

FUNDACIÓN IDEAS PARA LA PAZ


FUNDACIÓN
ideas
PARA LA
PAZ

Siguiendo el conflicto: hechos y análisis

Number 47/ February 2007

By:
 Angela Rivas
 María Lucía Méndez
 Gerson Arias

From Ex-combatants to Citizens: Strengths and Weaknesses of the new Demobilization and Reintegration Plans *

Debates on the effectiveness or failure of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process that the Uribe administration has implemented in the past few years, and political judgments on his peace initiatives have obscured the concrete events that have recently taken place in Colombia in this area. Beyond the criticisms that can be made of the way the process has been carried out, there are tangible changes such as the fact that the country now has more than 43,500 ex-combatants. What follows is an invitation to reserve judgment for the moment in order to examine the challenges and dilemmas posed by the concept of reintegration recently adopted by the Colombian government.

Shift in the official approach

• On February 14, 2007, the Colombian government sanctioned Decree 395, which sets out activities towards the definition of a model of assistance aimed at addressing the needs of the demobilized population. The purpose is to provide continuity to the process that each of the ex-combatants is following to achieve his or her full social and economic reintegration. In this way, the Colombian government reiterated the recent adoption of the concept of reintegration, also stated in the 2007-2010 Development and Investment Plan. Main differences between the meaning of reinsertion and of reintegration help in characterizing the nature of this shift. Reinsertion, the term used by the government until a few months ago, refers to short-term measures aimed at providing financial

and material assistance to ex-combatants to take care of their basic and immediate needs and those of their families. Reintegration, meanwhile, refers to a medium and long-term process through which ex-combatants and their families are expected to adapt to civilian life in economic, social and political terms. Far from a mere cosmetic change, the adoption of the concept of reintegration has implications for the scope and focus of measures to assist thousands of ex-combatants in returning to civilian life.

• The Reintegration Adviser, Frank Pearl, has sought to delineate the two concepts: "Reinsertion is a set of short-term measures aimed at assisting the demobilized combatant. Reintegration is a long-term process. Reinsertion is a program; reintegration is a process without deadlines. Reinsertion is based on paternalistic assistance, but monthly stipends will not work in the long-term. We must allow them to gain access to credit and training. Reintegration requires communities to get involved in the process and to commit themselves to it." Additionally he has stated: "Our initiatives include productive projects that seek to involve and benefit both ex-combatants and internally displaced people. These are not welfare programs because they receive no monthly payments from the government for nothing, nor state services for nothing....That means that everything that the ex-combatants receive is based on their performance towards 'graduating' from the program."

• Unlike other countries, where the adoption of the concept of reintegration to guide the management of ex-combatants has been after armed conflicts have come to an end, in Colombia such an adoption has been in a context marked by ongoing armed conflicts. In this context, both war and illicit armed activities are a way of making a living and a strong temptation for those who are trying to leave such activities behind. What then does it mean to adopt the concept of reintegration in contemporary Colombia?

*Con la colaboración de María Victoria Llorente, Román D. Ortíz, Juan Carlos Palou y Juan Sebastián Ospina.

Disarmament and Demobilization Programs, 2002-2006

- One of the most important lines of action announced by the Reintegration Advisory Office is the unification of intervention strategies aimed at assisting ex-combatants, whether they have demobilized individually, by deserting from an illegal armed group, or collectively, through a peace deal. The implementation of this measure might seem simple, however, it poses a significant challenge to the Colombian government: to unify two processes that result from two different types of government initiatives.
- On the one hand, individual demobilizations have been based on a government strategy that seeks to encourage combatants to desert from those armed groups with which the government is not negotiating at this time (FARC, ELN and other dissident groups). This initiative crystallized in 2002, when the government restructured the Reinsertion Office and created the Program for Former Combatants and Armed Insurgents' Return to Civilian Life (PRVC). From then on, the PRVC, a division of the Ministry of Interior, was in charge of managing the process of social and economic reincorporation of ex-combatants who had demobilized on individual basis. Beginning in 2003, the PRVC also took charge of the ex-combatants from self-defense paramilitary groups who demobilized collectively.
- At the beginning, this program did not attract much public attention, nor was it the object of political debate; it was only when collective demobilizations began that politically inspired judgments arose. The criticism focused on both the legitimacy of the process in light of the difficulties faced by peace agreements between the Colombian government and self-defense paramilitary groups, and the effectiveness of the government's approach to the private sector in attempting to provide alternative income-generation possibilities for ex-combatants (demobilized both individually and collectively). Despite this, it is striking that the PRVC has provided for close to 12,000 ex-combatants who, since 2002, have demobilized individually -- that is ex-combatants coming from the FARC, ELN, and dissident groups -- in addition to the 31,687 who demobilized collectively as part of the peace agreements between the Colombian government and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) blocs.
- Collective demobilizations followed a very different path. They resulted from peace agreements between the Colombian government and self-defense paramilitary groups. The Office of the High Peace Commissioner was the division in charge of managing negotiations towards these agreements. Collective demobilizations began with

