

January 11, 2021

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to express my concern with the deteriorating security situation near the Colombia-Venezuela border. As Colombia enters a sensitive period with Presidential elections this May, I urge you to do more to support the Colombian government as it seeks to contain and mitigate the destabilizing impact that drug-related conflict has on both Colombia and the Western Hemisphere as a whole.

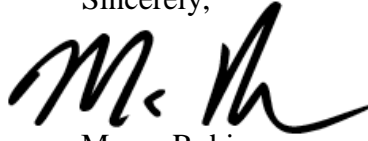
As you know, earlier this month, fighting between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and dissident elements of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) broke out in Colombia's Arauca province. The conflict over control of the lucrative cross-border drug trade emanating from Venezuela tragically killed at least 23 people in Arauca. This unfortunate return to the drug-related violence that plagued Colombia for many years has grave implications for the safety of both innocent Colombians and Venezuelans. During the conflicts of the mid-2000s, at least 868 people were killed and more than 58,000 people were forced to flee Arauca and the neighboring Apure Province in Venezuela, which destabilized other countries in the region.

This conflict is enabled by the Maduro regime's deliberate and active assistance to these militant organizations that rely on illegal narcotics for funding. For years, the dictatorial regimes of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro have provided safe haven for armed terrorist groups operating against the interests of the Colombian government. Unfortunately, your administration's decision to de-list most of these mercenaries from the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations has only emboldened terrorist organizations to continue their illegal activities in Colombia and Venezuela.

I urge your administration to maintain and strengthen the United States' longstanding commitment to, and mutually beneficial relationship with, the Republic of Colombia in the coming years. This should include exploring what additional support the United States can provide to Colombia's military and law enforcement bodies to prevent future violence; preserve the integrity of Colombia's elections from outside interference; and ensuring that U.S. international assistance does not benefit current or former members of terrorist organizations that further the violence. Our nation's unwavering support to Colombia should not be a partisan cause.

I look forward to working with you on these and other initiatives to further our nation's bilateral relationship with Colombia, which has been one of the pillars of regional stability in the Western Hemisphere. Thank you for your attention to these serious matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator