



# Colombian Election Disinformation Networks

**Role of paramilitary groups and the future of  
Spanish-language disinformation networks**

Delivered December 2022

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## Disclaimer

This report was limited to open source and publicly available data. All information is cross-checked against multiple sources for full verification. However, some assessments or conclusions are based on incomplete information and represent the analyst's best judgment based on patterns and data availability.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Spanish-language disinformation networks [identified previously by Nisos researchers](#) have continued to expand their presence in the Latin American region. The Venezuelan government-linked Chalecos Amarillos network identified in the Nisos report [Colombian Election Disinformation Campaign: The Role of Venezuelan Leftists \(March 2022\)](#) continued to spread disinformation and messaging in favor of leftist candidate Gustavo Petro in the recent election.

The ongoing efforts appear to have been folded into a broader umbrella organization for disinformation efforts and news stories promoting left-wing causes and candidates in the region called the Alliance of Alternative and Community Media (ALMAC or RedALMAC). This network appears to be a collective of left-wing radio networks, social media accounts, and media sources that are pushing information that has its origins in disinformation and media outlets such as Russia's *Actualidad RT* and Iran's *HispanTV*, both of which are Spanish language outlets targeting the region.

The stories carried by ALMAC affiliates range from legitimate news stories to outright disinformation and everything in between. A large number of ALMAC affiliates regularly share stories highlighting alleged ties between the Gulf Clan and the Colombian government, call attention to the killings of social leaders by paramilitaries, and promote Petro as the only presidential candidate able to bring peace to the country.

Petro emerged victorious in the second round where both candidates favored negotiations with dissident members of the demobilized Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the left-wing National Liberation Army (ELN). Chalecos and other ALMAC affiliates also began to move on to other, broader geopolitical topics – such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the regional boycott of the Summit of the Americas that was hosted in the U.S. – to promote additional disinformation.

This suggests that the networks will remain active in the region. Outside powers such as Russia and Iran have invested significantly in Spanish language outlets, and networks like Chalecos will continue to use social media platforms to push this disinformation with impunity. Organizations like ALMAC will give such campaigns a veneer of authenticity, due to the fact that the organization masquerades as a legitimate media conglomerate and some affiliates do carry legitimate news stories.

# OVERVIEW

Gustavo Petro emerged victorious in Colombia's July 19 presidential election, defeating populist candidate Rodolfo Hernández, and becoming the first leftist elected president in the history of Colombia. The advancement of Hernández and Petro was due in part to center-right candidate Federico Gutiérrez's collapse in the polls ahead of the first round vote on 29 May 2022. Gutiérrez was widely perceived to be the ideological successor to incumbent President Ivan Duque, who has faced significant backlash for:

- His handling of economy and the broader economic inequality in Colombian society
- An increase in the assassination of social leaders and humanitarian activists
- Nationwide riots in 2021 that lead to international criticism of the police response
- The modification of a 2016 peace deal with the left-wing Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and escalation of the Colombian government's conflicts with other paramilitary groups such as the left-wing National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Gulf Clan – one of the country's largest drug cartels that was formed from the remnants of demobilized right-wing paramilitaries.

Petro's victory has significant implications for the United States and its foreign policy in Latin America. Colombia has longstanding and well-developed ties with the United States that were forged in the Cold War and have continued due to the two nations' close coordination on fighting narcotics traffickers – primarily the FARC, ELN, and Gulf Clan – that operate within Colombia. These ties have grown so close that U.S. President Joe Biden designated Colombia a major non-NATO Ally on 23 May 2022.<sup>1</sup> However, Petro successfully campaigned for the presidency on a platform that included promises to conduct a complete overhaul of the country's counternarcotics efforts, reestablish diplomatic relations with Venezuela, and move to fully implement the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC and potentially move to add the ELN to the accord.<sup>2</sup>

While Petro's party, the Historic Pact, will not have a majority in the legislature, which may limit his ability to implement more extreme proposals, his election will strain relations with the United States amid the new "Pink Tide" – which refers to the phenomenon of Latin American countries electing leftist leaders<sup>3</sup> – that has emerged.

Nisos researchers previously uncovered a prolific election interference effort that was based out of Venezuela, one of the region's longest standing leftist regimes, aimed at promoting Petro's election prospects in Colombia's presidential election that leveraged a Twitter account @ChalecosAmarill to influence the outcome of the vote. The network was removed from Twitter, but remained active on Telegram and appears to have partnered with a wider regional disinformation network that was created following the publication of Nisos' first report. In addition, Nisos researchers observed that in addition

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/05/23/memorandum-on-the-designation-of-colombia-as-a-major-non-nato-ally/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/20/world/americas/colombia-gustavo-petro-president.html>