the dismantling of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc on November 24, 2003 and the Ortega Peasant Self-Defense Groups on December 7 of that same year. After an interregnum of one year, during which negotiations passed through times of progress and setbacks, collective demobilizations resumed with the Bananero Bloc in November 2004 and ended on August 15, 2006, when a faction of the Elmer Cardenas Bloc laid down arms. In total, between 2003 and 2006, 39 different demobilization ceremonies were held, through which 31, 687 members of the self-defense paramilitary groups ceased military activity.

- An key element in understanding why collective demobilizations, especially, have been in the eye of the hurricane is that, unlike the 1990-94 demobilizations of guerrilla groups, the negotiation between the national government and self-defense paramilitary groups did not include specific statements regarding the process of social and economic insertion to be followed by the ex-combatants. The only document signed by the two parties that addresses this point is the "Santa Fe de Ralito Accord," which states "The government promises to take the necessary steps to reincorporate them into civilian life." Beyond this, the process followed by ex-combatants has been marked by informal agreements or has not been the subject of any agreement.

What has and has not been done on the matter of reinsertion

- As to a general overview of the process, current figures provide further evidence of the considerable challenge faced by the Reintegration Advisory Office. Since the beginnings of the program and until 2006, the Colombian government had invested around 700 billion pesos, a little more than 300 million dollars, in it. In 2006 the national government announced that it was planning to invest 800 billion pesos during the period 2007-2010. On the expenditure side, the government put 20 billion pesos into the AUC's disarmament and demobilization phase alone, that is, approximately 8 million dollars. The reinsertion of an ex-combatant who demobilized individually costs the national government nearly 37.9 million pesos. The average reinsertion cost per person for those who demobilized collectively is 11.6 million pesos.
- Mass demobilizations have ended for the moment since all the self-defense paramilitary blocs have surrendered their weapons; however, individual demobilization has been continuous since 2002. According to information assembled by the Fundación Ideas para la Paz, a total of 43,600 combatants had demobilized in Colombia through February 28, 2007, 73 percent of these ex-combatants demobilized collectively and the

remaining 27 percent demobilized individually. Each month an average of 216 combatants demobilize individually (approximately seven people per day). This means that the adoption of any measure on this must take into consideration such an ongoing process and the impossibility of halting it.

- It is worth mentioning that, the individually demobilized ex-combatants population is quite heterogeneous. Ex-combatants come from different illegal armed groups, but mainly from the FARC. The majority of these ex-combatants have only received primary education, and there is a high percentage of illiterates among them. Although they come from different places throughout the country, as ex-combatants, they concentrate in urban centers, especially Bogotá. The majority of this population has not yet completed the two years program in the PRVC, and approximately 30 percent of these ex-combatants are involved in productive projects. Most of these projects concentrate in the services and retail sectors.

- Those who demobilized collectively come entirely from self-defense paramilitary groups. The majority of this population has only received primary education. Unlike those who demobilized individually, these ex-combatants are dispersed throughout the country. Areas where a large number of these ex-combatants concentrate include: Antioquia, Córdoba, Cesar, Magdalena, and Santander. The great majority of this population is still receiving humanitarian assistance, and only a small percentage has an additional source of income. At this time close to 90 percent of those who demobilized collectively have resolved their judicial situation, and 2,695 have asked to be benefited from the Justice and Peace Law. However, there have been some setbacks in the implementation of this law (see *Siguiendo el Conflicto* # 44).

