

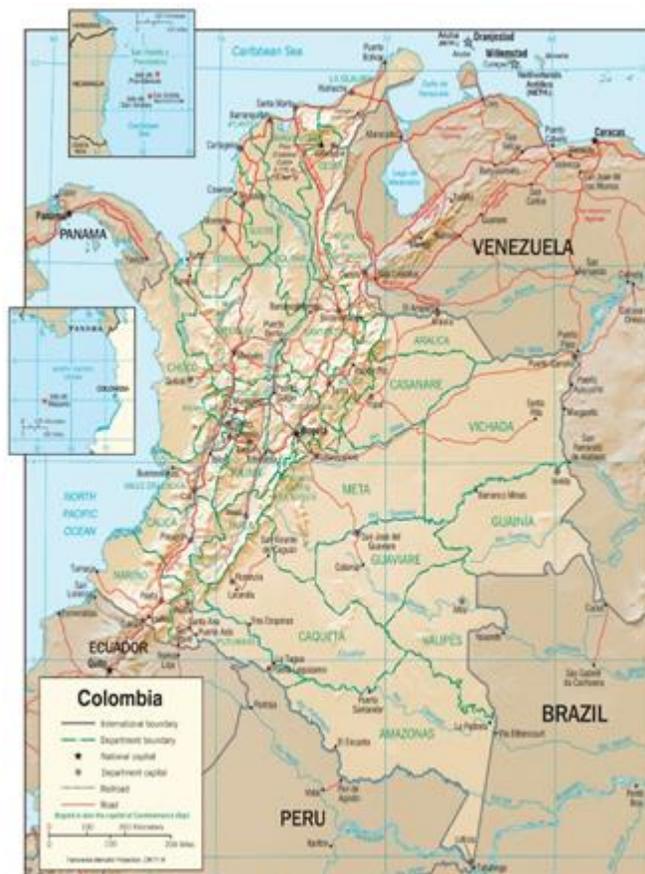
Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI)
Peace Operations Estimate – United Nations Mission in Colombia
(updated 7 June 2017)

Colombia's Peace Opportunity
Executive Summary

In December 2016, the western hemisphere's longest insurgency in modern history (52 years) came to a close with the Colombian Congress' approval of a [revised peace deal](#) between the government and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP, or simply [FARC](#)).

While the FARC sought peace for several reasons, sustainable peace is not necessarily assured. At least one observer suggests Colombia is not yet in a post-conflict status, but, instead, is in "[post-agreement](#)." The ceasefire appears to be in place, the FARC have returned some [child soldiers](#), some 7,000 or more FARC have "[laid down their arms](#)", and over 80,000 farmers have joined crop-substitution programs (cocoa—the source of cocaine—for legal crops) thus far. However, perhaps 5% of former-FARC [have refused to move into the \(disarmament\) camps](#) and some report:

Coca-growing has surged; farmers are planting the shrub in order to pocket payments for ripping it up again...Just 38% of Colombians think implementation of the peace accord is going well, compared with 51% in December...Many fear that the peace deal is encouraging new forms of lawlessness.



[Link to CIA World Fact Book \(Colombia\)](#)
[Link to UN Mission-Colombia](#)

Major considerations are:

- There are [delays in the timing](#) of a major component of the peace agreements—the disarmament of the FARC. However, the UN Special Representative in Colombia suggested the delays are due

According to the agreements, the FARC was to demobilize more than 16,000 people before end of December 2016. However, most of the encampments intended to shelter the former guerrillas were not built in time. Some are still under construction. The Colombian government claims this oversight was a result of October 2 plebiscite that "froze" the funds for the construction.

to "[logistical problems](#)". However, any significant delay in peace implementation allows for opposition groups to continue to foment discord regarding the agreement.

- While [peace negotiations began in February 2017](#) with the [Ejército de Liberación Nacional \(ELN\)](#) (a smaller leftist insurgency group), there remain other armed entities that are not part of the accords, particularly the organized crime groups such as the *bacrim*. These groups are already expanding into previously FARC-controlled areas and are recruiting new members that are former-FARC. In addition, many former-FARC remain “[wary](#)” of the negotiated peace, due to overall distrust of the Colombian government or “strong and lucrative connections to the illegal drug trade.” [Dissident FARC rebels](#) continue to harass and extort the population for money, access, and “protection.” Some rebels claim the representatives of the Colombian government are continually [violating the peace accords](#). In April 2017, “two FARC guerrillas and five relatives of FARC members were [murdered](#) in four separate incidents.” Further, the Colombian government recognizes the assassination of several civil rights or social justice leaders over the past year, [leading up to the peace agreement](#) and since then.
- The US Congress has not yet approved “[Paz \(or Peace\) Colombia](#)”—the proposed new phase of [Plan Colombia](#). It was expected the Congress would address this initiative during the “lame duck” session (November 2016-January 2017), but the aftermath of the Colombian plebiscite and the diversion of the US domestic elections precluded that vote. The Trump Administration has not committed to any Colombian support plan, providing [no line item for Colombia](#) in the proposed Trump budget. In addition, normal funding to Colombia through the UN or USAID or State Department may also be in jeopardy due to proposed budget decrements for foreign aid. Such reductions may significantly impact the peace process. Despite the uncertainty over Paz Colombia payments—or lack of them—President Santos continues to advocate partnership between his country and the US. In May 2017, he wrote for [the New York Times](#): “Colombia is now better prepared to confront the challenges of the future and benefit from its opportunities, and to be an even stronger ally and partner to the United States.”

President Barack Obama’s Paz Colombia requested \$450 million in 2017 to fund programs of land mine removal and continued agricultural development. In the US, the 16 years of Plan Colombia—initially focused as an anti-drug campaign—is considered by many as a major foreign policy success (others consider it [a significant failure](#)). While substantial drug trade reduction remains elusive, the US billions invested in Colombia helped strengthen the country’s security forces, justice system and its economy.
- Crime—often used by FARC and other armed groups to finance their activities—has not abated. In fact, Colombia’s [illegal coca crop has doubled in size in the past two years](#). Currently, Colombia produces more coca than the combined output of the second- and third-place countries (Peru and Bolivia). Illegal mining, human trafficking (for sexual exploitation and illegal immigration), and corruption also remain in practice. Some independent economists and current government officials suggest that the addition of former FARC members to the government’s new seats proposed in the legislative and executive branches would increase opportunity for oil production delays due to unfamiliarity with the processes or outright [“extortion by local associations”](#).

Mission Overview

1. Background. Colombia (and Ecuador and Venezuela) became independent after the [collapse of Gran Colombia in 1830](#). From 1948-1958, Colombia suffered the period of “[La Violencia](#)” and the deaths of over 200,000 people. Colombia enjoyed an uneasy peace for only six years before government forces attacked a small group of armed Communists with a secessionist agenda in the [tiny town of Marquetalia](#) in the spring of 1964. Eventually, the small group escaped into the jungle area and FARC was formed.

Initially, the FARC was one of many leftist groups rebelling against the government, opposing the privatization of natural resources, and promoting land reform initiatives. However, by the 1990s the FARC was the largest insurgency group, deeply involved in the drug trade and other illegal activities, [to include kidnapping and hijacking](#), to finance their military operations. At the same time, several right-wing paramilitaries were formed—usually financed and supported by Colombian economic elites (wealthy farmers and cattlemen)—as self-defense forces against the FARC. These groups also became rivals with the FARC in the drug trade, and many continued as criminal gangs [[bacrim](#) (Spanish for criminal gangs) or *Bandas Criminales*] after formally demobilizing as militias in 2006. The largest of the paramilitaries, [the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia \(AUC\)](#), remained on the US State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations until July 2014.

