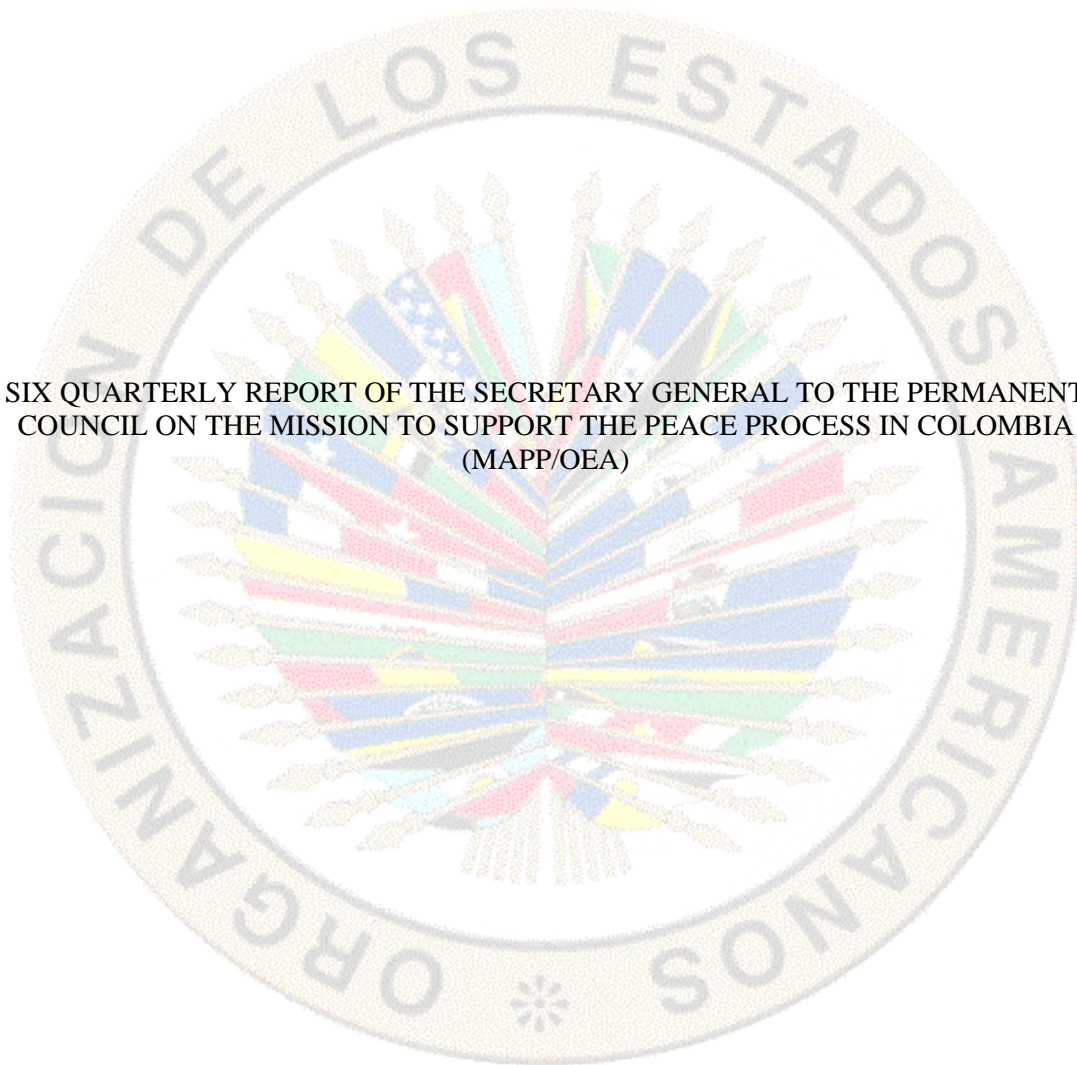


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SIX QUARTERLY REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL TO THE PERMANENT
COUNCIL ON THE MISSION TO SUPPORT THE PEACE PROCESS IN COLOMBIA
(MAPP/OEA)



MAPP/OEA

This document is being distributed to the permanent missions
and will be presented to the Permanent Council of the Organization.