- Also concerning judicial issues and legal procedures, it is worth clarifying that there are substantive differences between the two types of demobilization. A combatant who demobilizes individually is required to obtain his CODA. This is a certificate issued by the Operating Committee on the Laying Down of Arms that certifies both his membership in an illegal armed group and his will to abandon it. Those who demobilize collectively and as a result of a peace agreement are not required to obtain their CODA. Instead, membership in an illegal armed group is established through the inclusion of the person's name in a list prepared by the group's commander. These lists had, on occasion, included both combatants and a heterogeneous assortment of others alleging diverse affiliations to the armed group (membership in support networks, links through political collaboration, and so forth).

- The process followed by those who demobilized collectively has had various setbacks. This has been

due in part to the informality in the management of the agreements between the government and the self-defense paramilitary groups, the lack of agreements clarifying the process to be followed by both rank and file combatants and mid-ranking commanders, the magnitude of the demobilizations and the behavior of the ex-combatants. To deal with these problems, the government assigned the National Police the task of monitoring collectively-demobilized ex-combatants. The Police issue monthly reports on this population. The eighth report, published on February 1, 2007, describes the situation as follows: "during the entire demobilization process, a total of 542 ex-combatants have died and 78 have been injured for reasons related to illegal activities... 1,068 former members of the AUC have been captured by the authorities for engaging in criminal activities." As for rearming, the report indicates that 882 members of criminal organizations, known as BACRIM (the Spanish acronym for newly emerging organized crime gangs), have been arrested since June 2006, of whom 164 are demobilized combatants.

- The concentration zones created to facilitate collective demobilizations were abolished on December 15, 2006, and a total of 83 demobilized combatants, the majority of them middle-ranking commanders, were put into prison in Urrea, Antioquia. As for the AUC high-ranking commander, 57, of the 59 who were secluded in La Ceja Confinement Center in August 2006, are now in a maximum-security prison in Itagui. They are waiting for their judicial situation to be resolved through the Justice and Peace Law.

- In seeking to overcome the obstacles that have arisen in the process, on 12 July 2006, the Colombian government, through the PRVC, extended humanitarian aid to some AUC ex-combatants for six more months. This extension was on the condition that they were engaged in training and/or productive activities. Originally, the reinsertion collectively-demobilized ex-combatants was stipulated as an 18-month long process. The six-month extension, as explained by the government, was awarded only to those blocs that demobilized first and, for that reason, had not received some of the benefits that were established after their demobilization was underway or complete. However, in December 2006, the Reintegration Adviser announced that the government will extend the humanitarian aid "to those who have recently completed the program and will offer an extension to all those who at the time were in the process. This, provided that ex-combatants expressed their will to live peacefully." This decision anticipated the shift from a short-term reinsertion program to a reintegration process based on medium and long-term planning.

Opportunities, challenges and dilemmas posed by the Reintegration approach

The adoption of the concept of reintegration sets out opportunities, challenges and dilemmas that will define in great part the development of the process over the coming years. In general, processes of disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion of ex-combatants implicitly contain a wide degree of uncertainty. That is particularly true in the early stages, when the establishing of a plan of action confronts obstacles such as the absence of accurate figures on the number of ex-combatants who will participate in the demobilization and the difficulty of determining the time required to achieve the disarmament and demobilization of illegal armed structures. The process with the self-defense paramilitary groups in Colombia was not the exception. The number of combatants who appeared in the collective demobilizations exceeded by far original expectations of the government: the highest government estimates pointed to the existence of somewhat more than 23,000 members of the self-defense paramilitary groups, whereas the number of demobilized combatants reached 31,687. It is also worth recalling that the demobilization of the AUC blocs did not keep to the initially established timelines. The Santa Fe de Ralito Agreement of July 15, 2003 set the deadline of December 31, 2005 for the demobilization of all AUC blocs, but the last bloc actually demobilized in August 2006.

The peace initiatives of the Colombian government with the self-defense paramilitary groups have also been the target of politically inspired criticism and judgment. This has pushed the government to seek convincing results in the very short term. As the process has developed to date, showing results over the short run (that is, monthly reports with figures on the number of demobilized combatants and the number of demobilizations, etc.) has been a mechanism to lend credibility to a peace process that has been systematically questioned. In summary, the current disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion process in Colombia can be characterized by both its ample margin of uncertainty and the need to lend credibility and legitimacy to initiatives conducted as part of the process.

