



**InSight  
Crime**

ANALYSIS AND INVESTIGATION  
OF ORGANIZED CRIME

# Colombia's Ongoing Child Recruitment Crisis

FELN VIVE



***Colombia's Ongoing Child Recruitment Crisis***

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# 1. Bajo Cauca and Vaupés – Colombia's Child Recruitment Hotspots

*As in the darkest days of Colombia's civil conflict, armed groups across the country continue to enlist and exploit teenagers. In this, the first of a three-part investigation by InSight Crime about the recruitment of minors in Colombia by criminal groups and insurgents, we explore where and how this happens. The series involved dozens of interviews with former child soldiers, community leaders, activists and local government officials. Some names have been changed in order to protect identities.*

Santiago sat on a swing in a Bogotá park.

"I killed for the first time when I was 14," he said without making eye contact.

He sat still as he spoke, except for his feet scuffing the dirt.

Santiago was once recruited by [Los Caparrapos](#), a criminal group in Bajo Cauca, a region encompassing half a dozen municipalities in the northern state of Antioquia. He later became a hitman for the group

"I wish I hadn't murdered people. It's something I live with every day," he said.

Santiago, who was 16 when he spoke to InSight Crime, belongs to a new generation of teenage soldiers, which authorities hoped would never reappear following the demobilization of the country's largest guerrilla faction in 2016.

*"Carrying a gun **made me feel powerful**. It gave me a purpose"*

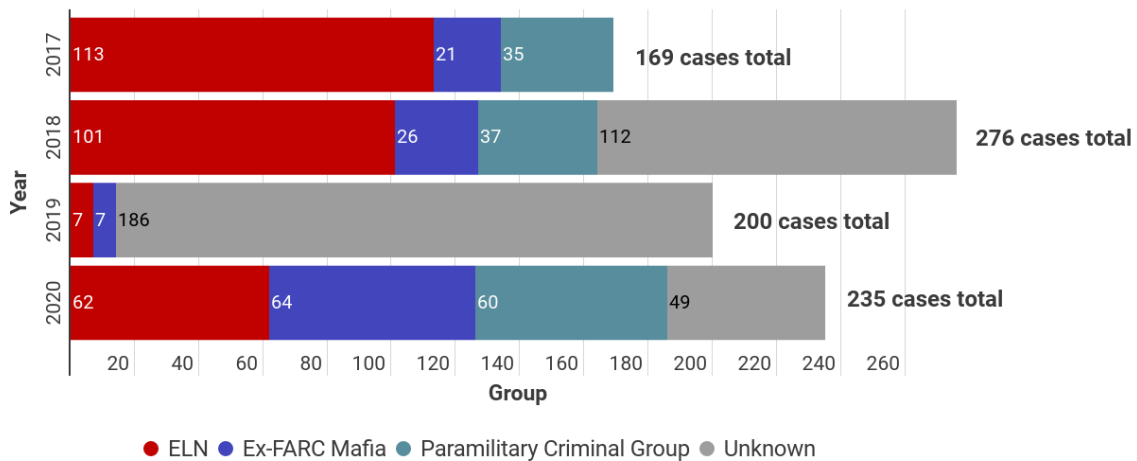
But just as in the darkest days of the country's civil conflict, armed groups across the country, including remnants of the guerrillas, continue to enlist and exploit teenage boys and girls. In early March, the Colombian military [bombed](#) a camp led by ex-rebels. Among the dead were at least two minors.

The Colombian government responded to criticism after the bombing, saying it “followed protocol,” and the minister of defense called the child recruits “[machines of war](#).”

Santiago, who spoke to InSight Crime from a Bogotá school for former child soldiers months prior to the Colombian military bombardment, said he was enchanted by the weapons but also with belonging to something.

“Carrying a gun made me feel powerful. It gave me a purpose,” explained Santiago. “My teachers always made me feel worthless. The gang made me feel better.”

## Numbers of Forced Child Recruitment Cases



Source: InSight Crime investigations  
March 2021

[insightcrime.org](https://insightcrime.org)

The number of youngsters being recruited by armed groups in Colombia has been rising steadily since the 2016 peace accords. The country’s Human Rights Ombudsman [issued](#) 165 alerts between 2017 and 2020, highlighting situations in which children and teenagers have been enticed or forced to take up arms. These government officials say the numbers of minors currently involved with armed groups [stands](#) at the highest level since before the country’s peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC), which culminated in a 2016 [accord](#).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) see similar trends. COALICO (Coalición contra la vinculación de niñas, niños y jóvenes al conflicto armado en Colombia), a coalition of seven NGOs working to monitor and prevent child recruitment, told InSight Crime that around 220 minors were recruited last year, compared to 200 in 2019 and 270 in 2018.

“The numbers are generally steady,” Julia Castellanos, a researcher at COALICO, told InSight Crime.

Still, many cases of child recruitment often go unreported, she added.

## Bajo Cauca and Vaupés – Recruitment Hotspots

The field research showed that the areas of most concern since 2016 include Bajo Cauca and the Amazon state of Vaupés.

The reasons are similar: They need bodies. In Bajo Cauca, the place where Santiago was recruited, a [turf war](#) over coca production and illegal gold mining between the [Caparrapos](#) and their former criminal masters, the [Urabeños](#), has left hundreds dead since it erupted in 2017. In Vaupés, which lies along the southeastern corner bordering Brazil, former FARC soldiers have been recruiting as they [expand](#) their territorial control.

