

4.2 Mission Notes

Central America and the Caribbean

Since its founding in 1948, the Organization of American States (OAS) has served as the primary political forum in the Americas region that works to address issues of peace and justice amongst its 35 member states. In serving this role, the OAS has deployed a variety of missions during its history, below are descriptions of four missions currently in the field.

COLOMBIA

Since January 2004 the Organization of American States (OAS) Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP) has been deployed to support the ongoing dialogue between the Government of Colombia and opposition forces, verify and monitor the demobilization of the right wing rebel group, United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (UAC), as well as to provide support to communities who were victims of violence.

Originally a mission of only 44 civilian experts, MAPP's size was roughly doubled in 2006 following a critical performance assessment conducted by the OAS and growing criticism from Colombian NGOs that the mission lacked the resources to go beyond basic demobilization verification. The enhanced mission strength yielded a heightened MAPP presence and activity in the field. Since its establishment, MAPP has assisted in the disarming of over 30,000 UAC paramilitaries and the rebel group no longer appears as an actor on the political stage.

Despite this progress, in the first half of 2010 OAS Secretary-General José Miguel Insulza warned that just as the mission had contributed to the evolution of stability in Colombia, challenges related to the reintegration of the demobilized UAC fighters and the emergence of illicit sub-state structures threatened the country's achievements. Indeed, during the year, MAPP observed the increasing phenomenon of paramilitary "recycling," where illegal armed groups comprised of both the dismantled forces and new adolescent recruits have emerged seeking to control illegal economic activities. These units are connected to drug trafficking activities and over the course of the last three years have established presences throughout Colombia's territory. The emergence of the groups has had a deleterious effect on the peace process where as a result of extortion, murders – which rose by alarming levels in urban centers throughout the year – and acts of intimidation, the majority of Colombia's population sees little change in their personal security.

Recognizing the necessity for a comprehensive national strategy aimed at stemming recruitment to illegal armed groups, providing reintegration opportunities and reinforcing the authority of the state, MAPP worked closely with Colombia's Department for Reintegration (ACR) in its ongoing development of a National Reintegration Policy. From MAPP's perspective, Colombia's reintegration model must rest on the commitment of society as a whole to coexist peacefully. Here, the participation of Colombia's private sector

OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS)

Authorization and Start Date	6 February 2004 (CP/RES. 859)
Head of Mission	Marcelo Alvarez (Argentina)
Staff Strength as of 2009	International Civilian: 30 Local Civilian: 59

OAS Special Mission for Strengthening Democracy in Haiti

Authorization Date	16 January 2002 (CP/RES. 806 (1303/02))
Start Date	June 2004
Head of Mission	Denneth Modeste (Grenada)

OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone between Belize and Guatemala (OAS/AZ)

Authorization and Start Date	7 February 2003 (Agreement on the Promotion of Confidence-Building Measures)
Head of Mission	Miguel Angel (Trinidad)

OAS Mission of Good Offices between Colombia and Ecuador (MIB/OEA)

Authorization and Start Date	17 March 2008 (RC.25/doc.15/08 and RC.25/RES.1/08 rev. 1)
Head of Mission	Victor Rico (Bolivia)

businesses is crucial to providing alternatives for former combatants and vulnerable adolescents, yet MAPP observed a record of disorganized private sector engagement that could prove to be more confusing than helpful if not addressed.

Similarly, MAPP continued to support Colombia's implementation of the Justice and Peace Law throughout the year. The law, passed in 2005, seeks to bring to justice combatants alleged of crimes during Colombia's conflict. While the law has elicited the participation of more than 280,000 victims of paramilitary violence, the lack of final judgments in these cases was a source of

concern for the mission. Further, despite the apparent commitment to justice, the requisite structures necessary for enforcing judicial decisions remain underdeveloped, a reality that holds implications for the development of trust amongst the population - a crucial component for the long-term consolidation of peace. Considering the progress that Colombia has registered with the support of MAPP and the multitude of outstanding issues that remain to be addressed to entrench the peace, both the mission and the Colombian government will need to redouble their efforts in the coming years.

HAITI

The OAS has also maintained an operation in Haiti. The OAS Special Mission for Strengthening Democracy in Haiti was deployed in 2004 to assist the country through the tense political period that followed the end of the country's conflict earlier that year.

