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the senior leaders of their military.

I also met with the general in charge of their police force that comes under the military, and then they flew me out to one of the base camps about an hour from Bogota near the FARC demilitarized zone, and I spent a half a day observing the training being provided by our troops to the Colombian military.

Let me give you some impressions, Mr. Speaker, for our colleagues. First of all, American troops are not being used in any combat mission whatsoever. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we imposed a limitation of 500 American troops in Latin America, in Colombia for the specifics of carrying out this plan, not one of our military is involved in any type of hostile action.

They are not involved in any kind of overt action against Colombia. They are simply there providing training. They are doing training for the Colombian military in terms of going out and running exploratory patrols of how to take apart these precursor labs. They are running training in how to guard the helicopters and the planes that are spraying the coca fields.

I can tell my colleagues, I was overwhelmingly impressed with our military. They are doing, as they always

do, an outstanding job. All of our special forces and our military personnel there speak fluent Spanish. And I can tell my colleagues the relationship they have established at the one base I visited in Larandia was absolutely exemplary.

The training that was going on was a reality training and the kinds of successes that the Colombian military is having, I think, is directly responsive to the efforts of the American military officers and enlisted personnel who are on the scene throughout Colombia.

We have a dangerous situation, Mr. Speaker, in that part of the world. Our focus in Washington from an national security standpoint has traditionally been on the former Soviet Union and the 15 republics of that nation, China, the Middle East, and the threats posed by countries like Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya and North Korea. But, Mr. Speaker, I came away from my trip and my meetings convinced that one of the most troublesome threats that we faced right now in America is the huge amount of cocaine coming into our country, primarily from Colombia.

It is estimated that between 60 percent and 80 percent of all the cocaine used in America is produced in Colombia. On hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland that used to grow crops, used to grow coffee, used to grow the kinds of fruits and vegetables that Colombia and Latin America are famous for. When the FARC began its operations and the terrorists revolutionaries began their operations, they began to acquire a large area in Colombia, specifically, do grow initially marijuana, and then poppies, and now they are into coca, which is converted in local labs into cocaine, which is then sent back here to the States.

Mr. Speaker, it is now a multibillion dollar industry in Colombia. In fact, the estimates are the FARC is receiving perhaps as much as \$6 billion to \$7 billion a year in income, which has allowed the FARC, which has its own zone inside of Colombia that is absolutely isolated from the rest of the country. It has allowed the FARC to produce a military that has in excess of \$20,000 armed troops.

This military is well-trained. They have the latest in terms of communication systems, and they have an elaborate network in place to send that cocaine through whatever means possible to America, and they are doing that.

In fact, just a few weeks before I arrived in Colombia, we were able to confiscate, or the Colombians were able to confiscate a submarine that had been built with the assistance of Russian scientists that the FARC was going to use to move cocaine from Colombia to America.

Mr. Speaker, the FARC has become a major force that provides a threat to America's homeland defense. Now, I have worked for the 14 years I have been in Congress on issues involving the security threats coming from Russia. I was a member of the Cox com-

mittee that investigated the transfer of technology to China.

I was on the speaker's advisory group on North Korea. I have spent hours and hours focusing on the threats coming from those nations providing technology to unstable nations and to unstable groups. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I am now convinced that one of the greatest threats that we face in the 21st century is the threat to our society from the continued growth of the cocaine industry in America, especially when this cocaine industry is supporting a major military establishment in Latin America, a destabilizing military establishment.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the FARC and the revolutionary groups are creating serious instability in the areas in Colombia where they, in fact, are secure. And they are now spilling over into north Ecuador, as well as having an impact in other Latin American countries.

The day before I arrived at the base camp at Larandia, there was intelligence that a FARC exploratory group was going to move into a small town, which is a typical operation for them. When they moved into that small town, they would burn the local police station, and they would hunt out the police officers and either intimidate them until they complied with the FARC or until they killed them.

Mr. Speaker, 3,000 individuals per year on average are kidnapped in Colombia. Many of them are police officers at the local level trying to provide protection for the people of the towns. The FARC and the revolutionaries have been going into small towns and villages wrecking havoc on the quality of life in those communities.

