



Siguiendo el conflicto: hechos y análisis

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Where Is Paramilitarism Heading in Colombia?

By: Conflict Dynamics and Peace Negotiations Area

The dismantling of the military, political and complicity relations structures of the paramilitary groups that participated in the negotiations with the Colombian Government between 2003 and 2006 was imperfect and incomplete. The government's strategic objectives (under the stewardship of the High Commissioner for Peace) focused on demobilize and disarm in any way possible a heterogeneous mix of paramilitary groups (most of which, now we know, with ties to the drug trafficking business), which in 2002 were present in nearly 600 municipalities around the country and were the main cause of the unprecedented escalation in violence. Without a doubt this was a laudable goal.

Acknowledging this fact does not mean concluding that the democratic defense and security policy, and the negotiations with the paramilitaries, did not impact or reduce indicators of violence in many regions of the country, or that it did not diminish the military threat of the FARC like never before.

As such, an analysis of the manifestations of violence that arose following the partial dismantling of the paramilitary groups is not a simple exercise. To the contrary, it is necessary to go beyond making accusations that suggest that little or nothing changed¹ or alleging that the government does not have a policy for fighting what are known as the emerging criminal gangs.²

Nonetheless, as Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) put forth four years ago, in the country conditions are such that it is not possible to state that we have surmounted the emergence and consolidation of a third generation of paramilitaries.³

In this paper FIP seeks to identify how these risks have remained in place, and also to complement other lines of analysis that have been made public concerning the current situation, to make it possible to assess the complexity of the phenomenon of the emerging criminal gangs and their nature.

From the Partial Dismantling of the Paramilitaries to the Emerging Gangs

The first achievement reached with the start of the negotiation process between the government and various paramilitary factions was, as simple as this may seem, the identification of the

power that the paramilitaries had held in the regions for a decade or more, time in which they had managed to control large areas of the country and had ordered the deaths of thousands of Colombians. At the same time it revealed the invisible drug trafficking leaders who were behind this phenomenon.

With the decision to pursue negotiation (decision that would be the subject of another report), the paramilitaries opened up a window of opportunity that was used by the government. However, this meant taking a number of risks, always following the presidential logic of "tackle and rectify." This was, to start on the road toward negotiation and then worry about the design of plans for sensitive issues such as the reintegration of former combatants and the rebuilding of institutions in former areas of paramilitary control.

The first of these risks became apparent when the military structure was split from its political and economic component. Because of this, even though thousands of fighters were disarmed and demobilized, reducing these organizations' capacity to do damage, at the same time it left leeway for the networks of corruption and drug trafficking to continue to operate, or else these spiraled into violent succession clashes. In the case of the drug traffickers who posed as paramilitaries, this meant the dismantling of their armies; but the structures linked to the drug business were left almost entirely intact, many of these located in urban areas (enforcement agencies, money laundering operations, etc.)

Another risk was related to the government's urgent need to guarantee and step up disarmament, in order to use the momentum, but also in response to criticism about the process from different national and international social organizations. In this way, and taking advantage of the situation,⁴ some paramilitary commanders, such as 'Don Berna,' Vicente Castaño, 'Macaco,' and 'Jorge 40' inflated the number of their fighters⁵ and left some of their units armed as a safety measure in case the negotiation did not work out. The situation was aggravated when the High Commissioner for Peace did not guarantee that they would not be extradited, even though extraditions had been suspended.⁶ This also had impact on the discussion of the legal framework (Justice and Peace law), in which it was apparent that many of the paramilitaries who were involved in heinous crimes would have to serve some prison time.

This scenario meant that a significant number of paramilitary commanders and drug traffickers, who overnight had become paramilitary leaders,⁷ chose to drop out of the negotiation process

or gradually prepared their departure. This was consolidated in late 2006 when the government ordered most of the commanders to be held at the Itagui Prison.⁸

Prior to this point, many paramilitary leaders in different regions had started to apply this strategy, putting in charge mid-level commanders who never demobilized. The Bloque Central Bolívar (BCB) “Central Bolívar Bloc”, under the command of ‘Macaco’ sold part of its structure in southern Caquetá to Los Rastrojos gang (the armed wing of Varela, leader of one of the branches of the Northern Valle del Cauca cartel), as also took place in Nariño, where it created the Organización Nueva Generación (ONG).⁹ For its part, the Bloque Norte “North Bloc” of ‘Jorge 40’ was passed on to the Mejía Munera brothers (Los Mellizos “The Twins”) in exchange for a payment of several million dollars.¹⁰

Likewise, leaders who had dropped out of the process in mid-2006 also began to form new groups with some demobilized paramilitaries, but mostly with people who had either never demobilized or else came from the groups that operated at the service of drug traffickers.¹¹ This was how cases of new groups in Meta, Córdoba, Antioquia, Santander, Norte de Santander, Nariño, Putumayo, Caquetá, Casanare, Vichada, and most of the departments on the Atlantic Coast became known.¹²

Without a doubt, this structural explanation about the appearance of these emerging gangs should be analyzed in conjunction with other dynamics.

