

Colombian President Santos Seeks Billions for New Plan Colombia



Bogota, February 2 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos will travel to the United States later this week to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the controversial Plan Colombia, and is expected to ask for billions of dollars more to continue the program.

The initial Plan Colombia was a multimillion-dollar anti-narcotics and counterinsurgency initiative that saw millions of U.S. dollars transferred to Colombia to fight the war on drugs and left-wing FARC guerrillas. The result, however, was largely the militarization of the country which helped uphold years of violence and human rights abuses in the country.

Since the deal was signed in 2000 by then Colombian President Andres Pastrana and his U.S. counterpart President Bill Clinton, the U.S. has provided more than US\$10 billion in aid to the South American country. In recent years, however, the aid deal has been winding down with Colombia now receiving about US\$300 million a year from the U.S.

Later this week, Santos will ask the U.S. Congress to revamp its spending once again, asking for a total of US\$5 billion—US\$500 million a year for up to 10 years. The initiative has been dubbed Plan Colombia

2.0.

While details of the plan have not yet been released, the plan is use the money to fund a post-conflict peace agenda once the Colombian government and the FARC, or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, sign a final peace deal. Their self-imposed deadline is March 23.

The funds will reportedly be used to help pay for regional development projects, which the first Plan Colombia also promised but failed to deliver, focusing almost entirely on military aid. The money would also go toward demobilizing and reintegrating around 7,000 guerrilla fighters into civilian life.

Santos will also update Congress on the peace negotiations, which have been ongoing in Havana, Cuba, for three years.

The Colombian president said he is not traveling to the U.S. specifically to ask for money, but rather to thank the country for its support over the years, according to McClatchy News.

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