They have been taking peaceful farmers and forcing them to stop growing legitimate crops and instead produce the coca that the FARC then buys and uses at their precursor labs to produce cocaine, which is then shipped to America. And if the local farmers do not cooperate, they, too, are harassed.

Their buildings are burned. Their vehicles are trashed and burned, and in the end, the people themselves are tortured. But the FARC is doing far worse than that, Mr. Speaker, and so is the result of the narco-trafficking trade in Colombia.

The day before I arrived at Larandia, there was a confrontation. The military units of the Colombian base where I lived, Larandia, were sent out, because they had intelligence that indicated the FARC was going to raid a local community and take over its police department.

The Colombian military met the FARC unit on a small road outside the village. A firefight ensued. The FARC was equipped with AK47s, the latest weapons available for a military anywhere in the world today, bought with those billions of dollars of money, most of it coming from wealthy Americans wanting to have their coke, at the same time they are proclaiming that

somehow they are concerned about the drug problem in America.

Mr. Speaker, the confrontation that ensued resulted in the death of 3 FARC uniform personnel. One of the uniform personnel, Mr. Speaker, was a 12-year-old girl. The second FARC soldier that was killed was a 14-year-old boy, and the third FARC military person that was killed was a 17-year-old boy. And the mode of operation was the same as it always is with the FARC.

When they get into a confrontation with the Colombian military, which may occur, 100 yards or 200 yards away so the soldiers cannot see who they are up against, the FARC pushes young kids in uniform out in the front so they are the first to be killed. They are the first to die.

Mr. Speaker, this has happened time and time again throughout Colombia. In fact, with all of our concerns about the crimes of Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic, it is amazing to me that there is not an outcry in this country for a war crimes tribunal against the gross human atrocities being caused by the FARC and the revolutionary groups in Colombia and Latin America.

Because what is occurring there? The hundreds of deaths, the slaughtering of young children, the slaughtering of families, the forcing of farmers to grow these illegal crops and the devastation of local villages, is a gross kind of human rights abuse that I do not think we have seen the likes of since Saddam Hussein was in his prime back in Iraq before the invasion.

Mr. Speaker, we have no choice but to support the Colombians in this struggle and they are winning. They are making progress. The training is working.

Mr. Speaker, I insert for the RECORD a summary of counternarcotics operations in Putumayo, which is the hot bed of this activity in Colombia. This was prepared at my request by our Ambassador. I submit this for the RECORD for all of our colleagues to review and for all Americans to understand the success that is occurring in Colombia as we begin to eradicate hopefully 100 percent of the coca production in that country which has led to the huge proliferation of cocaine into America.

SUMMARY OF COUNTERNARCOTICS OPERATIONS
IN PUTUMAYO, DECEMBER 19, 2000–JANUARY
28, 2001

(Prepared for Representative Curt Weldon)

I. INTRODUCTION

The first six weeks of counternarcotics operations in Putumayo Department in southern Colombia (the initial geographical focus under Plan Colombia) have seen many positive results. Two social pacts supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development, which provide for voluntary manual eradication and alternative crop development, have been signed by over 1400 families in Puerto Asis municipality, and six more are expected to be signed before the end of March. Aerial coca eradication and ground interdiction activities have taken place in south-central and southwestern Putumayo. As of January 28, 2001, over 24,000 hectares

have been sprayed in Putumayo, the most densely cultivated area in the world. There has been an unprecedented level of cooperation between the Colombian Army Counterdrug Brigade and the Antinarcotics Directorate of the Colombian National Police. The operations have proceeded with relatively few incidents of armed clashes or ground fire directed at spray aircraft.

II. AERIAL ERADICATION

Although estimates vary, coca cultivation in Putumayo could be as high as 90,000 hectares (about 225,000 acres). The most dense areas of cultivation are located in southwestern Putumayo. Aerial eradication in Putumayo began in that area on December 22, 2000. As of January 28, 2001, a total of 24,123 hectares has been sprayed—22,332 hectares in southwestern Putumayo (mostly in paramilitary-dominated zones) and 1,791 hectares in south-central Putumayo. Spraying is currently taking place in southwestern Putumayo. There have been eight spray planes and/or escort helicopters hit by hostile ground fire (in six incidents) since commencement of spraying in Putumayo—fewer than expected, given the high presence of illegal armed groups operating in Putumayo. None resulted in any injury or serious damage to aircraft.

