

5.2. Anti-kidnapping and extortion units (Grupos de Acción Unificada por la Libertad Personal, GAULA)

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GAULAs are specialised anti-extortion and anti-kidnapping policing and military units with about 1 659 agents that cover 90 % of the national territory, and are involved in prevention and investigation, intelligence gathering and cooperation with foreign authorities. Police's GAULAs are deployed to urban areas and report to the Colombian National Police, while the military units of GAULA operate in rural zones and are under the General Command of the Colombian Armed Forces. In addition, there are 'CiberGAULA' to fight against digital extortion, as well as a free national hotline (165) to allow victims to quickly connect with GAULA officers. Cases that are forwarded to the GAULA are sent to one of the 33 FGN delegates who are responsible for extortion cases. The GAULA also collaborates with the CTI and the PNC.845

According to an April 2023 article, between January and April 2023, the 33 military GAULA units made 218 arrests for extortion, 46 of which were from AGC/Pelusos/Caparros, and 54 other organised crime groups, while 118 were ordinary common crime.846 During 2023, the National Police's GAULA Unit reported that 2 708 people were arrested for extortion, a rise of 12 % from 2022, with 82 % of them receiving a prison sentence. For kidnapping, 630 people were arrested (a 17 % increase over 2022), with 90 % of them placed in detention awaiting a judicial process. 847

During 2024, military GAULAs conducted 600 operations, and arrested 900 people for extortion and 120 for kidnapping according to Infobae.848

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  France, OFPRA, Rapport de mission en République de Colombie, 28 November 2024, url, pp. 20-21

- 846

  Colombia, GAULA Militares, 21 April 2023, url

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Infobae, Secuestros en Colombia aumentaron en un 50%, según el Gaula de la Policía, 13 December 2023, url

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  Infobae, El Comando Gaula Militar potenciará las acciones contra la extorsión y el secuestro en Colombia, 28 September 2024, url

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