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### FEATURED Q&A

#### Would a White House Gambit on the US-Colombia FTA Pay Off?

**Q** The Bush administration has announced its intention to submit implementing legislation for the US-Colombia free trade agreement, which would start the 90 legislative day clock applicable under Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) procedures very shortly after Congress reconvenes in late March. This would be the first time a TPA-eligible implementing bill has been introduced over the objections of congressional leadership. Would such a gambit pay off? Or would it backfire and undermine the prospects for the trade pact?

ments. Repudiating that promise—even though it was made by a prior Congress under different party control—would be a grave act not justified by any circumstances specific to the Colombia deal. Opposition, whether based on dissatisfaction with the deal itself or a conviction that Colombia is an undeserving FTA partner, should be expressed through votes against the implementing bill. Going beyond that, and depriving the bill of TPA protections, would stigmatize the Congress as an unreliable partner in trade initiatives."

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**A** Guest Comment: John Magnus: "The gambit may not succeed, but is worth trying if no agreement is reached by the time Congress reconvenes. TPA cedes to the president two powers on trade agreement implementing bills normally guarded jealously by the parliamentary majority: to determine what bill text will be voted on and when (at least within what session of Congress) the vote will occur. Presidents have never used the second power. Now it appears that to avoid shelving the Colombia deal, the president will have to do so. TPA itself is fragile. As an adjustment to the normal debate rules, it can be pulled back at any time if the Senate or House chooses not to adhere to the bargain struck. But Congress has promised to apply these special debate rules to implementing legislation for an agreement negotiated and presented in accordance with TPA require-



#### Minister Calls Accusations Ecuador Harbors FARC "Lies"

Charges Ecuador is harboring a Colombian rebel group are "lies" and part of "a media campaign" against the country, Ecuadorean Foreign Minister Maria Isabel Salvador said Tuesday. See Special Advisor Report on page 3.

Photo: Latin America Advisor.

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