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Fluid loyalties, fluctuating
criminal governance

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CRIMINAL GOVERNANCE IN CITIES DURING COVID-19

This case study is part of a research project conducted by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), with support of Germany’s GIZ, that examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic challenges accompanying it on criminal governance in cities. The project aims to study how gangs and other non-state armed groups operating in illicit economies have altered their activities in light of the new circumstances in areas of criminal governance, and how governments and civil society have responded.

We define criminal governance as instances in which armed criminal groups set and enforce rules, provide security and other basic services – such as water, electricity or internet access – in an urban area, which may be a part or the whole of an informal settlement or a neighbourhood.

The project uses a comparative methodology, drawing from semi-structured interviews feeding into five separate case studies. The data is then synthesized in a final report that analyzes and summarizes the main trends. A fuller description of the methodology can be found in the final report.

The other case studies in this project are Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), San Salvador (El Salvador), Nairobi (Kenya) and Cape Town (South Africa). You can access the five case studies and the final summary report at criminal-governance.globalinitiative.net.

SUMMARY

Tumaco is a municipality in south-west Colombia, close to the border with Ecuador. The city, on Colombia's Pacific coast, has become a vital hub for non-state armed groups, including transnational drug trafficking networks and former guerrillas, owing to its port and location. Several armed groups, including ex-FARC dissidents,¹ have established a permanent presence in several low-income neighbourhoods, with significant consequences for the inhabitants and local governance. This case study examines criminal governance during the pandemic of three groups based in Tumaco: the Alfonso Cano Western Bloc (BOAC), the United Guerrillas of the Pacific (GUP) and the Contadores (Accountants).

The BOAC actively adopted measures to respond to the pandemic, imposing curfews, restricting people's movements and banning outsiders from entering areas under its control. Despite claims that it had yielded its role in governance issues to local community boards, the group continued to wield influence over the local population and provide services such as dispute resolution.

By contrast, the GUP did not impose any pandemic-related restrictions, and some members expressed views that the virus was not real, directly contradicting the Colombian government's stance. This resonated with many in Tumaco, who also believed the pandemic was not a serious threat. This lack of action may, however, also have been tied to leadership and discipline issues. The release of two prominent commanders from prison destabilized the group's hierarchy, impacting governance patterns and gang organization. Members started to charge the community high prices for services such as dispute resolution, which the population could not afford, and were reported as being unpredictably violent. These two commanders then defected to the BOAC and the Contadores, along with their fighters. The Contadores then 'inherited' the GUP areas.

Criminal governance also impacted people's adherence to COVID-related restrictions. In the few areas where restrictions were imposed by crime groups, these rules were more widely respected than those imposed by the local or national governments, mainly due to the implied and sometimes explicit threats accompanying armed groups' regulation and the authorities' inability to enforce restrictions.





AN URBAN CROSSROADS OF CRIME

The city of Tumaco is home to about 86 000 people, the vast majority of whom are Afro-Colombian.² Most people earn their livelihoods through the informal economy, such as motorcycle taxis or odd jobs. Outside the licit economy, the drug trade in Tumaco and the surrounding rural areas is a substantial industry, fuelled by the city's proximity to coca production – in 2020, there were approximately 8 800 hectares of coca in the surrounding countryside.³ Trafficking routes pass through the city, where cocaine is also stored before being distributed into the international market. It is these routes that the armed groups in Tumaco look to control, helping drive homicides, disappearances, shoot-outs and displacement.

The armed actors exploiting this important urban hub for the cocaine trade include dissident factions of FARC, a leftist guerrilla group that officially demobilized following a peace agreement signed with the Colombian government in November 2016.⁴ These factions are deeply involved in criminal activities, with little remaining connection to FARC ideology. During the study period, between March 2020 and March 2021, three armed groups were present in Tumaco: the Alfonso Cano Western Bloc (BOAC), the United Guerrillas of the Pacific (GUP) and the Contadores (the Accountants). The first two are considered FARC dissident groups, whereas the Contadores are a drug trafficking group founded by an influential trafficker in the region. This trafficker was captured in February 2020 but allegedly still controls the group from prison.⁵

▲ Coca fields seen from a police helicopter during an anti-narcotics operation in Tumaco.
© *Nicolo Filippo Rosso/Bloomberg via Getty Images*



FIGURE 1 The city of Tumaco is a key hub in the regional cocaine trafficking trade.