III. COLOMBIAN MILITARY OPERATIONS

As of January 28, 2001 there are approximately 3,000 Colombian Army troops deployed in Putumayo, including troops from the First and Second Counterdrug Battalions of the Counterdrug Brigade. The ground troops support aerial eradication activities and conduct lab interdictions. Since the start of operations in mid-December 2000, Colombian military forces have attacked 40 targets in Putumayo, including coca base labs, cocaine hydrochloride labs, and weapons storage facilities.

There have been five incidents of armed clashes between Colombian military forces and illegal groups since the start of Putumayo operations, one involving paramilitaries and three involving FARC. These clashes resulted in the deaths of two 12th Brigade soldiers, 11 FARC, and one paramilitary. The fifth incident was the firing (by unknown persons) of a rocket-propelled grenade at an embassy-contracted fuel plane (carrying Colombian National Police officers) departing Tres Esquinas.

The level of cooperation between Colombian military forces and antinarcotics police during the Putumayo operation has been unprecedented, given the historic rivalries between the various armed forces and police. The forces have shared USG-supplied helicopters to move troops and police in and out of the spray/interdiction areas. The Deputy Commander of the Counterdrug Brigade now attends the daily briefings for the spray pilots, hence is better able to deploy his troops into the most effective areas and to alert the pilots to suspected locations of hostile elements.

IV. U.S.-SUPPORTED ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT/MANUAL ERADICATION

A key aspect of the multifaceted Plan Colombia projects targeted for Putumayo (and, later, other parts of the country) is to encourage small coca growers to sign agreements to voluntarily eliminate their illicit crops in exchange for government assistance with alternative crop development. The U.S. Agency for International Development is working closely with the Government of Colombia's National Plan for Alternative Development (PLANTE), to put such agreements into place. Two agreements have been signed to date by a total of 1453 families in Puerto Asis municipality, providing for the voluntary elimination of nearly 3000 hectares

of coca. Six more agreements are expected to be signed before the end of March 2001. The target is to enter agreements with a total of 5500 families for the elimination of approximately 10,500 hectares of coca. The signing of even two elimination agreements has had a positive effect, in that many more families are interested in signing them now that they are perceived as a reality. The signings appear to have lessened some local officials' opposition to aerial eradication as well. While in the past they often complained that government efforts were focused on the "stick" of spraying but not the "carrot" of alternative development, at least one Putumayo mayor has stated that the government now apparently intends to keep its word to combine the two efforts.

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

Since the first Counterdrug Battalion was formed in April 1999, we have had no human rights complaints against the Counterdrug Brigade, nor have we received any since joint operations were launched in December 2000. There has been minimal displacement, with some 20-30 people displaced since spray operations began in mid-December. In contrast, thousands of people were displaced in the area between September-December 2000 as a result of the FARC's armed siege of Putumayo.

As required under the Leahy amendment, the Embassy vets all military and police units which receive USG assistance by reviewing the unit's human rights record and regular reports from the Colombian Ministry of Defense on any units or members of units which are undergoing formal investigation for human rights violations. The 24th Brigade, a member of the Joint Task Force-South under General Mario Montoya's command, is currently the only element of the Joint Task Force-South which is not approved to receive USG assistance.

VI. CONCLUSION

While the government of Colombia has achieved significant success in the first phase of U.S.-supported counternarcotics operations in Putumayo, much more remains to be done. Embassy is encouraging the Colombian Army and Antinarcotics Police to pursue more joint operations, and is encouraging the Colombian Presidency to explain Plan Colombia more clearly to its citizens. The Government of Colombia has shown the political will to maintain its commitment to the aerial eradication and interdiction aspects of Plan Colombia, even if violence escalates (as is likely to be the case). Public support for antinarcotics aid is strong, but continued close engagement at all levels will be required to maintain the GOC's resolve.

