

Colombian military and the paramilitary forces in the country. The Colombian military has been taking steps to sever its ties with the paramilitaries, but I am worried that those steps have not translated into meaningful progress on the ground. As the United States considers supporting the counter-insurgency operations of the Colombian military, we must guarantee that Colombia takes seriously its obligation to seek out and prosecute the paramilitaries. And we must remember that by most accounts, the paramilitaries today are more responsible than any other terrorist group for the massive war crimes committed in the country.

We must also ensure that the Colombian government commits its resources to a more robust investment in its own institutions. We must never substitute our own assets or personnel for an appropriate level of investment by Colombia in its own future. This must include domestic support to institutions of justice, and for the protection of civilians, as well as responsible military support to defend the civilian population from rebel and paramilitary attacks.

Finally, we must do more to ensure that communities that have already been so hard-hit by the conflict have access to development opportunities to rebuild their lives. Alternative development must be a cornerstone of any effective counter-narcotics campaign. Without alternative development, displaced communities will have only one rational economic option: to turn to the lucrative but illegal cultivation of the coca that drug lords are so eager to buy and protect. Quite simply, we must give battered rural communities a viable economic alternative to coca or poppy cultivation if we are ever to bring the wars in Colombia to an end. To date, our investment in such development has been insufficient. And perhaps as a result, we have also made little progress in stemming the flow of drugs. Without more of a social investment in alternative development, I fear that the coca fumigation program that is being supported by the United States will merely shift drug cultivation into even more remote and ecologically sensitive areas of the country.

So I rise today to congratulate the people of Colombia on their successful Presidential election in May. That democratic institutions continue to function in the midst of such violence and intimidation is an impressive tribute to the Colombian people. But as the United States moves to support our new colleagues in the incoming government in Colombia, we must continually ask ourselves whether our intervention is achieving our policy goals, and whether it is making a difference to the lives of average Colombians.

Carefully crafted U.S. support for Colombia can make a difference. Indeed, it must make a difference. But we must monitor the effects of that support very closely, because neither the U.S.

taxpayer nor the vast communities in Colombia that have already been devastated by the war can afford to see such a significant U.S. investment in Colombia fail. We cannot and must not abandon Colombia. But at the same time, we cannot delude ourselves about the efficacy of our policy thus far. Critics of U.S. policy in Colombia, and in many cases I have been among them, raise valid questions about the commitment of the military to the rule of law and to protecting civilians. They raise important questions about the consequences of fumigation and the economic prospects for farmers who agree not to plant coca. It is our responsibility to weigh these points and to answer these questions, and where necessary, to adjust our policy so that we get it right. For Americans and for Colombians, the stakes are too high to do otherwise.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Madam President, I rise today to speak about hate crimes legislation I introduced with Senator KENNEDY in March of last year. The Local Law Enforcement Act of 2001 would add new categories to current hate crimes legislation sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred in January 1998 in Springfield, IL. A gay man was abducted, tortured, and robbed. The attacker, Thomas Goacher, 27, was charged with a hate crime, aggravated kidnapping, armed robbery and aggravated battery in connection with the incident.

I believe that government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 is now a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

NATIONAL ASKING SAVES KIDS DAY

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, yesterday was the second annual National Asking Saves Kids Day or ASK Day. ASK is a national public health campaign that urges parents to ask their neighbors and community members if they have a gun in the home before sending their child over to play. The ASK campaign helps to enable parents to protect their children from the danger of a gun that is not safely stored. This is a sensible step toward preventing gun violence. According to PAX, a non-political organization that promotes solutions to the problem of gun violence and sponsors the ASK campaign, over 40 percent of American homes with children have guns. Many of these weapons are kept unlocked and loaded. Child access to these firearms

is one reason why children in the U.S. are more likely to die of gun violence than from all natural causes combined. In recognition of National ASK Day, parents, children, community leaders, and neighbors across the nation planted flowers as a symbol of the more than 3,000 children that PAX estimates could be saved through the simple message of the ASK campaign.

