

Box 3.2.1 Colombia

In addition to its presence in Haiti, the Organization of American States (OAS) has maintained a Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (known by its Spanish acronym, MAPP) since February 2004. The MAPP was mandated by the OAS Permanent Council to assist the Colombian government's efforts to demobilize and disarm the country's main right-wing paramilitary force, the United Self-Defense Forces of Columbia (AUC). MAPP has been subjected to frequent criticism by local and international NGOs, and the OAS Secretary-General admitted in October 2005 that "essentially because of scarce resources, the Organization is not fulfilling all the commitments it accepted." Nonetheless, the mission has verified the disarmament

of over 8,000 paramilitaries, more than half its preliminary target.

MAPP was set up after the AUC declared a cease-fire in December 2003. Although it reportedly breached this almost immediately, the government agreed that the AUC leadership should maintain a force of 400 men in a zone of location in southwest Colombia. The MAPP has offices in the zone and four other regional centers in addition to its Bogotá headquarters. But with an overall complement of 44 civilian personnel, most of its offices are typically staffed by only two to four personnel. Although their mandate includes not only verifying disarmament but working with ex-paramilitaries and affected communities, they have focused almost entirely on the former.

From mid-2004 onward, this narrow interpretation of the mandate has been criticized by Colombian civil society, and the mission's head has warned that many demobilized paramilitaries are slipping into crime. AUC cease-fire violations have continued. While the OAS Secretary-General has argued that the operation's staff should be more than doubled to 100, it will continue to face broad challenges deriving from political instability and Colombia's drug trade, in which the AUC has been a prominent player for over two decades.