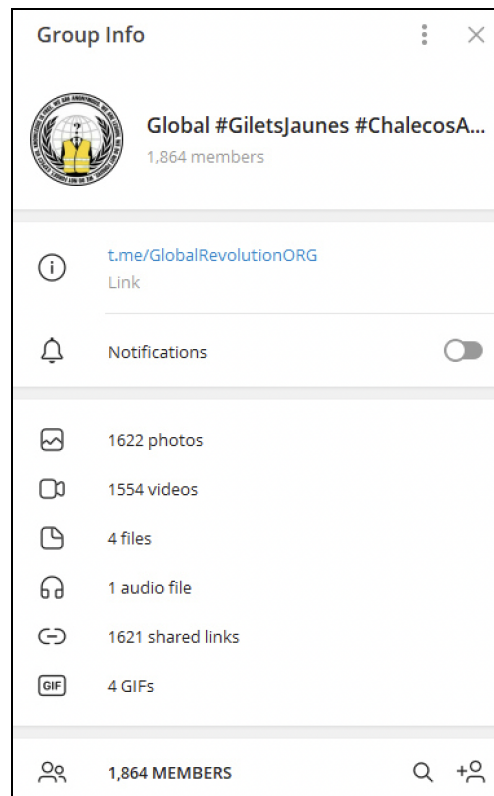
<sup>3</sup><https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/latin-americas-new-pink-tide-gains-pace-colombia-shifts-left-brazil-up-next-2022-06-22/>



to creating their own content, the Chalecos network worked to promote biased reporting from Iran, Russia, and Venezuela. The content blamed the incumbent administration of President Ivan Duque for paramilitary violence across the country; framed left-wing paramilitaries in a positive light, made allegations of close ties between the Gulf Clan and Colombian security forces, promoted Petro and other Historic Pact candidates; and continued its efforts to shape the narratives surrounding the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The latter activity resulted in Chalecos' Twitter account being suspended from the platform.

## CHALECOS & ALMAC

Nisos researchers continued to monitor the Chalecos Amarillos election interference network since their Twitter account was taken down sometime in March 2022 after it was found to be promoting misleading narratives surrounding the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Chalecos has remained active by shifting dissemination of information to Telegram since its suspension from Twitter and frequently posts in its open channel @GlobalRevolutionOrg to approximately 1,864 active subscribers, who will in turn spread that information on their own volition. This shift in strategy appears to be a tactic to avoid detection by Western social media companies and continue their operations. Chalecos has created a successor Twitter account @chalecosamar. The new account is relatively inactive as they currently rely more heavily on Telegram, which has inhibited their ability to gain followers. It is likely that the second Twitter account was only made to inform previous followers of the new Telegram channel and the Chalecos network likely planned on only being notably active on Telegram.



**Graphic 1: Chalecos Amarillos' Telegram Channel.**

Chalecos alleges to have become affiliated with a wider media network called the Alliance of Alternative and Community Media (ALMAC), which claims to be an "association of more than 300 national and international media" networks that, "work to make visible the reality of our peoples through unbreakable communication networks of brotherhood, in defense of freedom of expression, human rights and sovereignty."<sup>4</sup> Chalecos claimed that it is a member of AMLAC (sometimes called RedALMAC, translates to 'ALMAC Network') in a Telegram message that reported that AMLAC invited Gustavo Petro's running mate to an interview.



**Graphic 2: Chalecos Telegraph message discussing AMLAC's invitation to Gustavo Petro's running mate, Francia Marquez. The highlighted portion is where Chalecos claims to be affiliated with AMLAC/RedALMAC.**

ALMAC sent interview invitations to Gustavo Petro, Rodolfo Hernandez, and Heranandez's running mates that the organization documented on another social media page.<sup>5</sup> The organization also

<sup>4</sup> [https://redalmac\[.\]com/](https://redalmac[.]com/)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.instagram\[.\]com/redalmac/](https://www.instagram[.]com/redalmac/)

maintains Twitter,<sup>6</sup> TikTok,<sup>7</sup> and YouTube<sup>8</sup> accounts. These accounts will likely be used by the organization to disseminate disinformation and provide a veneer of authenticity to the sources shared by the organization. While Chalecos has promoted that it is a member of the organization, this cannot be confirmed via AMLAC website, which only acknowledges 25 media partners on their website. A full list of these 25 media partners can be found in the Appendix.



**Graphics 3: How AMLAC lists affiliates on its website.**

A complete list of all organizations that are affiliated with ALMAC is not available on the organization’s website and Nisos researchers were unable to confirm or deny Chalecos’ claim that they are affiliated with the ALMAC. However, given that ALMAC claims that it has 275 other unlisted members, it is likely that Chalecos Amarillos is one of these unnamed organizations that is affiliated with the ALMAC. A review of the affiliates that were listed showed many of these organizations have some the same leftist biases as Chalecos, but appear to be legitimate news organizations. It is possible that ALMAC is only publicly sharing these “legitimate” news outlets so that disinformation posted by other, less reputable, affiliates is more likely to be regarded as factual.

