

paramilitaries, the reason I mention the surrender by a top FARC commander is those who oppose reducing tariffs on U.S.-made products argue that Colombia just doesn't deserve it. They've not done enough when it comes to reducing violence and in going after the narco-traffickers and the terrorists.

Under President Uribe, he has increased the prosecution budget of the State Attorney General, the State prosecutor for the entire country—a nation of 42 million people—by 72 percent in the last 2 years. He has added over 400 new prosecutors.

Ladies and gentlemen, the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement is a good agreement for Illinois manufacturers, for Illinois farmers, for U.S. manufacturers, and for U.S. farmers. Let's ratify this agreement. Let's work with the best partner we have in Latin America.

I urge the Speaker to bring to this floor the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. Let's give it an up-or-down vote, and I believe it will pass with overwhelmingly bipartisan support.

[From the Economist, May 15, 2008]

FREE TRADE IN THUGS: GETTING TOUGHER
WITH RIGHT-WING WARLORDS

In a surprise move on May 13th, President Alvaro Uribe announced the extradition to the United States of 14 of Colombia's most notorious paramilitary warlords on drug-trafficking charges. As well as sending a warning to other right-wing paramilitaries, the aim is to show Democrats in Washington that Mr. Uribe means what he says about breaking with paramilitary groups who continue to murder trade unionists and other left-wingers.

Democratic congressional leaders and their trade-union allies have cited those murders as a reason for their refusal to approve a free-trade agreement with Colombia. Mr. Uribe may also be hoping to boost his already soaring approval ratings to strengthen his hand in an eventual bid for an unprecedented third term as president. More than two terms in a row are currently banned by the constitution, so this would require approval by Congress.

Mr. Uribe's move could backfire. Human-rights groups fear that it will rob the victims of the compensation that they are entitled to from their tormentors, and could also remove the evidence needed for a successful investigation into why Colombia's paramilitaries and their political accomplices have hitherto enjoyed impunity. More than 60 congressmen, most allies of Mr. Uribe, are either already in prison or under investigation in Colombia for alleged links to paramilitaries. Last month, Mario Uribe, the president's cousin and close political ally, was arrested.

"The good news is that these paramilitary bosses could now face serious jail time," said José Miguel Vivanco, Americas director of Human Rights Watch, a lobbying group. (In the United States, cocaine dealers can get 30 years or more.) "The bad news is they may no longer have any reason to collaborate with Colombian prosecutors investigating their atrocities. . . . Just as local prosecutors were beginning to unravel the web of paramilitary ties to prominent politicians, the government has shipped the men with the most information out of the country," he lamented.

In fact, the United States has agreed to allow Colombian prosecutors continued access to the extradited men. They have also apparently agreed to transfer to Colombia any seized assets or fines imposed on the warlords to compensate more than 100,000 victims who have come forward. Created in the 1980s by wealthy ranchers to protect themselves from attacks by the left-wing FARC guerrillas, the paramilitaries developed into armed gangs, accused of many thousands of killings as well as drug-trafficking and money-laundering.

Explaining his decision in a televised address on May 13th, Mr. Uribe said the extradited men had violated the conditions of a 2003 pact with the government under which they agreed to surrender to the authorities in exchange for relatively light prison sentences—a maximum of eight years—and protection against extradition. In return, they had promised to confess to their crimes, cease all illegal activities and use their drug money to compensate the victims of their appalling crimes. But the 14 warlords had continued to run their criminal networks from prison and had failed to pay reparations, Mr. Uribe said.

If the move was made with one eye on Washington, its timing appears to have been determined by a legal wrangle. Groups representing victims have been fighting to halt the extraditions. This appears to have prompted Mr. Uribe's decision to send the paramilitaries to the United States. Colombia's Supreme Court had recently supported these groups, ruling that extraditions of paramilitary bosses should be carried out only after they had confessed to their crimes and paid reparations. But this was overturned by a judicial council last week. Within hours, the first paramilitary leader to be extradited, Carlos Mario Jiménez, alias "Macaco", was on a plane bound for the United States, a journey made a week later by his 14 colleagues. More may follow.

