

Organization of American States

As the primary organization involved in promoting peace and security in Latin America, the Organization of American States (OAS) has two political missions active in the region in support of peace processes.¹

The OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OEA) verifies the disbanding of paramilitary groups and reintegration of ex-combatants; monitors public order where these groups operated; and facilitates government implementation of land restitution, transitional justice, and aid distribution. The mission has thirteen regional offices and nearly a hundred staff members deployed throughout the country.

MAPP/OEA supports and monitors the implementation of Colombia's 2005 Justice and Peace Law by providing advice and assistance to victims. However, the law has resulted in only eleven convictions in seven years,² and a controversial law adopted in June 2012 now limits the scope of prosecutions and softens sentences for some ex-combatants.

Colombia's Victims' Law took effect in January 2012, providing land restitution to displaced people. MAPP/OEA disseminates information about the law

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

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| • Authorization and Start Date | 6 February 2004 (CP/RES.859 [1397/04]) |
| • Head of Mission | Marcelo Alvarez (Argentina) |
| • Strength as of 30 September 2012 | International Civilian Staff: 32
National Civilian Staff: 64 |

to victims' rights groups and works with human rights organizations to protect those returning to their land. However, the OAS has reported a serious lack of security in some parts of the country where restitution is taking place.

The mission recently assisted 120 victims through a program of rights education, psychological assistance, vocational training, medical care, and food security. It also supported a historical memory project, worked with organizations representing the African-descendant population, and trained community leaders in alternative conflict resolution.

The OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone (OAS/AZ) verifies, reports, and provides early warnings on incidents that occur in the adjacency zone estab-

lished by Belize and Guatemala in their long-disputed border region. It also monitors the implementation of confidence-building measures, develops activities to improve relations among adjacency zone inhabitants, and promotes development. OAS/AZ conducts about a hundred verifications of incidents per year, but suffers from funding shortages as it struggles to attract new donors.

The office holds meetings with the police forces of Belize and Guatemala, provides global-positioning devices to the armies of both countries to help them avoid accidental territorial incidents, and maps information gathered in the field. Operational coordination meetings with representatives from both armies are held every three months.

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OAS/AZ provides services and subsidies for families, schools, and institutions directly affected by the situation. It provides training in rural tourism and is identifying opportunities to mitigate the effects of illegal logging and resource extraction in Belize. The Culture of Peace program, which brought hundreds of children from both sides together for cultural activities, is currently suspended due to a lack of funding.

In 2008 the two countries agreed to have the territorial dispute settled by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), pending approval by their respective electorates. A major step was taken in April 2012 as both countries agreed to hold simultaneous referendums on 6 October 2013. The OAS asserts that OAS/AZ must remain at least until proceedings begin at the ICJ, but it is unclear whether

both countries will vote in favor of ICJ arbitration.

On 18 July 2012 a Guatemalan was killed in a disputed incident involving Belizean troops near the adjacency zone. OAS/AZ dispatched a verification team

to gather information. Belize stated that the OAS could not arbitrate the matter, but invited OAS and Guatemalan officials to observe proceedings. The OAS hosted a meeting between the two sides on 31 July to discuss the matter.

OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone (OAS/AZ)

- Authorization Date 1 December 2000 [CP/RES.780 (1257/00)]
- Start Date 2003
- Heads of Mission Special Representative of the OAS Secretary-General for Belize-Guatemala: Ambassador Raúl Lago (Uruguay)
Interim Director of OAS/AZ: Sergio Benítez
- Strength as of 30 September 2012 International Civilian Staff: 4
National Civilian Staff: 3

Notes: 1. A third OAS mission, the Good Offices Mission in Ecuador and Colombia (MIB/OEA), is no longer active as of mid-2011.

2. International Center on Transitional Justice, "Justice and Peace Process Should Lead to the Most Responsible," 9 May 2012, <http://ictj.org/news/justice-and-peace-process-should-lead-most-responsible>.