



COLOMBIA

1st Front Dissidence (Ex-FARC Mafia)

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The 1st Front Dissidence is the most important of the criminal groups comprised of ex-members of the now demobilized Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC). It has succeeded in creating alliances with other criminal groups, especially around its operation base of southeastern Colombia, as well as along the borders with Venezuela, Brazil and Ecuador.

History

As soon as peace negotiations began between the FARC and the Colombian government in Cuba, there was a fear that the 1st Front, also known as the Armando Ríos Front, might attempt to distance itself from the peace process.

This was linked to the 1st Front having begun to show a lack of discipline as it gained in economic and military might due to the control it maintained over strategic drug trafficking routes and forced recruitment in Guaviare, Guainía and Vaupés.

In July 2016, the 1st Front informed negotiating parties in Havana, Cuba, that it would not demobilize along. From the negotiating table, the FARC leadership minimized the declaration, dismissing it as the actions of merely a few discontented members of the unit. The FARC Secretariat even ordered Miguel Botache Santillana, alias "[Gentil Duarte](#)," a member of the FARC's top leadership with more than 30 years of experience in the organization, to take command of the 1st Front and reestablish discipline. Instead, Gentil Duarte formed an alliance with Néstor Gregorio Vera Fernández, alias "[Iván Mordisco](#)," and took leadership of the dissident front, then made up of approximately 150 men.

After the peace agreement was signed, the FARC confirmed that the majority of the 1st Front had become dissidents and were led by Gentil Duarte, [Iván Mordisco](#) and Géner García Molina, alias "[Jhon 40](#)".

In April 2017, the 1st Front formalized its criminal with a public letter expressing "dissatisfaction," "rejecting" the FARC Secretariat's "betrayal," and inviting "all combatants that refuse peace" to join its ranks. The letter was signed by nine dissident fronts, one mobile column and seven urban militias.

This would be the first attempt by this dissident group to unite the former FARC groups which sprang up after the FARC demobilized. It was clear evidence [of the intent](#) of Gentil Duarte and Iván Mordisco to strengthen the alliances between them and their former guerrilla brethren.

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Since then, this alliance between Gentil Duarte, Iván Mordisco and Jhon 40 has not stopped growing. The 1st Front has consolidated its structure in the departments of Guaviare y Meta, while maintaining drug trafficking routes from Vichada to Venezuela.

They have also expanded through other alliances into the department of Caqueta, where the 1st Front controlled part of the border with Putumayo, thanks to the help of Edgar Mesías Salgado, alias "Rodrigo Cadete," who joined Duarte's alliance [until his death](#) in early 2019. From there, the 1st Front leapt into Putumayo and [has made great strides](#) in controlling this heavy coca production area.

Here, however, the 1st Front ran into problems, including the refusal of the ex-FARC 48th Front to join them. But after months of fighting, [the death](#) of the 48th Front's leader in March 2019 helped the 1st Front gain further ground.

Now, the group has seemingly settled on a new objective: the department of Nariño, the jewel in Colombia's drug trafficking crown. Criminal groups there have fought back against 1st Front incursions but recent news seems to show that alliances are being struck, again allowing Gentil Duarte's group to gain ground.

Criminal Activity

The 1st Front Dissidence began its criminal actions in 2016, focused on consolidating its control of the departments of Meta, Guaviare and Vaupés. This has included attacks against public authorities, forced recruitment, extortion and threats against the public.

Since 2016, the dissidence has engaged in criminal activities with the aim of consolidating its power in the departments of Meta, Guaviare and Vaupés. The most common of these criminal activities have included harassing and attacking security forces with explosives, engaging in forced recruitment, and extorting and threatening the civilian population.

