

**This Web page has been archived on the Web.**

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Home > Research Program > Responses to Information Requests

## Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

### Archived Content

Information identified as archived is provided for reference, research or record-keeping purposes. It is not subject to the Government of Canada Web Standards and has not been altered or updated since it was archived. Please "[contact us](#)" to request a format other than those available.

12 April 2007

#### **COL102407.FE**

Colombia: Kidnappings and extortion in rural and urban regions, especially Bogota, and protection available to victims (February 2006 - February 2007).

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Kidnappings and extortion

The Free Country Foundation (Fundacion Pais Libre), a non-profit organization that provides assistance to kidnap victims ([AP 17 Feb. 2007](#)), presented statistics from the National Fund for the Defence of Individual Freedom (Fondo Nacional para la Defensa de la Libertad Personal, FONDELIBERTAD) in a report on kidnappings in Colombia (Fundacion Pais Libre 2006). According to that report, in 2006, four departments (Tolima, Antioquia, Bogota and Meta) stood apart from the others, with over 61 kidnappings; between 42 and 48 took place in three other departments (Cundinamarca, Cauca and Valle) (Fundacion Pais Libre 2006, 6). That same report indicates that, of 687 kidnappings in 2006, 407 individuals were released, 147 were rescued, 30 died in captivity and 11 escaped (*ibid.*, 2).

Statistics provided by the Presidential Program Against Extortion and Kidnappings (Programa Presidencial contra la Extorsion y el Secuestro) indicate that, during the first 11 months of 2006, the total number of kidnappings dropped from 766 to 621, a decrease of 19 percent compared with the same period in 2005 (Colombia 22 Dec. 2006). For the first 11 months of 2006, the number of kidnappings for extortion dropped from 360 to 243 (*ibid.*). In 2006, the departments most affected by that type of kidnapping were Antioquia (32) and Valle (27), as well as the city of Bogota (22) (*ibid.*).

Olga Lucia Gomez, Director of the Free Country Foundation, pointed out that statistics provided by the government are not as reliable as they were five years ago ([AP 17 Feb. 2007](#)). She indicated that her organization provided support in approximately 2,000 cases in 2006 and that at least 40 percent of them were not registered with the government (*ibid.*).

The key perpetrators of the kidnappings for extortion were, on the one hand, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) (62 cases) and the National Liberation Army (Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional, ELN) (39 cases), and, on the other hand, small-scale criminals (91 cases) (*ibid.*).

With respect to the situation in the cities, the Foundation for Security and Democracy (Fundacion Seguridad y Democracia) indicates that 27 kidnappings took place during the fourth quarter of 2006 in Barranquilla, Cartagena, Medellin, Bogota (16 cases), Cucuta and Cali (Feb. 2007). In the fourth quarter of 2004, the capital city had three kidnappings, compared with seven during the same period in 2005 (Fundacion Seguridad y Democracia [Feb. 2007](#)). As for extortion cases, 34 of 75 cases reported in the six cities above took place in Bogota (*ibid.*).

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) indicates that the kidnappings, with or without extortion, took place primarily in rural areas and that "businessmen and public figures are targets . . . [for] guerrillas and common criminals" (20 Nov. 2006).

---

## This Web page has been archived on the Web.

---

kidnapped, including a cousin of former president Andres Pastrana, and that the sister of former president Cesar Garcia was assassinated during a kidnapping attempt in April 2006 (9 May 2006).

Another EFE article reports that, according to the Central Directorate of the Judicial Police (Direccion Central de Policia Judicial, DIJIN), demobilized members of paramilitary groups in the state of Putumayo had regrouped under a new militia and was practicing extortion (22 Nov. 2006). Reuters indicates that, according to a Colombian government report, at least 10 new gangs made up of former paramilitaries were formed between February and August of 2006 (31 July 2006). These gangs practise extortion and drug trafficking (Reuters 31 July 2006).

### Kidnapping and extortion protection measures

The Web site of the Presidential Program Against Extortion and Kidnappings indicates that about 400 people were to receive training on kidnapping and extortion investigation methods at the start of March 2007 (Colombia 6 March 2007).

In May 2006, the Administrative Security Department (Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad, DAS) indicated that 16 of its officers were fired because of their involvement in various crimes, including kidnapping and extortion (AP 21 May 2006). Associated Press reported that director Andres Penate had fired 70 agents since his appointment to DAS in October 2006 (ibid.).

Articles from the DAS Web site provide details about the arrest, by DAS members, of guerillas known for their involvement in kidnappings and extortion (Colombia 19 Jan. 2007; ibid. 12 Jan. 2007) and announce the dismantling of a criminal gang that was practising extortion in the municipality of Ibagué (department of Tolima) (ibid. 29 Sept. 2006).

