

3.1.7. Organised crime gangs

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La Oficina de Envigado, or La Oficina, is the most influential criminal organisation in the Medellín metropolitan area and operate as a network federation of independent local organisations, but under a hierarchical, pyramidal, and unified command.[280] La Oficina exercises influence over Medellín's gangs, also known as *combos*, which consists of between 8 and 30 members each.[281] These combos administer the different illegal economies, including killings-by-hire, shark loans, known as *'gota-a-gota',* extortion, robberies, and social control over local communities.[282] La Oficina has a sophisticated capacity to articulate different criminal activities, including large-scale and street-level drug trafficking, extortion, sexual exploitation, and the 'regulation' of territories, local markets, and social leaders.[283] Pares identified two wings within La Oficina: an 'operative' faction that carries out the criminal activities, and a 'managerial' faction, made up of business people, former drug lords, and high-profile public figures known as 'The Invisibles".[284] Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this report. According to Pares, the 350 combos that operate in Medellín under La Oficina have over 12 000 members in total.[285] Even though La Oficina controls large parts of criminal networks in Antioquia, AGC cells have been allegedly trying to establish presence in Medellín although no direct confrontations have been reported.[286] In the case of the AGC, they are not enemies but function more as criminal economic allies, especially in drug trafficking, which could explain the lack of direct confrontations between them.[287]

Shottas and Espartanos are two Buenaventura-based gangs[288] with between 600 and 1 000 members each.[289] Shottas dominate the continental part of Buenaventura and have localised leaders that provide logistical, financial, and military support to the gang.[290] Espartanos dominate the insular area of Buenaventura as well as part of the continental area, have a 'hermetic' structure, and their leaders operate from jails.[291] Both gangs dispute the control of illicit economies, particularly street-level drug trafficking and extortion, as well as profits associated with large-scale drug trafficking from Buenaventura's port.[292] These organisations have established 'invisible frontiers' within Buenaventura that restricts the freedom of movement of locals.[293] Both organisations are accused of engaging in forced recruitment of children, using explosives, and threatening, intimidating and killing of social leaders.[294] Extortion is one of the main illegal economies in Buenaventura as it allows not only for increased profits but also social control over territories.[295] Reported cases of extortion have decreased from 257 in 2022, to 158 in 2023, to 135 in 2024, which was attributed to the establishment of a negotiation table by the government with these organisations.[296] Homicide numbers in Buenaventura have fluctuated throughout the years, with 194 in 2021, 109 in 2022, 136 in 2023, and 77 in 2024.[297] Most of the victims are adult males.[298] The ceasefire was broken in

February 2025, leading to an increase in violence in Buenaventura to dispute territories, leaving over 50 dead.299

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  Pares, La paz ¿Cómo vamos?, 18 June 2025, url, p. 157; France, OFPRA, Rapport de mission en République de Colombie, 28 November 2024, url, p. 39

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  Pares, La paz ¿Cómo vamos?, 18 June 2025, url, p. 158

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  Pares, La paz ¿Cómo vamos?, 18 June 2025, url, p. 130

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  Pares, La paz ¿Cómo vamos?, 18 June 2025, url, p. 137

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  Pares, La paz ¿Cómo vamos?, 18 June 2025, url, p. 135

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  Verdad Abierta, Paz Total: ¿un paso adelante y dos atrás?, 21 April 2025, url

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