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Trying to Kill the Colombia FTA

By [Philip I. Levy](#)

May 5, 2011, 6:12 pm

The Obama administration made an important step yesterday in unblocking the U.S. trade agenda. It [asked Congress](#) to begin technical discussions on passing the free trade agreement (FTA) with Colombia.

This was the move that trade advocates on the Hill had been waiting for. After a long history of [stalling](#) on trade issues, the administration negotiated some minor revisions and embraced the FTA with Korea at the end of last year. In the process, they won the backing of the United Auto Workers. Congressional leaders urged the administration not to stop there; they wanted the pending FTAs with Colombia and Panama to move as well.

The administration ultimately consented, but the Colombia agreement faces unified opposition from the U.S. labor movement. In explaining this opposition, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka in March [gave](#) the graphic example of a Colombian unionist named Dario Hoyos who was murdered.

Dario was assassinated. It was on a bus. ...They stopped the bus with all the workers on it, make you kneel down on the ground, and they put a bullet through Dario's head. ...

And (the Colombians) called us and said: We have great news. We've convicted the men that have killed Dario Hoyos. And I was excited about that, until I found out that they convicted them in absentia. They are still at large. They named four people convicted and then said, that one's solved; let's move to the next one.

... That's why we oppose (the agreement) and that's why we think before you go with a partner, you should choose them carefully so that you don't aid and abet that type of thing.

Colombia is a violent country. It has made great strides in addressing that violence, but violence still remains. Dan Griswold

and Juan Carlos Hidalgo of Cato have [documented](#) the country's progress. Among their findings:

Union members enjoy greater security than other vulnerable groups of Colombian civil society, such as teachers, councilmen and journalists. ... economists Daniel Mejía and María José Uribe of the Universidad de los Andes in Colombia ... found no statistical evidence supporting the claim that trade unionists are targeted for their activities.


Trumka's reasoning seems to be that it is unconscionable to deal with a country where there are murders. Yet, in its latest statistics, the FBI [reports](#) that there were 13,636 murders in the United States in 2009, in 20 of which employers were known to have murdered employees. The question, in both Colombia and the United States, is whether these crimes were supported or condoned by the government, or whether they were instances in which it proved impossible to enforce laws perfectly. In both cases, it appears that the governments are working hard to stop such crimes, with significant but partial success.

In neither country should the stubborn persistence of violence serve as an excuse for forgoing the closer relations and mutual benefits that a free trade agreement would bring.




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[May 5, 2011 at 10:32 pm](#)

CIA and Mossad founded the Medellin Cartel to finance the Contras and bring crack into black neighborhoods and later imprison them in Wall St for profit gulag. It was also to destabilize Colombia which was drifting away from the fascist, drug trafficking bankster by joining the Non-Aligned Movement among other nation building no-nos.

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- o  *GERALD CHANDLER* says:
[May 6, 2011 at 12:33 pm](#)

You talk nonsense and that is why you hide behind the name of a great patriot.

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