It is worth recalling that adopting the concept of reintegration implies conceiving the return of ex-combatants to civilian life as a process that requires both the participation of various actors and time, since it shows results over the medium and long term. Therefore, a considerable degree of planning is essential. In this sense, government recent shift in its approach to the process to be followed by ex-

combatants seems like an opportunity to offset the improvisation that has, to some degree, marked the governmental management of this population. Such an adoption also sets the challenging task of lending credibility to this new stage of the process, even though the results will not be seen immediately. How can the logic legitimizing the process through fast results be combined with the logic of reintegration understood as a process that requires time and does not show immediate results? Without a doubt, the outcome of this process depends on the solutions to a series of hidden dilemmas in the government's plans for reintegration.

First Dilemma: What to do in the short run?

Adopting the concept of reintegration poses the challenge of rectifying the flaws that have been identified in the basic assistance package offered to each ex-combatant to facilitate his return to civilian life immediately after laying down arms. At a minimum, three tasks appear to be particularly necessary:

- In light of the recent announcement by the government that the whereabouts of nearly 4,700 demobilized combatants were unknown, the first measure that seems urgent is to locate the entire population of ex-combatants. The Reintegration Office has begun working on this point. On February 26, 2007, launched regional identification brigades as a strategy aimed at helping to locate ex-combatants.
- Second, it is worth ensuring that the shift from reinsertion to reintegration includes satisfactory compliance with the first. In Colombia, the basic assistance package for an ex-combatant includes assistance in health, education, and psychosocial needs, and a monthly stipend for personal and family expenses. Figures show that, as of November 2006, only 45.45 percent of collectively-demobilized ex-combatants have received health assistance; just 18.85 have completed academic training and 26.12 have done so in occupational training.
- Finally, it is important to examine carefully the income-generation options offered to ex-combatants. As stated by the Reintegration Office, it is clear that mechanisms through which this issue has been managed to date need to be reformed. It is also evident that existing economic projects need to become viable. More than 1,834 ex-combatants who demobilized collectively are involved in cooperative economic projects, and there are 3,622 other productive projects that involve many others who demobilized individually. Responding to the lack of suitable income-generation options for ex-combatants seems even more urgent due to the coexistence of reintegration initiatives with

an active market of war. In Colombia, illicit armed activities, as ways of making a living, are still available for demobilized combatants and could become attractive income-generation alternatives if licit income-generation options fail.

Second Dilemma: What is to be done about the market of war and illicit armed activities?

Income-generation options that are sustainable over time are key in securing the success of reintegration initiatives. As the experience of different countries shows, the implementation of these income-generation options has implicit difficulties that are aggravated by the existence of illegal income-generation alternatives to which the ex-combatants can access easily. This is particularly the case when reintegration initiatives coexist with ongoing armed conflicts. One of the biggest challenges faced by reintegration initiatives is the creation of strategies that can effectively deter ex-combatants from re-engaging in illicit armed activities. Although, in Colombia, these strategies exceed the scope and capacities of the agencies responsible for reintegration, asking about them cannot be postponed. What is to be done about the indications that ex-combatants are rearming and participating in illegal activities? Even under the assumption that the ex-combatants do not take up arms again, how are other members of the community to be discouraged from doing so? In other words, is it possible to try to achieve reintegration without taking measures aimed at hindering the recruitment of new combatants by illegal armed groups?

A recent study by UNICEF and the Ombudsman's Office says, "illegal recruitment is determined by aspects such as, inter alia, the territorial influence of specific groups, the strategic military position of the groups on the ground, and the need, if any, to expand the military base." A particularly striking example of forced recruitment occurred in Arauca, where 384 members of illegal armed groups demobilized individually between August 2002 and February 28, 2007.

The demobilization of the Vencedores de Arauca Bloc in December 2005 resulted in the disarming of another 584 men and women. As a consequence of the territorial struggle unleashed by the FARC and the ELN, however, the levels of forced recruitment have increased substantially. Despite the fact that there are no exact and reliable figures on recruitment, in August 2006 the mass media reported the withdrawal of 400 children from rural schools in Arauca in just one week because they were afraid of being recruited.

Third Dilemma: Should the Reintegration

Process continue indefinitely?

The definition of reintegration as a process that cannot be made conditional on a deadline defined a priori, suggests several challenges and dilemmas that demand careful examination. According to entities such as the World Bank, it appears undesirable to propose long-term individual processes since, among other things, this can create perverse relationships of dependency on the program among beneficiaries and run the risk of ignoring program beneficiaries' individual responsibility to assume their own reintegration process.

