Triple border – Colombia, Peru and Ecuador – ravaged by the Ex-FARC Mafia
Peruvian authorities captured 51 alleged drug traffickers and dismantled four clandestine drug processing laboratories in an operation conducted in the department of Loreto, on the border of Colombia and Ecuador. Among those detained were 40 Colombians that apparently belonged to the Ex-FARC Mafia operating in the area.
Ex-FARC Mafia groups and the Comuneros are increasingly operating in Peruvian territory, especially in the country’s Putumayo province. This dynamic is illustrated by a recent surge in complaints concerning criminal structures recruiting minors in the region.

In addition to the Ex-FARC mafia, other groups including the Peasant Guard (Guardia Campesina), the Independent Revolutionary Movement of Colombia (Movimiento Independiente Revolucionario de Colombia), and the New Horizon (Nuevo Horizonte) are active in the region, often collaborating with local groups like La Constru.

On June 16, 2018, the Peruvian government responded to the increasing presence of Ex-FARC Mafia in the region by declaring a 60-day state of emergency in the border area. Colombian authorities supported the measure based on their belief that Édgar Salgado, alias “Rodrigo Cadete”, one of the Ex-FARC Mafia affiliated with the 1st Front, was entering the region.

### Bajo Cauca and northeast Antioquia, the heart of the fight between the Urabeños and the FARC dissidents

- Since February 2018, dissident elements of the FARC’s 36th Front, led by Ricardo Abel Ayala Arrego, alias “Cabuyo”, have been fighting the Urabeños for control over drug trafficking and illegal mining in the Bajo Cauca region of Antioquia, especially in the municipalities of Briceño, Ituango, Toledo and San Andrés de Cuerquía.

- To gain the advantage in this conflict, alias “Cabuyo” has aimed to recruit ex-combatants from the 5th, 18th, and 36th fronts of the former FARC guerrilla. He has also sought to forge alliances with the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional – ELN), the Caparrapos, a territorial criminal group with a presence in the region, and criminal structures from the Valle de Aburrá like the Pachelly, a group whose activities are focused predominantly in the municipality of Bello.

- In the context of the violent dispute between the Urabeños and the Ex-FARC Mafia, social leaders in Ituango have found themselves victims of assassinations and constant threats. This has prompted a high number of displacements in the sub-region of Antioquia, augmenting the displacements caused by the Hidroituango crisis and the River cauca flooding.
In Bajo Atrato, the Urabeños and ELN’s war for control over drug trafficking continues

- On July 24, 2018, Colombia’s Ombudsman’s Office released an early warning declaring that 3,499 people in the urban center of Murindo were at risk due to confrontations between the ELN and the Urabeños. The local ombudsman, who was in particular danger for having denounced the situation, had to be transferred to another municipality accompanied by a robust security detail.

- The early warning also cautioned that the security forces did not appear to have established a presence in the region following the departure of the FARC’s 34th Front. On the contrary, the ELN guerrilla group and the Urabeños seemed to have intensified their presence in the area.

- Some days before, members of the Urada Jiguamiandó indigenous community in Chocó’s Urabá region, reported that a group of approximately 40 people, possibly members of the Urabeños, had entered their indigenous reserve.

The surrender law, insufficiently attractive and innovative for the GAO and GDO

- On July 10, 2018, the now ex-president Juan Manuel Santos approved a law to facilitate the surrender of Organized Armed Groups (Grupos Armados Organizados – GAO) and Organized Criminal Groups (Grupos Delictivos Organizados – GAO). Under this new law, criminal structures can collectively surrender to justice and receive benefits such as reduced sentences and special imprisonment conditions in exchange for delivering information about the group’s structure, alliances, and drug routes.

- Still, these benefits are not new in the Colombian justice system, nor are they significant enough to tempt criminal networks.

- This new law, along with rumored dialogues between the government and the Urabeños, has prompted discussions about the criminal organization’s possible intent to surrender. The group, however, has stated that they consider the incentives provided by the new law insufficient, suggesting the prospect of surrender is not as imminent as previously thought.
• In contrast, Juan Carlos Mesa Vallejo, alias “Tom”, one of the leaders of the Oficina de Envigado crime group, pledged his intent to surrender under the new law. In response, Colombia’s Defense Minister clarified that the new law applies only to the Popular Liberation Army (Ejército Popular de Liberación – EPL), the Urabeños, the Puntilleros and the FARC dissidence, excluding both the Oficina de Envigado and the ELN.

Supreme Court reopens the process against Uribe for alleged witness tampering

• The Supreme Court called ex-president Uribe for questioning as part of an investigation into bribery and procedural fraud. The case against Uribe began four years ago when the former president denounced Congressman Iván Cepeda for alleged witness tampering. The court decided to close the case against Cepeda.

• In light of the Supreme Court’s announcement, the former president initially declared himself “morally impeded” from continuing his work as a senator and presented his letter of resignation. Uribe’s resignation would impact which institution has the power to handle his case, determining whether it would remain in the Supreme Court or be transferred to the Attorney General’s Office.

• Later, though, Uribe requested that congress halt the evaluation of his resignation, a request which the president of the Senate accepted. To date, Uribe still occupies his seat in the Senate, meaning the Supreme Court continues to manage the investigation against him.

• The recently elected president of Colombia, Iván Duque, has expressed solidarity with the former president and pronounced confidence in his political mentor’s honor and innocence. Members of the ex-president’s political party, the Democratic Center (Centro Democrático), have also weighed in, making accusations against the suitability of those who preside over the High Court.