The hierarchies within these groups are somewhat flexible. Often, different criminal bosses control specific neighbourhoods, using groups of young people to assert authority on the ground. This control facilitates drug trafficking through the city, while criminal bosses also provide some governance services to the community such as conflict resolution, maintaining order and protection from outside threats; on a few occasions, they have also distributed goods, such as groceries, to locals. These bosses can switch groups and loyalties with ease, while maintaining control over the same territory and armed personnel, effectively handing these resources to a different faction.⁶ This occurred during the study period with two GUP bosses, known as Rocky and El Mocho, explored in more detail below.

Homicides are a crude but nevertheless useful measure of inter-gang rivalry in the city. During 2020, homicides slightly increased in the city of Tumaco, from 44 in 2019 to 51. Yet these numbers are much lower than in 2017 and 2018 – a period of heightened homicides, forced disappearances and shoot-outs (see Figure 2). In December 2018, armed groups in the city reached a truce,⁷ which was largely successful in stemming the violence, although homicides did not completely cease, with violations

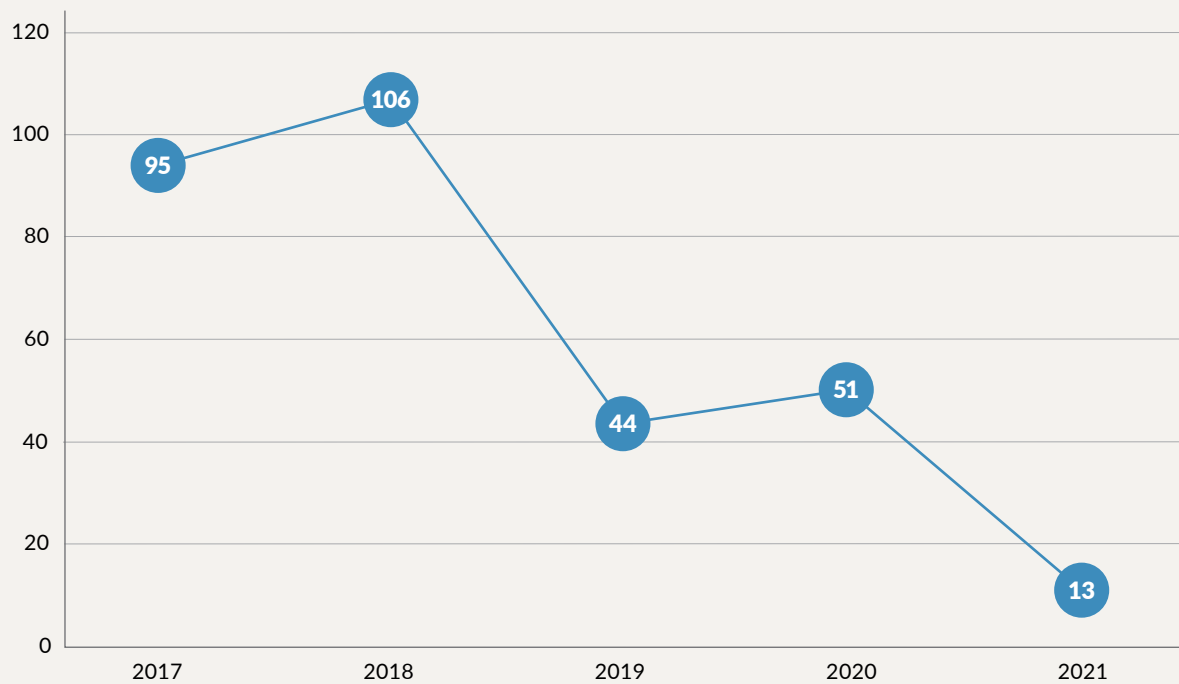


FIGURE 2 Homicides in urban Tumaco, 2017 to February 2021.