EFE indicates that a police operation in Antioquia led to the arrest for extortion of a group of 21 people with ties to paramilitary groups (14 Mar. 2007). In August 2006, during a military operation, six men who had just kidnapped a merchant in the city of Baranquilla were killed (EFE 15 Aug. 2006).

In April 2006, the Colombian national police announced that Unified Action Groups for Personal Freedom (Grupos de Accion Unificada por la Libertad Personal, GAULA), the army and the police were working together on an awareness campaign to stop kidnappings and extortion in the department of Huila (Colombia 19 Apr. 2006).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

## References

Associated Press (AP). 17 February 2007. Darcy Crowe. "Critics: Colombia Manipulates Crime Data." (Factiva)

\_\_\_\_\_. 21 May 2006. Sergio de Leon. "Colombia's Secret Police Fires 16 Officials Accused of Kidnapping, Extortion." (Factiva)

Colombia. 6 March 2007. Programa Presidencial Contra la Extorsión y el Secuestro. "Finaliza capacitación sobre Secuestro y Extorsión." <[http://www.extorsion-secuestro.gov.co/noticias/2007/mar\\_07\\_07.html](http://www.extorsion-secuestro.gov.co/noticias/2007/mar_07_07.html)> [Accessed 21 Mar. 2007]

\_\_\_\_\_. 19 January 2007. Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (DAS). "DAS captura guerrillero de las FARC." <<http://www.das.gov.co/>> [Accessed 21 Mar. 2007]

\_\_\_\_\_. 12 January 2007. Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (DAS). "DAS captura guerrillero de las FARC." <<http://www.das.gov.co/>> [Accessed 21 Mar. 2007]

\_\_\_\_\_. 22 December 2006. Programa Presidencial Contra la Extorsión y el Secuestro. "Durante el 2006: 32.5% disminuyó secuestro extorsivo en Colombia."

<[http://www.extorsion-secuestro.gov.co/noticias/2006/dic\\_22\\_06.html](http://www.extorsion-secuestro.gov.co/noticias/2006/dic_22_06.html)> [Accessed: 21 Mar. 2007]

\_\_\_\_\_. 29 September 2006. Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (DAS). "DAS desmantela banda de extorsionistas." <<http://www.das.gov.co/>> [Accessed 21 Mar. 2007]

\_\_\_\_\_. 19 April 2006. Policia Nacional de Colombia. "Se unen GAULAS de Ejercito y Policia para prevenir el secuestro y la extorsion." <<http://www.policia.gov.co/inicio/portal/portal.nsf/Noticias/Se+unen+GAULAS++de+Ej%C3%A9rcito+y+Polic%C3%ADa+para+prevenir+el+secuestro+y+la+extorsi%C3%B3n.>> [Accessed 19 Mar. 2007]

Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). 20 November 2006. "Colombia Risk: Security Risk." (Factiva)

---

**This Web page has been archived on the Web.**

---

\_\_\_\_\_ . 22 November 2006. "Police Arrest 12 Members of New Paramilitary Group." (Factiva)

\_\_\_\_\_ . 15 August 2006. "Colombian Troops Kill 6 Kidnappers." (Factiva)

\_\_\_\_\_ . 9 May 2006. "Colombian Police Arrest Suspects in Gaviria Case." (Factiva)

Fundacion Pais Libre. 2006. "Estadisticas Secuestro a 2006." <<http://www.paislibre.org/images/PDF/secuestroestadisticasgenerales%202006%20org.pdf>> [Accessed 19 Mar. 2007]

Fundacion Seguridad y Democracia. February 2007. *Informe Especial: criminalidad y victimizacion urbana en Colombia*. <[http://www.seguridadydemocracia.org/docs/pdf/boletin/boletin15completo.pdf?product\\_id=256](http://www.seguridadydemocracia.org/docs/pdf/boletin/boletin15completo.pdf?product_id=256)> [Accessed 19 Mar. 2007]

Reuters. 31 July 2006. Hugh Bronstein. "Ex-Paramilitaries Form Crime Gangs in Colombia." (Factiva)

## **Additional Sources Consulted**

**Internet sites, including:** *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005*, Factiva, Fondo Nacional para la Defensa de la Libertad Personal (FONDELIBERTAD), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch ([HRW](#)), Ministerio del Interior y de Justicia de Colombia, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia, Washington Office on Latin America.

[Click here for tips on how to use this search engine.](#)

Date modified: 2013-07-17 [Top of Page](#)