Faced with complex negotiations that originally started with three different structures,¹³ the government managed to bring the groups together at a single negotiating table,¹⁴ but it isolated the groups’ leaders from the rank and file fighters and the mid-level commanders. The former were placed in Santa Fe de Ralito, and the latter were left to their own devices in the regions. This resulted in a certain level of anarchy in various parts of the country, situation that the drug traffickers, the mid-level commanders, and some local authorities were able to use to their advantage to continue maintaining private armies. After the demobilization ceremonies, local authorities’ calls for institutional presence to control this phenomenon fell on deaf ears.¹⁵

One of the first voices that warned the public about this problem was the OAS verification mission (MAPP/OAS) in its Sixth Report in February 2006. Despite these warnings it was not until July 2006 that the government decided to establish an oversight mechanism, with the National Police monitoring the demobilization process.¹⁶ This seems to be a late reaction, especially given that from the outset the government had made the decision to disarm part of the paramilitary structure, while leaving other issues pending, ranging from the dismantling of the drug gangs that were behind the paramilitaries, to the reinsertion and reintegration of the former combatants.

This negotiation, which without a doubt took place under circumstances of great complexity and led the government to take risks, gave rise to conditions that were conducive to the emergence of new gangs in many regions of Colombia.

Emerging Gangs and a New Chapter in Drug Trafficking¹⁷

With the end of the collective demobilizations in August 2006, a large group of former commanders were betting that they would be able to remain involved in their illegal organizations, and these groups united with the purpose of continuing their drug trafficking activities.

This endeavor was led, as in the past, on the one hand by the key figures of drug trafficking who had ties to the paramilitaries (Vicente Castaño, ‘Los Mellizos,’ ‘Don Berna,’ ‘Macaco,’ ‘Don Mario’), and on the other hand, by the gangs that made up the armed wing of the northern Valle del Cauca cartel, Los Machos and Los Rastrojos. On top of these were a large number of mid-level commanders who never demobilized or who had dropped out of the process (as was the case of alias ‘Cuchillo’) and individuals like Daniel ‘El Loco’ Barrera who had always worked seamlessly with paramilitaries and guerrillas to export cocaine from the Eastern Plains region. To the extent in which the first associates of the paramilitary groups were no longer on the scene (having been killed or extradited), the business increasingly fell into the hands of dedicated drug traffickers, like Los Rastrojos and ‘Loco Barrera.’

Each of these actors was creating armed groups under different names, from the outset establishing strategic alliances with the FARC and the ELN. As the result of military pressure and having little offensive capability, the two guerrilla groups found their dependence on the drug trafficking business increasing and for a time they forgot their ideological differences. This was clearly the start of a new chapter in drug trafficking, characterized by fragmentation and heterogeneity, as well as varied degrees of secrecy, and considerable mutual dependence for survival.

From this perspective, the emergence and actions of these armed groups cannot be separated from the drug business in regions of crops, processing, local trafficking or dealing, and export of drugs.

Hybrid Emerging Gangs of Multi-causal Origins

These hypotheses about the rise of these groups mean that the nature of the emerging gangs can only be understood from a multi-causal and hybrid perspective. In this context it is essential to focus on a number of issues on which there remains much confusion and disagreement:

- **Emerging gangs and demobilized combatants.** Some analyses emphasize the rearmament of the demobilized combatants as the main factor that explains how the emerging gangs came about. In this regard, the only data available to back this statement comes from two sources. First, the arrests and deaths of gang members. As of 17 November 2009 the data show minor involvement by demobilized combatants, as seen in the following table (following page):

The second source or level of information is the identification of the former mid-level AUC commanders as the leaders of

