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MINDING OUR OWN BUSINESS REGARDING COLOMBIA IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF AMERICA

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Statement of HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS

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Mr. Speaker, those of us who warned of the shortcomings of expanding our military presence in Colombia were ignored when funds were appropriated for this purpose earlier this year. We argued at that time that clearly no national security interests were involved; that the Civil War was more than 30 years old, complex with three factions fighting, and no assurance as to who the good guys were; that the drug war was a subterfuge, only an excuse, not a reason, to needlessly expand our involvement in Colombia; and that special interests were really driving our policy: Colombia Oil Reserves owned by American interests, American weapons manufacturers, and American corporations anxious to build infrastructure in Colombia.

Already our foolish expanded pressure in Colombia has had a perverse effect. The stated purpose of promoting peace and stability has been undermined. Violence has worsened as factions are now fighting more fiercely than ever before for territory as they anticipate the full force of U.S. weapons arriving.

The already weak peace process has been essentially abandoned. Hatred toward Americans by

many Colombians has grown. The Presidents of 12 South American countries rejected outright the American-backed military operation amendment aimed at the revolutionary groups in Colombia.

This foolhardy effort to settle the Colombian civil war has clearly turned out to be a diplomatic failure. The best evidence of a seriously flawed policy is the departure of capital. Watching money flows gives us a market assessment of policy; and by all indication, our policy spells trouble.

There is evidence of a recent large-scale exodus of wealthy Colombians to Miami. Tens of thousands of Colombians are leaving for the U.S., Canada, Costa Rica, Spain, Australia. These are the middle-class and upper-class citizens, taking their money with them. Our enhanced presence in Colombia has accelerated this exodus.

Our policy, unless quickly and thoroughly reversed, will surely force an escalation of the civil war and a dangerous increase in our involvement with both dollars and troops. All this will further heighten the need for drug sales to finance all factions of the civil war. So much for stopping the drug war.

Our policy is doomed to fail. There is no national security interest involved; therefore, no goals can be set and no victory achievable. A foreign policy of non-intervention designed only to protect our sovereignty with an eagerness to trade with all nations willing to be friends is the traditional American foreign policy and would give us the guaranteed hope of peace, the greatest hope of peace and prosperity.

Let us think seriously about our foreign policy, and hopefully someday we will pursue a policy in the best interest of America by minding our own business.