In November last year, 18 teenagers were taken from the remote community of Carurú in the west of Vaupés. Dissident factions of the FARC arrived in the town, warning parents they had to give up their eldest child. Both families and local authorities were unable to fight back.

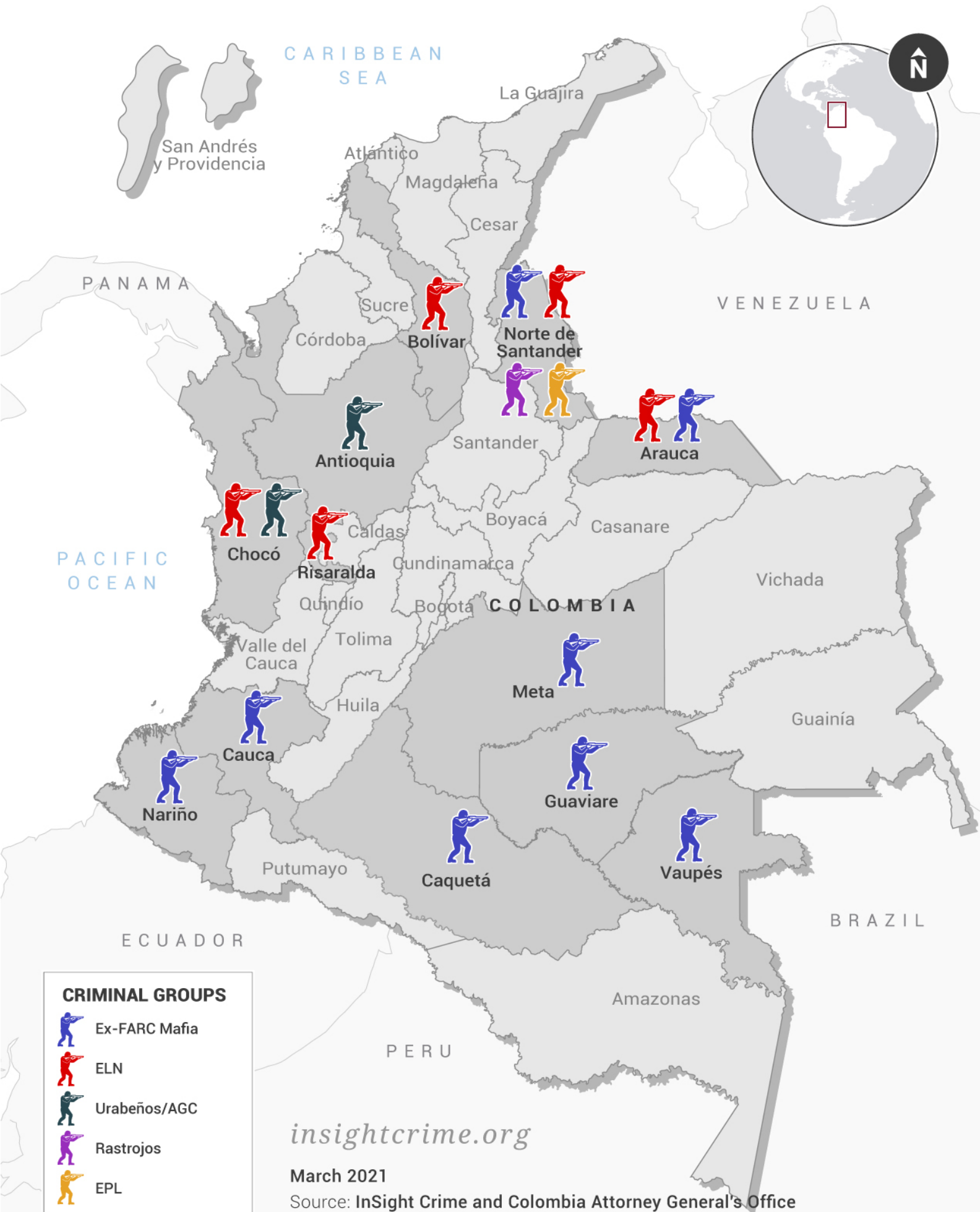
*“I joined because  
I wanted to support  
my family”*

But not all minors in this situation have been forcibly recruited. This investigation, which included fieldwork in eight departments, identified a wide range of social, emotional, environmental and criminal factors that can lead a young person to join an armed group.

The children and teenagers recruited are usually from poor, crime-plagued neighborhoods. Often just the offer of a regular hot meal can be enough to entice them to join, and a salary will convince them to stay. In Bajo Cauca, for example, paramilitary groups are offering children a salary of two million pesos to join their criminal cause.

“I joined because I wanted to support my family,” says Santiago, who then looked up for the first time during the conversation. “At least that’s what you think at first. But life suddenly becomes harder. You realize you’re trapped.”

# Locations of Forced Child Recruitment



[insightcrime.org](http://insightcrime.org)

March 2021

Source: InSight Crime and Colombia Attorney General's Office

## Pawns of Organized Crime

The 2016 demobilization of the FARC left a vacuum in Colombia's underworld, stoking a growth of criminal factions and re-opening old wounds.

Mostly rural communities across Colombia are at risk from a rapidly evolving checkerboard of armed groups who are fighting for control of drug trafficking and contraband at the Venezuelan and [Ecuadorean](#) borders, [settling old scores](#) in former FARC areas and fighting off [armed government campaigns](#).

This fragmentation has created disparate and localized armed confrontations, leaving young people as easy targets for groups seeking to replenish their ranks.

Bajo Cauca has suffered from an especially violent battle among the Caparrapos, Los [Urabeños](#), a [number](#) of FARC dissident groups, and the country's last remaining insurgent group, the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional – [ELN](#)).