[From BBC News]

FARC CAPTIVE CALLS FOR SURRENDER

A top commander of the FARC rebels in Colombia has urged other rebels to follow her example and surrender.

Nelly Avila Moreno, known as Karina, handed herself in to soldiers over the weekend in the latest blow to FARC.

She said FARC was falling apart under pressure from the military and growing desertions. Several key leaders have been killed in recent months.

Karina has been blamed for a string of murders and abductions in the north-western Antioquia region.

Her surrender is a coup for President Alvaro Uribe, who made her a priority target for the security forces in 2002, the BBC's Jeremy McDermott says.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, has been fighting to overthrow the government for more than 40 years.

NOT BLOODTHIRSTY

"To my comrades: Change this life that you are leading in the guerrilla group and re-enter society with the government's re-insertion plan," she said at a news conference called by the army in Medellín.

Her unit had been whittled down to fewer than 50 fighters—down from several hundred—when she surrendered.

Karina said she had been out of contact with FARC's seven-member ruling secretariat for two years.

"The decision [to surrender] was made because of the pressure by the army in the area," she said.

She said she was shaken by the killing of secretariat member Ivan Rios by one of his bodyguards in March.

The bodyguard had cut off Rios's hand and turned it in with his laptop computer in return for a reward.

The government has offered bounties for top rebel commanders. Karina's was \$1m (£512,000). Two weeks ago, President Uribe appealed to her to surrender.

She contacted the army who sent a helicopter to pick up her and another guerrilla, known as Michin.

She denied involvement in the 1983 murder of President Uribe's father and said she was not the "bloodthirsty" woman the authorities described her as.

WOMEN VETS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Oklahoma (Ms. FALLIN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FALLIN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With Memorial Day right around the corner, now is the time to reflect upon the courage, the dedication and the patriotism personified by the men and the women in our Armed Forces. I know many Americans will stop this weekend and will thank a veteran in their family or in their community for their service to our Nation. They may meet a young soldier back from a tour of duty in Iraq and may quietly just thank God that we are born in a Nation where freedom is valued and fought for.

In our modern military, it is becoming increasingly likely that a returning soldier is a woman, and while men still outnumber women in the Armed Forces, military service is no longer a career choice for men only. Today, there are more women than ever choosing to serve their country. They are pilots, engineers, commanders of ships, military police, and nurses. Deployed in two different theaters, women are playing a vital role in our war efforts.

Now more than 185,000 women have been deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and in other missions since 2001. Since its inception, women have played a vital role in defending our Nation and its freedoms. Whether it is in a hospital, in the tents of the revolution, in the shipyards of World War II or in the strategic combat positions they hold in our modern military, the contribution of women to our national defense is undeniable.

Tomorrow, I will be honored to join several of my colleagues from this chamber as we lay a wreath at the Arlington National Cemetery to honor the more than over 350 women in uniform who have died defending this great Nation since World War I.

In a few hours, we will be given the opportunity to honor these women and their significant contributions to our military when we vote on House Resolution 1054: Honoring the service and achievements of women in the Armed Forces and female veterans. By supporting this resolution, we can send a clear message to our women in the military and to our women veterans that your service is not forgotten nor is your courage, your patriotism nor

your sacrifice. Today, we honor you all.

OFFSHORE DRILLING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As gasoline prices soar to almost \$4 a gallon, the American driving public wants Congress to do something about it, and it is our responsibility.

Where I live, I represent a good part of rural southeast Texas, and many of these individuals are rice farmers, and they work the land, and they can't afford the diesel for their pickup trucks and for their trucks to go and work at the refineries in southeast Texas. All people throughout the country have this same common issue: Why are gasoline prices so high? Why isn't Congress doing something about it?

Well, part of the reason is Congress, instead of exploring our own natural resources, Congress has decided to make the decision to punish energy consumption in this country and to make it more difficult for America to take care of Americans. Congress' policy is let's rely on OPEC; let's rely on that dictator Chavez and get their crude oil while we figure out something else to do on how to take care of ourselves down the road, but the problem is immediate, and we need to deal with it, and we can deal with it.

