



War and peace

Why "Macaco" matters to Colombia's peace processes

Former narco helped rearm paramilitaries after AUC demobilization

by Adriaan Alsema | August 25, 2023

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Jailed drug trafficker and paramilitary chief "Macaco" says his influence went all the way up to Colombia's Supreme Court.

Macaco, whose real name is Carlos Mario Jimenez, reiterated last week that he wants to submit to the war crimes tribunal JEP and expose, among other things, these ties.



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On the same day, the JEP invited the man who turned counterinsurgency into a lucrative business to testify about his possible contribution to justice on November 8 and 9.

Speaking at an event organized by the Foreign Ministry, Macaco made a number of impressive promises about the future revelations of the former commander of the AUC's Central Bolivar Bloc (BCB).

Claims made by Macaco

- Former Supreme Court president Leonidas Burgos and former chief prosecutor Nestor Humberto Martinez sought to abuse their judicial power to “systematically try and destroy” President Gustavo Petro’s public image.
- Paramilitaries and politicians conspired to appropriate the funds of State-controlled companies like oil firm [Ecopetrol](#).
- Paramilitary organization AUC infiltrated Colombia’s top courts to secure the outcome of the elections of the president, congress, the chief prosecutor and regional authorities.
- Martinez sabotaged Macaco’s testimonies over ties between his Central Bolivar Bloc and politicians.

In a response, the president asked the JEP to declare him the victim of an assassination plot and called for a criminal investigation into the former chief prosecutor.

The war crimes tribunal will decide on whether or not to allow Macaco to submit to its transitional justice system based on revelations made during the November hearings.

Macaco’s career

Macaco began his career in 1990 as a drug trafficker of the Norte del Valle cartel, which controlled much of Colombia’s drug trade after the demise of the [Medellin](#) and [Cali](#) cartels.

By the time the AUC approached him in the late 1990’s, Macaco had become one of the richest people in the coffee region and southwest Colombia.

Macaco’s management of the BCB made his paramilitary organization one of the AUC’s main money machines and a competitor of “[Don Berna’s](#)” [drug trafficking](#) activities in northern Colombia.

Apart from trafficking drugs, the BCB traded in black market oil and provided armed services to anyone in business and politics who was willing to pay for them.

The BCB commander became so influential that US foreign aid agency USAID granted Macaco’s palm oil company a \$161,000 “alternative development” grant in 2004.

The BCB demobilized more than 6,500 people after a demobilization agreement made with former President [Alvaro Uribe](#) in 2005.

The BCB continued to traffic drugs after the demobilization in order to pay for the expenses of the former paramilitaries that were taking part in reintegration processes, Macaco told US prosecutors.

Macaco was also key in the creation of AUC successor groups like the [Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia](#) in [Antioquia](#) and La Cordillera in the coffee region.

Between June 2007 and March 2008, Macaco appeared before the Justice and Peace tribunal to testify about the crimes committed by the BCB and their associates 11 times.

End of justice

Macaco and 13 other AUC bosses were illegally extradited to the United States in May 2008 and he was sentenced to 33 years in prison because of his drug trafficking activities with the AUC in May 2011.

Macaco’s hearings resumed, but the prosecution requested an end to the transitional justice process because the former BCB boss had admitted to American prosecutors that he had

continued to traffic drugs after his demobilization.

Despite protests by his victims, Macaco was excluded from Justice and Peace in December 2014. The prosecution had yet to formally indict the former BCB boss of any crimes.

US authorities extradited Macaco to Colombia in July 2019.

The former BCB boss offered the government to act as a mediator in planned demobilization talks with the AGC, one of the paramilitary groups allegedly created by Macaco after the demobilization of the AUC.

The former paramilitary chief additionally requested to be submitted to the JEP and continue testifying against former AUC associates in politics and the private sector.

AUC

JEP

MACACO



UN to investigate plot to sabotage Colombia's war crimes tribunal

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