SOURCE: El Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias, Observatorio de Violencia, <https://www.medicinalegal.gov.co/cifras-de-lesiones-de-causa-externa>

occurring and armed groups resolving internal issues with killings.⁸ The truce was respected until September 2020, when a brother of the third-in-command of the BOAC was killed by a hitman who worked for El Mocho, though the hitman carried out the killing without authorization from his boss.⁹ Since then, there have been alternating periods of violence and uneasy peace in the city.¹⁰



▲
A view of Tumaco during
lockdown. © Ministerio del
Interior Colombia

CRIMINAL GOVERNANCE DURING COVID-19

Two trends characterized criminal governance during the COVID-19 pandemic in Tumaco: the imposition, in a few places, of anti-contagion measures that mirrored the state response, and a decline in the provision of criminal governance services in others.

As the pandemic began in Tumaco, fear was high amid concerns about how the city would be able to handle the virus. In some areas, armed groups exploited this climate of fear to exert authority, implementing measures to encourage social distancing and imposing restrictions on movement within and outside neighbourhoods under their control. These measures included curfews, restrictions on movement, quarantines and control over travel between the countryside and city, under threat of death, fines or forced quarantine.

Government ‘competition’

In part, these measures echoed those imposed by the national and municipal governments. In Tumaco, the mayor’s office and police imposed restrictions on the movement of people, such as banning parties and restricting entrance to supermarkets to certain days according to the last number of each citizen’s personal identification document. The mayor’s office also distributed bags of food. According to the local police, the presence of the armed groups in the *barrios* did not present any problems in distributing food to families because of the benefit it represented for the community.¹¹ These benefits apparently extended to families of armed group members, at least in La Paz. (When PR photos were taken by the mayor’s office, men belonging to armed groups

would avoid appearing, leading many photos to feature only mothers and children.¹²) Some members of civil society also helped distribute food in different communities, though it is unclear how widespread this actually was, given their limited access to resources. Some organizations were only able to do so in specific areas – a handful of *barrios*, at most – and for a short period of time.¹³ Members of the Orlando Fals Borda Collective, a civil society organization, distributed packages of food in both the city and countryside in Tumaco.¹⁴

The police focused mainly on enforcing the restrictions imposed by the government regarding COVID-19, and also accompanied the mayor's office in distributing food parcels.¹⁵ According to the local police commander, over 7 000 fines were handed out to people for breaking COVID-19 regulations, mainly in the first few months of the pandemic.¹⁶ Nonetheless, due to people's lack of money, the vast majority of the fines were never paid.¹⁷

There were other challenges in enforcing COVID-19 restrictions. The gathering of very large numbers of people for funerals is a common feature of Tumaco's culture, given the large family sizes and strong community bonds in Afro-Colombian communities.¹⁸ This created a difficult situation for the police. Telling Tumaqueños that they cannot hold a funeral for a loved one 'would lead to a riot', according to the local police commander, which led to many funerals going ahead as if there were no pandemic.¹⁹ Parties were another challenge, as some people continued to hold them because they did not believe in the virus.²⁰ The police were not particularly effective in controlling these situations – as one officer admitted in an interview – because they were simply not capable of controlling hundreds of people.²¹ This may help explain the fact that, despite numerous blatant violations of restrictions during the pandemic, only 14 people were detained.

On the other hand, locals living in neighbourhoods under the influence of armed groups that imposed restrictions appear to have heeded the groups' rules more than those of the government, with armed groups' curfews or restrictions on movement consistently respected. This could simply be a reflection of the degree of control armed groups exert and the threatening physical presence they command in some neighbourhoods: they are able to easily identify those who break their rules, whereas the police rarely ever go into such parts of the city. But the response of armed groups to the pandemic was by no means uniform. In some *barrios*, armed groups took no measures at all, for themselves or for the people living in their neighbourhood. In the case of the latter, many of the pre-existing criminal governance services, such as dispute resolution, control over petty crime and maintaining a general 'order' continued throughout the pandemic, but to a lesser extent. Various explanations exist for this decline in the exertion of governance. Firstly, there was increased fear of armed groups due to a perception that members were often unpredictable and more prone to violence than in the recent past. There were also lower levels of conflict among locals during the quarantine because of imposed restrictions. Furthermore, armed groups were beginning to charge money for these criminal governance services.

