

Drummond and the US have Blood on their Hands! Stop Plan Colombia!

In northwestern Colombia in 2001, the president and vice president of the mining union Sintramienergetica were taken off a Drummond bus and shot to death by paramilitary death squads hired by the corporation. Later that year, paramilitaries also killed the new president. These men were all killed during negotiations with Drummond. The miners union and the International Labor Relief Fund filed a civil suit against Drummond in 2002. Despite the court case, even more Drummond workers have since been threatened and murdered by paramilitaries. The civil suit was going to start on July 9th in Birmingham, Alabama, but on June 20th a Bush appointed judge ruled that Drummond will not have to stand trial for these murders!

At the trial multiple witnesses were scheduled to testify that Drummond made regular payments to the US government sponsored death squads, and paramilitary officers were going to testify to being hired to “neutralize” union leadership. This case brings further national and international attention to the crimes of US corporations in Colombia and to the role of US sponsored death squads.

Plan Colombia Funds Death Squads

Colombia is a country dominated by US economic and political interests. There is growing US intervention with soldiers on the ground engaged in combat, and 5 billion dollars given to Colombia since 2000. The US is running Colombia for the benefit of corporations. Worker after worker and peasant after peasant told the Colombia Action Network delegation that US military aid goes straight into the hands of US government sponsored death squads that terrorize their communities.

Colombia receives more US military aid than any other country outside of the Middle East. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Colombia Action Network delegations have documented that the right-wing Colombian government uses US tax dollars to kill and threaten trade unionists, human rights workers, and campesinos (peasants) who organize against the US’ free trade agenda.

As a result Colombia is the most dangerous place to be a trade union activist in the world. US corporations like Coca-Cola, Chiquita, Drummond, and Occidental Oil, hire paramilitaries to target trade unionists in order to kill union organizing and negotiating efforts. This corporate-death squad link has come under increasing scrutiny recently. Since 2002, the Colombian Action Network has been leading a boycott of Coca-Cola products for Coca-Cola’s collusion with death squads and the murders of 8 trade unionists. Campuses across the country have been ending their contracts with “Killer Coke”. This spring, Chiquita plead guilty to arming and funding paramilitaries in Colombia.

The ruling comes at an important time. The Bush administration and Colombia’s President Uribe want the US to pass a new free trade agreement. Drummond has laid off 1,700 US miners who earned \$18 an hour and moved their operations to Colombia. In comparison, Colombian miners earn an hourly wage of \$2.45, receive no other benefits, and are threatened, kidnapped, and murdered by paramilitaries for union organizing. Passage of this free trade agreement would only further hurt workers in both countries.

Despite the increasing publicity of the atrocities of what the Colombian government really does with US support, President Bush has requested \$600 million more dollars in military aid for Colombia. However, Congress is currently debating whether to discontinue US military aid. Drummond’s crimes give us the opportunity to make the impact of US sponsored death squads real to the American public and to Congress. Trade unionists, students, and peace activists should come to Birmingham to demonstrate in support of the workers in Colombia and to protest the judge’s unjust ruling!

TAKE ACTION!

1. Call Congress and urge your representatives and senators to vote against any free trade agreement with Colombia and to vote against any aid to Colombia.
2. Come to Birmingham on July 9th and demonstrate against Drummond’s use of death squads and the judge’s ruling. Show support for the workers in Colombia!

For more information about the demonstration in AL contact Chapin with Tuscaloosa SDS @ 251.605.7780.

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