OPERATIONAL RESULTS BY THE SECURITY FORCES AGAINST THE EMERGING GANGS (AS OF 17 NOVEMBER 2009)		
Total number of emerging gang members captured	7,190	100%
Emerging gang members captured who were demobilized combatants	1,075	15%
Total number of emerging gang members killed in combat	1,192	100%
Emerging gang members killed in combat who were demobilized combatants	71	6%
Source: Criminal Investigation Directorate - National Police. Comunicado No. 1609 - GRESO-ARIDA -38.10. 18 November 2009.		

these new structures. On this subject the examples are clear and convincing, but it is also true that these people never intended to demobilize. Thus, for example, there is the Urabá gang that used to be run by 'Don Mario' and today is under the command of the Úsuga brothers, all of them demobilized combatants. This is also the case of the ERPAC (Ejército Revolucionario Popular Antiterrorista Colombiano, "Revolutionary Anti-terrorist Colombian People's Army") that operates in different parts of the departments that make up the Eastern Plains, under the command of 'Cuchillo,' another demobilized fighter. These examples of demobilized commanders may also be seen in gangs such as Los Paisas (that operates in Antioquia, Sucre, La Guajira, Córdoba, Atlántico and Bolívar) and the Aguilas Negras "Black Eagles" that operates in Norte de Santander.

- **Emerging gangs and DDR programs.** Other reports relate the spread of these groups with the "temporary nature of the positive effects of paramilitary DDR" (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration).¹⁸ This affirmation is based on the dubious supposition that DDR programs are responsible for and determine security conditions.¹⁹ Of course those who implemented these programs have some degree of responsibility for those who demobilized, but they cannot be expected to neutralize all of the factors that represent a threat to security conditions (drug trafficking, organized crime). The other factor is that DDR processes are medium to long-term processes in which, as noted above, the main problem is not demobilized fighters who are rearming, but rather how to ensure that the former fighters who participate in the program stick to it and achieve reintegration.
- **Emerging gangs and their political nature.** Recent reports have brought to the forefront the political nature of these groups according to their "ideological disposition to support the local status quo by identifying as a threat social mobilization for rights or any suggestion of opposition to the de facto regional powers, which abound in rural areas and marginal zones of the cities... The neo-paramilitaries' illegal and violent pressure and control have become the currency, asking in exchange a certain tolerance for their illegal activities, including drug tra-

fficking."²⁰ In this regard it is worth adding more variables to this analysis, while recognizing that it has valid elements.

This statement downplays the role of drug trafficking in the structure and actions of these groups, relegating it to a subsidiary role and not as an explanation for the threats against social organizations or individuals who are not part of the conflict. Here it is worth reversing the logic of the argument to see how this statement is only partly true. Let us look at the specific case of La Guajira.

There it is possible to talk about two kinds of arrangements with the emerging gangs. A first level that at the time (2008) was run by 'Don Mario'²¹ who hired a local group headed by alias 'Pablo' to safeguard coca shipments (his own or those of other drug traffickers who had hired him to do their shipping) through the La Guajira peninsula. So long as business was taken care of, 'Pablo' and his gang were free to pursue any additional kind of illegal activity (extortion, contraband gasoline, kidnapping, etc.).²² FIP has found that Los Rastrojos established similar arrangements in other parts of the country.

Thus a second level within the "organization" emerges. In this, any factor, person, or action that violates its secrecy or involves risk for the illegal business, immediately becomes a military target, although this does not entail considerations of a political nature concerning the threat. In other words, while it is likely that these groups would have some sort of political analysis to justify their attacks or threats of social organizations,²³ it is also entirely likely that these actions, as in the case of their predecessors (AUC), were a lesson learned in terms of seeking to present a political mantle to enable them to be considered as "political actors in the armed conflict." Put another way, there was always the possibility that a "political veneer" would be profitable for their economic interests, meaning that they would always need a "political platform" for legitimacy.

Finally, and in the realm of possibilities of this second category, it must be noted that in some regions and municipalities in Colombia, some members of the security forces still make arrangements with emerging gangs. In this sense, some members of the security forces still have not surmounted the "paramilitary ethos," which for many years encouraged the paramilitaries. Luckily the government has come down hard against this through tough political decisions. It is also possible that at the present time, relations between the security forces and gangs reflect a phenomenon of corruption that must be recognized and addressed with utmost urgency.

In this way, the alleged political component of these groups, exhibited by the prevalence of threats against social organizations, among other actions by these gangs, must be understood in a more complex way. Is it worth recalling the example of Pablo Escobar, who taught that drug trafficking will always go on, seeking ways to ensure political status for criminal activity.