Part of the reason for the decline in criminal governance may also have been economic, with the drug trade entering a crisis period during the pandemic. The money, usually brought into the area by human couriers, simply was not arriving because those

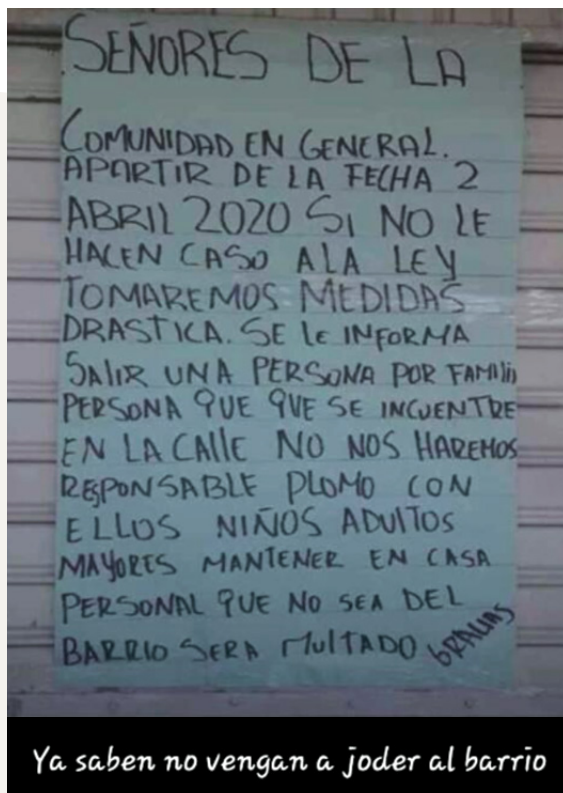
people were in quarantine or whole villages were isolated by the armed groups that operated there as well.²² Also, according to some sources, the armed forces, navy and police tried to take advantage of the pandemic to better control routes and eradicate more coca.²³ This led the GUP, in particular, to start charging money to provide governance services, which led people in neighbourhoods under its control to no longer use those services. In other parts of the city, GUP members turned to petty crime to make up for not being paid by their bosses.

BOAC-controlled neighbourhoods

Humberto Manzi

The BOAC gang imposed restrictions and measures regarding COVID-19 on the neighbourhoods under its control, though they were mainly punitive. In Humberto Manzi, a large neighbourhood on Tumaco's main island where the BOAC's urban leadership and most members live, the group put up a poster warning of 'drastic measures' if the community failed to follow rules imposed by the government (see below). The BOAC posted a similar warning in Panamá, another neighbourhood under its control.²⁴

According to one local leader from the *barrio*, once that poster went up in Humberto Manzi, 'no one left their homes'.²⁵ According to another, people refrained from holding parties during the worst of the pandemic due to restrictions imposed by the BOAC, though group members did violate that restriction.²⁶ The group also warned it would fine anyone from outside the neighbourhood found there, and ruled that only one member per family could leave to go grocery shopping.²⁷



A poster put up by the BOAC in the Humberto Manzi neighbourhood. It reads: 'People of the community in general. As of 2 April 2020, if you do not follow the law, we will take drastic measures. We warn you: only one person per family can go out; any person out in the street, we are not responsible [for what happens to them], bullets for them. Kids, adults, elders. Stay inside. Anyone here not from the neighbourhood will be fined. Thank you.' The message in white says: 'Now you know. Don't come f***ing around the neighbourhood.'