“It's a war. The bigger the group, the better the chances of winning. That's what they used to tell us. That's why they pick on kids,” said Santiago.

On the other side of the country, groups that once belonged to the FARC are now in fierce competition and have made frequent use of child soldiers. In Colombia's southern department of Caquetá, two former FARC fronts are [fighting each](#) other over the production and trafficking of cocaine.

Photos passed to InSight Crime allegedly show the bodies of three teenage members of these groups killed in combat between these two factions in 2019. Another eight children and teenagers recruited by the former FARC were killed in Caquetá during an air raid by the Colombian air force in August of the same year.

“Children are useful in every stage of the cocaine process,” a former drug trafficker told InSight Crime. “They pick the leaves, process the paste and can move the stuff easily around the country. They can also be armed to take on rivals. They are the pawns of the drug trade.”

## Alcohol and Abduction in Vaupés

In Vaupés, children and teenagers have been [targeted](#) as former FARC fronts carve out new drug trafficking routes toward Brazil.

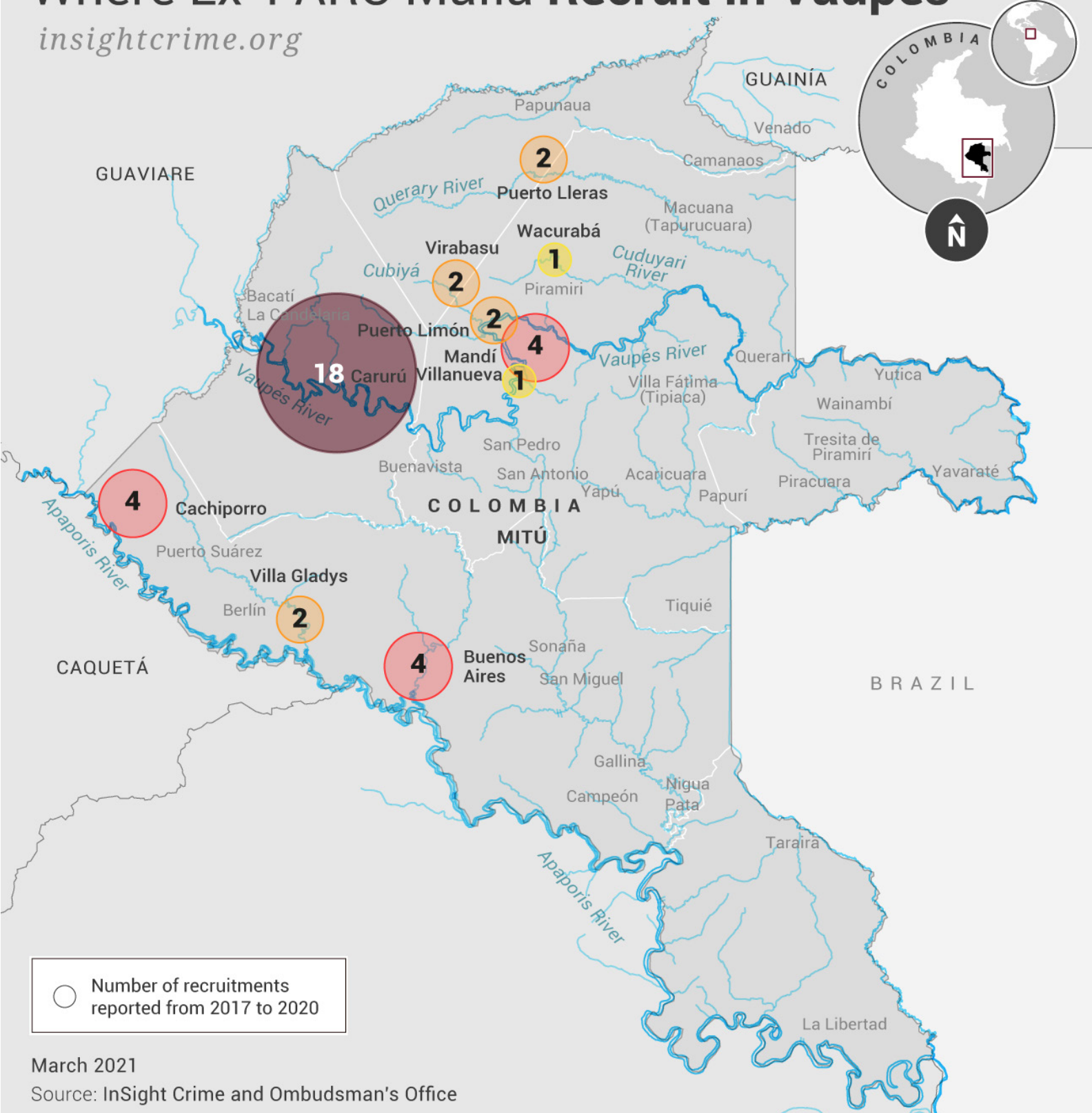
This remote region is made up of vast waterways that [serve](#) as trafficking arteries for groups seeking to ship cocaine and marijuana to Brazil. Local officials interviewed by InSight Crime spoke about a new criminal partnership in the area between what



was the First Front of the FARC and the Familia do Norte, a Brazilian prison gang, which has increased the amount of drugs and contraband going through Vaupés.

# Where Ex-FARC Mafia Recruit in Vaupés

insightcrime.org



March 2021

Source: InSight Crime and Ombudsman's Office

“They need guides, people who know the landscape. That’s why they target Indigenous children,” said Alfredo, a local resident of Wacurabá, an Indigenous community in Vaupés. He did not want to give his surname for fear of reprisals.