Another significant piece of evidence that points to ALMAC being a type of umbrella organization for regional disinformation efforts is the fact that the organization appears to have been established shortly after the first Nisos report on this matter was published. In addition, ALMAC’s claim that they have 300 member organizations is suspect, given that their Twitter account only had 182 followers as of July 2022 and none of the seemingly legitimate news outlets that ALMAC claims as members announced they were joining the organization.

This means that the organization is either outright lying about the number of affiliate organizations that it has or it is taking steps to actively conceal which organizations are members due to their association with known disinformation networks or foreign governments. That report was released publicly in March 2022 and the AMLAC’s social media pages were not established until April 2022. Nisos researchers also leveraged a third-party website data aggregator to determine that the ALMAC website was created on 2 April, shortly before their other social media accounts were established. While unconfirmed, this behavior provides circumstantial evidence that this organization was created in the aftermath of Nisos’ reporting.


<sup>6</sup> <https://twitter.com/RedALMAC>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@redalmac>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-ckX0C-5A2be1RYJc5OAA>

Page transparency

Page information for ALMAC



ALMAC

Media Agency

History

Created - ALMAC

April 6, 2022


Ads from this Page

This Page is not currently running ads.

Go to Ad Library

Find support or report Page

Close



ALMAC

alianza de medios  
alternativos y comunitarios

Follow

ALMAC

@RedALMAC

Alianza de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios - ALMAC, asociación de más de 300 medios nacionales e internacionales, trabajamos para visibilizar la realidad

Community

Global

redalmac.com

Joined April 2022


182 Following 481 Followers

Tweets


Tweets & replies

Media

Likes



alianza de medios  
alternativos y comunitarios



ALMAC

18 subscribers

HOME

VIDEOS

PLAYLISTS

CHANNELS

ABOUT

Description

¿Quiénes somos?

Somos la Alianza de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios (ALMAC), conformada por una asociación de más de 300 medios nacionales e internacionales, trabajamos para visibilizar la realidad de nuestros pueblos por medio de redes comunicativas inquebrantables de hermandad en defensa a la libertad de expresión y la soberanía.

Misión

Como Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios desde Latinoamérica y el mundo asumimos el devenir histórico de nuestros pueblos, para trabajar articulados en construir un periodismo que humanice la comunicación; geste en las actuales y nuevas generaciones un pensamiento crítico, democrático y empoderado de sus realidades.

Visión

ALMAC ES y SERÁ la GRAN familia que gesta, protege, acompaña y crece en la defensa de la libertad de expresión y la democratización de los medios desde la multiculturalidad.

Stats

Joined Apr 6, 2022

491 views

**Graphics 4, 5, & 6: ALMAC's social media pages. Notice that all pages were made in the same month and the organization's social media accounts were made on the same day.**

In addition to continuing to promote pro-Petro/Historic Pact content and attempting to denigrate the incumbent administration of President Ivan Duque throughout the country's election cycle, Chalecos Amarillos has also continued the coverage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It has also covered other significant geopolitical events in the region, including the protests in Ecuador and the ongoing presidential race in Brazil. Nisos researchers assess that the shift towards covering other news items,

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the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the protests in Ecuador, and the Brazilian election, are ways for Chalecos to remain active following the conclusion of the Colombian presidential election.

#### COVERAGE OF PARAMILITARY GROUPS

Gustavo Petro's prior affiliations with the M19 urban paramilitary group has been a barrier to his prospects for higher office; Petro previously ran for the country's presidency against Duque in 2018, losing in the second round by 13 percentage points. In 2010 he ran and did not make it out of the first round. Colombia, which has been at war with leftist paramilitary groups since the 1960s, had never elected a leftist president until Petro's election in 2022. This was in part due to public perceptions that these groups and parties are connected. In addition, incumbent President Ivan Duque won his election against Petro in 2018 by opposing the landmark 2016 peace deal with the left-wing FARC. The election of Petro, a former guerrilla himself, on a platform of resuming the peace process with the FARC and including the more violent ELN in that peace process suggests that the public perception of left-wing paramilitaries has changed significantly in recent years. While some of Colombia's leftward shift can be attributed to backlash against the government's handling of widespread protests in 2021 and deep inequalities that are present in Colombian society, the 13-point shift from the center-right Ivan Duque in 2018 to leftist Gustavo Petro in 2022 suggests that outside forces may have had some impact on the public perception of left-wing paramilitary groups and of the country's security forces.