Before the pandemic, people living in Humberto Manzi could go to BOAC members for advice regarding family issues and to help resolve problems and disputes between neighbours.²⁸ Extortion within the *barrio* has not taken place for years, as the group usually extorted in commercial areas of the city.²⁹ The group also cracked down on local robberies, either making sure they did not take place or by punishing the culprits. The group also controlled who could enter the neighbourhood.³⁰

Yet the chain of governance provision in Humberto Manzi has recently become more diffuse and less clear. According to an urban commander in the *barrio*, the order from their highest commander is that the local community action board – a local-level, elected group of community leaders that acts as the intermediary between government and communities – takes care of governance issues that the armed group used to cover. The armed group, according to him, acts as the ‘third instance’, meaning that when the board cannot resolve the issue, the group will.³¹ This form of delegation is common when armed groups are in dispute with other armed actors and move fighters frequently, and thus find it difficult to directly manage territory.³²

Nonetheless, the BOAC appears to maintain some involvement, especially in dispute resolution. Local leaders from the neighbourhood point out that the BOAC is still involved in resolving fights and disputes between community members, who on occasion go to the group themselves for support. The group even became involved in resolving a fight between two neighbours only days before the interview with a local *barrio* leader, who also added that the members of the armed group ‘don’t respect the community action boards’.³³ The group also continues to impose fines as part of its punishment scheme.

Nuevo Milenio

In Nuevo Milenio, another neighbourhood under BOAC control, the restrictions imposed by the group were stricter than in Humberto Manzi. It did not allow some people to work – such as taxi drivers – because their job was considered high risk; members often walked the streets with a digital thermometer, taking people’s temperatures – if it was too high, that person would have to stay at home; if anyone actually got sick, the whole family would have to stay inside, and their neighbours would do grocery shopping for them. The group also held a meeting with the community in the *barrio* to discuss the measures.³⁴

According to various sources, there was geographic variation within Nuevo Milenio regarding the measures imposed by the BOAC. In the entrances to the neighbourhood, a community leader reported that the group imposed no measures.³⁵ It appears that it was deeper into the *barrio* where restrictions were toughest; it is in this part of Nuevo Milenio where an important BOAC commander lives. Control around all of these points was evident, but deeper into the neighbourhood it became much more direct.³⁶ On the edges of the neighbourhood, unarmed members simply observed who entered and left, while deeper into the neighbourhood, armed members not only noted who came and went, but also stopped people from entering.³⁷

Before the pandemic began, the armed group in control of Nuevo Milenio was called ‘People for Order’³⁸ and the group resolved differences between community members; maintained ‘order’ (in the sense that they minimized and stopped any fights or disturbances that might attract the nearby police); and ensured that there was no extortion happening in the *barrio*.³⁹ This was true even during the peak of violence in the city in 2018.⁴⁰

Armed groups in Tumaco have continued to administer aspects of daily life in the barrios under their control during the pandemic.

GUP-controlled neighbourhoods

The pandemic saw a crisis of leadership within the GUP-controlled neighbourhoods of La Paz, Viento Libre and Buenos Aires that affected both criminal governance and the group's response to COVID-19. The top commander of the group during the pandemic was a young man known as 'Borojó', who lived outside of the city and relied on his urban lieutenants to maintain control of his fighters there.⁴¹ But the picture grew more complicated when two former high-level urban commanders of the FARC – 'El Mocho' and 'Rocky' – were released from prison in April and August 2020, respectively. Despite the 2016 FARC demobilization agreement, these commanders had maintained their weapons and territories in these Tumaco neighbourhoods – this time under the GUP banner – before being captured.⁴²

Given local fighters' experience and loyalty to El Mocho and Rocky, these two commanders quickly became more important than Borojó after their release. Rocky returned to his position as a GUP commander, mainly in the neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, while El Mocho controlled the Viento Libre and La Paz areas. The two commanders began to make autonomous decisions instead of following the official chain of command.⁴³

This shift in leadership had significant practical implications for local communities under their influence. The leadership style of El Mocho in particular is considered loose: he does not exert much discipline over his fighters and imposes very few restrictions on them. This means that they can commit abuses against the local population, with punishment rarely handed down by El Mocho.⁴⁴