- **Emerging gangs and former AUC groups.** One of the issues that became evident after the paramilitary demobilization was

that the unity of the self-defense groups under the AUC banner was a myth. In most cases the excuse of fighting the subversives was used as their justification to expand the drug trade, to sustain the regional political and economic powers and of course to fill the personal coffers of the paramilitary leaders or the owners of the paramilitary armies. As such, equating these emerging gangs with the AUC, based on a certain coincidence in their anti-subversive discourses and practices is questionable.

In recent studies that compare the activities of the former AUC groups and the emerging gangs, it is clear that there are significant differences between the two phenomena. Whereas between 2002 and 2006 the paramilitary groups were mainly engaged in combat (42%), raids (27%), and massacres (8%), for the period 2006-2008 the emerging gangs were involved in threats (53%), combat (23%), and raids (8%).²⁴ Significant differences exist both in terms of the kind of violence practiced and its scale.²⁵

This does not undermine the allegation that the emerging gangs are having severe humanitarian impact on some regions, and that both in terms of organizational structure and hostilities they are increasingly recognized as actors in the armed conflict.

- **Emerging gangs and the lack of public policy.** Another controversial issue when analyzing the emerging gangs refers to the alleged lack of governmental policy in this area. Although FIP acknowledges that the task of monitoring the disarmament and demobilization process began late, it is an exaggeration to say that there is no policy. This is not the same as maintaining that the policy has not been effective.

Since July 2006 the National Police's Mounted Police and Rural Security Division has had a mechanism for monitoring and tracking demobilized fighters and these new gangs. Based on this policy the "Operating plan against criminal gangs" was designed. Subsequently the Joint Mechanism for the Verification of Emerging Criminal Gangs (MEVEC) was designed and implemented, which involves several state agencies and includes civil society organizations in the monthly monitoring of the dynamics of these gangs.

Likewise, the Prosecutor General's Office created in 2008 the National Unit to Eliminate Backlog and Provide Support against Criminal Gangs, which has been in charge of bringing gang members to trial and complementing the actions of the security forces.²⁶

- **Emerging gangs and complicity with security forces.** The paramilitaries that formally demobilized between 2003 and 2006 always had ties with many sectors of the security forces and regional political-economic stakeholders. With the rise of the emerging criminal gangs, this phenomenon has persisted, despite the notable push that the Ministry of Defense has made to stamp out the "paramilitary ethos."

Two facts have brought this issue to the forefront. On the one hand, the "rediscovery" of what are known as "false positives"

(extrajudicial executions of civilians) and, on the other hand, cases of complicity with members of the Police, Army, and the DAS in some regions.

Regarding the first variable, the government itself has acknowledged that the security forces have been involved with criminal gangs in the "false positives." In October last year, Deputy Defense Minister Sergio Jaramillo said, "There is overlap in areas where there are 'false positives' and drug trafficking. There was some kind of deal with drug gangs, but common criminals are also involved. There were people who knew about small criminal gangs."²⁷ In other words, and to divert attention away from the phenomenon of corruption, members of the Army made deals with the emerging gangs to increase "combat kills" in return for guaranteeing them immunity for their criminal activities.

On the other hand, the country was already aware of the extremely high likelihood of infiltration, or that members of the military and police were making deals with the emerging gangs.²⁸ As an example, here is a sample referring to the abovementioned phenomenon of corruption:

In October 2008 alias "Cuchillo" was apparently able to escape from an Army operation thanks to the complicity of military authorities,²⁹ which even prompted an indignant reaction from President Uribe.³⁰

Also, some impressive results against the emerging gangs have subsequently come under question. In May 2009, 112 members of the Los Rastrojos gang surrendered to the questionable 17th Brigade troops in the municipality of Nuquí (Chocó).³¹ After the fact, Luis Córdoba, the municipal ombudsman, reported that during the days prior to the surrender gunmen had passed through the village, taking with them a group of young men, and promising them that "the more people who surrender, the more benefits they would get from government." At the time Córdoba said "I never said that this was a montage by the Army. I think the security forces were duped in their good faith."³²

There have also been cases of direct ties to the emerging gangs. In July 2009 Police Lieutenant César David Bejarano Morales, with the Mounted Police Mobile Squad (Emcar) in Córdoba and 10 other soldiers were accused by the Prosecutor General's Office of collaborating with what is known as the Envigado Office.³³ And in October 2009 four policemen from the police station in Carepa, Antioquia, were arrested for having ties to 'Don Mario's' gang. The policemen were allegedly supplying information to members of the arrested drug lord's gang, alerting them when operations would be carried out by the Police, the Army, and other agencies.³⁴

