

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 8, 2007

His Excellency Philippe Douste-Blazy  
Minister of Foreign Relations  
French Republic

His Excellency Miguel Ángel Moratinos  
Minister of Foreign Relations  
Kingdom of Spain

Her Excellency Micheline Calmy-Rey  
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs  
Swiss Confederation

Dr. Luis Carlos Restrepo  
High Commissioner for Peace  
Presidency of the Republic of Colombia

Your Excellencies:

We write out of concern - a concern that all of you demonstrably share - about a tragic situation that has gone on for far too long in the nation of Colombia.

In an act of cruelty that violates international humanitarian law, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgent group has been holding fifty-seven military and civilian individuals hostage, in some cases for as much as ten years. The FARC insists that it will only release its hostages after the Colombian government negotiates an agreement to release hundreds of guerrilla prisoners.

Most of those being held are Colombian citizens, although three are U.S. citizens, employees of a Defense Department contractor whose aircraft went down in guerrilla-held territory more than four years ago. Most of the Colombian civilians are prominent individuals, including former legislators, governors, and one former presidential candidate (Ingrid Betancourt, a dual citizen of Colombia and France).

We join you in expressing alarm at the tragedy of fifty-seven human beings forced to exist as captives in inhospitable jungles, and of hundreds of family members who have been separated from their fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, sisters or brothers for thousands of days. We also join you in calling on the FARC to abandon this cruel tactic and release its captives immediately and unconditionally.

As you know, though, the FARC instead insists that negotiations for a "humanitarian exchange" of prisoners take place in a 480 square-kilometer zone in southwestern Colombia

from which all military personnel have been removed. The Colombian government has been unwilling to pull security forces out of this zone, particularly if the FARC insists on its own forces carrying weapons.

The result has been stalemate, with both sides far from dialogue and the hostages far from winning release. This has gone on for too long. We agree with you that the status quo is unacceptable. For this reason:

- 1) We support the proposal presented in 2005 by the governments of France, Spain and Switzerland, and accepted in principle by the Colombian government. Under this formula, humanitarian-exchange talks would take place in a 180 square-kilometer zone within the area proposed by the FARC. Both parties would be unarmed in this zone, with the three countries and other international observers carrying out verification and security.

This proposal offers a good framework for moving ahead. We urge the FARC to exhibit some flexibility and willingness to compromise. For the insurgents, this will not be viewed as a loss of face, but as evidence that it values international public opinion.

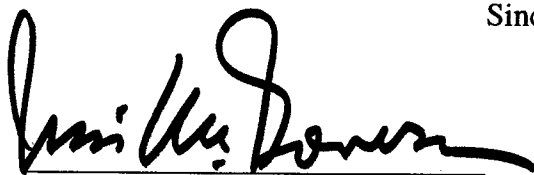
- 2) If the FARC and Colombian government agree to follow the French, Spanish and Swiss model, we commit ourselves to support the humanitarian-exchange talks by being present in the security zone where talks would take place. At key moments during the process, we will be on hand to offer whatever assistance, advice, accompaniment and political support that members of the U.S. Congress can provide.

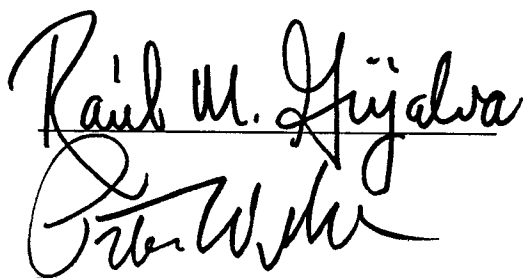
Of course, reaching agreement on the zone for talks is only a first step. The humanitarian exchange talks will be difficult, as both sides discuss thorny issues like released guerrillas' ability to re-join the FARC, or the guerrillas' commitment to take no new hostages.

These and several other big questions await the negotiators. But for now, the important thing is to get the process started. Toward that end, we pledge our support to the French, Spanish and Swiss proposal and our willingness to be present in the zone if necessary.

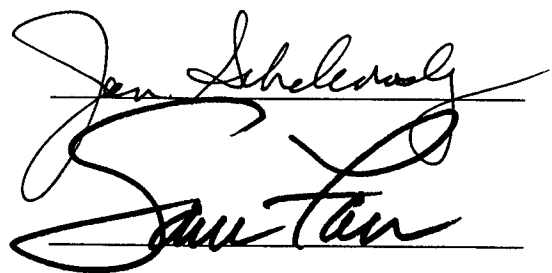
Thank you for your consideration.

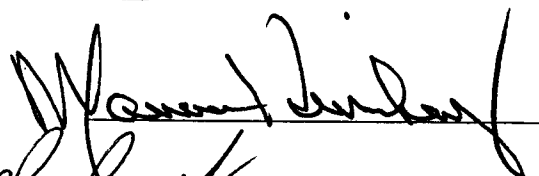
Sincerely,

  
Bill DeLoach

  
Raul M. Gijón

  
Peter W. Miller

  
Jan Schabert

  
Marcantonio

  
Bill DeLoach