At the same time, given that the drug trade was at a low point economically, payments for low-level fighters were less regular and many simply did not have money, especially those in La Paz and Viento Libre.⁴⁵ This led these fighters to turn to different ways of making money, including petty crime such as theft – though apparently only outside the neighbourhoods under their control – without repercussions from their commander.⁴⁶

This instability within the GUP leadership had two consequences for criminal governance during the pandemic in these three *barrios*. The first is that the GUP did not impose any restrictions on inhabitants;⁴⁷ in fact, in La Paz, the group openly stated that COVID-19 was not real and there was nothing to worry about or to defend against,⁴⁸ reflecting a perception common in the city.⁴⁹ Another interviewee, though, explained this lack of governance regarding COVID-19 as a result of the group being 'disorganized', implying that denying the existence of the virus was simply an excuse not to have to follow any restrictions themselves.⁵⁰

General criminal governance activities by the GUP in these neighbourhoods also declined, without completely disappearing, for two reasons. In the face of economic difficulties, the group began to demand that people pay for their services, such as resolving disputes between community members, especially those involving money.⁵¹ But the group asked for sums of money that were simply beyond people's means to pay, especially as the city's unemployment rate had reached 90% during the pandemic, according to the Chamber of Commerce.⁵² Additionally, given the lack of internal order in the group, the risk of low-level fighters unexpectedly resorting to violence increased



In January 2021, the Colombian military arrested seven members of the Contadores armed group. *Photo: Colombian army*

community members' fear, leading them to no longer turn to the GUP to resolve their problems or to try to avoid having fights or disputes altogether.⁵³

Nonetheless, some 'traditional' governance services remained, such as dealing with 'unauthorized' common criminality, such as theft within the neighbourhoods under their control. One interviewee stated that after two computers had been stolen from his office in Viento Libre, he turned to the armed group to find the culprit. They did, and the computers were returned. He later went back to speak to the *barrio* commander to convince him to not kill the young thief but instead hand him a punishment of community service.⁵⁴

Double defection

During the pandemic, El Mocho stayed in rural Tumaco in an area under control of the Contadores armed group. In order to continue living there, he joined the Contadores.⁵⁵ Interviewees hypothesize that he might have received an ultimatum from the Contadores to defect to the group.⁵⁶

Either way, it was a move that spelled an end to the GUP presence in Tumaco. The Contadores took over GUP-controlled neighbourhoods and began to increase levels of discipline among the former GUP members.⁵⁷ Different sources have stated that the group has not looked necessarily to improve its relationship with the communities – at least, for now – but has focused exclusively on internal discipline.⁵⁸

Between October and November 2020, Rocky also switched groups, in this case from the GUP to the BOAC to avoid continuing conflict with the latter⁵⁹ after the BOAC reportedly threatened to kill him.⁶⁰ Following the trend of fighters' allegiance to their leader, he brought his people into the BOAC and created more mobility within the city by gaining access to BOAC-controlled neighbourhoods.⁶¹ This, though, did not appear to change dynamics of criminal governance in Buenos Aires, where Rocky's territorial control has been the strongest, or Nuevo Milenio, where he lives most of the time.⁶²



▲ COVID-19 testing in Tumaco. In the city, some pandemic-related restrictions were imposed on *barrio* communities by armed groups. Photo: Social media

CONCLUSION

Armed groups in Tumaco have continued to administer aspects of daily life in the *barrios* under their control during the pandemic. Measures designed to counter the pandemic varied greatly according to the different armed actors in the city: the BOAC imposed various restrictions on locals for the first few months, when fear of the virus was at its highest. In contrast, the GUP did not impose restrictions. This can be explained by the differences in the leadership style and strength of hierarchy between the two groups. The Contadores, who replaced the GUP in the city towards the end of 2020, imposed no restrictions. Besides their different style, the lack of restrictions by the Contadores has also been a response to local perceptions about the virus, with the vast majority of people in Tumaco believing that the pandemic was over by late 2020, even as Colombia was experiencing a second wave of infection.