- **Extent of the emerging gangs.** Another debate is related to the extent of the phenomenon. Between 2006 and July 2008, the Observatory on Human Rights and IHL of the Vice Presidency reported the presence of these groups in 179 municipalities, a figure that was even higher than the one given in the MAPP/

OAS 12th Report of February 2009, which reported that 153 municipalities were affected by this phenomenon.³⁵

Along the same line, according to the National Police, the phenomenon seems to be declining in numbers, but it has exhibited some very disturbing qualitative changes. According to the DIJIN, as of 17 November 2009 there were six emerging gangs³⁶ operating in the country, which are composed of 2,579 members, with the largest being the Urabá gang with 807 members, Los Rastrojos with 866 members, and the ER-PAC with 575.³⁷ The variation in the official figures since 2006 may be seen in the following table:

DATE	NO. EMERGING	DEPARTMENTS AFFECTED	MUNICIPALITIES AFFECTED	NUMBER MEMBERS
Dec. 2006	33	20	110	4000
May 2008	18	16	101	2196
June 2009	10	22	146	3730
August 2009	8	24	174	4037
Nov. 2009	6	20	ND	2579
ND: No data available				
Source: National Police of Colombia. Mounted Police and Rural Security. Illegal Armed Gang Monitoring Group.				

According to monitoring done by FIP, reviewing reports in the press, Armed Forces agencies, the National Police, Ombudsman's Office risk reports and our own fieldwork, there is evidence of activities by these gangs over the past year in at least 178 municipalities in Colombia. It should be clarified that with regard to the figures by the Human Rights Observatory, changes may be seen in terms of the presence of some of these groups in certain municipalities between 2008 and 2009. It would be questionable not to take into account the variations year by year when defining the municipalities affected by this phenomenon. Similarly, it is necessary to clarify that when stating that a gang operates in a given municipality this does not mean it is in complete control.

According to the FIP records, the departments of Antioquia and Nariño are the most affected by the actions of the emerging gangs, with these groups having particular impact in the cities of Medellín and Tumaco. Likewise, actions by these groups have been recorded in 22 departmental capitals, and affecting 27 departments. According to our review, during the last year there was no activity by these groups in the departments of Quindío, San Andrés, Amazonas, Guainía, and Vaupés.³⁸

Regarding the number of their members, and taking into account their criminal and clandestine nature, with marked operational differences in rural and urban areas, it is extremely dicey to give the number of members, even as a very rough estimate.

Beyond the numerical size, efforts should be made to determine whether the reduction in the number of emerging gangs that the government reports (see table above) is due to a decrease in the phenomenon, or whether this has to do with a process of unification of these groups. An example of this may

be seen in the recent attempts at joining together that appear to have taken place in areas of Caquetá and outside Colombia's borders. This could represent a disturbing quantum leap in terms of prolonging Colombia's ongoing armed conflict.

The Risks of a Third Generation of Paramilitarism or a New Chapter in Drug Trafficking in Colombia

The continuity of certain elements of the paramilitaries who formally demobilized between 2003 and 2006, the presence of new actors and dynamics, and the persistence of the drug trade as the element that links these groups, mean that inevitably risks exist of the emergence of a *third generation of paramilitary groups*, and also that we are entering a new chapter of drug trafficking. In summary these risks are:

- Although dangers exist in analyzing these kinds of problems while a pre-election period is in full swing, in which political calculations can cloud objectivity, FIP believes that the democratic security policy has had a positive impact on improving the security and violence indicators in many regions. However, it considers that the primary objective of this policy originated in a public order context and dynamics which may differ from the current confrontation and persistence-emergence of illegal armed groups scenario. In this sense the policy must adapt to these dynamics, which, as it has becoming clear, have a strong component of violence that is perpetrated and concentrated in urban areas. Like any public policy, the democratic security policy should be adaptable to the changes and effects that it has brought about, many of them positive. The government's reaction to recent analyses that talk about the "decline of democratic security" have left a bad taste because these convey a message that is not accurate in terms of the new challenges of the current scenario. Admittedly, the democratic security policy was designed for strategic purposes in accordance with the context in 2002, and in that sense it has produced successful results.
- From both a quantitative and qualitative point of view, another risk would be for the government to underestimate the current phenomenon of the emerging gangs, or for some NGOs to overestimate them. In terms of the government, and in accordance with the lessons learned from the partial demobilization process, the notion of politics, as well as its classical conception, should also be understood as the art of calculating the consequences of a phenomenon, such as that of the emerging gangs, that has the potential to make the leap toward seeking political recognition, or the seduction or cooptation of sectors of society. Likewise, it is worth remembering that fueling the political pretensions of these groups could lead to the recreation of the history of paramilitarism in Colombia, as a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Using only official figures, it is clear that the phenomenon of the emerging gangs is gradually decreasing in numbers, but at