Nisos researchers noted in our last report that Chalecos frequently leveraged reporting by Iran's *HispanTV* and Russia's *Actualidad RT* to discuss the election and other ongoing matters in the region. A review of these publication's articles on left-wing paramilitary groups reveals that, for the most part, these news outlets blame the violence in Colombia on the government, particularly the administration of President Ivan Duque, and portray Venezuela as an opponent of these groups. *HispanTV*, appears to be active in producing these types of articles, which highlights the close ties<sup>9</sup> between the Iranian and Venezuelan governments.

For example, *HispanTV* posted an article on Jan. 5, 2022 reporting that Colombian citizens were fleeing to Venezuela following fighting between FARC dissident factions and the ELN in Colombia's Arauca department and Venezuela's Apure state.

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/11/iran-venezuela-sign-20-year-cooperation-plan-during-maduro-visit>





**Graphic 7: HispanTV article on Colombians fleeing into Venezuela due to violence in Colombia. However, the number of Colombians seeking refuge in Venezuela pales in comparison to the 1.7 million Venezuelans currently living as refugees in Colombia,<sup>10</sup> having fled Venezuela's collapsed economy.**

HispanTV also reported<sup>11</sup> that Venezuelan troops assisted locals in Venezuela's Apure state by fighting what the government calls TANCOL (Colombian Armed Drug Trafficking Terrorists) groups. The article stated that local residents urged the ELN and FARC to "take their conflict elsewhere" and that the Venezuelan government blames both the Colombian government and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency for funding TANCOL groups, such as the ELN and FARC. The Venezuelan government has long blamed the Colombian and U.S. governments for the violence in this region and has accused them of funding armed groups as a way to destabilize Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's government. HispanTV and *Actualidad RT* have helped fuel this narrative in the past. For example: HispanTV published two articles<sup>12</sup> <sup>13</sup> in April 2021 and *Actualidad RT* published one article<sup>14</sup> in March 2021 accusing the Colombian government of using the violence in the region to destabilize the Venezuelan government and that Colombian government officials are working to protect militants. The framing of Colombian paramilitary groups as extensions of the Colombian and U.S. governments has been a common practice of these outlets. HispanTV published an article in 2020 that accused<sup>15</sup> Colombia of preparing to launch a military incursion into Venezuela on the orders of former U.S. President Donald Trump.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/colombia-reopens-border-with-venezuela-after-14-months-2021-06-02/>

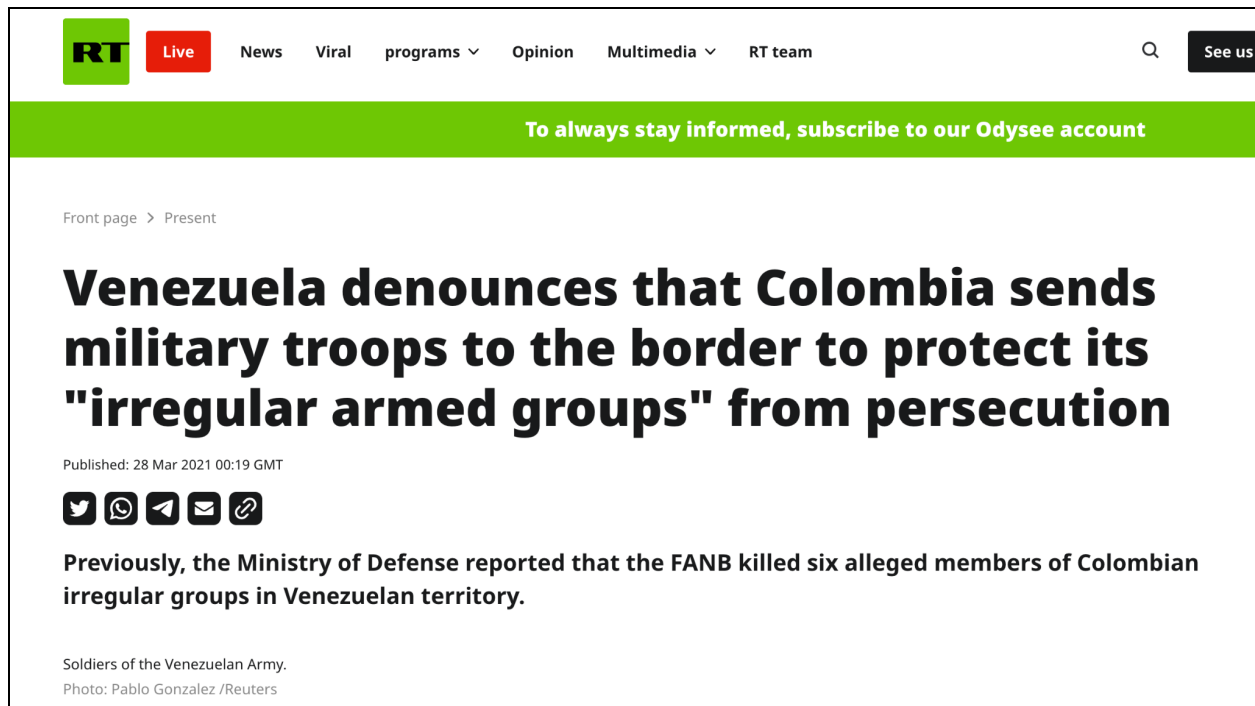
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/venezuela/535862/colombia-fanb-lucha-apure>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/venezuela/490299/cia-financiar-grupos-irregulares-colombia>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/venezuela/490717/maduro-apure-comando-sur>

