Box 3.4.2 Colombia

While the Organization of American States (OAS) has maintained its mission in Haiti through 2006, it has also expanded the small Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (known by its Spanish acronym, the MAPP). MAPP was mandated in 2004 to help verify the demobilization of the right-wing United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). This process gathered pace in the first half of 2006, and by September a total of 30,915 paramilitaries had been demobilized. Nonetheless, MAPP has warned that the AUC seems to have concealed some arms. It has also noted the emerging threat of "a new generation of paramilitaries," an amorphous collection of criminal gangs and militias. In September 2006 the Secretary-General of the OAS recommended that the mission play a greater role in reintegration efforts to counter this new threat. The mission's continuation was supported by the US State Department, which helps fund MAPP alongside a consortium of governments led by the Netherlands.

This funding has allowed for an expansion of the mission from 44 civilian personnel in late 2005 to 85 by the third quarter of 2006, comprising 34 full-time international staff, 17 local staff, and 34 consultants. This expansion followed a harsh appraisal by the OAS in late 2005 (spurred by mounting criticism from Colombian nongovernmental organizations) that MAPP had previously lacked the resources to go beyond basic demobilization verification. Having received new funding and staff, the mission has increased its assistance to community efforts to help former combatants. In an unusual initiative, the authorities in Medellín, a significant center of violence and drug trafficking, have provided funding for an expansion of MAPP's office there to engage in such projects.

Uncertainty remains over how these initiatives will influence the paramilitaries' evolution. The Colombian government has also moved into negotiations with the left-wing Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC); while MAPP has no direct involvement, it is possible that any demobilization might require some form of verification similar to that for the AUC.