

## Politics and Intelligence in Colombia

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Since their years in opposition, President Gustavo Petro and the *Pacto Histórico* coalition have cultivated enduring ties with illegal armed groups and criminal organizations—including the Cartel de los Soles, the ELN, FARC dissidents, and the Clan del Golfo—under the stated justification of advancing peace. These relationships have generated serious concerns about national security and the integrity of Colombia's democratic institutions.

Three illustrative cases underscore these risks: (1) the consistent political and diplomatic support that Petro and the *Pacto Histórico* have expressed toward Maduro's regime in Venezuela; (2) their public opposition to the extradition of Dairo Antonio Úsuga, alias *Otoniel*, the leader of the Clan del Golfo; and (3) their political efforts to advocate for the release of Jesús Santrich, a FARC dissident accused of receiving funds from Mexican cartels, who later escaped to Venezuela—reportedly with assistance from the ELN and the Maduro government.

Communication between Petro's political circle and the Maduro regime has occurred both directly and indirectly—through intermediaries such as Santrich and Iván Márquez, both former negotiators in Colombia's peace process, as well as through Colombian legislators acting under the guise of “peace advocacy.” Notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Petro traveled to Cuba, ostensibly to receive medical treatment, claiming that the island's health system offered unique capabilities. Critics argue that this episode symbolized deeper political and ideological ties to regimes historically hostile to Colombia's national interests.

Evidence suggests that Petro and the *Pacto Histórico* have maintained closer and more consistent relationships with Maduro and his associates than with the Colombian public. While some international organizations and think tanks have interpreted state awareness of Petro as politically motivated due to his far-left ideology, multiple reports indicate direct coordination with the Cartel de los Soles, the M-19, the ELN, the

Segunda Marquetalia, FARC dissidents, and the Clan del Golfo in organizing nationwide protests between 2018 and 2022.

The 2019 bombing of the Santander General Police Academy in Bogotá, which killed 22 cadets and injured many others, was attributed to the ELN. Although no verified evidence directly links Petro or the *Pacto Histórico* to this attack, their open alignment with the Maduro and reported links to the ELN raise credible concerns about possible indirect complicity or influence. Significantly, in 2023, five individuals allegedly involved in the attack were released from custody.

Since assuming office, Petro's government—supported by the *Pacto Histórico*—has reportedly shared intelligence with Maduro, Cabello, and other members of the Cartel de los Soles. Petro himself has made six official trips to Caracas, and his aides have made over 900 visits. Public statements from senior officials acknowledge ongoing communication between key Colombian ministers and these Venezuelan actors on matters of security and regional cooperation.

According to reports, Colombia's National Intelligence Directorate has provided information to Maduro regarding Venezuelan opposition figures residing in Colombia. Meanwhile, Petro's government has failed to prevent attacks against some of these exiled opposition members by unknown assailants in Bogotá.

Under the banner of the “Total Peace” initiative, Petro and the *Pacto Histórico* appear to have prioritized negotiations with illegal armed groups and transnational criminal networks over the protection of national security. This approach effectively positions the government as an intermediary to criminal organizations rather than as a guardian of Colombian sovereignty.

In practical terms, intelligence-sharing with the Maduro regime amounts to sharing sensitive information with criminal organizations. This poses profound risks to Colombia's security architecture and democratic stability—particularly in the lead-up to the 2026 legislative and presidential elections.

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