There are also administrative obstacles to such a course. In fact, the Reintegration Office is facing the task of having to include in its universe of beneficiaries those who have formally ended the government support program.

The processes of demobilization and reinsertion that began in Colombia in the 1990s offer important lessons concerning this dilemma. It is worth remembering that in these processes no deadline was established for those who put down their arms to complete their insertion into society. Ten years later, the Colombian government and the demobilized ex-combatants were trapped in a process that left both parties equally unsatisfied and lacked a clearly established ending point. As a consequence, in 2003, the national government and the representatives of the demobilized guerrilla groups had to sign exit agreements, in the hope of bringing the reinsertion process to a close.

Beyond the logistical challenges that these tasks pose, which cannot be ignored, the adoption of the concept of reintegration as it appears in Decree 395 of 2007 raises questions both on the pertinence and the implications of running a program that lacks clearly established deadlines and the duration of which is conditional on the process followed by each individual beneficiary. How can the authorities prevent an overly generous reintegration program from serving as an incentive for some individuals to opt to join illegal armed groups as a prior step to securing privileged treatment from the state? Some of the recent demobilizations seem symptomatic of the effects of such perverse incentives. This is the case with the surrender of a group of alleged FARC militiamen in Buenaventura last February. The group was made up of delinquent youth who had not been long in the ranks of the guerrilla movement and had no political formation. Here it is relevant to consider the comments made by Ana Maria Ibanez on the double standard that can become enshrined in state assistance to ex-combatants and internally displaced people,

“Nevertheless, it is also important to include the design of programs and greater attention to the internally displaced population in the reinsertion processes. The programs are quite different in terms of the number of beneficiaries, the benefits accorded to each and the timeline on what aid is given. That provision contrasts, however, with the lower level of interest and forcefulness of the policy aimed at the internally displaced population. The signs of this imbalance can be harmful during a reconciliation process since individuals obtain more benefits as the perpetrators of violence than as its victims.”

Fourth Dilemma: Differentiated treatment for middle-ranking commanders?

International experience indicates that ignoring the differences in rank of ex-combatants during the reinsertion process can have negative effects. Most commanders who have achieved a certain status and political influence as a result of the war, fear losing that power at the time of demobilization. The absence of differential benefits and state-aid-packages for these commanders can then result in a lack of sufficiently solid incentives to encourage them to actually demobilize and endorse demobilizations. This is particularly serious because middle-ranking combatants are the ones with the greatest potential to undo the process since, if they decide to quit, they have the know-how to both recruit new combatants and rearm demobilized ex-combatants.

Securing the demobilization of middle-ranking commanders is especially complex for several reasons. On one hand, it is likely that it will be difficult for them to take up an amnesty insofar as, in many cases, they are implicated in atrocious crimes. On the other, their security issues are complex because they can be a priority target of the groups from which they have deserted and for some of their vengeful victims. Finally, it is difficult to offer them an attractive package of social and economic incentives. In fact, it does not seem likely that someone who has held a leadership role in the war - with its usual quota of prestige and riches - will be satisfied with an unskilled job, which, in many cases, is their best option in civilian life.

Fifth Dilemma: What is to be done in the recipient communities?

The demobilized combatants reintegrate into a specific social and geographic space. Some return to their natal municipalities, others locate themselves in rural zones, and still others incorporate themselves into the life of some medium-sized or large urban areas. In the worst-case scenarios, they co-exist in daily life with other war-affected

groups or the deprived and excluded – internally displaced people, victims, the traditional poor, and so forth. The reintegration policy can create animosity, indignation or open political opposition if it is perceived as an unwarranted reward to those who took up arms and exercised violence. In this sense, it is necessary to develop concrete strategies to mitigate or eliminate these types of public sentiment. In the first place, social stigmatization is a threat to the objective of reintegration since it can increase ex-combatants’ vulnerability to exclusion. Second, the sustainability of the process is greater if recipient communities –that is the communities where ex-combatants locate themselves– recognize the benefits of both combatants demobilization and of reintegration initiatives in terms of the lowering of both insecurity and criminality.

In addition to this task of acclimatization and political persuasion at the community level, there is a broader objective and one that is more difficult to implement: the transformation of the socioeconomic conditions and the context within which the conflict developed. Here, the central issue is community development or local socioeconomic development. Although there will be debate and controversy on the true motivations that pushed youths or adults to take up arms, no one can deny that the absence of opportunities to live dignified and desirable lives is at least one source of frustration and unrest. Reintegration of ex-combatants into a degraded or poverty-stricken social structure does not seem feasible.

