Almost a year on, the author of this question has encountered no scientific proof for the notion that confining air passengers in a highly restricted space improves passenger safety. On the contrary, numerous scientific publications, factual evidence and public opinion all back up the view that traveller’s thrombosis is one of the consequences of the policy of enclosing passengers in a confined space. Certain studies even suggest that thrombosis may occur in as many cases as one in a thousand (Aerospace Medical Association – Air Transport Medicine Committee, Traveller’s Thrombosis, Deep Vein Thrombosis associated with Travel, January 2001).

Traveller’s thrombosis is only one of the more obvious consequences of the inhuman treatment frequently inflicted on passengers by airlines: cases in point include rheumatic ailments, claustrophobia, and even syndromes such as 'air rage' — a phenomenon which the Commission document refers to in detail, but without any consideration of its possible causes.

Given the above:

1. Does the Commission not consider it necessary, as a matter of urgency, to review its position on the confinement of air passengers in restricted spaces?

2. Does the Commission not consider that the principles already existing in EU law concerning minimum spaces for the transportation of poultry, pigs and other livestock should be extended to the transport of human beings by air?

(1) OJ C 219 E, 1.8.2000, p. 68.

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(8 May 2001)

The Commission is aware that long-distance transport of passengers by air may increase the risk of thrombosis or affect passengers' health in other ways. However, it does not believe that current knowledge justifies a legislative proposal from the Commission, and believes a review needs to be made of studies conducted by scientists from around the world before any conclusions are drawn regarding possible Community action to protect passenger health, including reserving passenger space for reasons other than rapid evacuation of aircraft.

The consultation which the World Health Organisation (WHO) organised on this subject on 12 and 13 March 2001 confirmed the lack of concrete evidence linking the risk of thrombosis to air travel. The WHO is proposing to undertake a series of epidemiological studies on the risk, the scale of the problem and the risk factors, studies to isolate the environmental factors (cabin pressure, oxygen levels, consumption of alcohol and lack of exercise) and, lastly, a study of the effectiveness of various preventive measures. A number of airline companies appear interested in contributing to, and helping to finance, these studies.

The Commission intends to follow the progress of research in this area closely. To this end, it will also take account of the results of a research project entitled Dynasafe, which is being funded under the Community’s Fifth framework programme of research and development (1).

(1) COM(97) 553 final.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0471/01

by Juan Naranjo Escobar (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(21 February 2001)

Subject: Plan Colombia

Since 1990 more than 35 000 people, the majority of them civilians, have died in armed clashes in Colombia. Since last September there has been an additional element in the peace process in the form of the so-called Plan Colombia, launched by the country’s president, Andrés Pastrana, and costing USD 7 billion for the period 2000-2006. The Commission plans to provide € 105 million in economic aid to Colombia over the same period. The EU will be contributing € 300 million in all.
Far from describing the conflict in Colombia as armed and militarist, the European Parliament stated in its resolutions of 18 January 2001 that the European Union should pursue its own, non-military strategy; that, in addition to their military dimension, the prevailing situation and conflict in Colombia have a social and political dimension; and that, given the economic exclusion in Colombia, the EU should finance primarily those projects geared towards assisting and modernising the civil sector.

How would the Commission define the Community's cooperation strategy? To what extent do certain aspects of Plan Colombia conflict with that strategy? On what areas does the Commission intend to focus its economic assistance, and what specific projects will it be supporting in the fields of education, agriculture, fisheries, health, legal reform and respect for human rights?

**Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission**

(31 May 2001)

As stated in the Communication entitled 'Mulitannual Support Programme for Colombia' adopted in October 2000, the Commission is well aware of the concerns that the military component of 'Plan Colombia' has created both in Colombia and in Europe. This same document states that the Commission does not intend to take part in any initiative with a military dimension in Colombia.

The Commission is considering funding projects in two main areas:

- € 105 million of programmable aid over the period 2000-2006, to be spent on the following sectors: social and economic development and combating poverty (€ 40 million); alternative development (€ 30 million); support for the reform of the judiciary sector (€ 25 million); support and promotion of Human Rights (€ 10 million).

- Additionally, the Commission intends to support a series of projects in the fields of emergency aid, to be carried out via European Community's Humanitarian Office (ECHO) (especially to assist the internally displaced people), non-governmental organisation (NGO)-co-financing, protection of the environment and tropical forests.

The identification of specific projects falling into these categories is underway, with the support of independent experts.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0472/01**

by Monica Frassoni (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(21 February 2001)

**Subject:** Italian appointments to the Scientific Committee on Animal Nutrition

One of the experts appointed to the new Scientific Committee on Animal Nutrition, created by Commission Decision 97/579/EC, is Professor Gianfranco Piva (Università cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Piacenza, Italy).

According to an article about BSE that appeared on page 3 of the daily newspaper 'La Repubblica' on 25 January, Professor Piva acts as a consultant for 'Morando', a Turin-based company that produces animal feed, and an opinion drawn up by him was annexed to a report of 9 June 1998 signed by the director of the veterinary services department of the Italian Health Ministry, Dr Romano Marabelli, which called for the Italian Higher Institute for Health to give permission for a threshold of 0.15 % to be set for the presence in feed of meal containing animal protein, in line with 'similar guidelines shortly to be issued' by the EU.

The invitation for expressions of interest in the post of member of a Scientific Committee, published by the Commission, specifies that candidates must submit a declaration of any interests that might be considered prejudicial to their independence.