Alfredo traveled for six days from Wacurabá to the departmental capital of Mitú to report the recruitment of his 17-year-old brother, Ángel, who he says went with FARC dissidents in January 2019. It took Alfredo a year to save up enough money for the trip. With no highways, journeys in Vaupés are done either by boat or with expensive charter flights.

“They had a party in the village. They got everyone drunk and wowed the teenagers with stories of war and weapons. Before anyone realized what was happening, the dissidents had convinced Ángel to join them, and they got up and left,” said Alfredo.

*“Children are useful  
in every stage of the  
cocaine process”*

Two days later, the guerrillas brought Ángel back to the village to collect his belongings. Now sober, he had changed his mind. But it did not matter.

“He was crying. He didn’t want to go anymore. But the armed men with him said he’d made a commitment and that they’d kill him if he refused to go back with them,” explained Alfredo.

Powerless to fight back, Ángel’s family could only watch as he was dragged off into the distance.

## **A Recruiting System**

The recruiters that took Ángel seemed to have a system. A number of residents in Vaupés, interviewed by InSight Crime, said a young man in his twenties was in charge of recruiting children and teenagers. He traveled with a group, all of whom dressed in civilian clothing.

They set up camp in these rainforest communities along the main trafficking routes to Brazil, organizing parties and selecting their targets, the residents said. Like in the case of Ángel, the minors are plied with liquor before being taken into the jungle.


Still, places like Vaupés are not a government priority. Indeed, cases of child recruitment often occur in isolated locations, and family members struggle to make the long journey to file reports.

Even when they do make the trip, deep-seated distrust of authorities may deter them. Despite Alfredo's long and arduous journey, skepticism got the better of him.

"They won't do anything anyway so it's not worth it. I see it in their faces. I'll probably never see my brother again. I just have to accept that, no matter how painful it is," he told InSight Crime.

In the end, Alfredo decided not to tell authorities anything about his brother's forced recruitment.

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## 2. In Colombia, Child Soldiers Play Many Roles

*Children serve in a wide range of roles in criminal organizations: errand boy, landmine builder, frontline combatant and assassin. In this, the second of a three-part investigation by InSight Crime about the recruitment of minors in Colombia by criminal groups and insurgents, journalist Mathew Charles explores how minors are used by crime groups of all stripes. The series — the first part of which can be read [here](#) — involved dozens of interviews with former child soldiers, community leaders, activists and local government officials. Some names have been changed in order to protect identities.*

When Yuli's brother was killed two years ago in clashes with security forces in San Calixto, in the northern Colombian state of Norte de Santander, the insurgency who he'd fought with saw an easy way to replace him.

Members of the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional – ELN), the country's last remaining guerrilla group, came to Yuli's farm and told her parents that she would need to take the place of her dead brother.

“They just took me,” she told InSight Crime in an interview. “They do whatever they want.”

Yuli was taken to a camp in the mountains and trained. Mornings were devoted to military exercise, while the afternoons usually included classes on leftist ideology. “There were about 20 of us. I knew some of them from school. I think most were under 18,” she said.

This is a pattern in Colombia as organized criminal groups are enlisting and exploiting youth. The recruits are useful. They can collect extortion fees, work in cocaine labs, or be forced into sex work. They can also sell and smuggle drugs, are used as assassins, and are often sent to the front lines of battle.

## Criminal Roles of Child Recruits

- Tier 1: Criminal Graduates
- Tier 2: Core Membership

[insightcrime.org](http://insightcrime.org)

- Tier 3: Peripheral Membership
- Tier 4: Pre-entry Level Membership



Yuli's main task with the ELN was to make landmines. With just a plastic canister, syringe, battery and the smallest amount of explosives, Yuli and a production line of teenagers created dozens of lethal landmines each day.

“At first, it’s a horrible thought that what you’re making kills people,” she said. “But you have to stop thinking about it. Otherwise, you would never survive.”

Yuli, who was 18 when InSight Crime interviewed her, spoke with confidence and was articulate about her experience. She was lucky, able to escape the ELN with the help of a sympathetic commander.

Yuli now lives apart from her family. Former child soldiers like her are unable to return home for fear of reprisals and are instead housed with foster families or in state-run care facilities, where she did the interview with InSight Crime.

“The worst is not being able to see my parents all the time and being able to tell them I love them. But at least I’m alive,” she said.

### Lonely Killers

The Catatumbo region of the state of Norte de Santander runs along the border with Venezuela. It has become a battleground for factions of the ELN and their criminal rivals, a former guerrilla group known as the Popular Liberation Army (Ejército Popular de Liberación – EPL).

The area has long been an EPL stronghold, but since the demobilization of another guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC) in 2016, the EPL has sought to expand. For this, the group actively recruited.

One of those who joined during this time period was named Diego. He was 15 when InSight Crime talked to him, living in Benposta, a sanctuary in the mountains overlooking Bogotá that provides housing, education and a chance to heal for minors who manage to escape the grip of crime groups. He spent two years with the EPL.

“They order you to do stuff, but they don’t want to be your friend. It’s a lonely life inside,” he said.

While talking, Diego stared at the floor, picking at the skin under his fingernails. According to him, he received regular target practice, but as the youngest recruit, he was usually handed thankless assignments, such as cleaning weapons, doing the washing-up, or cleaning the boots of other soldiers.

“I’d spend whole days cleaning rifles. But I didn’t mind because it was easy work. The scariest thing were the battles,” he explained.

