



February 21, 2002

Stop All-out War in Colombia, Communist Party Urges

Press Statement issued by the
Central Executive Committee
Communist Party of Canada

"The decision of the Colombian government to unilaterally cancel fledgling negotiations with the largest guerrilla army FARC-EP, and to launch a surprise attack on the de-militarized zone, is a disaster for the Colombian people and for efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in that country," the Communist Party of Canada said in a statement released today. The CPC is calling for an immediate cease-fire and for a return to the negotiating table

"President Pastrana has finally succumbed to pressures from the United States and the Colombian military to scrap the peace process and unleash an all-out war on the insurgents," CPC leader Miguel Figueroa stated

"In so doing, Pastrana and the ruling oligarchy he represents have undermined the painstaking efforts of Canada and the other member countries of the 'Group of Ten', and of the United Nations itself. He has also dashed the hopes of the Colombian people for peace and a just settlement of the outstanding issues".

On the evening of February 20, the Colombian president cancelled negotiations with the FARC-EP and signed orders for an immediate military attack and re-occupation of the demilitarized zone in the southern part of the country. Hours later, the Colombian Air Force bombed San Vicente and other towns in the area, and thousands of ground troops – along with U.S. military 'advisors' – invaded the region in a blitzkrieg-type operation.

"It is clear who has masterminded this escalation in the conflict," Figueroa said. "Since his inauguration, and especially since September 11, U.S. President Bush and his Administration have expressed open hostility to the peace process. They have expanded the military aid component of the Plan Colombia (started under the former Clinton administration), and tried to prevent any meaningful progress in the talks."

"The U.S. government, working hand-in-glove with the Colombian military and various corporate interests, almost succeeded in scuttling the negotiations in early January, but the intervention of the U.N., the Vatican, and the so-called 'Group of Ten' countries (including Canada) temporarily kept the peace process

alive."

"The biggest losers in an all-out war will be the Colombian people themselves," the Communist Party statement continued. "There is now the real possibility that U.S. imperialism will directly intervene in the war and even expand the conflict to other countries in the region, especially to Venezuela where Washington hopes to remove the nationalist and progressive government of Hugo Chavez."

"The international community needs to prevail upon the Colombian government to immediately cease hostilities and return to the negotiating table," Figueroa said.

"The war in Colombia is not an isolated or internal problem. It comes at a time when the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan is continuing, when Israeli military attacks against the Palestinian people are escalating, and when the Bush Administration is sending ground troops into the Philippines, and threatening war against the Iran, Iraq and North Korea."

"This so-called 'war on terrorism' is actually a war on people's resistance to globalization, a war on the sovereignty and independence of nations, and a war on peace and the principles of international law. It must be stopped now before war and militarism envelop the entire globe," Figueroa added.

"The CPC calls upon the Canadian government, and its new Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham, to speak out loudly and clearly against this expanding war in Colombia and around the world. Canada must end its slavish pandering to Washington and its aggressive, interventionist policy, and instead become a truly independent voice for peace and reason."

For more information, contact CPC Party leader Miguel Figueroa at (416) 469-2446.

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