Mr. Speaker, in this two-page summary, our colleagues will find a detailed assessment of the successes that we are achieving, of the cooperation of the Colombian military, of the brave efforts being put forth by military leaders and police leaders who everyday are being intimidated and whose families are being threatened by the FARC and the terrorist groups throughout Colombia.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also assure my colleagues one of the major concerns we have in any country is that there not be human rights abuses by the military or the police of that country. In the training that I witnessed at the Larandia operation, a major part of our training program for the Colombian military deals with human rights, showing the soldiers on the ground in Colombia that while they are there, to

weed out the corrupt narcoterrorists activity.

They must adhere to strict human rights concerns that we have. They must comply with international norms. They must not abuse innocent people. And while there are still incidents as there are even in our own military, from time to time, of concerns relative to human rights. I can assure our colleagues that the Colombian military, the Colombian police department have made overwhelming positive strides in stopping human rights abuses from those who are enforcing the laws and from those who are going after the narcotics traffickers.

Mr. Speaker, our military again is rising to the occasion and doing an outstanding job. The Colombian soldier on the ground understands the importance of maintaining human rights and dignity, even when they are dealing with thugs involved, with growing and selling off cocaine eventually for America's soil.

This summary gives a glimpse of the kind of successes that we are having in each of these areas; the efforts at cleaning up the drug labs, the efforts at spraying the crops, the efforts at protecting the human rights, the efforts at helping to rebuild the economy of these areas that have been devastated by drug trafficking.

□ 1600

The role of America is not just training. We are also providing resources. Of the \$1.3 million that we are placing into Plan Colombia, only a small portion is actually going to our military. Significant parts of the money are going into nonmilitary activities, such as the Department of State. Other parts are going into activities involving economic readjustment.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I have a series of charts that I will be providing for every Member of the House that give an assessment as to where the \$1.3 million is going, the kinds of equipment that we are buying, helicopters to do spraying, and helicopters to accompany the helicopters and the planes that are doing the spraying of the crops.

So the effort in Plan Colombia is not just about helping the military. It is about providing a broad strategy. It is about building democratic institutions. It is about helping local mayors and local councils have better control over their communities. It is involving ourselves through Colombia in creating additional economic activities for farmers who no longer are going to produce these drugs.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that we must stay the course in Latin America. One of the concerns that I had when I traveled to Ecuador and Colombia was that we in America do not know enough about our southern partners. I am very pleased that our new President has made statements that he wants to reach south. He has already reached out to Mexico. I know that he

wants to reach out to Central and South America.

I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that many of us, including myself, have not paid attention to our closest neighbors. We have not taken the opportunity to reach out to them as equal partners in terms of economic development, environmental cooperation, cooperation in health and human services, and also dealing with problems like the oil spill off the Galapagos or the drug problem in Colombia.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I had discussions in both countries and I am now suggesting to my colleagues, especially those on the Committee on International Relations chaired by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), that we look at the putting together an initiative, kind of a mini-Marshall Plan that would bring a special focus on the seven contiguous countries around Colombia, to let these countries know that Americans up north are not just in Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru and Panama, that we are not just there because of the drug problem, that we want to establish a new relationship, one that encourages more economic investment and encourages real environmental cooperation, one that shows that we will assist them in improving their quality of life in health care and education; and in the end, a strong component that will support the rule of law and support the continued effort to help the Colombian people and the other nations rid themselves of this terrible narcotrafficking and production that has been occurring there over the past several years.

I would hope that one of our objectives in this session of Congress would be to establish this mini-Marshall Plan to show our friends in South America that America wants to be true and close partners of theirs. Ecuador has been one of the closest allies to our country for years. It is time to let the people of Ecuador know that we appreciate that support and that we want to engage with Ecuador in a more aggressive way.

I would hope that our colleagues on the Committee of International Relations led by such great people as the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BALLENGER), who has traveled to that part of the world more than any of our colleagues, who along with his wife has a better grasp of the situation in Central and South America than many of our people who serve in State Department positions, that we reach out and work with the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BALLENGER) and his subcommittee and work to shape a new policy, a proactive policy that has a military component but also shows the people of South America that we want to be their true friends and trading partners.