SIXTH QUARTERLY REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL TO THE PERMANENT COUNCIL ON THE MISSION TO SUPPORT THE PEACE PROCESS IN COLOMBIA (MAPP/OEA)

I. Background

This quarterly report by the Secretary General on the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OEA) is submitted to the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) in compliance with resolution CP/RES. 859 (1397/04), in which the Council resolved “to instruct the Secretary General to provide quarterly reports to the Permanent Council on the work of the MAPP/OEA and its continued ability to contribute, through its work in Colombia, to the fulfillment of the values and principles contained in the Charter of the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Democratic Charter.”

II. Introduction

MAPP/OEA

Since the previous report was submitted to the Permanent Council in October 2005, the Organization’s Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia and the peace process itself have both made significant progress. In spite of those advances, however, we must not lose sight of the complexity of any peace process and, in particular, of the one underway in Colombia, a country that has seen more than 50 years of conflict. The Secretary General’s quarterly reports to the Permanent Council on MAPP/OEA give a temporary view of a peace plan that could take years or decades to put into practice.

With specific reference to the Mission, the member states and observer countries gave a highly positive response to the request made in the Secretary General’s last report to the Permanent Council, asking them to expand their support for the Mission. The call was for the countries interested in assisting the Mission to provide financial, material, and human resources. The Government of the Netherlands, MAPP/OEA’s main contributor since the Organization started work in Colombia, donated US\$1.5 million on December 13, 2005. With that donation, the Netherlands has become the most generous contributor to the Mission and thus deserves the special recognition of the General Secretariat.

The Governments of Sweden and the Republic of Ireland also deserve a special mention. The Swedish Government renewed its commitment to the Mission by continuing to fund the participation of the Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration (DDR) expert who has been a part of MAPP/OEA since 2004. In a letter to the Secretary General, Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs Leila Freivalds noted her country’s willingness to contribute US\$2 million to the Mission and, at the same time, set out a series of concerns regarding its operations. The Secretary General answered the minister’s letter and also met with Gunnar Lund, Ambassador of Sweden to the United States, and told him

that MAPP/OEA was working on the concerns expressed by his government so that, consequently, the donation of funds as initially offered could proceed.

Similarly, the Republic of Ireland donated €130,000 to MAPP/OEA for 2005, and it has promised a further €260,000 to be handed over during 2006 and 2007. The first €130,000 arrived at a particularly difficult moment for the Mission, and the money allowed the Organization's work in Colombia to continue. The Secretary General acknowledges this generous contribution.

The Secretary General would also like to thank the Government of Mexico for its decision to send personnel in support of MAPP/OEA. On December 27, 2005, the General Secretariat received a letter from Foreign Secretary Luis Ernesto Derbez Bautista, reporting his government's decision to send two Mexican experts in human rights, social affairs, the administration of justice, criminal matters, and law and order, to join the Mission in January 2006.

Similarly, the Government of Brazil, through its embassy in Bogotá and its mission to the OAS in Washington, D.C., contacted the MAPP and the Department of Crisis Prevention and Special Missions, respectively, to analyze the options available to it for contributing human resources to the Mission.

In January 2006, President of Chile Ricardo Lagos sent a letter to the Secretary General, reporting that interministerial consultations had been held with a view to sending two professional experts in law and order and local participation.

Likewise, the Government of Guatemala, through its ambassador in Colombia, relayed its intent to contribute between two and four professionals to the MAPP.

Other member states and observer countries have indicated their interest in helping. While the exact nature of their support has not been formalized, Argentina, Canada, Finland, Norway, Romania, Spain, Thailand, and Ukraine have made overtures to the Organization. The United States and the Republic of Korea have also spoken of their interest in continuing to assist MAPP/OEA. The Republic of Korea's donation of vehicles and computer equipment last year made a substantial contribution to the Mission.

These new sources of support enabled more than 20 officers to be hired, all of whom are international experts with experience in DDR and conflict resolution. In this way, the personnel numbers for verification tasks are being doubled. Over the coming weeks, the Mission will realize its goal of having 10 regional offices and more than 100 officers. When this goal is attained, MAPP/OEA will be in a situation to meet the challenge it faces.

