

## Rothman Fights for Moratorium on Aerial Fumigation

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Wants greater focus on development aid in plan Colombia

Washington, DC -- Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) today offered an amendment to impose a moratorium on U.S.-supported aerial fumigation in Colombia unless a greater emphasis is put on development assistance. Rothman temporarily withdrew his amendment today after House Foreign Operations Subcommittee Chairman Jim Kolbe (R-AZ) and the Republican majority agreed to address the lawmaker's concerns about Plan Colombia in the bill. However, Rothman stressed that if those concerns are not met he will offer his amendment before the full Appropriations Committee on July 10.

Rothman's amendment would impose a moratorium on U.S. supported aerial fumigation in Colombia until development assistance plans have been implemented in 75 percent of the communities that have applied for the aid under Plan Colombia. The amendment also requires that those plans include immediate delivery of assistance. "In this case, aerial fumigation has been used as the weapon of first resort, not the last," Rothman said. "I believe it is time to move ahead with economic and other development programs contained in Plan Colombia to provide economic stability, the rule of law, and hope for the people of Colombia. Let's give them a hand before we give them the poison." Rothman argued that fumigation alone does not work. He cited a 1999 General Accounting Office study that concluded, "U.S. and Colombian efforts to eradicate enough coca and opium poppy to reduce the net cultivation of these crops have not succeeded to date." The study found that in 1998 alone there was a 20 percent increase in coca acreage despite increased fumigation that year.

There have also been significant allegations of health and environmental concerns as a result of aerial fumigation. Between August 2000 and May 2001, Colombia's Public Ombudsman (defensor del pueblo) has received 1,158 reports of damage to human health, the environment and food crops allegedly caused by fumigation. And the Roundup website states that the herbicide, which is reportedly the major one used in the aerial fumigation in Colombia, is not recommended for aerial application and is not supposed to be applied near or upon bodies of water.

"Although the fumigation efforts are well intentioned, the victims unfortunately have not always been the drug lords and their coca leaves. There is no such thing as pinpoint fumigation," Rothman noted. "Sometimes the victims have been the Colombian farmers and their drinking water."

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