Ironically, the FARC's 1982 decision to engage in kidnappings and drug trafficking negatively impacted its popularity with the population. In addition, the US' Plan Colombia, which provided [\\$10 billion to Colombia's armed forces and social service agencies](#), hastened the end of the active insurgency. Eventually, international supporters of the FARC, such as Cuba's Fidel Castro and the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, urged the FARC to seek peace and shift strategy to the political stage. In November 2012, the Colombian Government started formal peace negotiations with the FARC, reaching a definitive bilateral cease-fire in early 2016 and a final peace agreement (Final Agreement on the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace) in August 2016.

The agreement was signed ceremonially in Bogotá on [26 September 2016](#). On October 2, 2016, through a plebiscite, the Colombian people rejected the agreement as ["too lenient."](#) In December 2016, the Colombian Congress approved a peace plan with several changes to the original, but still contained an amnesty clause for former FARC leaders that remains controversial.

Most estimate the insurgency and the government responses killed more than [220,000 persons](#) and ["disappeared"](#) between 46,000 and 100,000 people (depending on the circumstances considered a "disappearance"). An additional 7 million "internally displaced people" (IDPs) [a United Nations (UN) estimate that makes it [one of the highest numbers](#) globally to date] are directly related to the five decades of violence. Colombia also has the second-highest number of [land mines](#) in the world, having killed or injured more than 11,000 people since 1990.

2. Mandate. The United Nations (UN) [is committed to support of peace in Colombia](#) and implementation of the [UN Security Council \(UNSC\) Resolution \(UNSCR\) 2307](#). UNSCR 2307 approved a [political mission to monitor several aspects of the peace agreement](#) between the government of Colombia and the FARC, for a period of one year. The mission is based on UNSCR 2261, adopted **January 25, 2016**, and authorizes 450 **unarmed** observers and a number of civilians to be deployed in 40 widely dispersed locations to oversee the laying down of arms by the FARC and other facets of the agreement. The initial elements of the mission were in place by September 26, 2016, after the parties signed the first formal peace agreement documents in a public ceremony. The UN Peacebuilding Fund [approved \\$3 million](#) "for a project to support the collective reparations of victims in the armed conflict, and pave the way for the implementation of the peace agreement."

The political mission has [four components](#): observation [tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM)], coordination and substantive support, field support, and security. There are [five specified tasks](#):

- First: To be completed within 30 days of the entry into force of the Agreement, verify the retrieval by FARC-EP of collective weapons, grenades and munitions and their transportation to their camps.

- Second: To be completed within 60 days of the entry into force of the final peace agreement, verify the destruction by FARC-EP of unstable weapons in the areas where their units were deployed prior to the movement to the transitional local zones and points for normalization.
- Third: Monitor individual and collective weapons held by FARC-EP in their camps in the [Transitional and Normalisation Zones \(TNZ\)](#).
- Fourth: To be completed from day 60 to day 150 after the entry into force of the final peace agreement, receive individual and collective weapons, grenades and munitions from FARC-EP and store them in containers or equivalent secure facilities under permanent United Nations observation.
- Fifth: Transport the weapons out of the transitional local zones and points for normalization following the destruction of ammunition and the decommissioning of weapons.

Even before formalization of the agreement, there were FARC demobilization efforts. In the first week of September 2016, the FARC began the [separation and reintegration of all children](#) (under age 18) affiliated with the insurgency as child soldiers. On the day prior to the October 2016 plebiscite, UN monitors and FARC representatives observed the [destruction of more than 620kg of explosives](#) of the FARC.

A [second political mission](#) is proposed “to verify the reintegration of ex-combatants as well as the provisions in the agreement that refer to their protection, particularly from paramilitary groups.” It is expected to deploy after the current mandate of the UN Mission in Colombia ends in one year, for its own three-year duration.

3. Deployment. Training of some UN observers began the first week of September 2016, with some

CELAC was formed in December 2011 by the Declaration of Caracas. It consists of 33 countries in the Americas, but excludes Canada, the US, and European-supervised territories. It is considered an alternative to the Organization of American States (OAS), the regional body that was founded by United States and 21 other Latin American nations.

limited deployments thereafter. There are observers already in place for the UN Mission in Colombia contributed by the *Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños*

([CELAC](#), in English, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) as identified by the UNSCR language, but the numbers are not yet specified. [Canada and Mexico are exploring joint participation](#) in the mission, but that does not appear finalized to date.

The UN [repatriated](#) four observers in early 2017, for [inappropriate familiarity](#) with FARC members (by dancing with them at a New Year’s Eve party). Such actions were perceived as undermining the legitimacy of the UN’s mission in support of the peace implementation.

4. Casualties. There is no current UN peacekeeping or police mission in Colombia, so there have not been any casualties to peacekeepers in country in recent years. However, the number of UN [peacekeeper fatalities](#) is steadily rising across all current peacekeeping missions. The most accepted reason for this growth is that UN members are deliberately targeted by increasingly capable armed groups. However, the rise in fatalities may also correspond to significant growth to the overall numbers of peacekeepers, combined with the ever more risky environments in which they are deployed.

While this is a political mission, not peacekeeping, many of the same risk factors may affect this deployment.

Situation

5. Drivers of Conflict. The October 2016 plebiscite results indicated that peace will not be easy--or cheap. There are many issues that have been part of the fabric of Colombia since its independence and have not yet been addressed—nor are they likely to be in the near future. Among these issues are the following: land reform deficits; the continual rise in [organized crime](#); and the need for a cease fire or peace agreements with other armed groups, such as [Ejercito de Liberación Nacional \(ELN\)](#).

While large amounts of international funding were expected to support the myriad of peace-building tasks, little of this was anticipated to be available to the remote areas requiring enormous amounts of [needed resources](#). Further, some of the expected funding was from the United States and may not be budgeted. In regards to October 2016's rejected agreement, some observers pointed out:

The [agreement is unfair](#) to the great mass of the working population that strives daily for minimum wage, for the groups that have recently led peaceful protests seeking modest income increases, for the prisoners with minor offenses and even for the murderers and white collar criminals whose felonies might be even lower than those of the guerrilla...its incomprehensible and capricious rules and the idea that "Transitional Justice" may have over ordinary justice. This will generate legal uncertainty in an already chaotic and collapsed institutional system, and also gives FARC potential excuses to say that "the state" breached the agreement.

The [Colombian Congress's December 2016 approved agreement](#) includes "a vision to revamp Colombia's primitive countryside through major infrastructure investments and wean the FARC from their links to the country's cocaine trade." It also recognizes the [constitutional amendments](#) required to provide the FARC with 10 seats in Colombia's congress, which is a provision of the earlier deal. Amnesty is still a controversial aspect, but the current peace agreement acknowledges the utilization of a special tribunal to mete out justice to former rebels and military officials convicted of war crimes.

6. Significant Events.

a. Recent Events.