During his time with the EPL, Diego witnessed regular clashes with the ELN and the Colombian army. Due to his young age, they kept him at a distance, so he never had to fire on anyone, he said.

*“They order you to do stuff, but they don't want to be your friend. It's a lonely life inside”*

Another EPL recruit, Luis, was not so lucky. He left school when he was nine to harvest coca leaves and made his first contact with the EPL in one of their clandestine cocaine labs shortly thereafter.

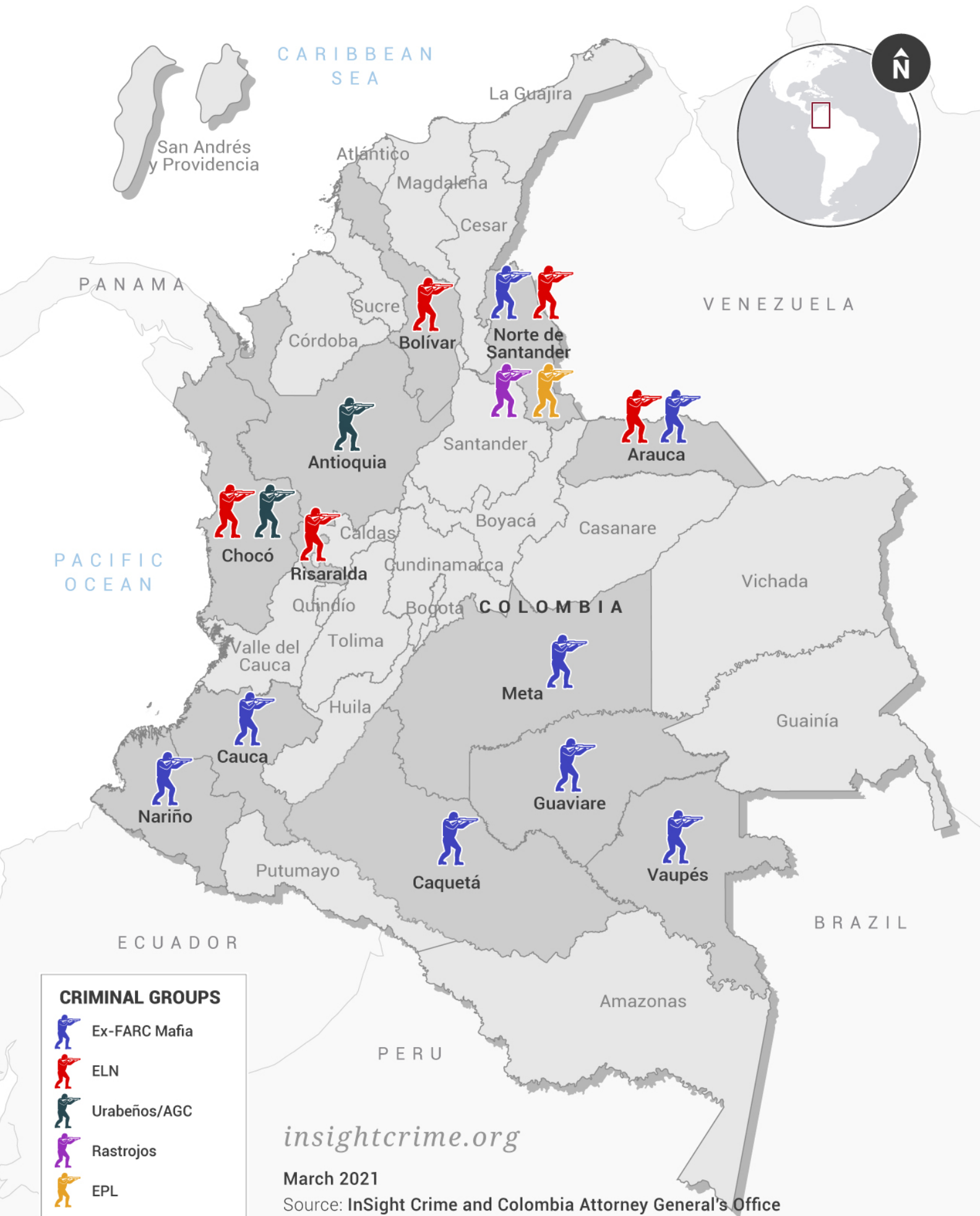
“From when you’re a small child, you’re thinking about guns, that they’re cool,” he told InSight Crime in an interview at Benposta. “Crime is really the only job option where I lived.”

The EPL first began paying him to run errands, transport drugs and for information on potential ELN recruits.






“I didn’t realize I was being groomed. But looking back, that’s exactly what happened. They offered me money for favors, then they gave me work in a drug lab, and then I ended up going off into the mountains with them,” said Luis, dropping his grin for the first time.

He was 14.

# Locations of Forced Child Recruitment



## CRIMINAL GROUPS

-  Ex-FARC Mafia
-  ELN
-  Urabeños/AGC
-  Rastrojos
-  EPL

[insightcrime.org](http://insightcrime.org)

March 2021

Source: InSight Crime and Colombia Attorney General's Office

Luis was given just two weeks of firearms training before he and the other new recruits faced an initiation test.

“The commanders said we were going to attack a police station, and so they took all the new guys to attack it, and we opened fire, until a plane arrived, and we retreated. I was scared because it was my first time. I was new. I had only been with them for 15 days,” he explained, speaking quickly and fidgeting.

“You had to fire your gun like a crazy person to stop yourself from getting killed,” he said, while miming firing a rifle.