The OAS's support for the peace effort in Colombia goes beyond the valuable contribution made by MAPP/OEA and includes coordinated actions by other agencies of the Organization.

Thus, during 2005, in the public information area, the Trust for the Americas implemented a program called “Workshops for Promoting Dialogue and a Culture of Peace,” which provided support for communities receiving demobilized former combatants in five regions of Colombia. The initiative worked by means of community radio programs and workshops, seeking to reduce the tensions generated by the process, build confidence, and promote a dialogue between the receiving communities and demobilized combatants of illegal groups, thus offering everyone a new option for social integration.

In 2006, in conjunction with the Department of Crisis Prevention and Special Missions of the Assistant Secretariat for Political Affairs, the Trust hopes to implement an ambitious program of support for civil society in the cities of Cúcuta and Montería. This program – which offers workshops on harmonious coexistence, economic alternatives for demobilized combatants, and public information campaigns – has already been presented to several donors.

Similarly, the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) is carrying out a series of projects intended to improve the socioeconomic conditions of displaced populations and to carry out capacity-building among them.

The PADF has been promoting, *inter alia*, job training among populations displaced by the violence, with projects that encourage the development of specific skills required by the market – such as dressmaking, computer services, carpentry, metalwork, cabinet making, and flower growing. The PADF’s projects have included the promotion of partnerships and the creation of Credit Funds, which support beneficiaries in developing small-scale businesses through reputable lending agencies. The PADF and MAPP/OEA will be implementing a shared working agenda to develop and implement projects for reintegrating demobilized combatants.

In the Fifth Quarterly Report, the Secretary General agreed to establish mechanisms to ensure proper documentation, transparent evaluations and investigations, and guarantees for complaints alleging cease-fire violations by members of the paramilitary units involved in the process. In connection with that, MAPP/OEA is currently improving the existing methods and manuals that clearly and exactly set the instructions to be followed by the verification experts in (1) verifying the cease-fire and cessation of hostilities, (2) verifying demobilization and disarmament, (3) verifying that the armed units have effectively been disbanded and reincorporated into civilian life, and (4) following up on the individual verification of reintegrated combatants.

Peace Process

Since the process of peace negotiations with the AUC began in November 2003, there have been 27 mass demobilization ceremonies at which more than 20,000 combatants have been demobilized. Following a unilateral suspension of the process by the AUC, it recommenced in December. The AUC had halted the demobilizations, claiming that the Government was not meeting the commitments to which it had previously agreed. Following negotiations

between the Government and the AUC, it was agreed to recommence the demobilizations and, on December 12, 1,923 members from three fronts of the Bloque Central Bolívar (BCB) in Antioquia handed over their weapons. After that, another 1,603 members of the self-defense forces were demobilized in December, with an additional 6,000 demobilizing in 2006 to date.

Progress has also been made in the negotiations with the National Liberation Army (ELN). On December 16, 2005, exploratory talks began between the Colombian Government and the ELN in Havana, Cuba. The governments of Norway, Switzerland, and Spain attended these initial discussions. According to the official communiqué issued at the close of the December 21 meeting, the discussions took place in a “frank and cordial atmosphere” and it was decided to hold another meeting in Cuba in 2006 to set an agenda for peace negotiations. Under Permanent Council resolution 859, the Mission’s mandate is to support all aspects of the peace process in Colombia, and the Organization is closely watching these developments.

Also noteworthy is the failure of a proposal presented by France, Switzerland, and Spain to clear an area of 180 km² in Valle del Cauca for hosting a meeting between the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and the Government at which a humanitarian agreement would have been sought.

In decree 4760 of December 30, 2005, the Colombian Government enacted the regulations for the Justice and Peace Law. This decree sets the requirements to be met by demobilized combatants wishing to benefit from the law. These include giving a free statement to a prosecutor, who then has a period of 60 days to pursue an investigation and draw up charges against the former combatant. The decree also establishes the rights of victims: under the regulations, victims may “participate actively in proceedings under the Justice and Peace Law by submitting evidence to the judicial authorities, and hearing and challenging any decisions adopted therein.” The State is responsible for ensuring that victims receive payments from the Victims Compensation Fund. One important aspect of the regulations is that they enable the procedural terms set by the Law to be interpreted in such a way that prosecutors’ offices can now meet its obligation of investigating crimes and making accusations within a more reasonable timeframe.