The police and the mayor's office provided packages of food and imposed fines on those who broke restrictions, albeit fines that were overwhelmingly never paid. It appears that most people heeded the armed groups' restrictions more than the government's, likely due to fear and the greater capacity of illegal armed groups to punish people, compared to the authorities.

The pandemic appears to have had little effect on criminal governance dynamics imposed by the BOAC. Despite their claims to have handed governance over to local communities, it appears that this is simply not the case, at least certainly not for dispute resolution. The GUP, on the other hand, have lost much local support for their governance services in part because of their failure to control members' use of violence and the practice of charging money for their services. Locals, tired of violence and with little income in what is a severely depressed local economy, have resorted to their services less frequently, showing that criminal governance can both create support for armed groups but also undermine it, depending on the quality of such practices.

NOTES

- 1 The acronym stands for Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces).
- 2 Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, Censo Nacional de población y vivienda de 2018: San Andrés de Tumaco / Nariño, https://sitios.dane.gov.co/cnpv/app/views/informacion/perfiles/52835_infografia.pdf.
- 3 Observatorio de Drogas de Colombia, *Cultivos ilícitos – Departamento/Municipio*, <http://www.odc.gov.co/sidco/oferta/cultivos-ilicitos/departamento-municipio>.
- 4 When asked if his armed group had an ideological goal, one urban commander simply responded, 'No, it's all about the routes.' Interview with a BOAC urban commander, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 5 Kyle Johnson, *La captura de Contador atomiza el poder de Nariño*, La Silla Vacía, 29 February 2020, <https://lasillavacia.com/silla-llena/red-de-la-paz/la-captura-de-contador-atomiza-poder-de-narino-72097>.
- 6 This is clear from analyzing Tumaco but was also confirmed during the fieldwork in the city. Interview with a BOAC urban commander, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 7 Kyle Johnson, *¿Está funcionando la tregua en Tumaco?*, La Silla Vacía, 9 June 2019, <https://lasillavacia.com/silla-llena/red-pacifico/esta-funcionando-la-tregua-tumaco-71077>.
- 8 Interviews with community leaders from Nuevo Amanecer and Humberto Manzi neighbourhoods, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 9 Interview with a BOAC urban commander, Tumaco, March 2021; interview with a priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 10 Interviews with community leaders from Nuevo Amanecer and Humberto Manzi neighbourhoods, Tumaco, February 2021; interview with a priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 11 Telephone interview with Tumaco police commander, March 2021.
- 12 Interview with community leader from La Paz, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 13 Interview with a local human rights defender, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Telephone interview with Tumaco police commander, March 2021.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Lucía Mercedes de la Torre Urán, *Parentela y territorialidad: la familia negra en la apropiación y construcción del espacio*, in *Perspectivas y Avances de Investigación de la serie Lasallista Investigación y Ciencia*. Bogotá: Corporación Universitaria Lasallista, 2011, 143–160.
- 19 Telephone interview with Tumaco police commander, March 2021; Mauricio de la Rosapasto, *Baile, cantos y nada de tapabocas durante masivo sepelio en Tumaco*, *El Tiempo*, 6 May 2020, <https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/cali/coronavirus-baile-abrazos-y-nada-de-tapabocas-en-sepelio-en-tumaco-492446>.
- 20 Interview with community leader from La Paz, Tumaco, February 2021; interview with a priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 21 Telephone interview with Tumaco police commander, March 2021.
- 22 Interview with an expert on the drug trade, Tumaco, February 2021; interview with a local human rights defender, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Interview with social worker from Panamá, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 25 Interview with community leader for Humberto Manzi, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 26 Virtual interview with expert on security in Tumaco, March 2021.
- 27 Interview with community leader for Humberto Manzi, Tumaco, March 2021. The poster shown on page 6 was verified by the same community leader.
- 28 The author witnessed this in the neighbourhood on one occasion. Interview with community leader for Humberto Manzi, Tumaco, March 2021; interview with a BOAC urban commander, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 29 Interview with community leader from Humberto Manzi, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 30 The armed groups in Humberto Manzi post look-outs