## Home, School, Crime

Luis' experience is common. Many youngsters begin by carrying out basic errands for organized criminal groups. In the troubled southwestern state of Cauca, teachers told InSight Crime that armed men, believed to be from [FARC dissident groups](#), regularly watch students from just outside the school gates.

“Today, they want the brightest, the most confident, those able to galvanize a following,” said a principal from Jambaló, an Indigenous reserve south of Cali, who asked to remain anonymous.

Local authorities, the principal added, lack the resources and expertise to tackle what he called “new” forms of youth participation in organized crime.

*“But living here in Cauca,  
I can only become involved  
in war, so I should make  
the most of it, I guess”*

“The focus has always been on protecting children from being abducted into an armed group. But now they live at home, come to school and fit in the criminality in their spare time,” the principal explained, talking about it as if it were a hobby.

Cauca sits along the Naya River corridor, which connects the country's central mountain range to the coasts of the Pacific Ocean through kilometers of thick jungle. This makes it an appetizing transit point for drug shipments. Children and teenagers often carry the illegal merchandise.

One of these “mules” was Alejandro. Although he was just 13 when we spoke, he was tall for his age and exuded the type of confidence the FARC recruiters sought. He told InSight Crime he started doing regular drug runs for an ex-FARC cell in early 2019.



Within six months, he said he had created a small network of “runners” made up of his friends from school. He was still doing it when we spoke.

“I coordinate four people and after each job, the bosses give me money to pay everyone,” he told InSight Crime.

Alejandro said he liked school, got good grades and was aware of the risks involved.

“If I lived elsewhere or came from a rich family, I’d probably go to university. I’d like to be an artist, if I’m being honest,” he said. “But living here in Cauca, I can only become involved in war, so I should make the most of it, I guess.”

## Passing the Test

Minors appear to be attracted to these criminal groups because of the power and money they possess. But for new recruits to climb the criminal ladder and reach that power and money, they must win trust and build confidence in their abilities.

Efren, who joined the criminal organization known as the Urabeños in Zaragoza, a municipality in the northern Antioquia state, spent years trying to reach that pinnacle.

*“Sometimes I didn't even know why I was murdering them”*

“It was really hard at first, but then it gets easier. I think you get used to it,” he said, staring across the Nechí river near the place where he lived and still worked for the group.

Efren said he was just 13 when he started selling drugs for the group. He was then given a gun and a patch of the town to patrol as a lookout.

By his nineteenth birthday, he was getting more grizzly assignments. One time, he said he was ordered to decapitate another teenager accused of stealing. It was a test.

“I didn’t flinch. Killing people is easy if you don’t look at their faces,” he stated, showing no hint of emotion.

From there, it spiraled, with assignments to kill becoming more frequent. Efren said he’d lost count of the number of people he killed.

“Sometimes I didn’t even know why I was murdering them,” he said of his seemingly out-of-body approach.

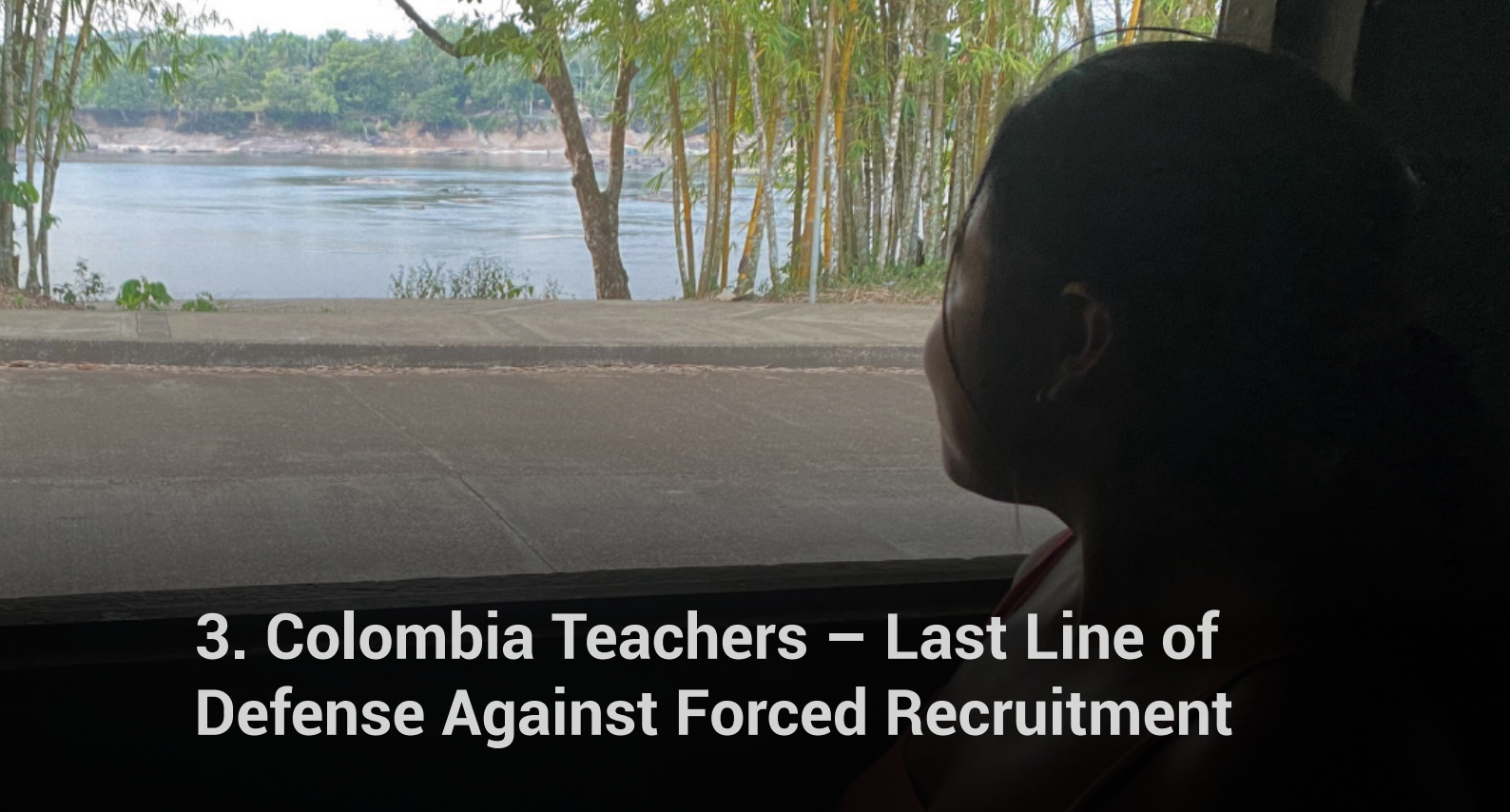
Efren was 21 when he spoke to InSight Crime and by then an unabashed junior commander with the Urabeños.