- [3-5 May 2017](#). The UN Security Council conducted a "visiting mission" to Colombia in order to demonstrate its commitment to the peace process in the country.
- [8 April 2017](#). Three overflowing rivers provoked a massive landslide, burying seven neighborhoods of the Amazonian town of Mocoa, with at least 300 deaths and over 400 people missing.
- [4 March 2017](#). Mission report to the UN Security Council.
- [February 2017](#). Peace negotiations began with *Ejercito de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) (a smaller leftist insurgency group).
- [6 January 2017](#). UN [repatriated](#) four observers for inappropriate conduct with FARC rebels.
- [13 December 2016](#). The FARC [announced the expulsion](#) of five commanders from their ranks for "their recent conduct, which has brought them into conflict with our political-military cause." Observers suggest these five individuals and their immediate followers are not interested in the FARC's efforts for peace.
- [1 December 2016](#). [Colombian Congress](#) approved an agreement ending the 52-year conflict between the 6,000-strong FARC and the government.
- [7 October 2016](#). [Nobel Peace Prize](#) awarded to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos for:

...his resolute efforts to bring the country's more than 50-year-long civil war to an end, a war that has cost the lives of at least 220 000 Colombians and displaced close to six million people. The award should also be seen as a tribute to the Colombian people who, despite great hardships and abuses, have not given up

hope of a just peace, and to all the parties who have contributed to the peace process. This tribute is paid, not least, to the representatives of the countless victims of the civil war.

- **2 October 2016.** Nation-wide [plebiscite](#) rejects a "lasting and stable peace."
- **26 September 2016.** With the UN Secretary General and the US Secretary of State and a dozen Latin American leaders on hand as witnesses, Santos and Timochenko (the FARC leader) signed the deal in Cartagena.
- **6 Sep 2016.** The first of the [training](#) groups completed its work to prepare joint mechanism to monitor and verify a ceasefire.
- **July 2016.** The FARC and the Colombian government requested the UN to support the work of the Sub-Commission on End of Conflict Issues, specifically on the monitoring and verification mechanisms for the bilateral ceasefire.
- **25 January 2016.** The UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2261 to establish a political mission of unarmed international observers to monitor and verify the laying down of arms, and be part of the tripartite mechanism that will monitor and verify the definitive bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, following the signing of a peace agreement.

b. Upcoming Events.

- **2017.** Renewal of UN Mission in Colombia.
- **2018.** Colombia's presidential and congressional elections.

Operational Environment (GPMESII)

7. **Geographic.** Colombia is slightly less than twice the size of Texas and the only South American country with coastlines on both the North Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea (Atlantic). It is comprised of flat coastal lowlands, central highlands, high Andes Mountains, and eastern lowland plains (Llanos). It is tropical along the coasts and eastern plains; cooler in the highlands.



Colombia has an abundance of petroleum, natural gas, coal, iron ore, nickel, gold, copper, and emeralds. Over one-third of the land is in agricultural use and over half is forested. Deforestation is one of the most damaging environmental issues in Colombia, along with soil and water quality damage from overuse of pesticides; and air pollution. The highlands are subject to volcanic eruptions; occasional earthquakes (Colombia is a seismically active country with a large potential for damage owing to its mountainous terrain and location along the Pacific Ocean ring of fire); and periodic droughts.

The *Galeras* is one of Colombia's most active volcanoes, having erupted in 2009 and 2010 and causing major evacuations; *Nevado del Ruiz* erupted in 1985 producing *lahars* (mudflows) that killed 23,000 people. It erupted again in 1991. Additionally, after 500 years of dormancy, *Nevado del Huila* reawakened in 2007 and has experienced frequent eruptions since then.

In regard to earthquakes, a [5.9 magnitude earthquake](#) struck the city of Medellin in early September 2016. [El Niño in early 2016](#) continued to [severely affect](#) the North Andes region of South America, to include a traumatic mudslide in 2017.

8. Political. Colombia is a presidential republic based on a Constitution. The President, [Juan Manuel Santos](#), is also the head of government and, beginning in 2018, can only serve for one four-year term. There is a bicameral Congress (or *Congreso*) with a 102-member *Senado* (100 members elected nationwide—no regional representation—and two elected on a special ballot for indigenous communities) and the 166-member *Camara de Representantes*. All Congressional members are elected to four-year terms.

Colombia has eight major political parties, and numerous smaller movements. There are a number of opposition groups, many of which are also part of armed insurgencies. Voting is universal at 18 years and above.

Called by many as “the best deal possible,” the [297-page peace agreement](#) was complicated and included [many concessions](#) on the part of all parties that would have been difficult to implement with consistent success. It [included disarmament](#), repatriation, [re-settlement of IDPs](#), political involvement at all levels of government, rural development, economic incentives, and [transitional justice](#)—all within a close timeline and in an environment of familial and community recent [memories of violence](#). There were five components:

- **The end of political violence, which is expected when FARC ceases to be a rebel army and transforms into a political party.** To this end, once the accord is officially signed and within 180 days, FARC members will move to UN-monitored camps to disarm. The Colombian military will provide [camp security](#).
- **Justice for victims of the conflict.** Similar to a truth-and-reconciliation process, Colombia will establish special tribunals to adjudicate war crimes and other atrocities committed by the rebels as well as paramilitary groups and government security forces. All combatants are eligible for alternative sentences and "restorative" justice aimed at making amends. In some cases, they may be criminally prosecuted. **This is one of the most controversial elements of the peace deal.** The Colombian Congress-approved peace agreement, in fact, included a [law offering amnesty](#), but only in cases of minor crimes.
- **Rural development.** The least controversial part of the agreement, the government will invest in infrastructure projects and state-building in areas where FARC was dominant. It is not a land-reform agreement; private property will not be impacted.
- **FARC in politics.** The FARC will have a number of seats in Congress through 2018; five seats in the *Senado* and five seats in the *Camara de Representantes*. They will not have voting rights but can speak on matters pertaining to the implementation of the peace accords. After 2018, they have to win seats through elections.
- **Ending the drug trade.** The FARC will work with the government and others to wean Colombia's rural farmers off coca. This is potentially the most dangerous part of the agreement, as other criminal groups use violence to “fill the gaps.”

To assist with implementation, there is a [joint committee](#) consisting of three members from the government and three from the FARC. The committee is to have an initial mandate until 2019, with an option to extend for up to a total of 10 years.

The Colombian Congress-approved peace agreement includes [50 modifications](#), mostly designed to address leniency concerns. The summary of the other [amendments](#) is:

- FARC members must **declare all their assets**, and the money will be used for **reparation payments** for the victims;
- **Religious groups' concerns** were addressed;
- There is now a **10 year time limit** for the transitional justice system;
- FARC members must provide “**exhaustive information**” about any drug trafficking;
- FARC members have only **six months to turn in their weapons** and start a political party; and
- The peace agreement **will not** form part of Colombia's constitution.

Although many polls indicated the October vote would result in a favorable outcome for the peace accords, some observers suggested the vote became a [referendum](#) on President Juan Manuel Santos, the current Colombian leader, who does not have consistently positive polling numbers. However, as the plebiscite lost in a narrow margin of [less than half a percentage point or only 54,000 votes](#), there may have been other factors in consideration. The minimal voter turnout (37%) suggests “Yes” vote-apathy or an assumption of success, or even the foul weather on polling day. It is equally apparent the “No” vote advocates (led by former President Alvaro Uribe) were willing to face the poor polling conditions due to the disappointment and [anger over the peace agreement conditions](#)—particularly the agreement to allow for political participation of the FARC leaders without any incarceration for their crimes. Notably, the [formerly violent interior areas pacified during the Uribe presidency](#) led the “No” vote, but areas that are still suffering from the violence led the “Yes” vote.