<sup>14</sup> <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/387802-maduro-duque-buscar-confrontacion-militar-venezuela>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/venezuela/474809/incursion-militar-colombia>



**Graphic 8: Actualidad RT article falsely claiming that the Colombia military is protecting armed groups.**

Despite both news outlets providing coverage on how the Venezuelan military was deploying troops to fight both the ELN and FARC dissidents, Venezuelan forces were working with the ELN targeting FARC fighters during the January fighting in the Arauca/Apure region, according to a report<sup>16</sup> by Human Rights Watch. Venezuelan officials denied this allegation,<sup>17</sup> but a review of photos of guerrilla camps captured by the country's military and shared by a Venezuelan military public affairs officer indicate that most of them are related to various FARC dissident groups and none show obvious connections to the ELN. This fact bolsters the Human Rights Watch reporting that Venezuela has some type of agreement with the ELN and implies that agents of the Venezuelan government directed the group to engage in attacks against Colombian government targets with the aim of reducing popular support for the incumbent administration and boosting Petro in the presidential elections.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuelan-security-forces-carry-out-operations-with-eln-rebels-hrw-2022-03-28/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.hispan.tv/com/noticias/venezuela/437511/vinculos-maduro-farc-eln-colombia>



Uniforms found in the camp of Colombian armed groups, in Apure, Venezuela

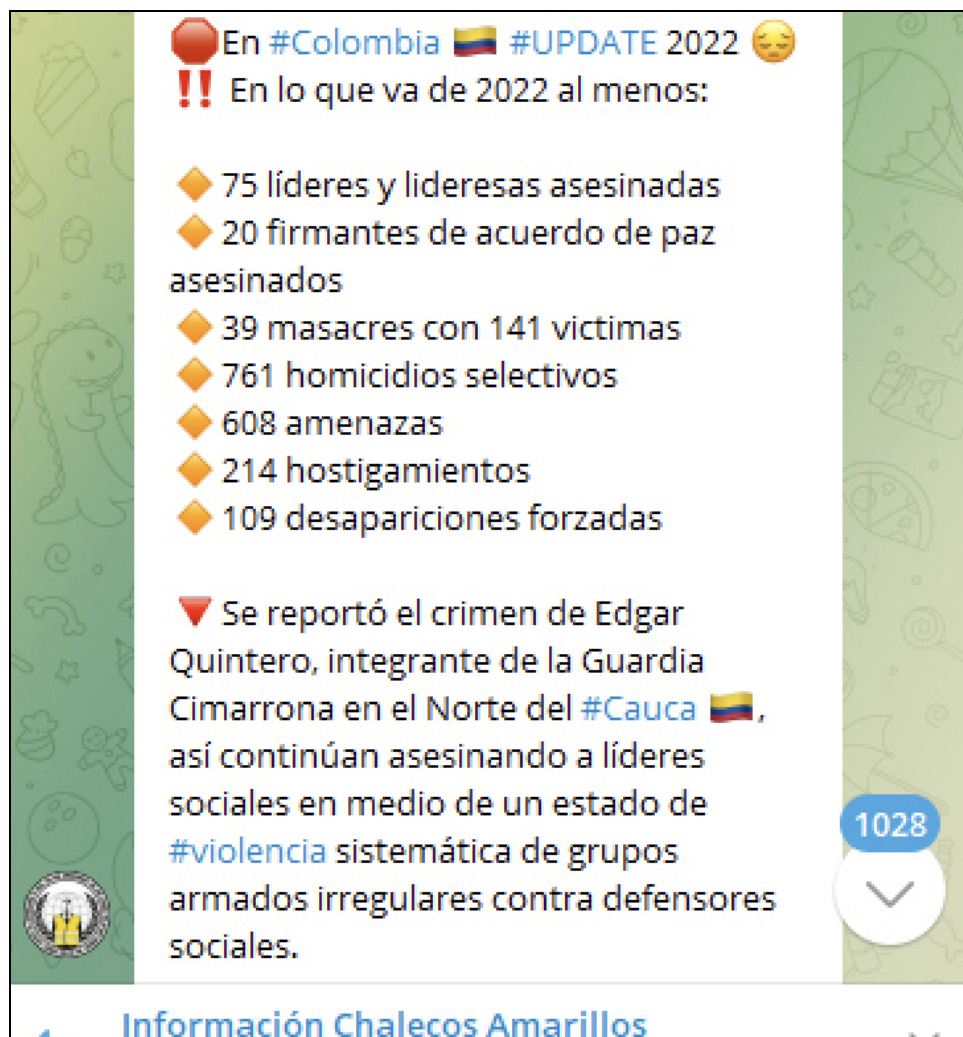
Twitter @dhernandezlarez

**Graphic 9: Photo from the Venezuelan military shared in an Actualidad RT article<sup>18</sup> showing uniforms recovered from a guerrilla camp that includes FARC patches.**

