Congressman Ron Paul U.S. House of Representatives May 23, 2002

No More Taxpayer Funds for the Failed Drug War in Colombia

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of this amendment, and I compliment the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. *McGovern*) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. *Skelton*) for bringing this to us. There has been a lot of discussion in the last 2 days, a lot about the deficit; and it strikes me as a bit of an irony, especially because it comes from many, and I have to say on both sides of the aisle, that do a lot to raise the national debt and the spending, and yet the debate went on and on. For some reason, I think there has been a lot of politics in the debate.

The interesting thing about what is going on right now, there is no politics in this. This is about war, and this is important, and this is about policy. It is said that we would like to get things like this through without a full discussion; but this, to me, is a key issue. This amendment is about whether or not we will change our policy in central America and, specifically, in Colombia.

Mr. Chairman, a year or so ago we appropriated $1.6 billion, and we went into Colombia with the intent of reducing drug usage. Instead it is up 25 percent. Drug usage is going up! They sprayed 210,000 acres, and now there are 53,000 more acres than ever before. It reminds me of Afghanistan. We have been in Afghanistan for less than a year and drug production is going up! I just wonder about the effectiveness of our drug program in Colombia.

But the theory is that we will be more effective if we change the policy. Pastrana tried to negotiate a peace and we were going too deal with the drugs, and we were going to have peace after 40 years of a civil war. Now Uribi is likely to become President and the approach is to different. He said, no more negotiations. We will be fighting and we want American help, and we want a change in policy, and we do not want spraying fields; we want helicopters to fight a war. That is what we are dealing with here. We should not let this go by without a full discussion and a full understanding, because in reality, there is no authority to support a military operation in Colombia.

What we are doing is we are appropriating for something for the administration to do without a proper authority. He has no authority to get involved in the civil war down there. We cannot imply that the issue of war is granted through the appropriation process. It is not the way the system works. The constitutional system works with granting explicit authority to wage war. The President has no authority, and now he wants the money; and we are ready to capitulate. Let me tell my colleagues, if we care about national defense, we must reconsider this.

This dilutes our national defense, it dilutes our forces, exposes our troops, takes away our weapons, increases the expenditures. If we ignore this issue I guess we can go back to demagoging the national debt limit.

So I would say, please, take a close look at this. We do not need to be expanding our role in Colombia. The drug war down there has not worked, and I do not expect this military war that we are about to wage to work either. We need to talk about national defense, and this does not help our national defense. I fear this. I feel less secure when we go into areas like this, because believe me, this is the way that we get troops in later on. We already have advisory forces in Colombia. Does anybody remember about advisors and then eventually having military follow in other times in our history. Yes, this is a very risky change in policy. This is not just a minor little increase in appropriation.

So I would ask, once again, where is the authority? Where does the authority exists for our President to go down and expand a war in Colombia when it has nothing to do with our national defense or our security? It has more to do with oil than our national security, and we know it. There is a pipeline down there that everybody complains that it is not well protected. It is even designated in legislation, and we deal with this at times. So I would say think about the real reasons behind us going down there.

It just happens that we have spread ourselves around the world; we are now in nine countries of the 15 countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union. And every country has something to do with oil. The Caspian Sea, Georgia, and why are we in the Persian Gulf? We are in the Persian Gulf to protect "our" oil. Why are we involved with making and interfering with the democratically elected leader of Venezuela? I thought we were for democracy, and yet the reports are that we may well have participated in the attempt to have a democratically elected official in Venezuela removed. I think there is a little bit of oil in Venezuela as well. Could that have been the reason.

So I would say, once again, please take a look at this amendment. This amendment is a "yes" vote, and I urge my colleagues to support it.