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HOFFA BLASTS MCCAIN TRIP TO COLOMBIA, REFUSAL TO ADDRESS HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Colombian Labor Leader Joins Hoffa in Call for End to Labor Activist Killings

(Washington, D.C.) – International Brotherhood of Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa and Jorge Gamboa, President of the National Petroleum Workers Union in Colombia, blasted Sen. John McCain's visit to Colombia to promote the Colombia job-killing trade deal with the United States.

"Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world to be a union member," Hoffa said during a press conference today. "Since 1991, more than 2,500 trade unionists have been assassinated in Colombia, more than any country in the world. Twenty-seven have been murdered this year alone. The United States shouldn't be dealing with regimes that torture and kill its citizens – John McCain should know that better than anyone."

In fact, more than 400 trade unionists have been murdered in Colombia since President Uribe took office – more than the rest of the world combined.

The Teamsters Union also launched a radio ad campaign on Air America radio to bring attention to McCain's visit to Colombia.

"If he visited places like Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania to talk with Americans about trade, he wouldn't like what he'd hear. But I guess it's hard for him to resist a trip to Colombia when his senior advisors have longtime business and political ties there," Hoffa said. "Besides McCain' cronies, just who benefits from a trade deal with Colombia? Not American workers. Not Colombian workers. For a maverick, McCain's ideas sure sound like what we've been getting from Bush for the last eight years."

Hoffa was joined by Gamboa who has experience first-hand the dire situation that trade unionists face in Colombia.

(MORE)

Page 2 of 2/Hoffa Blasts McCain Trip to Colombia, Refusal to Address Human Rights Issues

Gamboa said through a translator that the trade deal was imposed on workers by force, and he hopes members of the U.S. Democratic Party will intervene soon.

“We must reject this agreement on a multi-national level,” Gamboa said. “This agreement has awakened the persecution of those who oppose the Free Trade Agreement. It supports war, increases confrontation. It leads to more exploitation of workers, lower salaries, miserable incomes and forces workers to turn to illegal activity to make money.”

Founded in 1903, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents 1.4 million hardworking men and women in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

For a replay of the press conference call:

U.S.: 1-800-475-6701

International: 320-365-3844

Access code: 952104

