

DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION OF PARAMILITARIES IN COLOMBIA:

Implications for urban security in Medellín

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Until recently, the presence of armed criminal gangs, guerrilla militias and paramilitary groups in Medellín — Colombia's second-largest city with over two million inhabitants — resulted in the city having one of the highest per-capita murder rates in the world.¹ While levels of violence remain high by international standards, the city has experienced impressive reductions in key indicators which can be attributed to a variety of local and national security initiatives.

The current process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) being carried out nationally within the framework of the Justice and Peace Law, a national peace plan passed in June 2005, has had especially strong implications for public security in Medellín. DDR programs targeted the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and their urban proxies beginning in late 2003

following the AUC's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire. That November, 860 paramilitaries belonging to Medellín's AUC-linked Cacique Nutibara Bloc (BCN) publicly laid down arms, the first of a series of 37 collective

demobilizations in which over 30,000 combatants have disarmed.² These demobilized combatants have been resettled throughout roughly one third of Colombia's municipalities, with the largest number by far being resettled



Paramilitaries linked to the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) publicly surrender their arms in Medellín as part of a peace agreement signed with the government. (November 2003)