

## COLOMBIA: WHERE U.S. POLICY KILLS

# FORCED ERADICATION AND FUMIGATION OF COCA CROPS:

IT'S TIME TO END U.S.-FUNDED AERIAL FUMIGATIONS AND FORCED MANUAL ERADICATION

### WHAT IS FORCED ERADICATION OF COCA PLANTS?

The U.S. began funding the forced eradication of coca—the raw material in cocaine—in Colombia with the 2000 implementation of Plan Colombia, a multi-billion dollar funding package, 80% of which was allocated for military aid and drug eradication. Coca crop eradication is conducted with one of two methods:

**Fumigations** spray the herbicide glyphosate (a high powered version of Monsanto's Roundup) and other unknown chemicals from planes.

**Forced manual eradication (FME)** involves eradication teams, accompanied by the police and military, ripping out coca plants at the root.



*"Our fields were manually eradicated and then two months later they were sprayed. All the food crops have been destroyed. The only thing that keeps growing is coca. Forced eradication doesn't work. We have no alternatives to coca and now we have no food!"*

### WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF FORCED ERADICATION?

- **Forced Eradication has failed to reduce acres of coca in cultivation.** In 2006, the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) found that despite \$5.4 billion in aid to Colombia and the fumigation and/or forced manual eradication of over two million acres of coca, there was still more coca than when Plan Colombia began.
- **Forced Eradication spreads coca and harms the environment.** When Plan Colombia began, coca was grown in 12 of Colombia's 32 provinces; today it is grown in 23 provinces. As long as U.S. cocaine demand stays steady, forced eradication of coca crops in one area often only pushes growers further into the jungle to clear virgin forests for coca farming in the world's second most biodiverse country.
- **Fumigations kill desperately needed food crops.** Experience shows that coca is quite resistant to aerial spraying of glyphosate and often survives fumigation missions. Unfortunately, the spraying *IS* effective at killing the less hardy food crops, such as yuca, plantains, corn and other subsistence crops that small-scale farmers and their families rely upon for survival. Fumigations spray also frequently drifts onto neighboring farms where no coca is grown. Their food crops are also killed. Fumigations leave poor farmers desperate and without alternatives and fuels internal displacement.
- **Fumigations are detrimental to humans and ecosystems.** Evidence suggests that glyphosate causes severe ecological damage such as increased deforestation and harm to aquatic ecosystems while posing a serious threat to human health and reproduction. U.S.-funded fumigations have sprayed rivers, lakes, houses, churches, and schools, even when humans are present. Children and the elderly are more susceptible to these health concerns which include respiratory and gastro-intestinal problems as well as skin rashes.
- **Forced Manual Eradication teams sow terror as they rip out coca.** Teams are often made up of soldiers and/or former paramilitary fighters. Many farmers report home break-ins, theft of food, radios, livestock, and money as well as sexual violence against women during the FMEs.
- **Past Forced Manual Eradication programs failed in Bolivia and Peru.** These programs led to mass riots, years of political instability in Bolivia, sustained poverty, and human rights violations committed by the military units involved in eradication activities. Coca is still grown in both countries.
- **Forced Eradication does not provide poor farmers with any feasible financial alternative to coca.** Eradicated farmers face hunger. Without alternative crops, farmers are left without food or money to support their families and must replant coca to survive. U.S.-funded alternative investment programs should respond to farmers' requests for alternative projects.



### DEMAND = PRODUCTION

**As long as there is demand for cocaine and small-scale farmers have no financially feasible alternatives, coca will continue to be cultivated.**

# THREE CASE STUDIES: HOW U.S.-FUNDED FORCED ERADICATION POLICY HURTS COLOMBIANS



## **1. COSURCA**

Small-scale farmers joined together in 1993 to form COSURCA and produce an **alternative to coca farming: organic coffee**. COSURCA has received funding for its 1,600 family farms from USAID, the U.N., and the Colombian government. Despite this support, and being a shining example of alternative development, COSURCA farmers were fumigated in 2005 and again in 2007. Their crops were destroyed and forfeited their organic certification for future crops. COSURCA still has not been compensated for their losses.

## **2. BUSCANDO BUENOS CAMINOS**

Buscando Buenos Caminos (Looking for Good Paths) has become an option to return to civilian life for demobilized paramilitary fighters. Government funding has helped them breed cacao (chocolate) seedlings that are suitable for their climate using grafting techniques. **In August 2007, this government-funded project was hit by drift fumigation spray**, resulting in the destruction of two years of crop production, as well as two years of investment in alternatives to war.

## **3. SINGLE MOTHERS FARM**

Last year, 100 single mothers—most widows from the years of violence in Colombia's southern province of Putumayo—took out a loan to buy land and start a farming project. Their hope was to bring food-stability to their households, and to learn to grow their own crops for long-term sustainability. In August 2007, weeks after planting nine acres of food crops, **U.S.-funded fumigations wiped out the work these single mothers had put into their survival**. These women play by the rules and work hard, and yet don't receive any assistance from governments or other entities. They just receive fumigations.



## **WE ARE THROWING U.S. TAX DOLLARS AWAY ON FORCED ERADICATION**

- Despite over six billion U.S. tax dollars, there has been an increase in acres of coca cultivated since fumigations began.
- Forced eradication spreads coca crops into new regions, threatening virgin forests and wildlife habitat, and spreading conflict.
- Without funded and feasible alternatives for coca farmers, coca production will continue.

### What Can You Do to Stop Forced Eradication?

- ◆ **Build a coalition** in your community, organization, and congregation to stop U.S. funding for eradications.
- ◆ **Pressure your U.S. legislators** to de-fund the aerial fumigations and FME programs in Colombia, part of the Foreign Operations Bill, and to fund voluntarily coca eradication programs that are paired with alternative economic development projects.
- ◆ **Learn about other U.S. policies in Colombia**, including U.S.-funded militarization and the proposed Free Trade Agreement at [www.witnessforpeace.org](http://www.witnessforpeace.org).
- ◆ **Educate your community** about unjust U.S. policies in Colombia and how to address the problems of drugs domestically through events and media.
- ◆ **Contact Witness for Peace** for more educational resources.

**Join Witness for Peace in support of farmer's proposals for voluntary manual coca eradication paired with diverse cropping and infrastructure development programs!**