The first issue: Drilling for crude oil and natural gas. Now, because of Congress, we have made it impossible to drill offshore. This map of the United States shows two areas offshore. This blue area is down by Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. This area in the Gulf of Mexico is where we drill offshore, and we are glad to do that. That crude oil that we take from the Gulf of Mexico and distribute throughout the United States is good for America. But you see, Mr. Speaker, there is also more crude oil in the Gulf of Mexico by Florida. There is also crude oil over off the east coast. Mr. Speaker, there's also crude oil off the sacred coast of California, the west coast, but we don't drill over there. We don't drill in the Gulf of Mexico. We don't drill on the east coast. Why? Because of Congress.

So one thing we could do is lift the offshore drilling prohibitions, not the regulations, but the prohibitions. But because of the environmental fear lobby that is so strong in this Congress, we don't drill where there's crude oil or natural gas. Way up here, not even on the map, is a place called ANWR where there is nothing except crude oil, and we don't drill for crude oil in ANWR because of the environmental fear lobby and because of Congress.

Let's lift those restrictions and take care of ourselves rather than rely on foreign dictators and OPEC to get our crude oil.

Now, there is going to be another offshore drilling rig out in the Gulf of

Mexico over here near this red zone, but it is not going to be built by Americans. Those rigs out there off the coast of Florida, about 48 miles, are going to be built by the Cubans, and it's financed by the Chinese. That's right. The Chinese and the Cubans are drilling where America ought to drill.

Doesn't that bother anybody? Lift the restrictions.

The second thing we need to do is have more refineries. I represent southeast Texas. We have the Nation's largest refinery and the second largest refinery. Down in the Sabine-Neches Waterway that borders Louisiana there are numerous refineries, but they're running at capacity because we haven't built a new refinery in this country in 30 years.

Why? The environmental fear lobby is prohibiting us from taking care of ourselves. So it doesn't do any good to produce more crude oil if we don't have the refinery capacity to produce gasoline and diesel fuel. So make it easier to have refineries in this country. We need to take care of ourselves.

I was somewhat embarrassed as an American citizen when our President, the most powerful person on Earth, had to go and ask OPEC last week to produce more crude oil so we could have gasoline. Of course, they in their arrogant way said, "Well, we'll think about it. Maybe we will and maybe we won't." See, that is what is happening to our country. We are being held hostage because Congress will not let America take care of Americans.

Mr. Speaker, we need to produce the crude oil, the natural gas that we have. We need to even produce and to build more nuclear plants in this country. Right now, China is building nine nuclear plants, and they have 40 on the drawing boards. How many are we making? We're not making any because the environmental fear lobby will not let us build nuclear power plants in this country.

So how long is it going to take Congress to get the message that we need to reduce gasoline prices? One way to do that is to increase supply, and we can take care of ourselves. We are the only major power in the world that depends on other nations for our fuel and for our economy. This ought not to be, but it is just the way it is.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 15 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

□ 1000

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. PASTOR) at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord of history and purveyor of all the world, it seems that with the passage of time all nations are coming into a closer unity. People of different cultures and religions are being bound together in common concerns and by greater communication.

By Your grace, individuals seem to be more aware of the world around them and grow in a sense of responsibility. Bless this solidarity and help this Nation through leadership in government, religion and industry build a world of prosperity, freed of hunger and assured of justice and peace.

Ignite a spirit of hopefulness in young people that they may prove themselves to be positive, creative and joyful, truly Your free children both now and forever.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY

(Mr. HONDA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, it is with tremendous honor that I rise today to celebrate the 60th anniversary of a great democracy and our close friend and important ally, Israel. With its strong technology sector in both renewable energy development and high-tech research, Israel is a natural friend of Silicon Valley, which I proudly represent.

Israel's contribution to the high-tech industry, from computer processors to cell phones, and its development of life-saving medical techniques, benefit people around the world every day.

I have fond memories of my first trip to Israel, whose people, history, and culture have left an everlasting impression upon me.

I have supported Israel throughout my career, and will continue to do so. We must continue our democratic partnership with Israel. Once again, Mr.