the same time its structures are becoming more concentrated and skilled, which is not without risk. It is quite likely that these groups are moving toward seeking recognition as “political actors of the armed conflict,” even if they spend most of their time engaged in the drug trade and controlling other illegal markets.

- Another risky issue is the persistent complicity of members of the security forces with the emerging gangs. The continuity of these illegal relationships, fueled by drug trafficking, makes this a major challenge for the government and the control agencies. Fortunately, the Ministry of Defense has been taking clear steps to eradicate the “paramilitary ethos” in the security forces and to fight corruption, on the understanding that the legitimacy of military and police power is its center of gravity.³⁹ Nonetheless, there is still work to be done, and it is imperative that this work continues without electoral influences.

¹ Soledad Granada; Jorge A. Restrepo; Alfonso Tobón García. “Neoparamilitarismo en Colombia: una herramienta conceptual para la interpretación de dinámicas recientes del conflicto armado colombiano.” in *Guerra y violencias en Colombia: herramientas e Interpretaciones*. Bogotá: Cerac-Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2009; p. 467-499.

² Mauricio Romero and Angélica Arias. “Sobre paramilitares, neo-paramilitares y afines: crecen sus acciones criminales ¿qué dice el gobierno?” in Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris. 2009 *¿El declive de la Seguridad Democrática?* Special Report. December 2009; p. 1.

³ Fundación Ideas para la Paz. Siguiendo el conflicto No. 25, “La tercera generación,” 12 August 2005. According to this analysis: “If one analyzes the future scenarios based on today’s indicators, and not the “political-military” logic of yesterday, one must necessarily conclude: there will be a third generation of paramilitary groups (following the groups from the Magdalena Medio region in the early 1980s and the subsequent evolution of the ACCU-AUC-Ralito; or even a fourth or fifth generation, for those who prefer amore precise differentiation) ... The fundamental problem is the continued existence of the drug trade. That is the ‘third generation’s’ main source of income.”

⁴ Decree 3360 of 2003 authorized the High Commissioner for Peace to carry out collective demobilizations of paramilitary groups. This law left it up to the commanders to draw up the list of fighters who were laying down arms and were involved in the process, without effective controls to ensure that the paramilitaries did not use this mechanism to inflate their numbers, plus it enabled their rearguard members not to appear on the official lists.

⁵ According to a communiqué by Carlos Castaño, as of December 2001 the AUC had 15,000 armed men (“Nuestra Evaluación a disposición de los Candidatos Presidenciales.” Document by Carlos Castaño, 20 December 2001). According to the High Commissioner for Peace, the AUC demobilization process would involve 13,000 men (Interview with the High Commissioner for Peace. Caracol Radio, 16 July 2003). In the end 31,671 paramilitaries demobilized.

⁶ This suspension had been put into effect in 2004 with Carlos Castaño and Salvatore Mancuso.

⁷ Among the most important members of these two groups are: Vicente Castaño Gil, alias ‘El Profe’; Herbert Veloza, alias ‘HH’; Miguel Ángel and Víctor Manuel Mejía Múnera ‘Los Mellizos’; Pedro Oliverio Torres ‘Cuchillo’; Luis Eduardo Zuluaga ‘McGiver’; Luis Arnulfo Tuberquia ‘Memín’; Alcides Durango ‘René’; Daniel Rendón Herrera ‘Don Mario’; Walter Ochoa Guisao ‘El Gurre’; Miguel Villareal Archila alias ‘Salomón’; Manuel Enrique Torregrosa Castro, alias ‘Chang,’ and Carlos Fernando Mateus Morales alias ‘Paquita.’ Many of them were captured, some were killed, and others were extradited.

⁸ On 14 August 2006, in a public statement, President Uribe called on the AUC leaders to present themselves at detention centers and begin the Justice and Peace process. Two days later the process began in which the AUC leaders and demobilized fighters were taken by Police and DAS officials to their facilities. Then they were taken to an old recreation center near La Ceja (in northwestern Antioquia). Finally on 1 December, President Uribe ordered 59 demobilized paramilitary leaders to be moved to the high-security prison in Itagui (Antioquia), saying that a possible escape plan was in the works.