According to Decree 3043 of 2006, the functions of the Reintegration Adviser include the task of ensuring the positive reception of the demobilized ex-combatants by the recipient communities. However, the task of encouraging local development is beyond the scope of the Office’s powers. The appropriate mechanisms to address this objective are in the hands of other government divisions that can invest in productive infrastructure, provide credit, and promote the democratization of access to productive resources. In this sense, achieving the objectives of the Office depends in large measure on not having to act alone.

What if things do not work out?

In Colombia, where illegal armed groups continue to operate and the priority of national government is to consolidate its Defense and Democratic Security Policy, results on the implementation of reintegration policies can condition future negotiations with those illegal armed groups that continue to operate. Adequate design and implementation of these policies could help maintaining the pace of individual demobilizations

or even increase it. Such policies might even become attractive elements and provide the needed confidence to those guerrilla groups that have contemplated getting involved in peace negotiations and the definite surrender of arms.

An effective demobilization and reintegration process might allow the country to break the vicious circle in which combatants move from one illegal armed group to the other, turning internal armed conflict into a spiral-like war. Failure means going back on the path of never-ending violence, through which demobilized combatants can be rapidly rearmed and placed at the service of new illegal interests -- an everlasting war in which political motivations seems to be condemned to take second place to the logic of war as a career. The crossroad between the commencement of peace and the perpetuation of war is, nothing less than, what is at stake in the success or failure of the demobilization and reintegration plans that the country is about to inaugurate.

*Notes

1 Office of the President of the Republic, Decree 395 of 2007 (14 February).

2 It is fundamental to continue with the demobilization and reintegration policy, taking into account the adjustments necessary to achieve peace. Draft bill 201-07, Chamber of Representatives, issuing the National Development and Investment Plan "Communitarian State. Development for All, 2007-2010."

3 See also, Colin Gleichmann, et.al., Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: A Practical Field and Classroom Guide, GTZ, NODEFIC, PPC, SNDC. 2004; Jeffrey Isima, "Cash Payments in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programmes in Africa," *Journal of Security Sector Management* 2:3 (September 2004), 1-10; Sigrid Willibald, "Does money work? Cash transfers to ex-combatants in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes" *Disasters* 30:3 (2006), 316-339.

4 The High-Level Advisory Office for the Social and Economic Reintegration of People and Groups That Have Taken Up Arms, headed by Frank Pearl, was created in September 2006 to carry on the job of the Program for the Reincorporation of Former Combatants and Insurgents into Civilian Life (PRVC) and the Office of the High Peace Commissioner. See: Office of the President of the Republic, Decrees 3043 and 345 of 2006 (7 September).

5 "Proceso con los 'paras' está en su momento más crítico: Alto Consejero para tema de desmovilizados" [Process with the 'paras' at most critical moment: high-level adviser on demobilized combatants] *El Tiempo*, 4 November 2006. On the length of the reintegration phase see: Office of the President, Decree 3043 of 2006 (7 September) and Decree 395 of 2007 (14 February): "The benefits that individually or collectively demobilized persons leaving organized illegal armed groups receive in the framework of reintegration, beginning with Decree 128 of 2003, are conceded to each person, according to the criteria determined by the Advisory Office for Social and Economic Reintegration and will end when the social and economic reintegration process culminates, which will be established based on the process followed by each person" (Article 1).

6 "Todos tenemos que ayudar a reconstruir este país". Habla el consejero presidencial Frank Pearl. [We all have to help to rebuild this country. Presidential adviser Frank Pearl

speaks], *El Espectador*, 23 December 2006.

7 Translator's Note: The FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and the ELN, Army of National Liberation, are respectively the largest and second-largest insurgent organizations in Colombia.

8 The PRVC was formally established in 2003 through Decree 200 of 2003.

9 The exception to the rule was the process with the Cacique Nutibara Bloc, which demobilized in 2003 and included the signing of a "peace agreement" in which it was specifically spelled out that "the political responsibility for reincorporation is the jurisdiction of the national government;" however, "the Medellín mayor's office will contribute to the development of the verification model, monitoring and follow-up of the demobilized combatants and communities" (Peace Agreement between the National Government and the Reincorporated Members of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombian AUC," La Ceja, Antioquia, 10 December 2003).