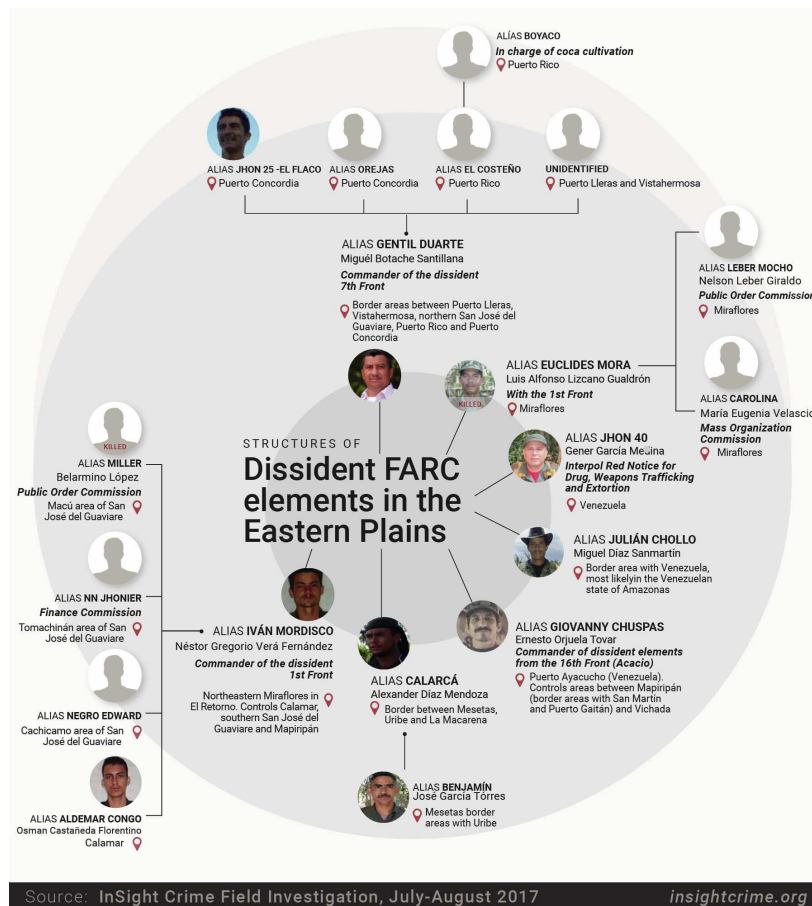
Currently, the 1st Front controls coca crops in Guaviare as well as cocaine production there, but has expanded rapidly to [the south of Meta](#), with the aim of controlling drug trafficking routes to Vichada and Guainía. It has also begun greater involvement in sending cocaine from Caquetá through the north of Amazonas and into Brazil.

The 1st Front is focused on controlling all links in the drug trafficking chain, from production to transportation and sale, which has allowed it to rapidly increase its profits.

Leadership

The 1st Front dissidence is comprised of at least 400 members, and has a horizontal leadership structure including Miguel Botache Santillana, alias "Gentil Duarte"; Néstor Gregorio Fernández, alias "Iván Mordisco"; Géner García Molina, alias "Jhon 40"; Luis Alfonso Lizcano Gualdrón, alias "Euclides Mora"; and Miguel Díaz Sanmarín, alias "Julian Chollo."

Although the dissidence is highly mobile, its main operational base is in the village of Barranquillita in Miraflores.



Allies and Enemies

The 1st Front dissidence is the main organization within an alliance of FARC dissidents. The other dissident fronts with which it is allied are the 14th, 15th, 17th, 27th, 33rd, 40th, 42nd, 43rd and 44th Fronts. In Guaviare, this dissidence has established an alliance with the Urabeños, which handles minor criminal revenue streams, such as those derived from the extortion of businesses and the purchase of cocaine paste.

In Putumayo, the 1st Front has made alliances with former members of the FARC 32nd Front, with the objective of expanding into the south of Putumayo, along the border with Ecuador. However, it has come up against groups already firmly entrenched there, such as La Construcción and a group which emerged from the demobilization of the FARC's 48th Front.

Geography

Its main zones of influence are in the departments of Guaviare, Vaupés, Meta y Guainía.

In Guaviare, it controls the municipalities of Calamar, Miraflores and el Retorno; in Vaupés it has a presence in Cararurú and the municipalities of Pocoa and Taraira, while in Guainía it is strongly present in Mapiripana, Morichal Nuevo and Pana Pana, along the Brazilian border.

Members of the 1st Front have also been reported in the north of Amazonas department, especially near the border with Vaupés.

In Caquetá, it counts with the support of the 7th Front, especially in San Vicente del Caguán, gracias a alias "Rodrigo Cadete".

[In Putumayo, it is focused on Puerto Guzmán](#) and is currently seeking to expand southward along the Ecuador border.

Prospects

The 1st Front of the ex-FARC Mafia represents the new dynamic of criminal groups in the country: organizations that seek to control criminal economies and territories, and are willing to ally with different kinds of groups to achieve their aims. Moreover, these groups rarely confront the armed forces and the civilian population, and they use state weakness and corruption to hide their actions.

This has allowed the 1st Front to position itself better than most criminal groups who have emerged from the FARC demobilization. Its economic strength, criminal alliance and rapid ability to adapt have allowed it to expand into areas which it never previously contested. The vast criminal experience of its leadership is also a major advantage.

The 1st Front is arguably the strongest ex-FARC group in Colombia and will likely continue along this path, given its expansion in the south of the country into major drug trafficking areas.

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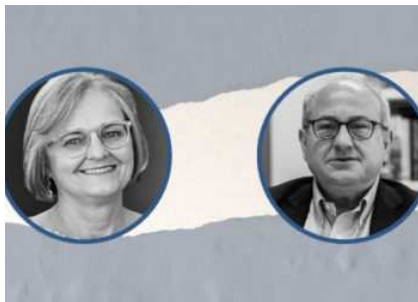
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