



Plan Colombia: A Development Success Story

Colombia is one of the strongest examples of the transformative effect of American engagement. U.S. security and economic assistance has helped the nation move from a cartel-ridden fragile state to a strategic ally and economic partner.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. grappled with the threat of a major drug war spilling over its southern borders—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) undermined security and the rule of law in Colombia and across Latin America.

In 2000, the U.S. launched a partnership called “Plan Colombia” to provide security and economic development assistance to help combat the spread of narcotics, train law enforcement, and promote economic growth. Since then, the country has seen a significant reduction in violence and, while more remains to be done, has become a valuable security and economic partner—U.S. exports to Colombia have quadrupled to over \$15 billion in 2015.



Overview of U.S. Foreign Assistance to Colombia

- Following the signing of Plan Colombia, U.S. military assistance helped the Colombian government fight the FARC and other drug lords, while also providing equipment to battle the spread of narcotics.
- U.S. development assistance helped train farmers to grow crops other than coca, improve yields, rebuild schools, and create new partnerships to help small producers get goods to market.
- The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) worked with private sector partners to help Colombia upgrade its energy infrastructure in order to improve access to electricity.
- The U.S. worked with the Colombian government to strengthen the rule of law by training police and implementing reforms to assist Colombians with land compensation.

Benefits to the United States and Latin America

- Since Plan Colombia began, homicides in Colombia have been cut in half, while kidnappings and terrorist attacks have declined by 90%.
- The Colombian military has become a valuable regional security partner that participates in multinational operational exercises.
- Colombia has become a model and trained over 11,000 police officers from 21 Latin American and African countries, as well as Afghanistan.
- The U.S. is Colombia’s largest trading partner, with U.S. exports including oil, machinery, agricultural products, and organic chemicals.
- Today, approximately 250 U.S. businesses conduct operations in Colombia.

“In just a few years, Colombia has achieved a remarkable, indeed historic, transformation in the security arena that few would have thought possible... from a nation under siege from drug trafficking organizations and military groups to a country quickly becoming a lynchpin of security and prosperity in South America.”

Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, April 15, 2010