It is critical that we do all we can to keep children from gaining unsupervised access to firearms. That is why I cosponsored Senator DURBAN's Child Access Prevention Act. Under this bill, adults who fail to lock up loaded firearms or an unloaded firearm with ammunition could be held liable if a weapon is taken by a child and used to kill or injure him or herself or another person. The bill also increases the penalties for selling a gun to a juvenile and creates a gun safety education program that includes parent-teacher organizations, local law enforcement and community organizations. This bill is similar to legislation President Bush signed into law as Governor of Texas. I support this bill and hope the Senate will act on it.

I know my colleagues will join me in recognizing National ASK Day, and I urge them to support Senator DURBAN's common sense gun safety legislation.

RATIFICATION OF NEW YORK TREATIES AGAINST THE SALE, TRAFFICKING, AND PROSTITUTION OF CHILDREN AND AGAINST THE USE OF CHILDREN IN COMBAT

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, it gives me great pleasure to hail the ratification of the Optional Protocol Against the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography by the U.S. Senate this week. I applaud the strong leadership of Senator BIDEN, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Senator HELMS, the Ranking Member of that Committee, as well as Senator BOXER in bringing this new treaty to fruition.

The use, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography, or for pornographic purposes is included in the universal definition of the worst forms of child labor in the International Labor Organization's Convention 182 which this Senate ratified in 1999 on a 96-0 vote. Therefore, it is altogether fitting and proper that we now follow through and adopt this new instrument of international law to crackdown worldwide against the despicable acts of trafficking and prostituting of children.

This Optional Protocol gives special emphasis to the criminalization of the sale and trafficking of children as well as child prostitution and pornography. It also stresses the importance of improved international cooperation and coordination to combat the sexual exploitation of children everywhere in the world, while also promoting heightened awareness, more information

gathering, and public education campaigns to enhance the protection of children trapped in one of the worst forms of child labor.

For nearly a decade, I have been working hard to end the scourge of abusive child labor. It is a tragic and disturbing fact that millions of children under 18 years of age currently endure slave-like conditions in brothels, back alleys, and hideaways that jeopardize their basic health, safety and well-being. These children are being tricked, lured, and sold outright for purposes of forced labor and exploitation in the commercial sex trade of prostitution and pornography.

In the European Union, the International Organization for Migration reports a marked increase in the number of unaccompanied minors trafficked for sexual purposes from Central and Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia.

In India alone, hundreds of thousands of children exist in slavery-like conditions for purposes of forced labor or prostitution, according to the U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.

UNICEF estimates that at least 200,000 children every year are trafficked into the Central and West African slave trade for purposes of forced labor.

In Mexico, a UNICEF study estimates that 16,000 children are victims of sexual exploitation—many of them are prostituted in tourist destinations such as Cancun and Acapulco.

In the United States, experts within the Department of Justice estimate that at least 100,000 children are involved in the sex trade in any given year. Approximately 400 cases of Internet child pornography are prosecuted each year in the Federal courts alone. I am pleased to report, for example, that a crackdown on Internet child pornography was launched last year in Des Moines, the capital city of my own home state.

A 1999 report issued by the Central Intelligence Agency estimated that up to 50,000 women and children are trafficked into the United States each year.

We must not stand by while millions of children are sold for purposes of forced labor and consigned to prostitution and pornography in order to satisfy adults who profit from their abuse. When presented with the dimensions of human trafficking in 2000, I joined 94 of my colleagues in the U.S. Senate to express both our outrage over the criminal behavior of child traffickers and our support for the victims of trafficking by passing the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

This week we are taking more effective action through ratification of the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. It is an important victory in our effort to protect children everywhere. I look forward to continuing this effort with my colleagues in the weeks, months, and years to

come. In approving this new standalone treaty, we are affirming that the American people believe that all children, given their vulnerability to adult coercion and greed, deserve special protection in international law and practice against sexual predators and exploiters.