10 "Reto social empresarial: apoyo a desmovilizados" [Social challenge for business: assistance to demobilized combatants]. *Portafolio*, 25 September 2006.

11 The disarmament and demobilization stage includes the costs of gathering the combatants together in 'concentration zones'. DAPRE-Special Peace Programs Fund calculated these figures through December 31, 2006.

12 For individually-demobilized combatants, the calculations include the benefits received while they are in the Program of Humanitarian Assistance to the Demobilized Combatant (PAHD), which is managed by the Ministry of Defense. Ex-combatants are in this program for three months and they spend 24 more months in the PRVC. For collectively-demobilized combatants, it includes the 18 months of the process and the seed money that they are entitled to receive (National Planning Department- Policy on Demobilization and Reincorporation of Members of Illegal Armed Groups: Assessment and Challenges for the Future, January 2006) (in Spanish).

13 Data taken from PAHD, the High Peace Commissioner's Office, the National Police and the High-Level Advisory Office for Reintegration.

14 Between 2004 and 2005, the number of demobilized guerrillas dropped. However, this coincided with the increase in individual demobilizations from the self-defense paramilitary groups and resulted in a relative stability in the total annual figures for individual demobilization since 2003. The phenomenon began with the signing into force of Law 782 of 2002 (December 23) through which Congress authorized the government to hold negotiations and facilitate agreements with illegal armed groups without the requirement of awarding prior political recognition to the group. Following that, the issuance of the regulatory decree (Decree 128 of 2003) allowed the first individual demobilizations of members of self-defense paramilitary groups. Law 1006 of 2006 (December 22) extended the provisions of Law 782 of 2002 for a further four years.

15 Decree 1385 of 1994 and Decree 128 of 2003.

16 Recall the following events: In its sixth quarterly report of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council of the OAS (February 2006), the Mission accompanying the peace process began to warn of the reactivation of some groups in areas where paramilitary groups were formerly present and identified the possible participation of ex-combatants in illegal activities. Since that time, many actors have denounced the rearmament of some AUC mid-ranking commanders. Later, and facing repeated criticism, on August 16, President Uribe required the former paramilitary chiefs to assemble and move into seclusion in the Prosocial facility, located in the municipality of La Ceja, Antioquia. Finally, with the beginning of the Justice and Peace proceedings imminent and based on

information suggesting a possible escape from La Ceja, the government moved 57 of the secluded paramilitary chiefs to a maximum-security prison in Itagui.

17 National Police, Eighth Control and Monitoring Report on Those Demobilized from the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, February 1, 2007 (in Spanish).

18 The association of former members of self-defense paramilitary groups with the so-called BACRIM is also part of the most recent OAS reports, which states: "As a result of the verification work, the Mission has identified 22 new structures composed of approximately 3,000 members, of which a part were members of the self-defense paramilitary groups. Eight of these structures show indications of a possible rearmament, constituting situations of alert. The Mission has verified in full 14 rearming cases. See Eighth Quarterly Report of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council on the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia, MAPP. February 14, 2007.

19 "Más detalles sobre Urrá" [More details on Urra]. *El Meridiano de Córdoba*, January 29, 2007.

20 National Police. Seventh Control and Monitoring Report on Those Demobilized from the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, January 6, 2007. To date three former paramilitary commanders have been released due to the absence of legal proceedings against them.

21 "Extienden ayuda humanitaria para algunos desmovilizados de las AUC" [Extension of humanitarian assistance for some AUC demobilized combatants], *SNE* [government press agency], July 12, 2006.

22 Communiqué from the Presidential Palace, *SNE*, December 5, 2006.

23 Speech by Juan B. Pérez Rubiano, member of the Exploratory Commission to the first public hearing on the process with the self-defense paramilitary groups. Congress of the Republic, January 19, 2004. This figure, however, contrasts with others reported by official sources before the collective demobilizations occurred. According to government information, there were 8,150 members of AUC blocs in the year 2000. See Ministry of Defense, *The Illegal Self-Defense Forces in Colombia*, December 2000. Later, the High Peace Commissioner corrected this figure, noting that "after working for several months," the government had established that these groups had 13,000 members, according to an interview with the High Peace Commissioner, Office of the High Peace Commissioner, July 16, 2003. Nevertheless, according to the annual estimates of the Ministry of Defense, the self-defense paramilitary groups had 10,916 combatants as of 2004. See Ministry of National Defense. *Achievements of the Consolidation of the Defense and Democratic Security Policy*. January 2007.