In spite of these advances in the peace process, MAPP/OEA has identified several violations of the cease-fire and demobilizations, and it has also seen problems caused by the reintegration of former combatants. These considerations and comments are in accordance with the mandate of the Mission and, consequently, we trust that they will be taken into consideration by the Government of Colombia.

The Mission holds that the partial demobilization and dismantling of units, transfers of fighters from a demobilized unit to another group, and the territorial expansion of a non-demobilized unit into areas where demobilizations have taken place represent violations of the Santa Fe de Ralito Agreement, signed by the Government and the AUC on July 15, 2003, whereunder the outlawed

organization agreed to demobilize all its members and to refrain from offensive actions.

However, recidivism into criminal activities by demobilized combatants, either individually or collectively, does not constitute a breach of the agreements signed by the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) – provided that there are no ties between the demobilized combatants in question and the organization or its active officers.

The General Secretariat believes that the sustainable success of the peace process depends on the attention paid to communities affected by violence and on the effective reintegration of demobilized combatants. As has been noted by High Commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo, the Government needs to reexamine its efforts vis-à-vis the reintegration process. According to what MAPP/OEA has seen, with the exception of some areas, the reintegration process is in crisis and is endangering the long-term viability of the peace process. This report will highlight some of those problems.

III. Developments with the Peace Process and the AUC Demobilizations

The AUC's mass demobilizations recommenced on December 12. Thus, there were five collective demobilizations in December: Bloque Central Bolívar (BCB) Remedios (1,923 members); Frente Héroes y Mártires de Guática of the BCB (522); Bloque Vencedores de Arauca (548); Autodefensas Campesinas de Tolima (208); and the BCB's Frente Vichada (325). In total, 3,526 self-defense members were demobilized in December.

Similarly, this year to date, three units have been demobilized: (i) some 2,700 men belonging to the Bloque Mineros, in Tarazá, Antioquia; (ii) approximately 2,500 men from the Bloque Central Bolívar en Santa Rosa, south Bolívar; and (iii) around 700 men from the Bloque del Magdalena Medio in Puerto Boyacá.

The following table summarizes the number of weapons handed over in the five December demobilizations.

MAPP/OEA

Subtotals of Surrendered Weaponry					
	Bloque Vencedores de Arauca	BCB – Frente Héroes y Mártires de Guática	BCB – Remedios	Autodefensas Campesinas de Tolima	BCB – Frente Vichada
Total combatants demobilized	548	522	1,923	208	325
Weapons surrendered	198	297	1,385	51	282
Ratio of men to weapons	36.1%	56.9%	72%	24.5%	86.8%
Rocket launchers			07		
Homemade 60mm mortars	4	01	25	01	04
Multiple 40mm grenade launchers		06	7		04
Single-shot 40mm grenade launchers		06	33	01	04
Machine guns	22	03	29	01	02
Rifles	172	246	1,240	35	267
Carbines		02	01		01
Submachine guns		05	03	01	
Shotguns			09		
Pistols		10	21	06	
Revolvers		18	10	06	
Subtotal weapons	198	297	1,385	51	282
Mortar grenades			86	08	03
40mm mortar grenades		85	313	11	58
Rifle grenades			64	04	02
Hand grenades		13	79	42	
Subtotal grenades	0	98	542	65	63
Antipersonnel mines					
Claymore mines		01			
Subtotal mines		01			
Ammunition		20,668	140,091	6,997	26,386

In connection with this, MAPP/OEA is still concerned about the failure to destroy the weapons surrendered by the demobilized paramilitary groups. This concern has been conveyed to the competent authorities of the Colombian Government.

IV. Verifying the dismantling of AUC armed units

To carry out its verification mandate, the Mission has offices in six regions of the country and its headquarters in Bogotá. The regional offices are located in Cúcuta, Valledupar, Montería, Turbo, Medellín, and

Barrancabermeja, in accordance with the presence of active or demobilized self-defense units and their spheres of influence. MAPP/OEA also has a Mobile Team, which travels to areas not covered by the regional offices, such as Chocó, Valle del Cauca, Nariño, Cundinamarca, Meta, Casanare, Vichada, etc.

