

Biden Takes Heat From Own Party for Plan to Remove FARC From Terror List

The Biden White House is receiving pushback from within the Democrat Party over the decision to remove the Colombian rebel group FARC from a list of terrorist organizations.

When the *Wall Street Journal* first [broke news](#) of the decision before it was to be publicly announced, there was little stir in Washington, D.C. But the news has sparked controversy in Florida — home to an estimated 150,000 Colombian American voters, many of whom fled the Latin American country due to violence carried out by FARC.



AP Images

As a result, some top Democrats in the Sunshine State are [railing against](#) Biden.

“This is terrible. It’s bad policy. It’s bad politics,” said Annette Taddeo, a state senator running in the Democrat primary for governor.

Taddeo — who left her home country of Colombia at age 17 when her father, a WWII American fighter pilot, was kidnapped by FARC — called the White House’s move “outrageous.”

FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Spanish: *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*), waged a decades-long guerilla war against the Colombian government that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and displaced millions.

The narco-funded revolutionary group signed a peace deal with the government five years ago that is still in the process of implementation. But support for the deal has been mixed, particularly among Florida's Latin community, as many oppose former FARC members' reintegration into society.

"These were terrorists, murderers," Taddeo said.

Even Congressman Charlie Crist, a former governor who is also in the Democrat primary to try to reclaim his old job, expressed concern at the news, saying the FARC “caused decades of war and death — they’ve earned their designation.”

Daniella Levine Cava, the Democrat mayor of Miami-Dade County, called on Biden to rethink the change and “double down to reject the extremist communist agenda that destroyed nations like Venezuela.”

The White House attempted to do some damage control with a conference call on Wednesday. The State Department had reportedly told Congress of its forthcoming plan to drop the “terrorist” designation, but even the Colombian government had yet to be notified.

But the White House defended its decision. *Politico* notes:

The State Department's decision to drop FARC from its list of terrorist groups isn't giving a



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on November 28, 2021

free pass to the former guerrilla group, according to the senior administration official, who declined to speak on the record. The plan to remove the FARC from the list, the official said, comes after an annual review that included input from the intelligence community, law enforcement, the U.S. embassy and the State Department.

Five years into the peace process, 90 percent of FARC rebels have demobilized and met their commitments under the agreement, the official noted. And a key piece of the administration plan, the official said, is to add the new armed groups — formed by former FARC rebels and dissident groups, including the group known as Nueva Marquetalia and one faction led by guerrilla leader Gentil Duarte — that are now pushing instability and violence in Colombia.

“This isn’t pulling back punches. It’s pointing them in the right direction — and that’s the [FARC dissidents and their] terrorist and criminal activity,” the senior administration official said.

Some Democrats fear the argument in favor of removing the “terrorist” designation will be lost on voters.

“I can explain this to my students. I can have this debate among my colleagues, but local politics isn’t making that distinction, especially because there are people in this community who were either kidnapped or had relatives who were kidnapped — while some of the people responsible [former FARC rebels] are now sitting in the Colombian Congress,” said Eduardo Gamarra, a Latin American studies professor at Florida International University in Miami who polls Latin voters in the United States and throughout Latin America.

According to Gamarra, the move will be an “even harder sell” for Biden because he did not first consult with the Colombian community in Florida.

“I don’t know what they gain by doing this,” he questioned. “There’s more of a gain for Colombia than there is for the Democratic Party or the Biden administration.”

While Colombian American voters historically voted Democrat, they and other communities, such as Venezuelans and Nicaraguans, have in recent years begun to shift Republican in commonality with the Cuban American community.

The consequences of this shift were seen electorally in the 2020 presidential election. Whereas Hillary Clinton carried Latin-heavy Miami-Dade County by 30 percentage points in 2016, Biden won by only seven. Republicans hope to build on that new support in South Florida in the 2022 midterm elections.

“They’ve seen the poll numbers. It’s a disaster,” said Juan Zapata, a former Republican state representative for Florida.

“The people of South Florida, and now throughout the United States, know this is a terrible deal,” Zapata added. “And it’s not just Colombian Americans. It started with Fidel Castro in Cuba. There’s Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua. And it went to Venezuela with Hugo Chávez.”



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