9. Military/Security. Despite of—or perhaps, because of—the peace agreement, [assassinations of community activists](#) have increased dramatically in recent weeks. According to some observers, “the killings appear to fit a pattern of attacks on left-wing activists, indigenous leaders, human rights advocates and members of Marcha Patriótica.” The right-wing para-militias are suspected, given the evidence of “threatening pamphlets and fliers” signed by a group called “Black Eagles” (one name of many of the *Bacrim*) and other anti-communist forces. Nothing much more is known of these groups, but the [right-wing para-militias](#) have a history of collaboration with government forces.

Marcha Patriótica is a political and social movement in Colombia.

a. National Armed Forces. The Colombian armed forces consist of the National Army (*Ejército Nacional*), Republic of Colombia Navy (*Armada Republica de Colombia*, ARC, includes Naval Aviation), Naval Infantry (*Infanteria de Marina, IM*), and Coast Guard], and the Colombian Air Force (*Fuerza Aerea de Colombia, FAC*). Military service is compulsory at some point between 18-24 years of age with an 18-month service obligation.

The national armed forces have a [problematic history](#) in Colombia. Between 2002 and 2008, army brigades across Colombia routinely executed civilians considered part of the insurgencies. Due to demands to show “positive” results (with increased “body counts”) in their war against FARC and other similar groups, soldiers allegedly “abducted victims or lured them to remote locations under false pretenses—such as with promises of work—and killed them, placed weapons on their lifeless bodies, and then reported them as enemy combatants killed in action.”

Beginning in 2009, there was a significant reduction in cases of alleged unlawful killings attributed to security forces. In May 2015, the Colombian Attorney General’s office began investigating more than 3,700 unlawful killings and obtained convictions for over 800 of them. However, at the same time,

authorities have not prosecuted the senior army officers involved in the killings. Instead, many of them were promoted.

Colombia's internal armed conflict has shaped its participation in overseas military and security engagements for decades. While it ranks as the 12th largest [participant in international peacekeeping operations](#) from the Americas, its peacekeeping engagement is "modest" compared to some of its Latin American neighbors. Once internal security is ensured, Colombia may be in a position to provide additional forces to international peacekeeping efforts. However, how acceptable to the Colombian increased involvement in international efforts is—or would be—to the Colombian people, politicians, or military is unclear at this point. There are many perceived advantages (military readiness sustainment, e.g.) to enlarged global military contributions as well as disadvantages (continued national expense for the military, e.g.).

Colombia's participation in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions to date includes:

- UN Emergency Force (UNEF I) to the Suez Canal and the Sinai Peninsula (1956–67)
- UN Multinational Force of Observers (MFO) in the Sinai (1982—Present)
- UN Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA, 1989–92)
- UN Observer Group for the Verification of the Elections in Haiti (ONUVEH, 1990–91)
- UN Angola Verification Mission II (UNAVEM II, 1991–95)
- UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL, 1991–95)
- UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC, 1992–93)
- UN Protection Force in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNPROFOR, 1992–95)
- UN Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA, 1997)
- UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH, 2004–today)
- UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA, 2002)
- UN Office in East Timor (UNOTIL, 2005)
- UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL, 2005)
- UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB, 2007)
- Organization of American States' (OAS) (1990s) demining program in Honduras and the Special Mission for Strengthening Democracy in Haiti (2002-06).

Colombia's current contribution to UN peacekeeping operations is 29 civilian National Police deployed in MINUSTAH to protect civilian populations, assure human rights, and help rebuild institutions. To date, Colombia has not authorized the deployment of infantry troops in any peacekeeping operation.

b. Non-State Armed Groups. It is uncertain if all members of the various FARC combat and support units [will agree to demobilize](#) or if they will instead migrate into other insurgent organizations. At this juncture, there appears to be some of both options happening within the FARC. While the majority former-FARC are disarming, some appear to be joining other insurgent groups. A summary of the [major non-state armed groups](#) follows:

- ***Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).*** The 52-year old [conflict](#) between the Colombian government and the FARC is the country's longest-standing insurgency. Pedro Antonio Marin, a peasant farmer who went by the alias Manuel Marulanda, or "Sure Shot," founded the rebel group in 1964. Under Marulanda's leadership, the FARC drew recruits mainly from poor, rural, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and universities, growing to an estimated 20,000 armed fighters by the late 1990s. It still has the [strongest ties to Colombia's peasantry](#), acting as a government and implementing its own Rule of Law in matters of dispute in exchange for protection, intelligence, and logistical support.

At the height of its power in the 1990s, the FARC took over several military bases and took hundreds of soldiers hostage. In 2002, the FARC was in position to fire rockets at downtown targets during the Presidential inauguration ceremony.

[In December 2016](#), the FARC [announced the expulsion](#) of five commanders from their ranks for “their recent conduct, which has brought them into conflict with our political-military cause.” Observers suggest these five individuals and their immediate followers are not interested in the FARC’s efforts for peace. Therefore, the Colombian government must act [swiftly to establish its presence](#) in those areas where the FARC once operated, or else these gaps will be filled by organized crime.

- [Ejército de Liberación Nacional \(ELN\)](#). Estimated at 2,500 members in March 2016, the current peace agreement does not include the ELN. However, in February 2017, new rounds of peace negotiations began between the Colombian government and the ELN. ELN was founded as a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla organization in 1964 by [a group of students invited to Cuba](#) to receive education and military training for the purpose of revolution exportation. From its beginning, the group was financed via kidnappings and extortions. In 1973, the Colombian army reduced its numbers significantly in “Operation Anorí.” However, by the 1980s, the group began to engage in illegal mining and extortion, as well as “a complicated relationship” with drug trafficking (while ELN formally opposes drug trafficking, its members are clearly involved).

The ELN participated unsuccessfully in three previous peace talks with the Colombian government. Each one was derailed by the ELN’s inability to sustain a cease-fire during the negotiations. The group was also part of the current peace negotiations originally, but the [kidnapping of three journalists](#) in late May 2016 eliminated them from the process, even though the group [released the journalists within a week](#).

Despite its engagement in peace negotiations, the ELN remains in a struggle with a bacrim armed group known as the *Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* [or [Gaitanist Self-defenses of Colombia \(AGC\)](#)]. Between the two of them, they are committing serious abuses against Afro-Colombian and indigenous Wounaan riverside communities (San Juan River).

- [Popular Liberation Army \(EPL\)](#). Founded in 1967, the EPL follows a Maoist ideology. The group originally operated in the northwest *Urabá* region near the border with Panama, where it focused on fighting and extorting multinational corporations. Starting in the 1980s, many EPL members left the organization and became paramilitary leaders, prominent narco-barons, or both. One example is [Los Rastrojos](#), founded by the Úsuga clan, which became the largest neo-paramilitary group in the country.