After a self-defense unit has been demobilized, the regional offices keep in constant contact with the civilian, military, and police authorities, as well as with the communities and with other institutions and nongovernmental organizations with a local presence. The regional offices also monitor all the sources of information available in the areas where they are based, in order to obtain data on the prevailing law-and-order situation. Verification entails monitoring the emergence of new groups, possible raids by guerrilla forces, the presence of the forces of law and order, and the personal situations of demobilized combatants. Similarly, the Mobile Team strives to perform the same task, even though the frequency of its visits is insufficient because of the large areas it has to cover.

In addition to conducting this form of verification on the ground, the Mission's presence in different zones allows the monitoring of communities. The Mission's aim in this regard is to identify locations where new illegal armed groups have emerged or other illegal agents have co-opted self-defense units that have demobilized and regrouped, which pose a threat to those communities.

In performing this task, to date the Mission has carried out verifications in 16 regions and subregions of the country in which AUC units have been demobilized (see attached map), namely: city of Medellín (Bloque Cacique Nutibara and Bloque Héroes de Granada), region of Urabá in Antioquia (Bloque Bananero), southern region of Magdalena (Autodefensas del Sur del Magdalena e Isla de San Fernando), Cundinamarca (Bloque Cundinamarca), region of Catatumbo, Santander (Bloque Catatumbo), Valle del Cauca (Bloque Calima), Córdoba (Bloque Sinú y San Jorge and Bloque Héroes de Tolová), La Mojana subregion in Sucre (Frente La Mojana), Antioquia (Bloque Suroeste Antioqueño, Bloque Noroccidente Antioqueño, and Bloque Héroes de Granada), Los Montes de María subregion in Sucre and Bolívar (Bloque Héroes de los Montes de María), Nariño (Bloque Libertadores del Sur), Meta and Vichada (Autodefensas Campesinas del Meta y Vichada), and Chocó (Bloque Pacífico).

The timetable of post-demobilization visits drawn up by the Mission provides for on-the-ground verification of the effective dismantling of the following armed units that have not yet been verified: Autodefensas Campesinas de Ortega, Bloque Centauros, Frente Vichada–Bloque Central Bolívar, and Bloque Tolima, thus completing the first round of demobilization verification visits that have been carried out. The Mission plans to continue with verifications of this kind over the next year.

The Mission believes the verification of the dismantling of the armed units demobilized to date to be generally positive. The illegal armed units still

found in various areas of the country have been dismantled, and most former combatants have returned to their places of origin.

However, certain phenomena arising subsequent to the demobilizations are a cause of concern to the Mission. These are (see enclosed map): (1) the regrouping of demobilized combatants into criminal gangs that control specific communities and illegal economic activities; (2) holdouts who have not demobilized; (3) the emergence of new armed players and/or the strengthening of those that already existed in areas abandoned by demobilized groups.

- (1) *The regrouping of demobilized combatants into criminal gangs that control specific communities and illegal economic activities.*

In regions where guerrilla activity is low and the entry of the forces of law and order has not been effective, conditions arise under which various armed illegal groups can assume control. In these areas, the problem arises when middle-level demobilized combatants step into the vacuum. They assume control of the criminal activities that were traditionally the preserve of the units or groups based there (extortion, levies on drug production, social cleansing, alliances with local administrations) and organize themselves into small groups, armed with side arms, remaining in urban areas and communicating by cell phones. The Mission is therefore concerned about the possible emergence of illegal players within the framework of the conflict, who could ultimately end up engaging in turf wars.