⁹ Prosecutor General’s Office of the Nation, National Unit for Human Rights and IHL, Statement made by Mr. David Hernández López alias ‘Diego Rivera,’ political commander of the Bloque Libertadores del Sur, 20-21 November and 4 December 2007. And, “El nuevo ventilador para,” *Semana*, 9 March 2008.

¹⁰ “La banda que heredó el imperio de Jorge 40,” *VerdadAbierta.com*, 21 October 2008. See: <http://www.verdadabierta.com/conflicto-hoy/50-rearmados/489-la-banda-que-heredo-el-imperio-de-jorge-40>

¹¹ According to the classification in the Sixth Report by the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS), February 2006: 1) the regrouping of demobilized fighters into criminal gangs that control specific communities and illegal economic activities, 2) groups that had not demobilized, 3) the emergence of new armed groups and/or the strengthening of some existing ones in the areas left by the demobilized groups.

¹² See among others: CNRR. “Disidentes, rearmados y emergentes: ¿Bandas criminales o tercera generación paramilitar?” August 2007; ICG. “Los nuevos grupos armados en Colombia,” 10 Mayo 2007; Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris. “Bandas criminales, seguridad democrática y corrupción,” *Arcanos*, December 2008; Fundación Seguridad y Democracia. “Los grupos armados emergentes en Colombia,” May 2008; Reports by the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS).

¹³ The process started in December 2002 with an exploratory phase, making contact with three structures: the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia), AUC; the Bloque Central Bolívar (Central Bolívar Bloc Campesino Self-Defense Groups), BCB, and the Bloque Vencedores de Arauca (Arauca Victors Bloc); and with the Eastern Alliance Self-Defense Group, made up of the Self-Defense Groups of southern Casanare, Meta, and Vichada.

¹⁴ On 31 March 2004 in a public statement the United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia, the Central Bolívar Bloc, and Arauca Victors Bloc announced that from that time they would make up a single bargaining bloc whose priority would be to define the proposal on holding centers. The statement was signed by 33 paramilitary leaders

¹⁵ FIP corroborated this claim during the closed sessions at the conference “Reconstruction, Reinsertion and Region,” held in November 2005 in Medellín, with the participation of mayors, governors, and officials from several regions around the country.

¹⁶ On 7 July 2006 the Police presented the results of the “First report on the control and monitoring of the demobilized fighters,” which also defined mechanisms for doing this monitoring.

¹⁷ This section is based on: Jeremy McDermot. “Desmovilización de las AUC: nuevo capítulo del narcotráfico en Colombia” in: Fundación Ideas para la Paz – Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Cuadernos del Conflicto Series: Conflicto armado e iniciativas de paz en Colombia, December 2009; p. 70-74.

¹⁸ Soledad Granada; Jorge A. Restrepo; Andrés R. Vargas. “El agotamiento de la política de seguridad: evolución y transformaciones recientes en el conflicto armado Colombiano.” in: *Guerra y violencias en Colombia: herramientas e Interpretaciones*. Bogotá: Cerac-Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2009; p. 100-101.

¹⁹ For a discussion of this argument in the context of Medellín, see: María Victoria Llorente. “Los reinsertados de Medellín y la ‘donbernabilidad.’” *Semana.com*, 18 June 2009. And María Victoria Llorente and Juan Carlos Palou. *Reintegración y Seguridad Ciudadana en Medellín*. Bogotá: Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2009.

²⁰ Mauricio Romero and Angélica Arias. “Sobre paramilitares, neo-paramilitares y afines: crecen sus acciones criminales ¿qué dice el gobierno?” op. cit., p. 3.