“When I think back to my life when I was 13, I had nothing. Now I have everything I want. I can buy clothes for my daughters, and I can feed them. I can take my girlfriend out to eat,” he told InSight Crime.

And while he admitted he often thinks of his victims, he added that it is a small price to pay.

“I’m constantly looking over my shoulder,” he said. “So many people want me dead. That’s no life, I suppose, but it’s worth it for the money.”

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A person is shown in profile from the back, looking out towards a wide river. The river is surrounded by lush green trees and vegetation. The scene is captured from a slightly elevated position, possibly from a balcony or a window. The lighting is natural, suggesting daytime.

### 3. Colombia Teachers – Last Line of Defense Against Forced Recruitment

*Colombia remains a hotspot for forced recruitment of minors. In this, the last of a three-part investigation by InSight Crime, journalist Mathew Charles looks at how school teachers are trying – unsuccessfully – to thwart this recruitment. The series, including the [first](#) and [second](#) parts, involved dozens of interviews with former child soldiers, community leaders, activists and local government officials. Some names have been changed in order to protect identities.*

Nancy Arboleda has a distinct air of authority. It probably comes from the two decades of experience as a teacher in a school in Tumaco, a small city in the corner of southwestern Colombia.

“We’ve lost 21 students here since 2012,” she said, counting them on her fingers, as she spoke to InSight Crime from her school.

It has had a huge impact. Local education authorities say the number of students at Arboleda’s Iberia school has fallen in the past five years from about 3,600 to just over 3,000.

“If they haven’t been killed, they’ve been recruited,” Arboleda said. “Parents have also stopped enrolling their children at school because it’s just so dangerous.”

In 2016, the government and the country’s largest guerrilla group – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC) [signed](#) a peace accord. But in regions like this, it is difficult to tell, as violence remains an everyday reality for tens of thousands of people.

Authorities in Tumaco, for instance, say a former FARC front has been recruiting heavily from marginalized communities in the region. Their targets are not just children. Arboleda says eight teachers have fled due to death threats.

“They don’t just come for the children,” Arboleda said. “They also come for us.”

## A Deliberate Strategy

The recruitment of children and teenagers by armed groups in Colombia is not erratic and opportunistic. It is calculated and the result of a definite policy aimed at growth and expansion.

In Colombia’s eastern plains, students and teachers reported one recruitment strategy being used by FARC dissidents is to entice recruits with offers of companionship. One 15-year-old named Marly said she met a 17-year-old boy who persistently courted her.

“He was new to school and had arrived to finish his studies in the ninth grade. We started getting to know each other more. We talked a lot and we started dating. I really liked him,” she said.

Marly says the pair were inseparable. But six months later, she realized the boy had an ulterior motive.

“We were alone, he grabbed me and told me I had to go with him. He said if I didn’t go with him to the guerrillas, they’d kill him,” she told InSight Crime.

## A spectrum of determinant factors in cases of youth participation in organized crime



She is now living in Bogotá after a miraculous escape.

“I was very lucky because my brother saw us fight in the street, and he came to help me. Otherwise, I don’t even know if I’d be alive to tell this story,” she explained, rocking back and forth as she spoke.

*“Parents have also stopped enrolling their children at school because it’s just so dangerous”*

Teachers in the department of Meta, were too scared to go on the record because they fear reprisals by the former FARC, but they told InSight Crime that it is common for the dissidents to force older boys and girls to seduce their younger peers.