Beyond its political facilitation role, the OAS mission was also mandated by the OAS General Assembly to assist in the preparation for Haiti's presidential elections in 2006, in cooperation with UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). A memorandum between the two organizations assigned principal responsibility for voter registration to the OAS, while MINUSTAH was tasked with supervising all aspects of the electoral process, and with providing security. The OAS's National Haiti Office, which had been operating in the country since 1956, significantly supplemented the Special Mission's work in support of the elections.

Haiti's 2006 elections were considered relatively successful and were followed by growing security in its urban areas. Nevertheless, the political situation has remained volatile, with the need for the OAS's continued political facilitation clear. This reality was best demonstrated when a protracted period of government inefficiency in Haiti was capped with the ouster of Prime Minister Pierre Louis in October 2009. While the prime minister was quickly replaced, Haiti remains prone to political conflict as it continues its post-conflict recovery.

During 2007 and with an eye toward streamlining its activities in the country, the OAS

General Assembly consolidated the organization's presence under the single representation of the OAS Haiti Office. In its current form, the OAS works on a range of projects supporting democratic governance, human rights, socio-economic development and the strengthening of Haiti's political institutions.

The January 2010 earthquake in Haiti had dramatic impact on the OAS's mission in the country, but also served as an impetus for the organization to maintain its presence and heighten its efforts to confront what will continue to present political challenges necessary of facilitation. In support of Haiti's legislative and presidential elections – delayed after the earthquake and rescheduled for 28 November 2010 – the OAS along side the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) will deploy a Joint Electoral Observation Mission. The 150 observers in the mission will oversee various aspects of the electoral process, including voter registration, providing technical assistance to the country's Provisional Electoral Council technical and logistical support to vote tabulation centers.

THE BELIZE AND GUATEMALA ADJACENCY ZONE

During 2000, Belize and Guatemala resumed negotiations on their centuries old territorial dispute under the auspices of the OAS. By 2003 the talks yielded an agreement to continue negotiations until status of the disputed area was reached, creating an Adjacency Zone (AZ) in the disputed territorial area. The agreement also established the Office of the OAS General Secretariat in the Adjacency Zone (OAS/AZ) for the dual tasks of overseeing and assisting in confidence-building measures between Belize and Guatemala and monitoring the zone for verification of violations. Beyond those verifications requested in writing by the governments, the OAS/AZ performs unrequested verifications that are identified by the Incident Early Warning System designed by the mission to defuse potentially volatile situations. The OAS/AZ conducts over 100 verifications each year.

Beyond the primary tasks described above, the OAS/AZ supports the normalization of relations between the armed forces of Guatemala and Belize. Here, the mission's activity with the militaries has served to coordinate and standardize geographic names used in the AZ and established their agreed locations on maps. The OAS/AZ also supported the resettlement of communities located in the AZ to their respective national borders. This activity involves not only the relocation of the communities, but also the building of new homes, creation of basic services and replanting of crops to sustain them.

During 2008, and at the suggestion of the OAS Secretary General, the parties agreed to refer their territorial dispute to the International Court of Justice. Subsequent to this agreement, both countries are preparing for simultaneous referendums in each country on the decision to ask the International Court of Justice to settle the dispute. Meanwhile, Guatemala and Belize continue to negotiate in good faith, with representatives of both countries agreeing under the auspices of the OAS in March 2010 to create a High Level Working Group to facilitate direct and continuous communications between both countries on the situation in the Adjacency Zone and to identify areas of shared concern.

COLOMBIA AND ECUADOR

Colombia's March 2008 military incursion into Ecuador's territory sparked a diplomatic crisis between the two nations, with Ecuador cutting its diplomatic ties with Colombia. In response to the heightened tensions that followed the crisis, the OAS authorized the Colombia – Ecuador Good Offices Mission (MIB/OEA) at the XXV Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Relations. The mission focuses on promoting the re-establishment of trust among the two governments through confidence building measures, verifying compliance with the commitments made by both countries in the aftermath of the crisis and works to prevent and verification of incidents on the border.

The mission is composed of a team of civilian experts on political, security, defense and trans-border cooperation. MIB/OEA receives additional supported from the OAS mission in Bogota. Since its establishment, MIB/OEA

has convened a series of meetings between high-ranking civilian and military representatives from both Ecuador and Colombia in an effort to rebuild relations between the two countries and remains deployed.

NOTES

- 1 See Human Rights Watch report *Paramilitaries' Heirs*, <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/88058/section/4>.