These men did their job to protect our Nation from an illegal alien, a Mexican drug smuggler who brought $1 million worth of marijuana across our border into Texas. Yet through a questionable prosecution, these two men were convicted for defending themselves and defending our border.

It is a sad day that such a travesty of justice could happen to two Hispanic Americans who loved America so much that they were willing to become law enforcement officers, and in this case Border Patrol agents, in order to protect America. Despite the efforts of the American people and Members of Congress, who have brought this to the attention of the White House, nothing, and I say nothing, has been done to reverse this injustice.

While outside groups and Members of Congress have filed court briefs to support these agents, we still anxiously await a decision in their appeal. The more time these men spend in prison and the longer it takes for a decision on their appeal, the more frustrated the American people become.

The American people have not forgotten agents Ramos and Compean. From time to time, I still hear from constituents who are frustrated that these men are still in prison. The only glimmer of hope for these agents and their families rests with the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. During an oral argument on December 3, 2007, one of the judges considering the case, Judge E. Grady Jolly said, and I quote, Madam Speaker, and this is his quote, ''It does seem to me that the government overreacted here. For some reason, this one got out of hand.'' That is a Federal judge that made that comment.

A ruling on their appeal is now expected any day, and millions of Americans are hopeful that the Court of Appeals will reverse this terrible injustice.

Madam Speaker, I still call on Chairman JOHN CONYERS to hold a hearing to review this unjust prosecution some time before the end of the year. Chairman CONYERS is a fair-minded person for whom I have great respect. Justice is crying out for his help.

And Madam Speaker, before I close, I want the Ramos and Compean family to know that there are those in both parties in this House of Representatives that are not going to sit back and wait until this injustice is corrected because these two border agents deserve nothing but praise for what they have done for this great Nation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

OIL EXPORTS FROM COLOMBIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, the papers back home tell the story: 25 firefighter jobs advertised, thousands of applicants. Bass Pro Sporting Goods building a new store, 300 jobs, 13,000 applicants, and the applications keep coming in. Yet the Bush administration last week sent Congress another job-killing NAFTA-like trade pact, this time for the South American nation of Colombia.

But why Colombia? And why now? The answer to both questions, in a word, is oil. Rather than paying attention to what is happening in this country, again, the Bush administration is focused to a new set of global oil deposits.

Why Colombia? In the big picture of global trade, Colombia is relatively insignificant to the United States. So why would the Bush administration make it a top priority in the final year of his presidency? Because oil represents more than half of Colombia's exports to the United States. And nothing drives Bush administration policy more than oil.

Ten years ago, Colombia wasn't even exporting oil. It was an oil-importing country. But with the Middle East in turmoil, the Bush administration, like the Clinton administration before it, is doing everything it can to make Colombia safe for oil exports to us. At a time when U.S. relations with Venezuela, South America's leading oil producer, have dropped to an all-time low, Colombia has emerged as the continent's fourth leading supplying supplier.

A decade ago, as I mentioned, Colombia was an oil-importing nation. Now, multinational oil companies have made huge investments because of tax favorability in the area of a giant, crescent-shaped, underocean oil field that stretches from Colombia to Peru. This trade agreement is not about cocoa. It is not about coal. It is not about cut flowers. This is an agreement about oil.

Buying oil from Colombia piles more oil trade deficit on top of the $800 billion overall trade deficit our Nation has wracked up with nations all over the world. We continue to export jobs at an accelerating rate and import more and more and more from abroad with oil leading the way by far the number one category in the red.

As in Middle East, the United States government is pouring billions of dollars into Colombia in the form of military and foreign aid in order to protect the oil companies' investments.

Why now? Because the United States is being forced by political realities to relocate its sole defense base in Latin America out of Ecuador, whose president wants it removed from there. And by contrast, the Uribe government in Colombia has welcomed U.S. military involvement, seeing an opportunity to court favor with the Bush administration and the military protection that aid provides for oil exports. Only Israel and Egypt receive more military assistance from the United States.

According to Amnesty International, which opposes military aid to Colombia until human rights concerns are addressed, the U.S. contributes approximately $750 million, a quarter of $1 billion, each year. It is estimated that our country has sent Colombia more than $5 billion under the guise of Plan Colombia, with most of the assistance going to the military and police.

These parallels with the Middle East are troubling. In both regions, the United States risks its reputation with the ''people on the street'' by mixing economic designs on resources not belonging to us, and then moving defense assets to protect that interest.

Yes, average Americans are justifiably upset over rising prices at the pump. A gallon of gasoline now costs as much or more than a gallon of milk. Think about that. But surely the answer to this predicament is not to increase our oil dependence on Colombia. If our citizens saw how our America has dedicated its military assets to back up that oil flow owned by private interests, they would be really enraged. In Latin America, the United States is viewed as anything but the ''Sweet Land of Liberty.''

As in the Middle East, public opinion throughout Latin America has turned strongly negative toward the United States. People to our south view the Bush administration's policies as concerned only with the wealthiest segments of society or their American investment partners and essentially apathetic about democracy for the average person. To achieve the real Alliance For Progress envisioned by John F. Kennedy, our policies should promote democracy and cooperation, not resource exploitation.

Why would our government tether itself to a regime that has tolerated the murder of thousands of labor leaders, more than the rest of the countries of the world combined? Already this year, 17 more labor leaders have been assassinated in Colombia. The Bush administration's failure to cure America's oil addiction is no reason to overlook the crimes of impunity that are being committed regularly against organized labor in Colombia.

Once again, however, our foreign policy is being held hostage to the demands of an oil-based economy. Haven't we moved beyond the 20th century? The issue is not the U.S. trade relationship with Colombia, but the failure of the Bush administration to make our economy more stable at home by pursuing the important goal of energy independence.

Our national leaders should wake up and move us to freedom from imported petroleum. This is a national imperative as serious as our Nation has ever faced. We don't need Colombian oil now. We need energy independence here at home.