

Maduro-Petro & Co.

By Fernando Mora¹

Between August 15 and 20, 2025, Venezuela's top power brokers—Nicolás Maduro, Diosdado Cabello, and General Vladimir Padrino—launched a coordinated media blitz. Facing increasing pressure from Washington, the three pillars of the *Cartel de los Soles* took to social platforms in lockstep, each echoing the same implausible claim: Venezuela plays no role in the cocaine trade. The blame, they insisted, lies with Colombia and its Pacific routes.

The choreography was not only obvious—it was revealing. This wasn't a defense; it was a smokescreen. With trafficking networks under scrutiny and U.S. pressure mounting, the Maduro regime is no longer defending its legitimacy—it is struggling to survive. Their synchronized denials are a clear indicator: a cornered cartel-state managing damage.

Then came the violence. On August 21, FARC dissidents—operatives of both Maduro's *Cartel de los Soles* and Petro's "Total Peace" agreement—launched attacks in Antioquia and Cali with military precision. In Amalfi, a drone strike brought down a National Police UH-60 Black Hawk during a coca eradication mission—12 officers were killed, several others wounded. That same day, a truck bomb exploded outside the Marco Fidel Suárez Air Force base in Cali, killing six civilians and injuring dozens.

Almost immediately, Petro's government released an intercepted audio recording in which perpetrators can be heard celebrating the attack. Yet Petro publicly downplayed the events, calling the attackers "unstructured factions." Defense Minister Iván Velásquez blamed the Clan del Golfo. Interior Minister Armando Benedetti pointed to the Calarcá men, a FARC offshoot—none of it coherent. These contradictions aren't accidental—they're calculated. This isn't a government seeking clarity; it's a government refusing to speak the truth.

Later that day, a man known as "El Mocho" was arrested at his home in Cali, Valle del Cauca. He is suspected of belonging to the FARC dissidents led by Iván Mordisco—a central figure in both Maduro's cartel and Petro's Total Peace strategy. He is also accused of playing a direct role in the Cali bombing.

Soon after, Mordisco's brother was arrested by the Attorney General's Office and Colombian military. In both operations, no resistance was encountered. The message was clear: Petro's administration knew where they were—and Mordisco's men knew they weren't targets. There was no fear of retaliation.

These events are no coincidence. They are the direct result of Petro's "Total Peace" policy—a doctrine that rewards armed groups who continue *criminal activities as usual, territorial control, and de facto immunity (el Pacto de la Picota)* in exchange for vague promises to disarm. The result isn't peace. It's the normalization of violence. Armed groups now operate with more confidence, greater resources, and virtually no consequences. "Total Peace" hasn't failed—it has imploded.

What Colombia is facing is not a simple policy failure—it's a strategic alliance. The Maduro-Petro axis is no longer a speculative theory; it is an active, cross-border pact based on criminal interests, mutual protection, and *political survival*. **For the first time**, Maduro appears to have directly coordinated violent operations in Colombia—specifically in Antioquia and Cali.

Petro's swift denial of Mordisco's involvement reveals his priorities. His message is unmistakable: Petro is not protecting Colombia—he is protecting Maduro.

In today's Colombia, facts are manipulated, narratives are engineered, and violence is rebranded. Every new crisis serves to consolidate executive power. Every contradiction is part of the strategy.

This is not foreign policy. This is collusion. And now, Petro seems prepared to escalate: to declare

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a national state of emergency—not to restore order, but to entrench his power, silence dissent, and sideline democratic institutions. It's a familiar tactic—one Maduro has long perfected.

Let's be clear: Maduro, Cabello, and Padrino are not acting from strength—they are reacting from fear. Their trafficking routes, finances, and regional influence are under threat. And Petro? Instead of defending Colombia's sovereignty, he has chosen alignment with a collapsing regime—dragging the country toward the same authoritarian decay.

This is not about ideology or diplomacy—it is complicity. It also lays bare the armed groups that backed Petro, Claudia López, Ospina, and Quintero during the violent protests between 2022 and 2024.

Colombia stands at a defining crossroads. The decisions made in the coming months will determine whether the country preserves its democracy—or becomes the next victim of a regional authoritarian wave. There is no room for ambiguity. This is a moment of reckoning.

As the 2026 parliamentary and presidential elections approach, Colombia faces two starkly different blocs:

Petro's Bloc: Anchored by Daniel Quintero, Gustavo Bolívar, Claudia López, Iván Cepeda, and María José Pizarro. Backed by substantial national and international resources—including support from Maduro's regime and armed allies secured through Total Peace, regardless of who the candidates are.

The Opposition: A fragmented coalition of traditional politicians, entering the race with fewer resources, no clear leadership, and no unified agenda.

Meanwhile, Petro enjoys the support of Maduro's bot army and a well-funded propaganda machine operating inside Colombia. The opposition, by contrast, remains paralyzed—still not even debating strategy.

This is no longer a political contest. It is a convergence of authoritarian ambition, organized crime, and regional destabilization.

Unless Colombia acts with clarity and urgency, it won't simply be influenced—it will be governed by the very forces it once resisted: the Maduro-Petro & Co.