In 1990, EPL leaders signed a peace agreement with the government to disarm and demobilize. [According to the agreement](#), the EPL could send two non-voting members to the Constituent Assembly the following year as a political party. However, not everyone in the organization agreed with becoming a political party and many in the group remained active rebels. The political group was renamed Hope, Peace, and Liberty (also EPL by its Spanish initials), [but most of their leaders were murdered](#) by the EPL faction that refused to disarm and FARC rebels who considered the disarmed EPL members as traitors. Those who remained in the EPL after the 1990 peace deal also forged pacts with paramilitaries [and maintained involvement in drug trafficking](#).

The current size of the group’s membership [is unclear](#). The EPL’s [area of influence](#) is concentrated in a region known as *El Catatumbo* in *Norte de Santander* near the border with Venezuela—a hotbed for cocaine production. The Colombian government considers the EPL as a criminal organization.

- **United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC)**. The AUC was the largest right-wing paramilitary group in the country until its 2006 disarmament. The group formed in April 1997 when various paramilitary leaders from around the country decided to unite under the leadership of Carlos Castaño for control of drug and contraband routes. By 2004, the AUC operated in 35 percent of the country and its membership reached 13,500 members.

The AUC also used violent intimidation to influence elections and some estimate that it controlled 30% of the Colombian legislative branch. While an estimated 420,000 people can claim to be AUC victims, the Colombian legal system has only recognized 3,136.

In 2003, the AUC signed a peace agreement which began its demobilization. The former-AUC members were required to confess all of their crimes and turn over assets to contribute to reparation of victims in exchange for short prison terms. Interestingly, after the three-year demobilization process ended, 31,000 AUC members had demobilized, leading some observers to speculate that a number of drug traffickers had pretended to be paramilitary members in order to get in on demobilization benefits and avoid extradition. In 2008, then-President Uribe's government decreed that several paramilitary heads had not complied with the peace agreement and extradited them to the US.

- **April 19 Movement (M-19)**. The M-19 is a defunct guerrilla group that existed in urban areas between 1974 and 1990. It attracted university students from across the country frustrated with the 1970 presidential election and claiming to be the "intellectual protest movement." In 1985, the group took over the headquarters of Colombia's Palace of Justice in downtown Bogotá. The government responded by sending police and Army tanks in a 27-hour-long battle, with over 100 people (to include judges) killed.

While this armed group is obsolete, its history resonates among many planners and future observers of the upcoming FARC demobilization efforts. In 1989, M-19 members reached a deal with the government and agreed to disarm. In 1990, the M-19 became the first armed group to sign a peace accord in Colombia and became a political party, the Democratic Alliance-M-19 (AD/M-19). While approximately 7,000 M-19 members demobilized, at least 600 of them were murdered in the 1990s, allegedly by the Colombian military—a cautionary tale for many disarming FARC members.

- **Bacrim**. The *bacrim* are the remnants of neo-paramilitary bands still active in Colombia. Since May 5, 2016, the *bacrim* have been officially reclassified as "Organized Armed Groups," or GAO, by the government. The *Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* [Gaitanist Self-defenses of Colombia (AGC)] currently engaged in committing atrocities in the Chocó province against the indigenous population and the ELN. They are one example of existing *bacrim*.

- **Organized Criminal Elements (Domestic and Transnational)**. Organized crime groups are often intertwined with other armed groups. They operate in all areas of crime, to include, but not limited to, trafficking (human and drugs), illegal mining (all minerals and emeralds), kidnapping, and extortion.

c. Other International Actors. Given its geographic position at the northern point of the South American continent and with its access to both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, Colombia has many international partners and actors interested in its resources and population.

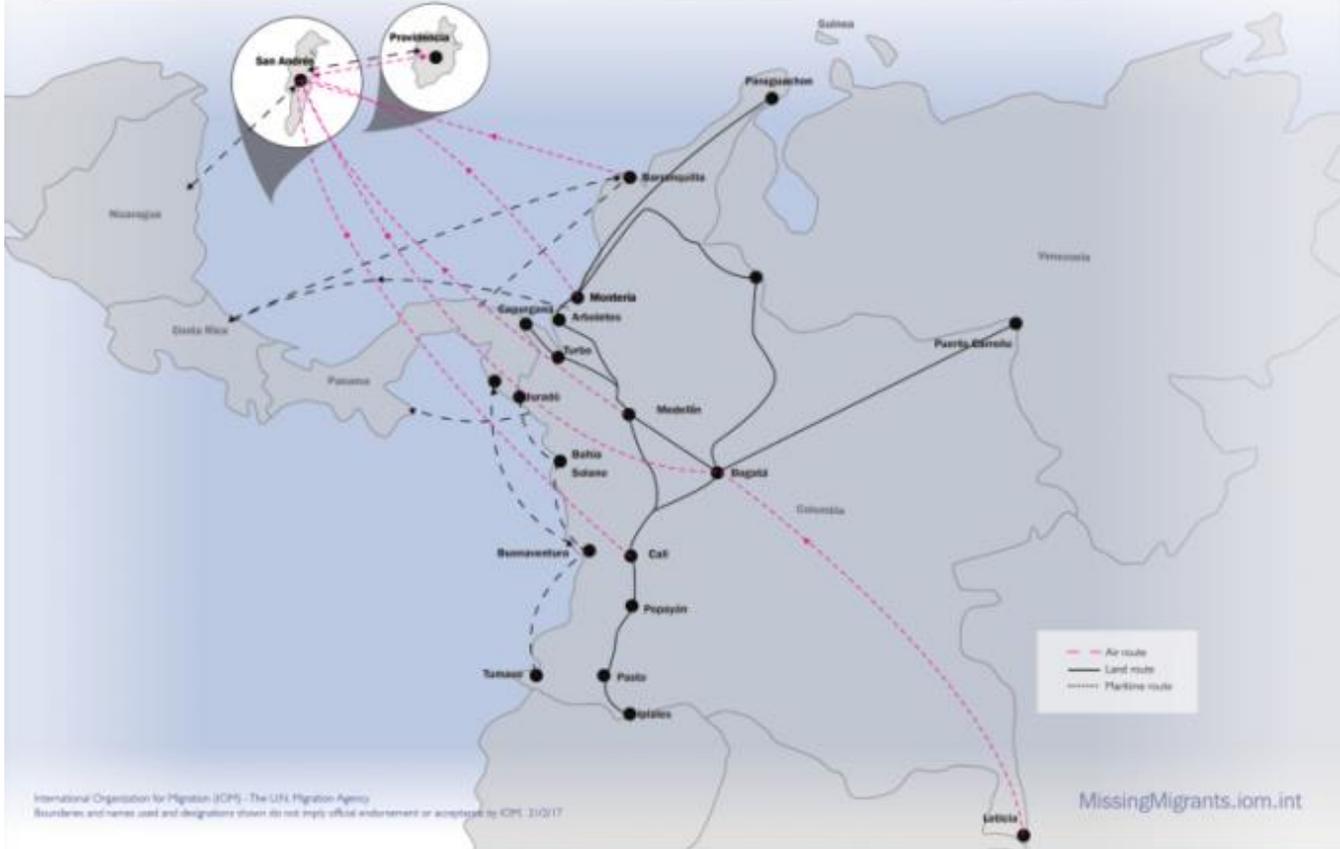
- **International Organizations**. This following list is not complete, but provides an example of the current interests of several international organizations in the long-term stability of Colombia:

- ❖ **Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC, in English, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States)**. CELAC contributes observers to the UN Mission in Columbia.
- ❖ **Inter-American Court on Human Rights**. In November 2014, this organization condemned Colombia for “disappearances” committed by military troops after the recapture of the Palace of Justice in 1985.
- ❖ **International Criminal Court (ICC)**. The Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the International Criminal Court (ICC) continues to monitor Colombian investigations of crimes that may fall within the ICC’s jurisdiction. In November 2015, the OTP reported that it would “carefully review and analyse [*sic*] the provisions of the agreement [with the FARC], in particular with respect to the restrictions of liberty in special conditions and the inclusion of state agents,” and expressed its concern about limited progress on prosecutions of sexual and gender-based crimes in the ordinary justice system.
- ❖ **European Union (EU)**. The EU has many economic and development interests in Colombia (and throughout the region). The **European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)** cautions that, despite the peace agreement, Colombia will likely continue in the medium term to face the humanitarian consequences of the conflict—which could even become more complex and acute in the short term in places where other armed actors compete for control of territories and resources.
- ❖ **Organization of American States (OAS)**. At the request of Colombia, the OAS provided observers to the plebiscite on October 2, 2016, with the **Mission to Support the Peace Process** in Colombia (MAPP/OAS).
 - **Other International Actors**. **Norway** served as another “guarantor” of the peace negotiations process (along with Cuba). However, the **United States (US)** remains the most influential foreign actor in Colombia. In 2015, it provided approximately US\$280 million, mostly in military and police aid, as part of **Plan Colombia**. Total aid in the past 15 years is over \$10 billion. It is expected to **relaunch** as “Paz Colombia” in support of the peace agreement implementation process. The US involvement in Colombia is not without controversy, such as the **extradition of paramilitary leaders** for prosecution and incarceration in the US, rather than in Colombia.
 - **Regional Neighbors**. There are a number of long-standing boundary disputes between Colombia and its neighbors. In addition, the illegal narcotics, guerrilla, and paramilitary activities penetrate all neighboring borders and they have caused Colombians to flee mostly into neighboring countries. **Chile** provided negotiators to the recent peace negotiations, acting as a “facilitator” (along with Venezuela). **Cuba’s** involvement in Colombia included long-term support of the insurgencies, particularly the FARC and the ELN, and more recently, as a “guarantor” of the peace process (along with Norway). The peace agreement was negotiated in Havana. Colombia recently created a bilateral commission with **Ecuador** to fight against human trafficking. **Panama** is another country that receives refugees from Colombia as well as victims of human trafficking. **Venezuela** also allegedly supported the various insurgent groups, yet served as a “facilitator” during the peace negotiations. Recently, Colombia opened **a previously closed border** with Venezuela. However, the recent crisis in Venezuela **threatens Colombia’s fragile peace** as refugees come across the border. However:

Many of those who have fled Venezuela, ironically, are Colombians who had immigrated there decades ago to escape Colombia’s own civil war when Venezuela, awash in oil dollars, was a relatively peaceful and

prosperous place to earn a living. Yet as the crisis in Venezuela has worsened, those born in Venezuela have started to flee as well.

Mixed migration routes: Colombia



10. Economic. According to the [World Fact Book](#), Colombia's economic policies and free trade agreements bolstered its ability to weather external shocks; however, its economic development is stymied by inadequate infrastructure, inequality, poverty, narco-trafficking and an uncertain security situation.

Colombia depends heavily on energy and mining exports, making it vulnerable to a drop in commodity prices. It is the world's fourth largest coal exporter and Latin America's fourth largest oil producer. Declining oil prices resulted in a drop in government revenues; therefore, in 2014, Colombia passed a tax reform bill to offset the lost revenue from the global drop in oil prices and to help finance implementation of a peace deal between FARC and the government.

The El Niño weather phenomenon caused food and energy prices to rise, with inflation spiking to 6.8%. In order to combat inflation, the Central Bank raised interest rates four times during the last four months of 2015, ending the year with a 25 basis point increase to 5.75%.

Unemployment hit a record low of 8.9% in 2015, but the rate is still one of Latin America's highest. Regardless of the low unemployment, almost 30% of the population lives in poverty. Nevertheless, Colombia's gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate averaged 4.8% per year from 2010-2014,

continuing a decade of strong economic performance, before dropping in 2015. Household consumption is over 2/3 of GDP composition; the government is another 18%. The service industry comprises over 60% of the labor force; other industry and agriculture is 20% for each sector.

Colombia is a founding member of the Pacific Alliance - a regional trade block formed in 2012 by Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru to promote regional trade and economic integration. In 2013, Colombia began its accession process to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The US is Colombia's largest trading partner. The US-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, which began in May 2012, aims to improve the investment environment, eliminate tariffs and other barriers to US exports, expand trade, and promote economic growth in both countries. Primary US exports to Colombia include oil, machinery, agricultural products, and organic chemicals. Primary US imports from Colombia include crude oil, gold, coffee, and cut flowers. US direct investment in Colombia is primarily concentrated in the mining and manufacturing sectors.

Colombian officials estimated the peace deal would bolster economic growth by up to 2%. Given the negative vote of the plebiscite, [Colombia's domestic and international financial markets are expected to react negatively](#) and delay other planned measures to offset the oil income reduction.

The UN set up a [development fund](#) in February 2016 specifically to finance 24 projects that seek to provide collective reparation for victims of the conflict. It recently received an additional donation of \$16.8 million from several European nations, bringing the funding to \$56 million. [An UN-led environmental team](#) is also in place to focus "on the environmental impacts from illegal extraction of minerals, deforestation and mercury pollution." However, the additional [\\$400 million](#) of *Paz Colombia* funding expected from the US appears in jeopardy. Despite President Trump's purported promise to President [Juan Manuel Santos](#) to "personally" take charge of aid for Colombia, there was [no line item for Colombia](#) in the proposed Trump budget.

11. Social. Spanish is the official language and 90% of the population is Roman Catholic. 84% of the population is white or mestizo (ethnic group of Spanish and Native American); another 10% are considered Afro-Colombian; less than 4% are Native American. It also has a ["disappearing tribe"](#) of the Jiw community, an indigenous group of only about 3,000.

Colombia has a very literate population of almost 95%.

Colombia is in the midst of a demographic transition resulting from steady declines in its fertility, mortality, and population growth rates. The birth rate has fallen from more than 6 children per woman in the 1960s to just above replacement level today as a result of increased literacy, family planning services, and urbanization. However, income inequality is among the worst in the world, and more than a third of the population lives below the poverty line.

Colombia has young population with almost 43% below 24 years old, yet youth unemployment (15-24) is almost 20%. Approximately 9% of children between the ages of 5-17 are engaged in some form of child labor. However, exact numbers are difficult to ascertain as the government is not yet present in the more remote and/or FARC-controlled regions.

Average life expectancy at birth is just over 75 years old, regardless of gender, with generally good population health and health support programs, especially in urban areas (which contains over 75% of the total population). Unfortunately, the more remote areas have dramatically reduced availability to adequate health care and a corresponding declination in life expectancy.

There is a high risk of a few major infectious diseases such as dengue fever, malaria, and yellow fever. In August 2016, Colombia declared the [Zika epidemic already over in Colombia](#). The ten months of active monitoring indicates that the Colombian epidemic [did not result in the tragic birth defects](#) evidenced in Brazil. However, there are some tracking processes that may have skewed the findings.

a. Rule of Law. Colombia has a civil law system influenced by the Spanish and French civil codes. It has a Supreme Court of Justice (or *Corte Suprema de Justicia*) with Civil-Agrarian and Labor Chambers (each with 7 judges) and the Penal Chamber (with 9 judges). Supreme Court judges are appointed. Subordinate courts' judges are elected for 8-year terms.

