

"REJECT U.S. BIOLOGICAL WAR AGAINST COCA AND POPPY"

statement by

Jorge Enrique Robledo Castillo, Senator of Colombia

A **Act** is being discussed in the United States Congress that would order the Office of National Drug Control Policy (commonly known as the Anti-Drug Czar Office) to submit within 90 days “a plan to conduct, on an expedited basis, a scientific study of the use of mycoherbicides [fungi] as a means of illicit drug crop elimination”. This outlandish plan would include the immediate application of mycoherbicides in the chosen country, probably Colombia, because it must include “a plan to conduct controlled scientific testing in a major drug producing nation” (House Resolution 2829, Office of the National Drug Control Policy Reauthorization Act of 2005 –ONDCP Act of 2005).

The main promoter of this Act is Representative Dan Burton, Chairman of the House International Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere. Burton justified his proposal claiming that “despite” the great expenditures by the United States in Colombia and Afghanistan on the eradication of coca and poppy, “the flow of illegal and lethal narcotics continues to be a major problem in our country”. Burton also explained that the plan must also include an “expedited and complete peer review of the science of mycoherbicides” as a means of illicit drug crop elimination. He emphasized: “we need to begin testing it in the field” and concluded **categorically**: this “offers us the possibility to cut off the source of these drugs literally at their roots”. (Media Advisory Office of Congressman Dan Burton, June 16th 2005)

So far as we know, this is the third time the United States has tried to use mycoherbicides against coca and poppy crops. The first time was in 1999, when even the Environmental Ministry in Colombia protested the attempt. With the approval of President Uribe Vélez, in 2003 the US once again tried to move forward on this issue, according to the explanation given by Debora McCarthy, an official of the State Department of the American empire, in a letter to Luis Alberto Moreno, Ambassador of Colombia in Washington.

That the proposal for the massive use mycoherbicides represents an enormous threat was evident in the letter dated November 12, 2003, and sent by Colonel (Ret.) Alfonso Plazas Vega himself –at that time Director of the National Drug Office in Colombia, and an enthusiastic supporter of spraying crops with Glyphosate– to the Ambassador in Washington, in which he opposed a visit to Colombia by American experts who were to promote the issue among officials of the Colombian Institute of Agriculture. Mr. Plazas pointed out: “Mycoherbicides have not been approved yet in the United States, because **in plain language** it is a biological war against illicit crops; this is very dangerous

because the mycoherbicides that destroy coca leaves or the poppy may also destroy other crops and generate major problems”.

I reject this new effort of imperialist aggression against Colombia (Afghanistan does not produce coca **nor** undertake aerial spraying against poppy crops). Furthermore, I summon the Minister of the Interior and Justice, Mr. Sabas Pretelt de la Vega, to present President Uribe’s position on this matter before the Senate, and in particular to clarify whether testing with mycoherbicides will be undertaken within the national territory. Likewise, I call upon all the democratic people of Colombia and the world to initiate a vigorous campaign against the approval of this Act which brings to mind Nazi experiments and which could create enormous problems at a global scale.

Bogota, July 17,2005

(Translated by Elizabeth Beaufort)