I came away also, Mr. Speaker, from my trip with one additional piece of information dealing with a very controversial subject that will again be taken up by this Congress this year,

and that is the School of the Americas. Every year, Mr. Speaker, when we bring up the defense authorization bill on the floor, there are several Members of Congress who offer an amendment to basically do away with the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia; and they use the argument that some of the graduates of that school have committed atrocities and have been involved in gross human rights abuses, particularly in Central and South America.

Mr. Speaker, I am not challenging the fact that out of the thousands of people that have gone through the School of the Americas there have been some bad apples, just as I would acknowledge that you can take Harvard University or Yale or Princeton and find one or two graduates who have ended up in jail because of white collar crimes or because of things that they have done that are against our society.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when I ask the question of the Colombians and the Ecuadorians and our leaders and our two ambassadors in those countries how important is the School of the Americas to your success, the answer was unanimous. The answer was unanimous from everyone I talked to, that the School of the Americas played an absolutely essential role in teaching South and Central American leaders that the military responds to the civilian part of society, that human rights is a part of what a military leader must consider every day he or she is doing their job, that the School of the Americas has trained young military leaders to understand the same types of leadership skills that our military has that are so frequently brought to their attention in serving in our services.

So an additional point that our colleagues need to ask as they travel and deal with the situation in Latin America is how important is this institution to the continued success that we are having in cooperating with the militaries of the South American countries. Are they perfect? The answer is, no. Is our military perfect? The answer is, no. But we are both moving in the same direction, addressing the concerns of human rights and dignity as we enforce laws and as we deal with tyrants and dictators and thugs such as those involved with the FARC and the revolutionary groups that currently are running rampant in Colombia and other parts of South America.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, the news is good. The success is documented, and I rise as someone who was not a big fan of this initiative 6 months ago.

I was a skeptic. I am now convinced we are doing the right thing. Our colleagues, Mr. Speaker, are going to be asked this year to provide a second sum of money to continue this operation. Our colleagues need to get the facts. Our colleagues need to travel to Latin America.

To this end, Mr. Speaker, I will again be organizing a delegation sometime in

the mid to latter part of 2001. I have already received a commitment that Members of Congress will be able to stay overnight in a base camp so they can see firsthand and observe themselves the kind of training, the kind of interaction, can talk to the villagers, and can talk to people who are in the Colombian military to see the success firsthand that we are having.

In Ecuador, we will meet with the leadership. We will also talk about environmental cooperation with pristine areas like the Galapagos. In Colombia and the other countries we visit, we will begin to focus on the success that we are having.

I encourage our colleagues, Mr. Speaker, prior to the vote on these additional funds, to travel to that part of the world. The gentleman from North Carolina (Chairman BALLENGER) takes trips to Central and South America on a regular basis. If our colleagues cannot join the delegation that I organize, they can contact the gentleman from North Carolina (Chairman BALLENGER), and I am sure he will organize an appropriate visit as well this year.

I think in the year 2001, under the leadership of our new President, George Bush, Latin America is the key area of focus; that we must renew old friendships. We must show these people in Central and South America that we are not the ugly gringos of the north, that we want to be their friends. We want to be their trading partners. We want to help them solve their environmental problems. We want to help them in their effort to weed out corruption, to deal with human rights abuses, and to help them provide a solid well-trained military and police force to maintain the basic elements of democracy.

In doing all of that, Mr. Speaker, I am convinced America will be better, our homeland defense will be more secure, and we will have a better relationship with those people who inhabit both Central and South America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the remaining time and thank the Speaker and the staff for sticking through this Special Order.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 18. Concurrent resolution providing for an adjournment of the House of Representatives.

The message also announced that pursuant to the provisions of Senate Resolution 105 (adopted April 13, 1989), as amended by Senate Resolution 149 (adopted October 5, 1993), as amended by Public Law 105-275, further amended by Senate Resolution 75 (adopted March 25, 1999), and Senate Resolution 383 (adopted October 27, 2000), the Chair, on behalf of the Democratic