

 PEACE MAIL

August 2-8, 2016

GOC and FARC-EP release protocols for disarmament and transitional zones

On Friday, August 5th, the Government of Colombia (GOC) and the FARC guerrilla group released their 83rd Joint Communique from Havana.¹ The announcement accompanied the release of five sets of operational details for guaranteeing the continuation of the bilateral ceasefire, and managing the zones in which the FARC will gather to lay down their arms over a six-month period once all parties sign the final accord. The protocols include provisions for the following five aspects of these processes: (1) monitoring and verification, (2) governing the ceasefire that is already in place, (3) requirements and functions of the transitional zones, (4) laying down of arms, and (5) general logistics. Each component includes assurances for normal functioning of non-armed social, political, and economic activity in the areas in which these zones will be located as well as requirements for implementing the guidelines with a gendered approach. The United Nations have, as of this week, begun operational site visits to the zones in which these activities will occur.^{2,3,4,5,6}

ELN rejects “essence” of peace negotiations between the FARC and the GOC

Despite a March 30th agreement to begin peace talks between the GOC and the ELN, the second largest guerrilla group in Colombia, despite posturing by both sides, no advances have occurred since that date. Over the weekend, the ELN Central Command announced that they do not agree with the “essence” of the current peace accords between the FARC and the GOC.⁷ ELN leadership argues that the FARC, in its interest to transform into a political party, has been willing to look past the culpability of the GOC for its “dirty war and terrorism.” Experts on the theme express concern that, without the dissolution of the ELN, many FARC guerrillas who do not wish to participate in the disarmament process will simply move into the other guerrilla group once the FARC and the GOC sign a final peace agreement.⁸

Most recent poll suggests that Colombian public will reject peace deal with the FARC

Recent poll results released on August 6th report that some 50% of Colombians would vote “no” on the plebiscite, while only 39% would vote “yes.”⁹ If the voting population approves the peace deal through the plebiscite, Santos can move forward with implementing the accords. However, if the “no” vote wins, Santos will not be permitted to ratify the deal, though Congress will still be free to do so. Some potential explanations for the recent dramatic decline in support include Santos’ low approval ratings, which have in turn affected negatively perceptions of the peace accords. Issues with the border crisis with Venezuela, poor progress with the ELN, and the recent agrarian workers’ strike have all worked against Santos in recent months. Analyses also suggest that the cynicism of the moment may link to the ex-President, now Senator Alvaro Uribe’s aggressive campaign for a “no” vote on the plebiscite. For now, the plebiscite will likely occur six weeks after the final signing of the peace accords in Havana.¹⁰