

4.1.10. Capacity of armed and criminal groups to track and trace targets who relocate

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For detailed information on this topic, please refer to EUAA Country Focus: Colombia (2022), Section 5.8.

Sources indicate that illegal armed groups expand their presence and influence through subcontracting to smaller groups and criminal outfits, as well as operating internationally due to participation in international criminal networks.[566] Jeremy McDermott commented that each targeting situation can be different, depending on the group, the location, the profile, including in relation to large cities such as Medellín, Cali, and Bogotá, where the dynamics of armed/criminal structures are each distinct. Regarding reaching a person who is considered by an armed group as high value or high profile, 'if a hit is out on that individual, there are local *oficinas* in most cities, so if there is enough interest or money to pay for it, the group can find someone almost anywhere; but they must want to kill them. In most cases, the group just want the problematic person out of their business. If the target is sitting on strategic or tactical intelligence about a group, they might be prepared to shell out a lot of money to have them murdered. They can often find people by tracking their social media and pressuring friends and family in the area in order to find someone they wish to target.'[567] According to a Conflict Analyst based in Colombia who specialises in tracking conflict and political developments in the country, ‘in general, beyond just extortion, relocation in Colombia is increasingly less of a protective strategy’ noting this was particularly the case for social leaders or politically sensitive cases. ‘Furthermore, the analyst was of the view that in such cases the risk of being found by an armed group, unfortunately outstrips the capacity of the state to respond, whether that's through individual protection, or trying to create more specific conditions in cities. The threat is bigger than, and has overcome, the capacity of the state to respond.’[568]

DeJusticia observed that the success of relocation also hinges on the state's capacity to limit and diminish the territorial influence of illegal armed groups. That influence, in turn, is determined primarily by the organisational structure of each group. For example, the largest post-FARC factions—those that rejected the 2016 FARC-EP Peace Agreement —typically expand by establishing social and political control within defined territorial domains. Consequently, their attacks against community leaders and public officials tend to concentrate in rural areas,

municipalities, and mid-sized towns within their operational range. In contrast, the Clan del Golfo, a combination of heirs of previous large illegal right-wing armies, local paramilitary groups that emerged after the 2016 peace agreements, and small urban criminal bands that attach to them from time to time, exhibits a far more pervasive and adaptable threat, capable of targeting individuals even beyond its traditional zones of influence. Another factor amplifying the reach of illegal armed groups is their access to the contract-killing economy. While authorities have apprehended the direct perpetrators of organised crimes, these individuals are often marginalised youths with no evident ties to organised structures, hired through opaque and fragmented chains of intermediaries. A notable example is the murder of a CTI investigator from La Guajira - although both the shooter and the attack's coordinator have been captured, they have yet to reveal the intellectual authors behind the crime. A similar pattern emerged in one of the most shocking recent events in Colombia—the assassination of presidential candidate Miguel Uribe Turbay in Bogotá on August 13, 2025—carried out by a 15-year-old during a public political rally.[569]

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  EUAA, Country Focus – Colombia, December 2022, url, p. 80, citing multiple oral sources

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  Conflict analyst, Interview with EUAA, 14 October 2025

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