

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

[Home](#) > [Research Program](#) > [Responses to Information Requests](#)

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment please email Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca.

14 July 2015

COL105254.E

Colombia: The Black Eagles (Águilas Negras), including areas of operation and criminal activities; whether the Black Eagles seek out individuals within Colombia and abroad; state protection available (2014-March 2015)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

This Response replaces COL105125.E of 20 March 2015.

1. Overview

Sources indicate that the Black Eagles are also known under the name Renacer (Colombia 10 Oct. 2014; *El Colombiano* 8 Apr. 2014; *El Nuevo Siglo* 7 Apr. 2014).

Sources describe the Black Eagles as a paramilitary group (TeleSUR 23 Oct. 2014; Agencia EFE 1 Dec. 2014). According to sources, the Black Eagles was derived from the former paramilitary group United Self-defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, AUC) (ibid.; Assistant Professor 16 Mar. 2015; *Colombia Reports* 16 Feb. 2015). In a report dated 16 February 2015, *Colombia Reports*, a news website on Colombian issues, calls them more specifically a "neo-paramilitary group" that "let themselves [be] known to the public" after the demobilization process of the AUC, which took place between 2003 and 2006 (ibid.). Other sources describe the Black Eagles as a [translation] "criminal group" (banda criminal, BACRIM) (*El Colombiano* 8 Apr. 2014; *El Nuevo Siglo* 7 Apr. 2014). A 4 February 2014 article by the Associated Press (AP) explains that, according to the police, the military and the Office of the Attorney General of Colombia (Fiscalía General de la Nación), the Black Eagles are formed of ex-paramilitaries, drug traffickers and criminals (AP 4 Feb. 2014).

According to sources, the Black Eagles are linked to the criminal group the Urabeños (*El Colombiano* 8 Apr. 2014; *El Nuevo Siglo* 7 Apr. 2014; *El País* and Colprensa 8 Apr. 2014). *Colombia Reports* adds that the Black Eagles "were long confused with being the Urabeños" (*Colombia Reports* 16 Feb. 2015).

For additional information on the AUC, the BACRIM and the Urabeños, see Response to Information Request COL105044.

According to sources, the Black Eagles have a political agenda (Agencia EFE 4 Feb. 2014; *Colombia Reports* 16 Feb. 2015; AFP 2 Dec. 2014). Two sources specify that the group is opposed to the negotiation process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) (ibid.; Agencia EFE 4 Feb. 2014). According to *Colombia Reports*, the Black Eagles "seem the most political and the most active in threatening leftist politicians and displaced victims of the armed conflict seeking to have their stolen land return [ed]" (*Colombia Reports* 16 Feb. 2015).

2. Structure and Areas of Operation

Sources indicate that Alejandro Ávila Meza (also known as Ratón) and Erlin Javier Arroyo Mosquera (also known as Polocho) are two leaders of the Black Eagles (*El Colombiano* 8 Apr. 2014; *El Nuevo Siglo* 7 Apr. 2014; *El País* and Colprensa 8 Apr. 2014). According to a press release from the Office of the Attorney General of Colombia, other known members include two brothers, Alexander Mosquera Sosa and Leiser Mosquera Sosa (Colombia 10 Oct. 2014).

Colombia Reports claims that, according to authorities and experts, the Black Eagles do not have a central leadership (*Colombia Reports* 15 Jan. 2015). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Black Eagles reportedly have a [translation] "main bloc" (Bloque Capital) (AFP 2 Dec. 2014; Agencia EFE 4 Feb. 2014). Two sources note that there is a group that calls themselves the [translation] "Northern Atlantic Coast Bloc of the Black Eagles" (Bloque Norte Costa Atlántica Águila Negras) (*Colombia Reports* 15 Jan. 2015; *El Herald* 14 Jan. 2015).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an assistant professor of sociology at Winthrop University indicated that the Black Eagles operate where the AUC once did (16 Mar. 2015). A 9 October 2014 Agencia EFE news report notes that the Black Eagles operate along the country's Atlantic coast. Similarly, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, an associate professor of political science at the University of Los Andes (Universidad de Los Andes) said that the regions over which the Black Eagles have a "stronghold" are the departments of Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó and Córdoba (10 Mar. 2015). On 4 November 2014, the Office of the Ombudsperson of Colombia released a map of post-demobilization criminal groups by departments, in which the following departments were identified as operating areas of the Black Eagles: Arauca, Bolívar, Casanare, Chocó, Córdoba, Cundinamarca, La Guajira and Santander (Colombia [4 Nov. 2014]).

3. Criminal Activities

According to sources, the Black Eagles are involved in drug trafficking, extortion (AP 4 Feb. 2014; Associate Professor 10 Mar. 2015), looting and stealing cattle (ibid.). The 4 February 2014 AP article indicates that the police, the military and the Office of the Attorney General have said that the Black Eagles are also involved in kidnapping and killing (AP 4 Feb. 2014). Sources report that the Black Eagles send death threats (ibid.; Associate Professor 10 Mar. 2015; *Colombia Reports* 22 May 2014) to local leaders and journalists "for speaking out against their practices" (ibid.).