[Plan Colombia](#) included funding for several Rule of Law initiatives. These programs and agencies will be important in implementing the peace agreement's [justice and reparations](#) tenets.

One major caution in the area of transitional justice is categorization. Justice demands categorization as either victims or perpetrators. However, in Colombia it is more complex. For example, child soldiers often became part of the FARC to meet survival or social needs. While they may be guilty of horrific actions, they were likely forced into the environment. In other cases, many women in the FARC and other armed groups [suffered harm within the groups themselves](#).

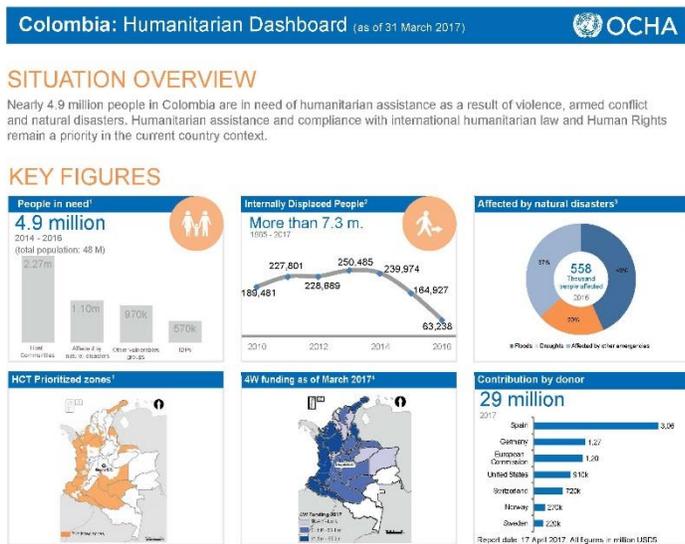
Another example of upcoming peace agreement implementation complexity is in the [land restitution](#) arena. In most cases, for every IDP-family that left their property, another family moved into their home or on their land. In many cases, that move or occupation occurred over 50 years ago—or one or two generations. In other cases, the IDPs or their families consider themselves “better off” after the forced move than they were beforehand. The courts will have great difficulty navigating these nuances.

b. Human Rights. Over the past 50 or more years, Colombia has seen numerous and horrific human rights violations perpetuated by insurgency and para-military groups, as well as government forces. Colombia is also a [source, destination, and transit](#) country for human trafficking within its domestic territory as well as throughout the western hemisphere and the continents of Asia and Europe. While Colombia is still considered “a destination” for foreign child sex tourists, the Government of Colombia fully meets the minimum international standards for the elimination of trafficking. Reported treatment of [women and children in the FARC](#) is mixed, but most indications are that many women and children are used as slaves and are forced to use contraception, have abortions, and give up their own children. A study called “[Like Lambs Among Wolves](#)” (2012) reported that “In some cases, minors have been kidnapped. But other minors, particularly those who live in remote, marginalized and impoverished areas of Colombia, have been lured into the group by the prospect of food and shelter.” Most of these children became [soldiers](#), involved in all of the activities of the FARC.

The peace agreement implementation attempts to promote [gender equity](#), such as ensuring access to rural property for women; guarantees of the economic, social and cultural rights of women and “persons with diverse sexual orientations and identities”; institutional action to strengthen women’s organizations; and promotion of women’s participation in representation, decision-making and conflict resolution. Ironically, much of the language to promote equity in peace was feasibly due to the need to confirm the existing equity of FARC women among their male peers. While there are some women that were—and are—victims among the FARC, [others were appreciated as equals](#). A recent assessment points out:

Women held important jobs, were appointed as commanders, and the FARC brought several women to the negotiating table during four-year long peace talks with the government. Women were particularly sought after for intelligence gathering and radio communications, forming the backbone of guerrilla operations.

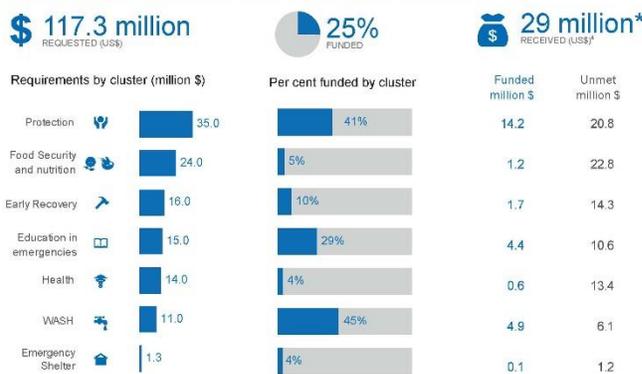
c. Humanitarian Assistance. The insurgencies displaced over 7 million people—or more than one out of every 10 Colombians. [Forced displacement](#) is prevalent due to all armed factions, with Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations disproportionately affected. Estimates of the actual IDPs may be inaccurate because not all forced displacements are recorded. Colombia also has one of the world's highest levels of “disappearances”, although exact numbers are difficult to ascertain, given the nature of the concept. In August 2016, increased hostilities [generated the displacement](#) of an additional 1,256 people in different areas of the country and the [assassinations of several civil society/human rights leaders](#).



Unfortunately, the peace process has not yet resulted in complete relief from violence in Colombia. The [UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR) [reported in May 2017](#):

Violence continues to uproot thousands of people in Colombia...Fighting for territorial control in the Colombian Pacific Coast region among irregular armed groups has displaced 3,549 people (913 families) since the beginning of 2017...While recognizing the important efforts by the Government to consolidate peace and the authorities' commitment to ensure that the rights of victims, including internally displaced people and refugees, are addressed, we are deeply concerned at the increasing levels of internal displacement, which affect several communities, particularly in the Chocó, Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Nariño departments in Colombia's Pacific Coast...Afro-Colombian communities and indigenous people have been particularly affected by the violence, which is endangering their survival. These two ethnic groups account for 10% and 3% respectively of the 7.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Colombia...Since the signing of the peace agreement, increased violence by new armed groups has resulted in killings, forced recruitment — including of children — gender-based violence and limited access to education, water and sanitation, as well as movement restrictions and forced displacement of the civilian population.

FUNDING: HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2017⁴



Creation date: 17 April 2017. Feedback: zhong17@un.org, www.unocha.org, www.reliefweb.net, info@unocha.org, www.unocha.org/colombia
 Sources: 1. MID 2017; 2. UNHCR cutoff date: 31 February 2017; 3. UNHCR cutoff date: 31 December 2016; 4. UNHCR report date: 07 April 2017.
 *The sum of the budget per cluster is less than the total funding received due to 402 system induced coordination projects under the HRP.

12. Information. Colombia has over 100 television and more than 500 radio broadcast stations. Telephone fixed-line connections are owned by only about 15% of the population; but almost all the population use cellular phones and over half the population uses the Internet.

13. Infrastructure. There are over 100 airports with paved runways and another 715 unpaved. It has major seaports on both the Atlantic (Caribbean) and Pacific Oceans. While there are improved roads throughout much of Colombia, many roads in the interior regions remain unimproved.

