

October 5, 2007

Top Leaders

Speeches

War on Terror

Transformation

Contact Us

The Pentagon Channel

» WATCH LIVE NOW «

9:00 a.m. EDT (LIVE) - the commander, 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, briefs the Pentagon media on Iraq operations



7:00 & 11:00 p.m. EDT
A look at the establishment of U.S. Africa Command and a history of the U.S. in Africa.

News

Press Resources

Bloggers' Roundtable

Photos

DoD Web Sites

Casualty Reports

Special Interest

- > Employer Support Awards
- > 9/11 Remembrance
- > Pentagon Memorial
- > Why We Serve
- > Pandemic Flu
- > U.S. Africa Command
- > Stars and Stripes

Humanitarian Ops

- > Pacific Partnership
- > USNS Comfort
- > Force for Good

Special Reports

- > Gates in Latin America
- > CJCS Hail and Farewell
- > Farewell to the Chairman
- > MRAP Vehicles Protecting Troops
- > Wounded Care Top Priority
- > Heroes in the War on Terror



U.S. Department of Defense
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs)

News Transcript

On the Web:

<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4051>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131/697-5132

Public contact:

<http://www.defenselink.mil/faq/con>
or +1 (703) 428-0711 +1

Presenter: Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Colombian Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos Calderon

Media Availability with Secretary Gates and Minister of Defense Calderon for

(Note: Min. Santos's remarks are through an interpreter.)

STAFF: (Through interpreter.) The minister of Defense and then the secretary of Defense and then we will have four questions.

Mr. Minister.

MIN. SANTOS: Thank you very much.

First of all, I would like to deliver a special and warm greeting to the secretary of Defense and to thank him on behalf of the government and of all the Colombian people. His visit to our country we met with President Uribe and afterwards we went to the Tolima Air Base. And we had the opportunity to discuss how productive our cooperation has been, and we made an overview of the -- past year (inaudible) -- here, and the results are there to say very grateful, very good.

We talked about having an opportunity to cooperate in the future of the United States as an example, our two countries that have an objective -- and this arrangement has been that of Plan Colombia has no (bad ?) information; it has not been done before. And this is a bipartisan effort of the United States and on the part of Colombia that has given the -- (inaudible) -- and the results are the ones expected.

So, Secretary Gates, once again, we want to thank you, your government, your people, in this struggle against terrorism and drug trafficking. This is a struggle where we are together. and we have -- convinced that we will continue to have excellent results. Thank you very much

SEC. GATES: Muchos gracias.

First let me thank Minister Santos for hosting my visit, as well as the people of Colombia for a productive visit, an opportunity to discuss our shared security interests and a chance for me to progress in territorial control, human rights protection and democratic security.

I first met with Minister Santos at the Pentagon last February. I am pleased to return his visit by the hospitality President Uribe, the first lady and the minister have shown me here in beautiful Tolima air base.

The U.S. and Colombia have enjoyed a long-standing cooperative defensive security relationship. This has been one of our most prominent allies. That fact is underscored by our partnership in com

Subscribe

- > E-mail
- > RSS
- > Podcasts

Publications
Freedom of Information Act

Employee Resources

curbing transnational crime, and strengthening democratic institutions.

For the United States, supporting Colombia enhances regional security, thereby promoting economic progress. Others benefit as well. Recently Colombian police have been training our counter-narcotics operations.

Overall, Colombia has made substantial progress towards strengthening governmental economic reforms, and bolstering security in rural areas, all of which have made its citizens safer.

Colombia needs the continued support of the United States to consolidate the rule of law, the reinsertion of demobilized groups, public security and economic development. The proposed Promotion Agreement will also help to sustain these efforts in the future, and we will work hard to make this agreement. Let there be no doubt, challenges will remain, but they are surmountable.

We value Colombia's friendship and recognize the sacrifices of the Colombian people. I support that President Uribe and the government of Colombia have provided us. I look forward to partnership as Colombia strengthens its democratic institutions, extends the rule of law, and makes life safer, more prosperous lives.

Gracias.

Q (Off mike.)

SEC. GATES: We did have the opportunity -- President Uribe, the minister and I -- to discuss the situation and to discuss the humanitarian agreement possibility. I am -- we obviously would like to see the return of the American hostages and the return of all of the hostages.

I think we were especially focused on the fact that the reason we have this problem is because of the decision to release the hostages will come as a result of a decision by the FARC. I think that comes along that creates an environment in which the FARC will make that decision is to be expected.

I know that -- President Uribe has assured me that there are limits on what he will and what is possible of this possible agreement, and I'm satisfied with those limits, in terms of what Colombia is prepared to accept. So I think we had a good conversation. I know that Colombia is doing everything in its power to release of the hostages, and anything we can do to help this process we would be happy to cooperate.

Q (Off mike.)

SEC. GATES: We are prepared to -- above all we want the safe return of our hostages, to work with the government of Colombia to any extent that we can to help make that happen. If the government chooses to pursue opportunities to secure that return I think is up to the government. As I indicated in my previous answer, I think that the limits that President Uribe outlined to me were the limits.

Q (Off mike.)

SEC. GATES: I'm sorry, I didn't hear the first -- the question you addressed to me.

Q (Off mike.)

SEC. GATES: I think that our support remains firm and strong. I've been impressed by the professionalization of the Colombian military, toward the increased efforts, toward rule of law, toward justice people from the past and certain high profile cases. So I think that, frankly, we are quite pleased with the status of our relationship with the Colombian military.

MIN. SANTOS: (Interpretation in progress) -- here is that these vandals, as you term them, were the ones that brought to (light ?) because of internal investigations, and this shows that they are in a process of transparency and self-cleansing that makes possible that this came out to the penetration you were talking about.

Now, the changes on the part of the Department of Defense, there won't be many changes. The aid will be continued, and in the future we will discuss -- (interpretation stops).

Q (Off mike.)

SEC. GATES: Well, first of all, I sent a group to Iraq last week to look into the proper operation of the aid.

contractors working for the Department of Defense. They have come back with some recommendations that I have preliminarily reviewed and they seem to make sense to me. I still need to go back and review them with my colleagues at the department, but we will be taking some steps I think to enhance the command structure and the coordination of their activities by our military commanders in Iraq. So I'm confident that we are moving in the right direction in that respect.

We are looking forward to participating in Plan Mexico. The Mexican government -- Pre-9/11 made proposals. We have some proposals for financial -- further financial assistance before that. We look forward to working even more closely with Mexico to deal with this problem of narcotics trafficking issue for all of us.

(C) COPYRIGHT 2007, FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC., 1000 VERMONT AVE. NW; 5TH FLOOR, WASHINGTON, DC - 20005, USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ANY REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RESALE IS EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED. UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RESALE OF THIS INFORMATION CONSTITUTES A MISAPPROPRIATION UNDER APPLICABLE UNFAIR COMPETITION LAWS. FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PURSUE ALL REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO IT UNDER APPLICABLE LAWS TO PREVENT SUCH MISAPPROPRIATION. FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. IS A PRIVATE FIRM AND IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. NO COPYRIGHT IS CLAIMED AS TO ANY PART OF THIS WORK PREPARED BY A UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE AS PART OF HIS OR HER OFFICIAL DUTIES.

FOR INFORMATION ON SUBSCRIBING TO FNS, PLEASE CALL JACK GRAEME AT 202-347-1400.



[Printer-friendly Version](#)



[Email A Copy](#)

[About DefenseLink](#)

[No Fear Act](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[External Link Disclaimer](#)

[Web Policy](#)

[USA.gov](#)