This problem exists in: (1) The municipality of Palmito, Sucre department (the former area of influence of the Héroes Montes de María group), where a group of some eight demobilized combatants controls the population and, in particular, the urban area. (2) In the Mojana subregion, specifically in the municipalities of Majagual, Guaranda, and Sucre (the former area of influence of the Frente la Mojana), a group of seven individuals – including a former Front commander – are extorting several local traders. Reports and complaints also indicate that the group is carrying out “social cleansing.” (3) In Montelíbano municipality, in the department of Córdoba (the former area of influence of the Bloque Sinú y San Jorge), a group of around 25 individuals, including some demobilized combatants, controls the illegal drugs trade and is intimidating the civilian population. (4) In the village of La Cristalina in Puerto Gaitán, Meta (the former area of influence of the Autodefensas Campesinas de Meta y Vichada), a group of five demobilized combatants extorts money from the transportation of foodstuffs. (5) In districts of Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca (the former area of influence of the Bloque Calima), the capture of one demobilized combatant led to an outbreak of violence that ended with the death of 14 demobilized combatants. (6) In rural areas of Palmira and in Florida, Valle (also formerly controlled by Bloque Calima), a group of demobilized combatants is engaged in extortion. (7) En Tumaco, Nariño (the former area of influence of the Bloque Libertadores del Sur), there have been reports of demobilized combatants controlling a part of the drugs trade.

Identifying the interrelations between common criminals, drug traffickers, and new manifestations of the self-defense phenomenon is a task that requires

attention. Other angles could also be involved, in that there could be groups and individuals attempting to establish armed units in order to benefit from the Justice and Peace Law.

(2) *Holdouts who have not demobilized.*

The second phenomenon that has emerged in the aftermath of the demobilization process is the continued presence in certain regions of holdouts: fronts or groups that have not demobilized. These holdouts are organically parts of the armed units of the demobilized groups, and they continue to pursue the same criminal activities in their spheres of influence. MAPP/OEA calls on these groups to join in with the peace process, hand over their weapons, and cease their criminal activities.

Córdoba

Of particular concern to the Mission is the situation that has arisen in the rural districts of Crucito and Gallo in the northern regions around Urrá Dam in Tierralta municipality following the demobilization of the Bloque Héroes de Tolová (BHT). A group of between 60 and 80 non-demobilized paramilitaries continues to operate there. The group protects illegal crops and controls the coca base trade in the area. Since the BHT's demobilization, this group no longer uses camouflage, operating instead in civilian garb. The group has organized public meetings, telling the locals of its intent to control the area. They have conducted censuses of the inhabitants and of the community's capacity for coca base production.

Meta

In Cristalina village, Puerto Gaitán, Meta, the Mission was told of a group of self-defense members from the Frente Vichada of the Bloque Central Bolívar that did not demobilize in Cumaribo, Vichada. The group apparently plans to fight with demobilized combatants from the Autodefensas Campesinas de Meta y Vichada (ACMV) for control of the extortion carried out against the local population and against the trucks that pass through the area to supply the region's illicit crops.

The Mission has been told, by several sources, that a former ACMV commander apparently sold some of his weapons to a dissident commander from the Bloque Centauros and hid another amount in a cache for a group of some 200 non-demobilized combatants.

Sucre

Apparently there is a group of some 30 men who decided not to demobilize and who continue to operate in the foothills of the Montes de María.

Bolívar

The same situation is found in Córdoba municipality, in the department of Bolívar, where reports speak of the existence of a group of around 15 individuals who are guarding the area and have ties with the drugs trade.

- (3) *The emergence of new armed players and/or the strengthening of those that already existed in areas abandoned by demobilized groups.*

The emergence of new armed groups pursuing a range of different interests remains a cause of concern for the Mission. There is a risk of demobilized sectors of the population being co-opted, and of new combatants being recruited. This phenomenon has emerged primarily in areas with consolidated illegal economies.

Valle del Cauca

In Valle del Cauca, the Mission has heard of several phenomena that are apparently related to drug trafficking in northern Valle. There, two criminal gangs are passing themselves off as self-defense forces under the names Autodefensas Unidas del Valle (AUV) and Rondas Campesinas Populares (RCP). According to some reports, to achieve this aim they are arming themselves and recruiting new members from among the civilian population and demobilized combatants. The inhabitants of some municipalities in the north of Valle del Cauca department have told the Mission that they have seen men in uniforms, carrying rifles and wearing armbands with the letters "AUV."