Peace Operations Functions

14. Command and Control.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the UN Mission in Colombia: Jean Arnault (France)

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG): Tania Patriota (Brazil)

Chief Observer (UN Mission in Colombia): Major General Javier Antonio Pérez Aquino (Argentina)

15. Intelligence. There is no intelligence apparatus in place specific to this political mission. Some of the US funding for Plan Colombia included [intelligence technological advancements](#).

16. Operations. The [phasing](#) of the UN Mission in Colombia includes:

Phase One: Establishing Mission in Bogota and assessing conditions for the eight identified “regional hubs” for the ceasefire and laying down of arms.

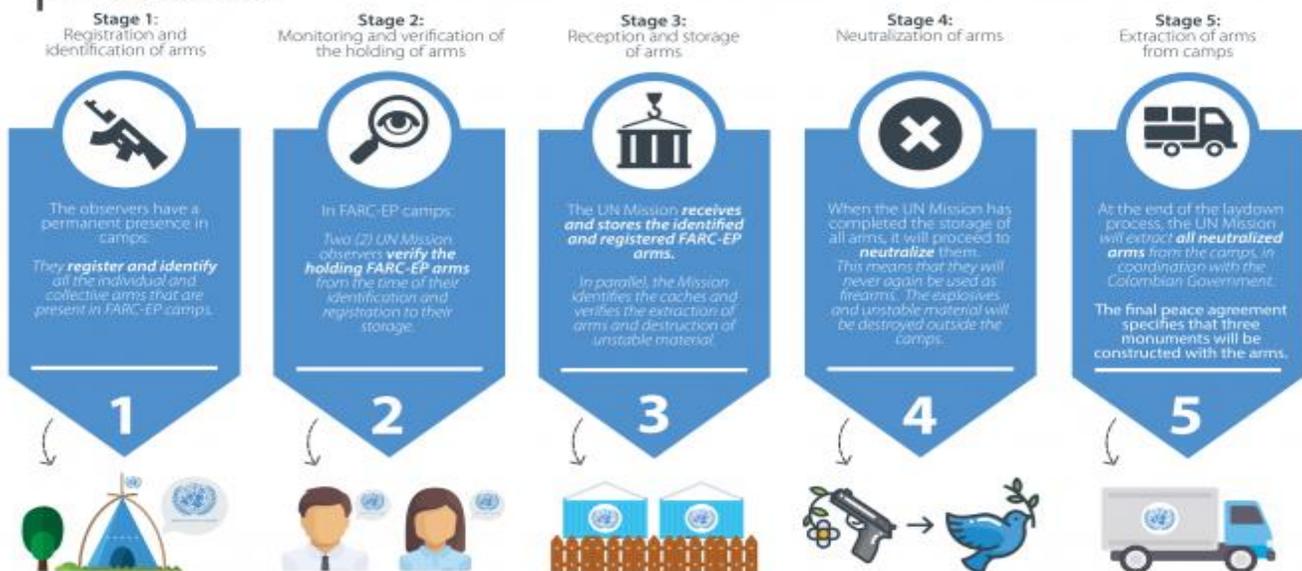
Phase Two: Preparing the Mission to operate at the local levels.

Phase Three: Deployment of all observers and full operationalization of the tripartite MVM. It will also include a technical component, with the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at Notre Dame University designing the methodology to identify advances in the implementation.

the arms laydown process:



Since **1 March**, the UN Mission has begun to verify the arms laydown process, which covers **five stages**:



17. Protection.

a. Mission Protection. While security (of the Mission) is a component of the Mission mandate, it is accomplished in partnership with the government security assets, since the Mission members are unarmed.

b. Protection of Civilians. There is no task for Protection of Civilians in the current mandate, although protection of the disarming FARC is implied. However, there are several UN and other International Organizations' (IOs) agencies and other Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) present in Colombia with protection tasks, especially for IDPs and children (although none are officially armed). [Security for the former-FARC members](#) is a major concern of all participating parties.

18. Sustainment. Any mission will have sustainment challenges as indicated by the poor infrastructure.

Issues and Considerations

19. Issues. There are many issues still ahead for Colombia. The major issues for the peace agreement implementation are:

- Ensuring the funding remains available to holistically address the agreements for peace.
- Determination on whether—or how many—of the former-FARC will actually participate in the process instead of [joining other armed groups](#).

Specific to the UN political mission, the major concern is the security of the mission personnel and those former-FARC members that turn themselves in to the designated disarmament locations—when such an opportunity arrives.

The issues for Colombia remain the very same drivers of conflict that have inspired the insurgencies and hindered Colombian economic development to date. Explicitly, those are issues of land reform, resettlement of IDPs, and the wide-spread economic disparity within the population (which is reflected also in health care and education).

20. Considerations. Colombia needs the UN to provide international and impartial legitimacy to the peace agreement implementation; the UN needs a successful peace process in Colombia to validate its international role in the same arena and concept. Therefore, they share the same primary recommendations:

- Determine the motivations for former-FARC members [to join armed groups](#) or [renew their affiliation with violent groups](#) and address those concerns;
- Promote and assist the insurgents' ability to [find legitimate work and the people's ability to accept former combatants](#) as members of their community;
- Start governing in the [border regions](#) where FARC was dominant, and make a positive difference in the quality of life of the population in those regions;
- Address the needs of the IDPs in either resettlement or "[securing their futures in host communities](#)"; and,
- Most importantly, [proceed with caution](#).

Resources

21. Key Documents and On-line References.

- [Colombia Reports Peace Talks](#)
- [Global Responsibility to Protect \(Colombia\)](#)

- [Human Rights Watch, Colombia, 2017](#)
- [International Crisis Group Colombia's Final Steps to the End of War \(September 2016\)](#)
- [International Crisis Group A Wary Farewell to Arms for the FARC \(March 2017\)](#)
- [International Red Cross Humanitarian Challenges 2017 \(Colombia\)](#)
- [Interpeace Peacebuilding Model of the Colombian National Police \(May 2017\)](#)
- [Migration Policy Institute As Colombia Emerges from Decades of War, Migration Challenges Mount \(April 2017\)](#)
- [Making Contact Radio Project The Fraught Process Towards Peace Colombia and the Philippines \(May 2017\)](#)
- [National Public Radio FARC and Colombia Sign Peace Treaty](#)
- [Report to the UN Security Council Parties Committed to Preserving 'Impressive' Gains Already Made in Colombia Peace Process \(May 2017\)](#)
- [Security Council Report \(Colombia\)](#)
- [UN, OCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview 2016](#)
- [UN Documents \(Colombia\)](#)
- [UN Political Mission \(Colombia\)](#)
- [USAID--Colombia](#)
- [USAID--Colombia Assistance Plan](#)
- [US Department of State--Plan Colombia](#)
- [US Department of State--Colombia Fact Sheet](#)
- [US Department of State, Trafficking in Persons, July 2016](#)
- [US Global Leadership Coalition Peace Colombia: The Success of U.S. Foreign Assistance in South America \(May 2017\)](#)
- [Supranational American Organizations](#)
- [Sustainable Security The Legacy of Plan Colombia \(May 2017\)](#)
- [Washington Post Women Experience in FARC \(March 2016\)](#)
- [Washington Post A side effect of peace in Colombia? A cocaine boom in the U.S. \(May 2017\)](#)