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Break in the Bilateral Ceasefire between the FARC and the GOC

A confrontation in the department of Meta between the FARC and the GOC broke the bilateral ceasefire agreed upon by the parties in Havana on **July 23**. On Friday July 8, FARC members clashed with a special forces unit of the Colombian Army, which operates under a mandate of territorial monitoring, control, and protection of civilian populations. The reportedly accidental confrontation occurred within the context of an overarching mission coordinated by the United Nations, the Colombian Army, and the FARC, in which certain FARC members were set to leave their camps to either prepare the transitional zones where they will lay down arms, or to train with the UN on issues of monitoring and verification. In this instance, the FARC reportedly had inadvertently had traveled outside of the agreed upon zones where security was guaranteed, due to using incorrect coordinates.¹ No Colombian Army soldiers or civilians were harmed in the encounter, and uncertainty remains as to whether or not any FARC members were injured.²

Two FARC Fronts Reject Impending Peace Accord

The First and Seventh Fronts of the FARC announced late last week that they do not plan to lay down their arms in the event of a peace accord.³ The two fronts reportedly have combined operations in the eastern departments of Vaupes, Guaviare, and Meta, and comprise roughly 800 guerrillas (11% of the estimated 7,000 remaining FARC members), and both groups have links to lucrative illegal mining and drug trafficking operations.⁴ Conflicting accounts remain as to whether these announcements were the acts of a few financially-motivated leaders, or if they represent the intentions of entire blocs.⁵ In response, the FARC leadership asserted that economic interests are motivating the dissident factions, and stated that those who did not conform to the peace accord would be “putting themselves outside of the FARC-EP and [would not be able to] use its name, arms or properties for any purpose.”⁶ President Santos stated that any FARC who did not adhere to the peace agreement would be killed or imprisoned through ongoing war operations.⁷

Coca cultivation soars in 2015, Crop Substitution Pilot Project Begins

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released its annual report on illicit crop cultivation last week, which indicates that coca and cocaine production in Colombia surged in 2015, particularly in national parks and protected indigenous and afro-Colombian lands. The number of families growing coca grew by 11%, and cocaine production increased by 46%, with total production exceeding that of Bolivia and Peru combined.⁸ Potential contributing factors include a rush to plant the illegal crop ahead of likely government crop substitution assistance resulting from a peace agreement and possible financial motives of remaining FARC members anticipating demobilization and a future loss of revenues. Two days after the UNODC report was released, a new pilot initiative for illicit crop substitution was launched with 400 families in Antioquia. The initiative is the direct result of agreements made at the negotiating table in Havana, and occurs in tandem with the implementation of land and rural development accords reached between the GOC and the FARC on May 26, 2013.⁹