

## STATEMENT BY JOHN RENDON

For the past three decades and change, I've consulted with a number of governments on security matters, including Colombia, where for the past almost twenty years, I have had both the honor and the privilege to support four Colombian administrations and multiple ministers of National Defense.

During that time, I have followed a very traditional rule: all conversations with government officials in either government remain confidential-- whether media reporting is accurate or not.

I'm going to maintain that position now.

But let me share the following observation, forged over two decades of learning from and about Colombia.

Because of President Pastrana's tireless dedication, Minister Luis Fernando Ramirez's leadership and Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno's relentless and resolute engagement with the United States government, the journey on which Colombia embarked from a near failed state to today would not have been possible.

President Pastrana's efforts made it possible for President Uribe to succeed and win the war, to reclaim real security for its citizens, and return the government to the people through his town meetings.

President Santos's extraordinary accomplishment in ending a war which took the lives of tens of thousands innocent men, women of children for more than one half of a century would not have been possible without President Uribe's success.

President Duque's economic and social progress would not have been possible without the success of President Santos.

Here is what I, as a friend of Colombia, have concluded: each President, each Leader stands on the shoulders of the presidents that have gone before them, regardless of party or personality.

That is the measure of a true democracy and something about which all Colombians should be proud.

Sadly, in too many countries; Politics, which was once called a noble profession, has migrated from the Art of Compromise, to become the Art of Annihilation. This phenomenon is as corrosive as corruption to the fundamentals of freedom.

I believe it is in the best interests of Colombia and the world for Colombia's relationship with the United States to remain strong. I have directed my attorney to contact Colombian legal

counsel involved in this case to urge them to refrain from litigation and rhetoric that could create the risk of damaging the relationship between the United States and Colombia.

That relationship must continue to transcend political parties and personalities, to carry out a common agenda to strengthen the security of both countries.

I thank the people of Colombia and their governments over the past two decades for all you have taught me. It has been, is now and forever will be an honor and a privilege to support the bipartisan relationship between Colombia and the United States.

May nothing more than the oceans and seas, ever come between our two countries.

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