



the sunshine project

NEWS RELEASE

www.sunshine-project.org

European Parliament Rejects Agent Green

Citing Human Health and Environmental Dangers, Parliamentarians Vote
474 –1 to Prevent Introduction of Biological Agents

(Hamburg and Austin, 1 February) – Today the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly against the introduction of biological agents into the Drug War. In Resolution B5-0087/2001, which sets out a stance against militarization in Colombian President Pastrana's "Plan Colombia", Parliamentarians expressed their conviction that the European Union:

...must take the necessary steps to secure an end to the large-scale use of chemical herbicides and prevent the introduction of biological agents such as Fusarium oxysporum, given the dangers of their use to human health and the environment alike;

Political support for the decision is strong. The European Union's top foreign policy official, Council of Foreign Ministers President Lars Danielsson, said the EU considered Plan Colombia – which calls for the use of biological agents – a bilateral US-Colombia affair in which Europe did not wish to become involved. Commissioner Poul Nielson, speaking on behalf of the European Commission, declared that he was "completely in agreement" with sponsor Joaquim Miranda of Portugal, who attacked eradication with biological agents as dangerous for biodiversity and potentially deepening international spill over of Colombia's complex internal conflict.

The proponents of biological eradication – the US and its junior partner the United Nations Drug Program (UNDCP) – have faced fierce opposition in recent months, forcing them to withdraw immediate plans to test and deploy biological agents in the Andes. But neither has renounced the strategy of attacking illicit crops with biological weapons, and despite accusations of biological warfare, both the US and UNDCP continue to conduct research and development of anti-narcotic crop biological agents.

The European Parliament's decision is a blow against these policies because it rejects not just one biological agent (*Fusarium oxysporum*); but the entire approach. Thus, European Parliament resolution is an important step toward a global ban on the use of biological weapons against illicit crops called for at a December meeting in France by an international group of more than eighty non-profit organizations (see the Sunshine Project website for more details).

The Resolution is embarrassing for the British government, which is the only country outside the US that has provided money for UNDCP's biological agents research. The Drugs and International Crime Division of the UK Foreign Office is funding tests being conducted by a facility of the former Soviet Union's offensive biological weapons program located in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. In recent months, however, as public scrutiny has increased of this program and the related one to develop agents to eradicate coca in the Andes, the Foreign Office has become increasingly tight-lipped on the subject, making ambiguous public statements about the future of its support for biological eradication.

Last year the US Congress conditioned aid to Colombia on Bogotá agreeing to use biological agents. This condition was suspended in a waiver issued by former US President Clinton, who overrode the US Congress citing concerns about biological weapons proliferation. But this policy could be reversed in future appropriations. Shortly before leaving office, Clinton reiterated the concern about biological weapons. The new US administration has not made any public statements on the issue.