Chalecos either did not engage publicly or deleted messages sent on its Telegram account during the fighting between the FARC dissidents and ELN/Venezuelan military forces that lasted from 2 January 2022 until both Colombia and Venezuela increased the number of troops deployed on their shared border on 17 January 2022. Nisos researchers assess that Chalecos likely deleted messages sent during this period, as long periods of radio silence from the group have not been observed since.

However, Chalecos began ramping up accusations that the Colombian government, particularly the incumbent administration, was responsible for the violence following these clashes along the border and for increased violence throughout Colombia. The most common refrain from the group was that a high number of humanitarian aid workers have been killed in Colombia since Duque took office.

<sup>18</sup><https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/426190-fuerza-armada-venezuela-desarticula-campamento-apure-tancol>



**Graphic 10: Telegram message sent by Chalecos reporting on the deaths of social leaders and humanitarian workers by paramilitary groups. This message appears to have been resent regularly with figures updated by the group.**

The killings of social leaders and humanitarian workers have been on the rise in Colombia and, as noted by Chalecos, paramilitary groups are responsible for most of the killings. Given previous reports that Venezuela is supporting at least one of these groups, the ELN, means that these killings may have increased as a way to boost Petro's chances by denigrating the incumbent administration.

In addition, reporting by ALMAC-affiliates does not appear to mention the ELN, despite the fact that the group has played a significant part in the rise in the killings. The group chooses instead to blame the Gulf Clan (a drug cartel made up of former right-wing paramilitary fighters) and Colombian security forces. For example, ALMAC-affiliate *Radio Checeres* published an article that blamed "paramilitary groups, such as the Gulf Clan" for half of these disappearances/killings, despite the fact that the CINEP report cites both the Gulf Clan and the ELN in their reporting<sup>19</sup> on violence in the country.

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.cinep\[.\]org.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/5to-Informe-Secretaria-Tcnica.pdf](https://www.cinep[.]org.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/5to-Informe-Secretaria-Tcnica.pdf)

Paramilitary groups, such as the Clan del Golfo, are the "presumed responsible" for almost half of these victimizations (581), although the Police and the Army come very close, with 490 and 243, respectively.

The CINEP documented 193 murders of social leaders and 43 of demobilized FARC in 2020. "They are not all those that occur in the country, we are sure there are many more, but we reduce them to those that we can document," alleged the father Javier Giraldo, researcher of the foundation's Data Bank. EFE

**Graphic 11: Radio Checeres article omitting the ELN's role in the killings of social leaders.**

The paramilitary activity that caused the greatest shift in the polls appears to be the five-day "armed strike" that was launched by the Gulf Clan, an armed group formed out of the remnants of right-wing paramilitary groups that disbanded in the late 1990s/early 2000s and now focuses on drug trafficking rather than fighting ideological political battles. The group's "armed strike" began on the morning of 5 May and lasted until the evening of 9 May and was launched to protest the extradition of their former leader to the United States. The "armed strike" saw the Gulf Clan take effective control of 11 of Colombia's 32 departments (provinces) and resulted in 24 deaths.<sup>20</sup> The armed strike was damaging to the incumbent administration, as observed by the impact on the poll numbers of Federico Gutierrez, Duque's preferred successor. Gutierrez was comfortably in second place and appeared likely to move into the run-off against Petro with 28 percent of the vote, according to an aggregation of local election polls.<sup>21</sup>