In the district of La Cristalina de Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca, the Mission heard about the possible creation of a new self-defense group; reportedly, it is still recruiting members and has not yet begun to conduct military operations.

In that same department, the appearance of pamphlets and graffiti from groups calling themselves "Bloque Central" (Riofrío municipality) and "Frente Social Común por la Paz" (Tulúa municipality) is being monitored by the Mission. To date, no exact information has been obtained regarding the origins or actions of these groups.

Similarly noteworthy is the appearance of pamphlets signed by the "Frente Social por la Paz" that are circulating in the cities of Sincelejo, Tulúa, and Pasto. These pamphlets refer to recent attacks by the FARC-EP, urge civil society to join up to "defeat terrorism," and are signed "It's coming! Frente Social por la Paz." There are similarities in the documents found in Tulúa and Pasto, and it can be concluded that they are part of the same phenomenon.

Chocó

This department reported two specific incidents in the municipalities of San José del Palmar and Istmina, which were apparently the work of the same drug-trafficking gang that calls itself the Autodefensas Campesinas Unidas del Norte del Valle (ACUN). The Bloque Pacífico used to operate in the vicinity of these two municipalities.

This group of drug traffickers has set itself up in a rural area of San José del Palmar municipality, in the southwest of Chocó where it borders with the north of Valle department. During the third week of October, it confronted a guerrilla group composed of member of the FARC's Frente Aurelio Rodríguez, the ELN, and the Ejército Guevarista Revolucionario-ERG, resulting in numerous deaths.

It can be said that in most of the municipalities where the Frente Héroes del Chocó operated,¹ this drug-trafficking group has now begun operations. Indeed, most sources consulted support that claim;² they also report that the "replacement" took place one month before the demobilization. In addition, they suggest that money possibly changed hands between the two organizations, whereby the Bloque Pacífico "ceded" territory and the illicit economy in the area to the ACUN.

Nariño

There is another worrying situation in Nariño department, where the existence of a group called "Mano Negra" or "Águilas Negras" was detected. This group's center of operations is in the village El Palmar, Leiva municipality, and its influence extends into the districts of Esmeraldas and La Sierra in El Rosario municipality, into the village of Remolino in Taminango municipality (Nariño) and, possibly, into the municipalities of Mercaderes and Balboa (Cauca). This group operates in the former area of influence of the Bloque Libertadores del Sur (BLS), attached to the Bloque Central Bolívar (BCB), which was demobilized in Taminango (Nariño) on July 30 last.

This group apparently comprises between 80 and 150 men. They are recruiting new combatants, from among both demobilized fighters and the local population. According to information received by the OAS, in the aftermath of demobilization, the "Mano Negra" group is working to recuperate the coca monopoly.

Norte de Santander

A similar phenomenon has arisen in Norte de Santander, where there are reports of a group calling itself "Águilas Negras" or "Águilas Azules" that operates in the municipalities of Puerto Santander, Sardinata, and Tibú and is apparently pursuing a plan to expand and secure control of territory. Some reports indicate that this group might belong to the Bloque Central Bolívar (BCB). However, the Mission has to secure further information before it can determine the identity of these illegal groups. It has been noted that this group brings keen pressure to bear on demobilized former combatants from the Bloque Catatumbo living in the area, with the result that some of them have been killed, others have been displaced, and others are now part of the group.

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1. Condoto, Istmina, Medio San Juan, Lloró, Bagadó, Novita, and Tadó. However, its center of operations was located in the municipalities of Istmina and Medio Baudó.
 2. Departmental and municipal authorities, and civil, military and community sources.

Antioquia

In certainly municipalities in southwestern Antioquia – particularly Amagá, Venecia, and Hispania, the former sphere of influence of the AUC's Bloque Suroeste – there are also reports of the emergence of a group calling itself the “Águilas Negras.”

Cundinamarca

In Guaduas municipality, adjacent to the area where the Bloque Cundinamarca formerly operated, the Mission has detected the presence of a paramilitary group comprising some 50 men. This group carries out fuel thefts, extortion, and kidnappings, and is being investigated by the National Police.