- ²¹ Nowadays being disputed by Los Rastrojos, Los Paisas, and Los Urabeños.
- ²² Delegate Ombudsman for evaluation of risks to the civil population as a result of the armed conflict-Early Warning System (SAT). Monitoring Note No. 025-09 (26 October 2009); Monitoring Note No. 017-09 (9 July 2009); and Monitoring Note No. 018-07 (30 March 2007).
- ²³ Mauricio Romero and Angélica Arias. "Sobre paramilitares, neo-paramilitares y afines: crecen sus acciones criminales ¿qué dice el gobierno?" op. cit., p. 9. According to the figures presented in this report 53% of the actions by these organizations resulted in threats against them.
- ²⁴ Ibid. These figures come from the CERAC (Resource Center for Conflict Analysis) database.
- ²⁵ In turn, according to the same source, it seems that these gangs were not involved in homicides or responsible for the mass graves and corpses discovered that are attributed to violence by them. According to the Justice and Peace Unit of the Prosecutor General's Office, most of the mass graves discovered in this process were from homicides committed prior to 2002. This is something that would be worth reviewing, at least chronologically.
- ²⁶ Prosecutor General's Office of the Nation. Resolution 0-5103 of 5 August 2008.
- ²⁷ "Los correctivos que se tomaron han sido efectivos: Gobierno." *El Tiempo*, 18 October 2009.
- ²⁸ Mauricio Romero and Angélica Arias. "Bandas Criminales", Seguridad Democrática y corrupción." In: Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris. *Revista Arcanos* No. 14, December 2008. The actions that the Ministry of Defense has implemented in this area should also be highlighted.
- ²⁹ "Operación fallida contra 'Cuchillo' encendió dudas sobre la IV División del Ejército." 1 November 2008. http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/justicia/operacion-fallida-contra-cuchillo-encendio-dudas-sobre-la-iv-division-del-ejercito_4639761-1
- ³⁰ In October 2008, speaking from El Salvador, President Uribe reprimanded the Army's Fourth Division for not having captured "Cuchillo" and "El Loco Barrera": "On Saturday I will make a call from Envigado (Antioquia). And I will repeat the following: for example, there are currently drug traffickers that we have not been able to capture, such as the situation with 'Cuchillo' and 'El Loco Barrera.' I will ask: Are we capable of capturing them or not? And I ask this particularly of the Army Division in Villavicencio, whether it is capable of capturing 'El Loco Barrera' or whether it is protecting him." (Uribe called on the security forces to capture 'Cuchillo' and 'El Loco Barrera,' SP, 30 October 2008.)
- ³¹ "112 miembros de la banda 'Los rastrojos' se entregaron en Nuquí, Chocó." *El Tiempo*, 20 Mayo 2009.
- ³² "Rastrojos sin ley." *Revista Semana*, 31 May 2009.
- ³³ "Teniente de la policía de Córdoba trabaja para la 'Oficina de Envigado.'" *El Tiempo*.com. Available online at http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/caribe/teniente-de-la-policia-de-cordoba-trabajaba-para-la-oficina-de-envigado_5478616-1
- ³⁴ "Capturados cuatro policías que trabajaban para 'Don Mario.'" *El tiempo*.com, 9 October 2009. http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/justicia/capturados-cuatro-policias-que-trabajaban-para-don-mario_6319027-1
- ³⁵ Twelfth Quarterly Report by the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS). 9 February 2009.
- ³⁶ "As of the month of November 2009, through the Integrated Center for, the national government was aware of the existence of a total of six criminal gangs, which have approximately 2,579 members. 1) The Urabá criminal gang, this armed group has approximately 807 members; it carries out its criminal actions in the departments of Chocó, La Guajira, Cesar, Antioquia, Córdoba, Sucre, Bolívar, and Magdalena. 2) The Revolutionary Anti-terrorist Colombian People's Army (ERPAC) criminal gang, this illegal gang has 575 armed members; it operates in the departments of Meta, Vichada, Guaviare, and Guainía. 3) The Los Paisas criminal gang, an armed group that does not have a top leader, has 222 men, and it operates in the departments of Sucre, La Guajira, Córdoba, Antioquia, Atlántico, and Bolívar. 4) The Los Rastrojos criminal gang operates in the departments of Nariño, Norte de Santander, Valle del Cauca, Antioquia, Cauca, Cesar, Chocó, and the Magdalena Medio region; it has 866 members. 5) The Los Machos criminal gang, its area of operation is the department of Valle del Cauca; this criminal organization has 34 members. 6) The Renacer criminal gang is composed of 75 men, and operates in Chocó Department." (Criminal Investigation Directorate - National Police. Communication No. 1609 - GRES-ARIDA -38.10. 18 November 2009).
- ³⁷ Criminal Investigation Directorate - National Police. Communication No. 1609 - GRES-ARIDA -38.10. 18 November 2009.
- ³⁸ It is worth mentioning that the distribution of their presence is not homogeneous and in some departments, only one municipality is affected, as in the case of Boyacá (in Puerto Boyacá) and Caldas (in La Dorada).
- ³⁹ National Ministry of Defense. *Política Integral de DDHH y DIH*. Bogotá, 2008; p. 18-19.