24 The explanation provided by the top paramilitary commanders for this delay was the absence of guarantees for the participants' legal security in the process. Such guarantees were in doubt owing to the developments of the draft legislation "Alternative Imprisonment" introduced by the government in August 2003. This bill, which by any light treated the paramilitary commanders very leniently, garnered numerous criticisms both inside and outside the country, which forced the postponement of its passage through Congress. In addition to changing the timeline established in the Santa Fe de Ralito Accord, the interruption of the collective demobilizations threatened to affect similar processes with other self-defense paramilitary groups, such as the Central Bolívar Bloc, which were still at an exploratory stage. Only in October 2004 did the commanders of the self-defense groups announce that they were continuing with the demobilizations. In November of that same year, collective demobilizations were resumed but in July 2005 they were interrupted again, seriously upsetting the government, which considered that its promise to demobilize

the self-defense paramilitary groups before December 2005 was endangered. This second interruption coincided with the passage of the Justice and Peace Law on July 25, 2005 and marked the beginning of a new stage of stagnation in the process, which culminated in January 2006 when once again the demobilizations were resumed.

25 "Gobierno no tiene pista de 4.731 reinsertados, denuncia consejero para la reintegración, Frank Pearl" [Government Lost Track of 4,731 Reinserted Combatants, Reports Reintegration Adviser Frank Pearl] *El Tiempo*, February 13, 2007.

26 "Inician brigadas de atención e identificación de desmovilizados" [Demobilized Combatants' Assistance and Identification Brigades Begin], *SNE*, February 16, 2006.

27 Office of the High Commissioner for Peace. Report on the Status of Reintegration on November 17, 2006 (in Spanish).

28 *Ibid.*

29 The Reintegration Adviser says, "Here we are trying to create sustainable options for people who are making radical changes in their lives and have to transform themselves inside first. Here there will be no getting something for nothing, no paternalistic handouts. We are not going to continue making payments of two million pesos per demobilized combatant, in the case of those who demobilized collectively, and 8 million in the case of the ones who demobilized individually, to give them the money and they set up their business, because that has been a failure." See "No insistiremos en algo que ha fracasado: Pearl" [We will not keep trying to make something work that has failed: Pearl], *El Colombiano*, February 26, 2007. For more information on the problems with productive projects, see for example, "En Urabá piden más apoyo a reinsertión" [They are asking for more support for reinsertion in Uraba], *El Colombiano*, November 3, 2006; "Buscan proyectos productivos para reinsertados" [Looking for productive projects for reinserted combatants], *Hoy Diario del Magdalena*, November 17, 2006; "En Urabá, más vigilancia a zonas de proyectos productivos de ex AUC" [More vigilance in zones of former AUC members' productive projects in Uraba], *El Colombiano*, January 17, 2007.

30 Increased criminality following the demobilization of illegal armed groups and participation of ex-combatants in criminal activities has been reported in, for example, Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and South Africa. See, among others, Mark Knith and Alpaslan Ozerdem, "Guns, camps and cash: Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace" *Journal of Peace Research* 41,4 (2004): 499-516.

31 UNICEF-Defensoría del Pueblo. Study of the characteristics of the boys, girls, and adolescents withdrawn from the illegal armed groups: social and productive insertion with a human rights-based focus, *Defensoría del Pueblo-UNICEF*, 2006: p. 71.

32 "Los niños de Tame (Arauca) huyen de una orden de reclutamiento de las FARC" [The children of Tame (Arauca) flee a FARC recruitment order], *El Tiempo*, August 11, 2006.

33 Conclusions of the working groups held at the forum "Reconstruction, Reinsertion and Region" organized by the Fundación Ideas para la Paz and Revista Semana Medellín, November 15 and 16, 2005.

34 Ministry of National Defense, The demobilizations are continuing in the city of Cali and in the port of Buenaventura, Twenty-seven FARC militiamen demobilize in Buenaventura, February 2, 2007.

35 Ana María Ibáñez, La estabilización económica de la población desplazado [Economic Stabilization of the Internally Displaced Population] *FIP Working Papers Series No. 3*, Fundación Ideas para la Paz, November 2006, p. 5-6.

36 Jeffrey Isima, *op. cit.*, p. 6.