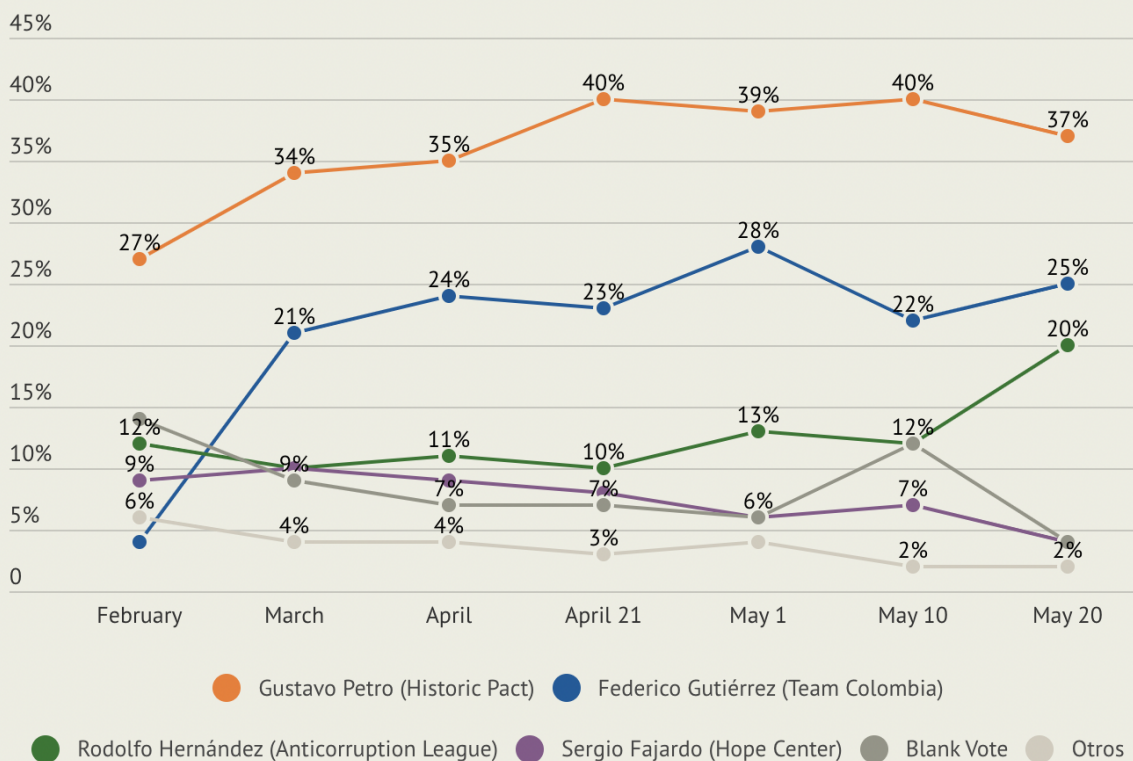
<sup>20</sup> [https://www.aljazeera\[.\]com/news/2022/5/12/terrifying-days-of-terror-under-colombias-gulf-clan-cartel](https://www.aljazeera[.]com/news/2022/5/12/terrifying-days-of-terror-under-colombias-gulf-clan-cartel)

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.as-coa\[.\]org/articles/poll-tracker-colombias-2022-presidential-election](https://www.as-coa[.]org/articles/poll-tracker-colombias-2022-presidential-election)



## Poll Aggregator

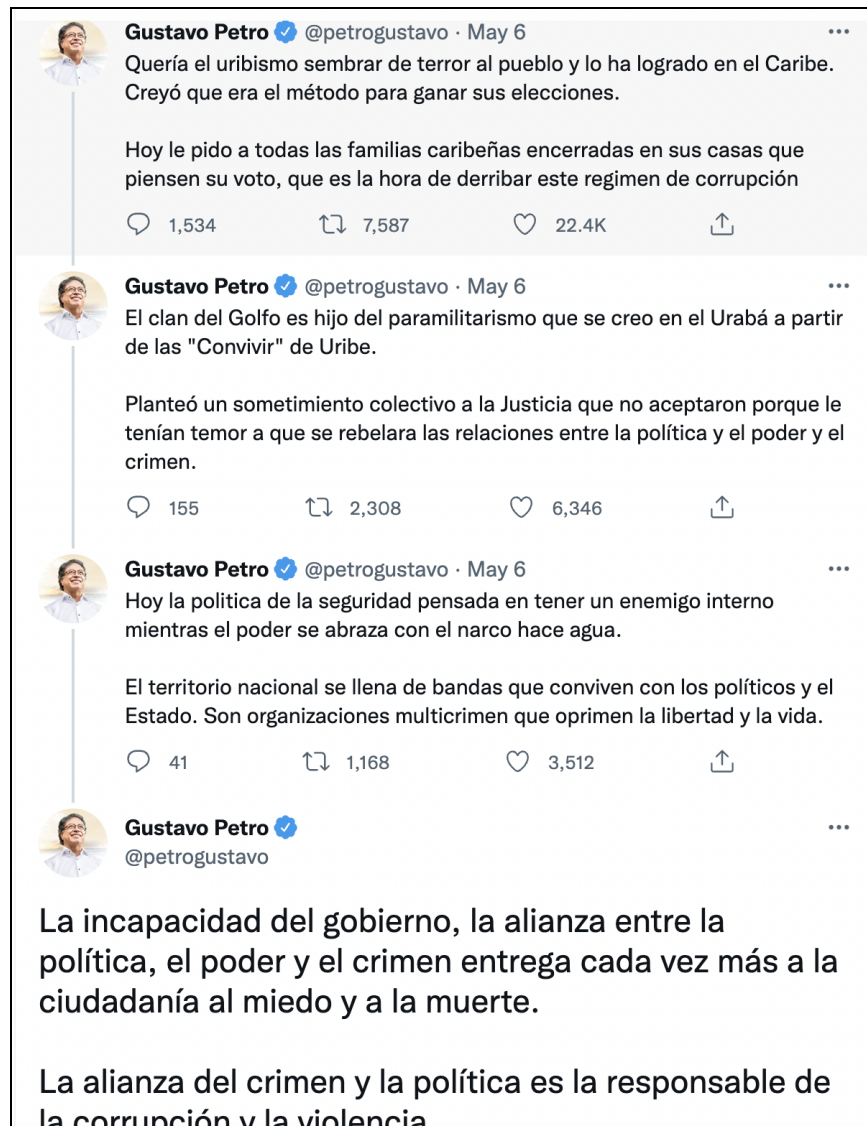
*La Silla Vacía's* poll aggregator includes data from 10 pollsters—ranked based on methodology and accuracy—and weighted accordingly.