Instances of death threats issued by the Black Eagles that were reported on by the media include the following:

- Gustavo Petro, the mayor of Bogotá, and other political figures, as well as human rights activists, were issued a death threat by the Black Eagles (AFP 5 Feb. 2014; AP 4 Feb. 2014; Agencia EFE 4 Feb. 2014) on 4 February 2014, forcing them to abandon politics (ibid.).
- The brother of Eblin Ruth Lúligo, mayor of Rosas, department of Cauca, was killed [on 11 May 2013 (W Radio 22 May 2014)] after receiving death threats (W Radio 22 May 2014; *Colombia Reports* 22 May 2014). According to *Colombia Reports*, he had made the threats public prior to his death (ibid.). In May 2014, Mayor Lúligo herself received a death threat signed by the Black Eagles warning her that she could also be killed (W Radio 22 May 2014). The threat ordered her to leave town within three days (ibid.). A public servant and 13 school teachers were threatened as well (ibid.). The teachers decided not to go back to work and Mayor Lúligo asked the authorities to protect the people who were targeted by the message (ibid.). According to *Colombia Reports*, the Mayor said her security was "fine," but she was concerned for the others since they did not have protection (*Colombia Reports* 22 May 2014).
- Media sources indicate that, according to Reporters Without Borders, Juan Pablo Gutiérrez, a photojournalist working for the National Indigenous Organization (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia) on threatened indigenous communities, was issued a death threat on 14 August 2014 by the Black Eagles for continuing his work on indigenous communities and staying in Colombia (Agencia EFE News 26 Aug. 2014; *El Espectador* 26 Aug. 2014). He requested assistance from the National Protection Unit (Unidad Nacional de Protección, UNP) for protection (*El Espectador* 26 Aug. 2014).
- Media outlets, including TeleSUR, Canal Capital and RSF, were issued death threats by the main bloc of the Black Eagles, as reported by media sources in December 2014 (ibid. 1 Dec. 2014; AFP 2 Dec. 2014). Agence France-Presse (AFP) reports that, according to a letter signed by the Black Eagles and sent to Canal Capital, the criminal group has a [translation] "complete list" of journalists who are being targeted for supporting the Cuban/Venezuelan model (ibid.).
- In January 2015, sources reported that a pamphlet signed by the Northern Atlantic Coast Bloc of the Black Eagles had been released, in which 39 people working with victim groups, land restitution organizations, and human rights defenders were issued death threats and declared [translation] "'military objectives'" (*Colombia Reports* 15 Jan. 2015; *El Herald* 14 Jan. 2015).

Further information on these incidents could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4.State Response

Sources report that the following people were arrested [on 7 April 2014 (*El Colombiano* 8 Apr. 2014)] for having suspected links with criminal groups, including the Black Eagles: Ebrin Mosquera Ibarguen, the mayor of Medio San Juan, department of Chocó; three members of the police; two former members of the police; and a

soldier (*El Colombiano* 8 Apr. 2014; *El País* and *Colprensa* 8 Apr. 2014; *LatinNews* 8 Apr. 2014). Sources report that Colombia's Office of the Attorney General issued a statement saying that members of the Black Eagles claim that Ebrin Mosquera Ibargüen had worked with them to [translation] "force people to vote for him in the districts of Chiquichoque and Bocas de Suruco" and that they provided him with 20 million pesos [approx. 9,702 CAD] for a vehicle (*El Colombiano* 8 Apr. 2014; *El Nuevo Siglo* 7 Apr. 2014; *El País* and *Colprensa* 8 Apr. 2014). According to the Assistant Professor, the Black Eagles are "well articulated" and their leaders have not been captured by authorities (16 Mar. 2015).

The Organization of American States' (OAS) Inter-American Commission on Human Rights indicates that the Office of the Ombudsperson of Colombia reported that on 21 January 2015, 38 people, including journalists and human rights activists, had presumably received death threats from the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, and that protective measures through the UNP were reportedly put in place for 12 of those individuals (OAS 30 Jan. 2015). For more information on the criteria to obtain protection from the UNP program, see Response to Information Request COL104011. For more information on the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, see Response to Information Request COL105044.

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Associate Professor indicated that in instances when people are issued death threats, the government has "funding for protection agencies/services for victims" such as "providing body guards and "helping conceal their identity" (10 Mar. 2015). The Assistant Professor indicated that if a person receiving a threat currently holds a "position of leadership or power" or is a public servant in the judicial system, they "might receive protection from the authorities, but not otherwise" (16 Mar. 2015). She added that a person who has been victimized may obtain resources from the state but might not receive protection (*ibid.*). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. For additional information on military objectives of and state protection from armed groups, see Response to Information Request COL105118.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The following individual was unable to provide information: Research Fellow on Latin America, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

Attempts to contact the following were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: Assistant Professor of Political Science, Universidad de los Andes; Associate Professor of Comparative Politics in Latin America, George Mason University; Bogotá – Analyst at the Policía Nacional, Human rights coordinator of the Policía Metropolitana; Co-Director, US Program, Human Rights Watch; Colombia – Oficina de Protección y Asistencia, Fiscalía General; Fundación Seguridad y Democracia; Medellín – Personería; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; Programa Somos Defensores.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; British Broadcasting Corporation; Cable Noticias; Colombia – Ministerio del Interior, Procuraduría General de la Nación; eoi.net; *El Tiempo*; *El Universal*; Europa Press; Freedom House; Fundación Ideas Para la Paz; InSight Crime; Instituto Popular de Capacitación; International Crisis Group; IRIN; *Jane's Intelligence Review*; Movimiento de Víctimas; Reporters Without Borders; UN – High Commissioner for Human Rights, Refworld, ReliefWeb; US – Department of State, Overseas Security Advisory Council.

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Date modified: 2015-08-13 [Top of Page](#)