In conclusion, it is noteworthy that in three of the cases detected – southwestern Antioquia, Norte de Santander, and Nariño – the name “Águilas Negras” appears and that, in three cities from different departments of the country, pamphlets signed by the “Frente Social por la Paz” have been circulating; to date, however, the origin and nature of this phenomenon has not been identified.

V. Special verification mission to investigate incidents in Curumaní, Cesar

In Cesar, the Mission's team from the Valledupar office conducted verification work, with support from central government officials, in which every effort was made to investigate a massacre perpetrated by the AUC. This team, accompanied by the Social Pastoral Office and the presidential office's Social Action, recorded an armed incursion by a group of approximately 150 men belonging to the AUC's Bloque Norte. The group clashed with members of the ELN in both Lamas Verdes and Nuevo Horizonte. According to information provided by locals who witnessed the incidents, following the fighting a number of people from the area were captured and later executed.

To date, in the aftermath of these violent and reprehensible actions, eight bodies have been recovered and one minor, 16-year-old Jesús Emiro Manzano, remains missing. The possibility of finding more bodies has not been discarded. In addition, some 18 families were displaced.

The Mission is watching how this case unfolds. These incidents represent a clear violation of the cessation of hostilities by the AUC. The OAS has published the preliminary results of the verification, and it now falls to the judicial agents of the State to cast light on the facts.

VI. Conclusion

In his last report to this Council, the Secretary General said that the OAS had been presented with a historic opportunity to contribute to building a solid and lasting peace in Colombia; he also said the Organization was in a position to address this challenge, provided it maintained the political commitment

established in Resolution 859 and it had the means and resources necessary to achieve the planned objectives. Since the presentation of that Fifth Report to the Permanent Council, the member states' political commitment to the peace effort in Colombia is stronger than ever, while the financial support sought for so long is beginning to arrive in substantial amounts.

The Mission is growing through increased contributions of human, financial, and material resources. If all the verbal commitments made by countries interested in participating in MAPP/OEA are formalized, over the coming weeks we could attain the goal of opening 10 regional offices in the areas where demobilizations have taken place and have a total of more than 100 Mission officers. This progress would allow the Organization to carry out its tasks in Colombia effectively, discharging the commitment with the Colombian people that it assumed in January 2004.

The Secretary General holds that human rights are fundamental to the Organization's work in Colombia. Thus, the IACHR recently conducted a visit to Bogotá and, thanks to additional resources from the Government of Sweden, it plans to make regular visits over the coming months. The IACHR has also worked with the General Secretariat, providing advice on specific issues within the verification process.

The peace process with the AUC has also made considerable progress. The AUC's mass demobilizations recommenced, and it is hoped that the entire group will have laid down its weapons by the end of February. The task of verifying the cessation of hostilities and disarmament, as regards the peace process with the AUC, is entering its final phase.

Ahead of the OAS Mission lies the essential task of verifying that demobilization and disarmament of the illegal units actually take place and that the legal stages in the demobilization process are followed. This requires it to be present in all areas where the AUC operate, and that goal will be attained with the contributions promised by the member states, observer nations, and other friendly countries. Similarly, MAPP/OEA can and must support the reintegration process and the work being carried out with the communities most severely affected by violence.

In spite of these advances in the peace process, MAPP/OEA has identified several violations of the cease-fire and demobilizations, and it has also observed the problems caused by the reintegration of former combatants. In addition, MAPP/OEA is concerned by the destruction of the weapons surrendered by the paramilitary groups in the mass demobilizations, and it places the highest importance on this issue. It has not to date been possible to ensure that those armaments are destroyed. These considerations and comments are in accordance with the mandate of the Mission and, consequently, we trust that they will be taken into consideration by the Government of Colombia.

The challenge posed by Colombia is perhaps the greatest one that lies ahead for this Organization. The peace process in Colombia is extremely

complex, and every stage of it contains both positive aspects that deserve to be highlighted as well as serious obstacles and challenges. The role of the Organization of American States is to support the efforts of the Colombian Government in seeking to ensure a lasting peace, based on respect for the principles that guide the Organization. The Secretary General is pleased that the OAS member states recognize this challenge and are willing to assist in the quest for peace.



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Self-defense groups undergoing demobilization

