

IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Colombia: The military police and military police anti-riot operations, including their involvement in serious human rights violations between December 1995 and June 1997 during demonstrations in Caquetá; the National Police Intelligence Directorate (Dirección de Inteligencia Policial de la Policía Nacional, DIPOL) and their involvement in serious human rights violations, including murder and disappearances, between May 1996 and June 2008; whether DIPOL was previously known as SIPOL (December 1995–June 2008) [COL200909.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Information on the military police and military police anti-riot operations, including their involvement in serious human rights violations between December 1995 and June 1997 during demonstrations in Caquetá, and information on DIPOL and their involvement in serious human rights violations, including murder and disappearances between May 1996 and June 2008, was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1. Overview

According to the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1996*, the government's "overall human rights record remained poor" and armed forces and police "continued to be responsible for serious abuses" (US 30 Jan. 1997, 1).

The information in the following paragraph was provided to the UN Commission on Human Rights in April 1997:

According to a representative of Franciscans International, the government of Colombia "had carried out a systematic pattern of human-rights violations for years," including forced disappearances, which "in the majority of cases [were] accompanied by torture and summary executions." The same representative reported that "[a]rbitrary detentions were increasing in areas under military control" and the situation had "deteriorated considerably" in 1996 as a result of a paramilitary group "offensive." Several NGO representatives stated that, on average, 10 Colombians were killed every day over politics or ideology. An International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH) representative added that "one person disappeared every two days." According to a representative of the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, guerrilla forces were responsible for 30 percent of the killings, while the remainder were committed by government forces, "who enjoyed 100 percent impunity" (UN 10 Apr. 1997, 12, 13, 15).

Amnesty International provides the following information in a 1997 report:

More than 1,000 civilians were extrajudicially executed by the security forces and paramilitary groups operating with their support or acquiescence in 1996. Many victims had been tortured

the Procurator Delegate for Human Rights [Procurador Delegado para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos] announced that during the previous 15 months his office had imposed disciplinary sanctions, including 50 dismissals, against 126 military and police personnel for violations of human rights. In the same period, the Procurator Delegate had opened more than 600 cases against members of the security forces involving 1,338 victims of massacres, torture and "disappearance." (Amnesty International 1 Jan. 1997)

2. Military Police and Anti-Riot Operations

US Country Reports 1996 indicates that

[w]ith notable exceptions, the security forces generally exercised restraint in dealing with protesters. However, soldiers reportedly killed several militant coca farmers and field workers ("cocaleros") and injured hundreds who—supported in part by guerrillas and narcotics traffickers—were seeking to impede antinarcotics programs in the south in August Security forces were responsible for dozens of disappearances. (US 30 Jan. 1997, 1–2)

2.1 Human Rights Violations Between December 1995 and June 1997 in Caquetá

Sources report that to protest the destruction of coca crops in Caquetá and two other departments, farmers staged protests in July 1996 (USCRI 1 Jan. 1997) or organized "strikes and mass demonstrations" between July and September 1996 (Amnesty International 1 Jan. 1997). Sources indicate that government forces "frequently" responded with "excessive use of force" (Amnesty International 1 Jan. 1997) or that "military authorities in charge of special public order zones" in Caquetá and the other departments used violence to disperse protesters, "reportedly burn[ing] homes and belongings and threaten[ing] local authorities, forcing some to flee the area" (USCRI 1 Jan. 1997). Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that soldiers were filmed shooting at coca farmers in Caquetá (HRW 1 Jan. 1997).

Amnesty International notes that "at least 12 unarmed civilians died" in those protests, and "scores of protesters and journalists were seriously injured" (Amnesty International 1 Jan. 1997). According to *US Country Reports 1996*, army soldiers "severely beat" a cameraman in Caquetá because he had recorded them "beating an unarmed civilian" (US 1 Jan. 1997). The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a non-profit organization that "promotes press freedom" (CPJ n.d.), notes that a cameraman "was beaten repeatedly by three soldiers with the butts of their G-3 rifles" for photographing "the soldiers firing upon farm workers" (CPJ Feb. 1997).

3. DIPOL

In an article in the journal *Strategic Insights* [1], Steven C. Boraz, a lieutenant commander and intelligence officer for the US Navy (U.S. Naval Institute n.d.), states that DIPOL is the intelligence unit of the National Police, which "fall[s] under control of the Defense Ministry" and works "primarily in urban areas, attempting to curtail organized crime, break up insurgent cells and stop kidnapping, drug trafficking and other illicit activities" (Boraz May 2007, 2). International Crisis Group similarly notes that DIPOL refers to "police intelligence" (International Crisis Group 14 Mar. 2008, 4).

3.1 Whether DIPOL Was Previously Known as SIPOL

According to a 2004 report by the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Observatory), a joint program of the FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (Organisation mondiale contre la torture, OMCT), SIPOL is the metropolitan police of Santafé de Bogotá (Observatory 14 Apr. 2004). However, sources published in 2006 and 2007 state that SIPOL is the Intelligence Service of the National Police (Servicio de Inteligencia de la Policía Nacional) (UN 5 Apr. 2007, para. 105; Amnesty International 11 Oct. 2006) or the police "intelligence agenc[y]" (International Crisis Group 10 May 2007, 23). Insight Crime, an organization that researches and analyzes "organized crime in the Americas" (InSight Crime n.d.), similarly indicates in 2016 that SIPOL is an acronym used to refer to the "intelligence unit" of the Colombian police (InSight Crime 18 Mar. 2016).

3.2 Human Rights Violations Between May 1996 and June 2008

Information on human rights violations committed by DIPOL between May 1996 and June 2008 could

[1] *Strategic Insights* was an online journal, published by the Center on Contemporary Conflict (CCC), that covered national security topics with both peer-reviewed content and "viewpoints" (US n.d.). The CCC is an institute of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), a US Navy educational institution (US n.d.).

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ecoi.net summary:



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