I also want to take a moment to say how pleased I am that the Senate this week has ratified the Optional Protocol Against the Use of Children in Armed Conflict.

As you know, I worked very hard with Senator HELMS, in particular, to secure ratification of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Convention #182 to Prohibit the Worst Forms of Child Labor. Our bipartisan efforts paid off when the Senate in November, 1999 ratified that important new human rights treaty on a 96-0 vote.

Now included in the universal definition of the worst forms of child labor within ILO Convention #182 is the prohibition of forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict. Therefore, the Senate's action this week on this Optional Protocol means the U.S. has followed through on our international commitment at the time that ILO Convention #182 was under negotiation and joined the world community in universally condemning and outlawing the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

It probably seems unthinkable to most Americans that young children have been recruited, trained, and turned into soldiers who are actively engaged in combat. The latest research estimates that more than 300,000 children under 18 years of age are participating in armed conflicts around the world. For example, there are an estimated 50,000 child soldiers in Burma alone. Hundreds of thousands more are members of armed forces who could be sent into combat at any moment. Although most child recruits are over fifteen years of age, significant recruitment starts at ten years, and the use of even younger children is not uncommon.

Robbed of their childhood, child combatants are subjected to a cycle of violence that they are too young to understand or resist. While many of these young recruits may start out as porters or messengers, too often they end up on the front lines of combat. Some are used for especially hazardous duty, such as entering mine fields ahead of older troops, or undertaking suicide missions. Some have been forced to commit atrocities against family members or relatives. Inexperienced and immature, these children suffer far higher casualty rates than their adult counterparts. Those who survive are often physically or psychologically scarred for life. Typically lacking an education or civilian job skills, their futures are often very bleak.

Ninety-three percent of Americans believe that combatants should be at least 18 years of age, according to a recent poll conducted by the Inter-

national Committee of the Red Cross. Accordingly, I want to particularly salute the leadership of my colleagues, Senator BIDEN, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Senator HELMS, the Ranking Member of that Committee, as well as Senator WELLSTONE and thank them for their tireless work to see this treaty through to ratification. There is absolutely no justification for the forced or compulsory recruitment of children under 18 for deployment into combat anywhere in this world and I am proud that America is doing our part to end this egregious abuse of human rights and affront to common decency.

FIRST RESPONDER TERRORISM PREPAREDNESS ACT OF 2002

Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Madam President, I rise to urge my colleagues to support the First Responder Terrorism Preparedness Act of 2002 that I introduced along with the committee chairman, Senator JEFFORDS. This legislation is a huge step forward in providing the necessary tools for local and state first responders to prepare to respond to any act of terrorism.

We recognize that it is the local emergency responders who are on the scene first to rescue and help those who have been caught in a disaster. I visited the Pentagon and Ground Zero less than a week after the attacks and can tell you that these first responders are true patriots, and they live and serve us in every town and city across this great Nation. These local heroes, the type of first responders who made the ultimate sacrifice on September 11, are the embodiment of the American spirit—brave, selfless, and caring. They save lives and we should focus our resources to help them with their mission.

Prior to his confirmation to be the head of FEMA, nearly 9 months before the terrorists attacks on this Nation, I met with Joe Allbaugh to discuss FEMA priorities. Chief among the priorities we discussed was that of terrorism preparedness of our Nation's first responders. Little did we know what this Nation would be facing less than 9 months down the road.

Since September 11, I have met with Director Allbaugh and his staff on several occasions, and the Environment and Public Works Committee, of which I am the ranking member, has held a number of hearings on this issue.

In January, I enthusiastically endorsed President Bush's announcement of his first responder plan to be run by FEMA. This bill, the First Responder Terrorism Preparedness Act, mirrors the President's proposal and represents months of work by the Environment and Public Works Committee flushing the President's proposal with the aid of the administration.

In brief, this bill will authorize a first responder grant program for 4 years at \$3.5 billion per year. Each