- at the different entry points to the neighbourhoods and even within them, and stop and question anyone from outside who enters unaccompanied.
- 31 Interview with a BOAC urban commander, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 32 A dispute in Tumaco had flared up at the time of the interview. A BOAC commander in Tumaco stated that no one from the group wants to be in the city, and that many fighters and commanders are moving to the countryside. This is despite the fact that the BOAC has also been involved in regular fights with other armed groups in the countryside. This trend of members moving to the countryside could help explain why the group found it difficult to keep fighters in the city who could play a governance role. Conversation with a BOAC commander in Nuevo Milenio, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 33 Interview with community leader for Humberto Manzi, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 34 Virtual interview with expert on security in Tumaco, March 2021; virtual interview with human rights researcher in Tumaco, March 2021.
- 35 Interview with community leader from Nuevo Milenio, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 36 At the first entrance, the author entered unaccompanied to go to a local's home but was not stopped by the members of the group, despite the fact that they were sitting at the porch of a house in the entrance. When the author went deeper into the neighbourhood, accompanied, he and the locals were stopped by armed members of the BOAC who were posted in front of a shop, who asked what the purpose of the visit was, among other questions.
- 37 This was clear the various times the author entered and left Nuevo Milenio.
- 38 The People for Order later joined the BOAC, giving this group control over the neighbourhood.
- 39 International Crisis Group, Calming the restless Pacific: Violence and crime on Colombia's coast, 8 August 2019, 13, https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/076-calming-the-restless-pacific_0.pdf.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Virtual interview with security expert on Tumaco, March 2021; virtual interview with an international organization in Tumaco, March 2021.
- 42 Interviews with community leaders from Nuevo Amanecer and Humberto Manzi neighbourhoods, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 43 Virtual interview with security expert on Tumaco, March 2021; interview with community leader from La Paz, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 44 Interview with a priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021; virtual interview with security expert on Tumaco, March 2021.
- 45 Interview with priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021; interview with community leader from La Paz, Tumaco, February 2021; interview with expert on the drug trade, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 46 Interview with priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 47 Interview with priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021; interview with community leader from Viento Libre, Tumaco, March 2021; interview with community leader from La Paz, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 48 Interview with community leader from La Paz, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 49 Early on in the pandemic, various community leaders told the author that they did not believe in COVID-19, and even the mayor had to publicly state that COVID-19 was real and was not the 'Bone-Breaker' virus that many people had thought. Noticias 24, *Controversia en Tumaco por los casos confirmados de Covid-19*, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2421205938180242>.
- 50 Interview with priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 51 Interview with community leader from La Paz, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 52 Confidencial Colombia, *Tumaco está soportando los embates más duro del Covid19: Cámara de Comercio de Tumaco*, 5 June 2020, <https://confidencialcolombia.com/lo-mas-confidencial/tumaco-zaida-mosquera-camara-de-comercio-covid19/2020/06/05/>.
- 53 Interview with community leader from La Paz, Tumaco, February 2021; interview with community leader from Viento Libre, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 54 Interview with community leader in Viento Libre, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 55 Interview with community leader from La Paz, Tumaco, February 2021; interview with priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021; interview with community leader from Viento Libre, Tumaco, March 2021.
- 56 Interview with a priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021; virtual interview with expert on security in Tumaco, March 2021; virtual interview with human rights researcher in Tumaco, March 2021.
- 57 Interview with community leader from La Paz, Tumaco, February 2021; virtual interview with members of an international organization in Tumaco, March 2021.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Interview with security expert on Tumaco, March 2021; interview with a priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021; interview with community leaders from Nuevo Amanecer and Humberto Manzi, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 60 Interview with a priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021; interviews with community leaders from Nuevo Amanecer and Humberto Manzi neighbourhoods, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 61 Interview with a priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021; interview with a BOAC urban commander, Tumaco, February 2021.
- 62 Interview with a priest working in Viento Libre, La Paz and Buenos Aires, Tumaco, March 2021; interview with community leader from Nuevo Milenio, Tumaco, February 2021.



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