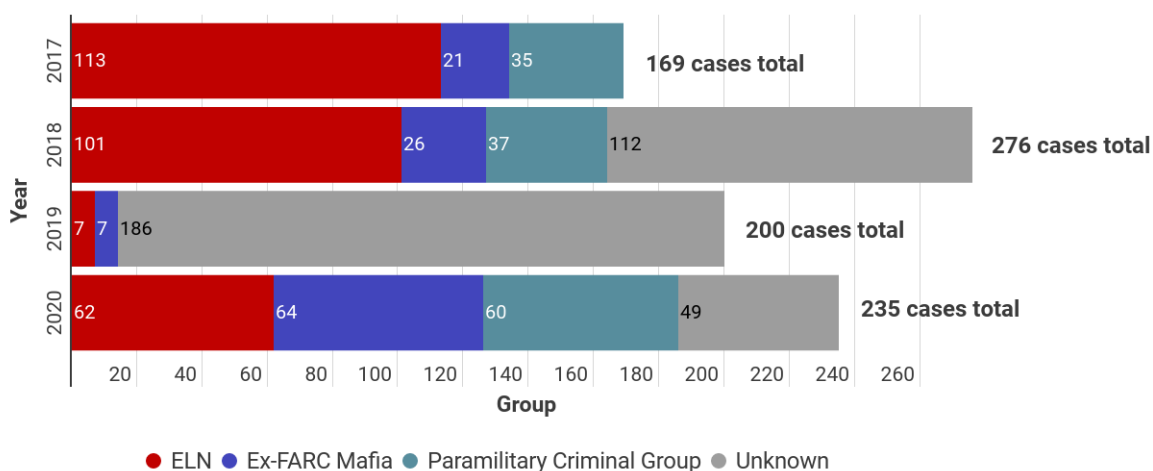
And Corporación Vínculos, a non-governmental organization that works with former child soldiers in Meta, said that older teenagers receive payments for each new recruit they can abduct or successfully convince to join the armed structure. If they fail, they face death threats. Teachers say they are powerless to do anything about it.

## Sitting Ducks

More than 700 educators received death threats in Colombia in 2018, and ten were murdered, according to the country’s main teaching union. In many cases, the union said they were trying to protect their students.

One principal from the southern Amazon department of Vaupés, who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, told InSight Crime she became a direct target of a FARC dissident group in 2017 when she tried to protect the students.

## Numbers of Forced Child Recruitment Cases



Source: InSight Crime investigations  
March 2021

“The guerrillas would regularly steal our fuel, our internet and even our food. But when they started to come for the children, I couldn’t allow it, so I closed the school and got the children taken home,” she said.

The principal alerted the local authorities. But the FARC dissidents labelled the principal as an informant and gave her 24 hours to leave town or be killed.

“It was terrifying. We’re just trying to protect children and offer them an education. But I suppose they don’t care about that. They just want to replenish their ranks,” she said.

## A Kidnapping and An Escape

To beef up their ranks, armed groups use kids like Luisa. She was 14 when we met. Two years prior, she and her 16-year-old sister were bathing in the river next to their school in Villa Gladys in Vaupés when they were kidnapped by the former guerrillas.

“It all happened so fast. Later that day, we were in camouflage and carrying a gun,” she explained, with a nervous laugh that did little to hide the anguish on her face.

Luisa and her sister spent a month in the dissidents’ ranks. Initially, they were taken to a camp in Miraflores, in the neighboring department of Guaviare, where they were taught to fire a weapon and given explosives training.

“It was the first time in my life I’d ever seen a gun. They taught us how to shoot. I started crying,” she told InSight Crime.

*“It all happened so fast. Later that day, we were in camouflage and carrying a gun”*

After four weeks, Luisa and her sister decided to escape. Under the cover of darkness, they made a run for it with several other children who’d been abducted.

“We spent all night running, and the guerrillas were chasing us. We crossed a river, swimming. We took off our clothes, boots and everything,” she said, her voice cracking at the memory. “The others couldn’t make it because they didn’t take off their boots. But my sister and I did. They were killed, and we survived.”

## Thwarted Programs

Many of the minors forcibly recruited in Vaupés are taken from their schools, according to local officials. The overwhelming majority of the region's students are at boarding schools, known locally as "internados." Clara Santa Cruz is a former regional education secretary in Vaupés, who said the schools have become hunting grounds for the former guerrillas.

"Children are grouped together and without their parents. They are left to their own devices after classes end each afternoon, and sometimes there simply aren't enough staff to look after them. They're basically sitting ducks," she explained. The Colombian government has been accused of ignoring the disturbing rise in forced recruitment, which is reaching pre-2016 peace deal levels. But ministers deny they're on the backfoot. They point to government programs such as one launched on Facebook by the First Lady last year. The [program](#), entitled "Súmate por mí," (Join with me), aims to provide a range of support structures for young people, including socioeconomic programs, sports and cultural activities, and training about human rights and preventing child recruitment.

The scheme is intended to work with vulnerable communities across the country but it has run into difficulty precisely because it is a government-run program. Local authorities in the town of Tame, the department of Arauca, told InSight Crime that rebels with the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional – ELN) have banned the project in several rural schools in the town. In fact, non-governmental organization officials and government employees have been barred from entering several neighborhoods under guerrilla control.

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*\*Mathew Charles is a freelance journalist and investigator with the Colombian Organized Crime Observatory at the Universidad del Rosario in Bogotá.*

# The InSight Crime Foundation

*InSight Crime is a foundation dedicated to the study of the principal threat to national and citizen security in Latin America and the Caribbean: organized crime.*

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InSight Crime's goal is to deepen understanding on organized crime in the Americas through on-the-ground investigation and analysis from a transnational and policy perspective.

We fulfill this mission by:

- providing high quality and timely analysis of news events linked to organized crime in the region;
- investigating and writing reports on organized crime and its multiple manifestations, including its impact on human rights, governance, drug policy and other social, economic and political issues;
- giving workshops to journalists, academics and non-governmental organizations on how to cover this important issue and keep themselves, their sources and their material safe;
- supporting local investigators through these workshops and by publishing, translating and promoting their work to reach the widest possible audience;
- developing a region-wide network of investigators looking at organized crime;
- presenting in public and closed-door sessions to governments, non-governmental organizations, academics and stakeholders on best practices, strategies and pitfalls in implementing citizen security policy on the ground.

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