**Graphic 12: Polling averages for the first round of the Colombian presidential election.**

The poll aggregation shows a clear decline in Gutierrez’s numbers after the armed strike began on 5 May and despite the slight uptick on 20 May, he finished third behind Rodolfo Hernandez with 23 percent of the vote. While some of this shift can be attributed to Gulf Clan’s actions, Gustavo Petro himself stated in a Twitter thread on 6 May<sup>22</sup> that the Gulf Clan was created by former President Alvaro Uribe – a former mentor to incumbent President Ivan Duque – to “sow terror” in the northern regions of the country, where Petro has significant support, with the intent of gaining an electoral advantage. Petro also accused the Gulf Clan of having close ties to the country’s security forces.

<sup>22</sup> <https://twitter.com/petrogustavo/status/1522582318355034112?s=20&t=Sf5Bs8j5lku272Hr3DxSWQ>



**Graphic 13: Gustavo Petro's Twitter thread on the Gulf Clan's armed strike.**

Chalecos, appearing to follow Petro's lead, began alleging that the Colombian government has been lenient on the group and that the country's security forces have a close relationship with the group.



**Graphic 14: Telegram message from Chalecos alleging the Gulf Clan has ties with Colombian security forces.**

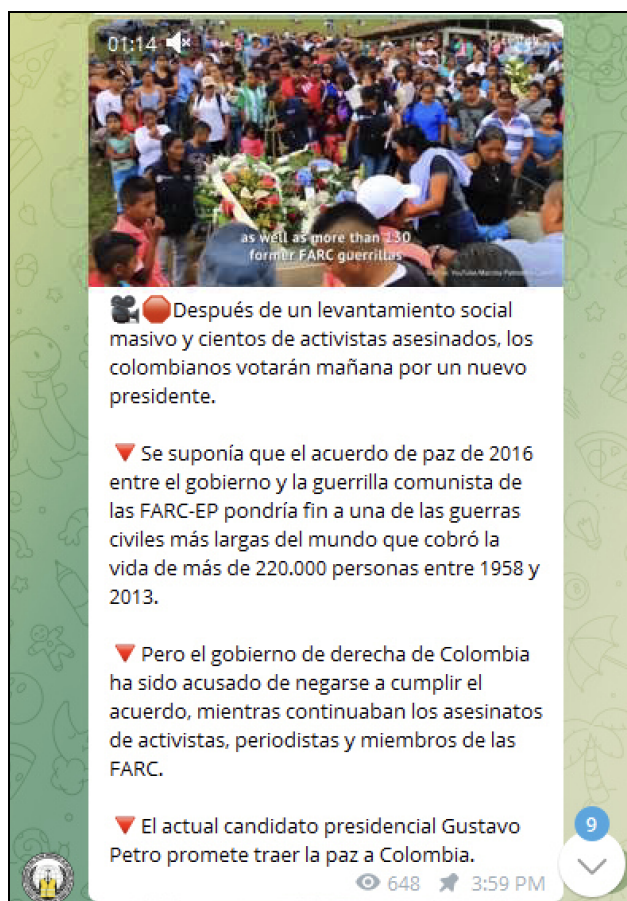
In addition to Chalecos echoing Petro’s allegations, Nisos researchers discovered that other ALMAC affiliates also published articles that blamed the armed strike on Duque’s mentor, made allegations of close ties between the country’s security forces and the Gulf Clan, or accused the incumbent administration of exploiting the armed strike. ALMA- affiliates:

- *Contiga Radio* published<sup>23</sup> an article on 16 May 2022 alleging that the Gulf Clan received arms from the military and alleged the group had bought off security officials.

<sup>23</sup>[https://www.contagioradio\[.\]com/politicos-y-militares-fueron-claves-en-la-expansion-de-las-agc-o-clan-del-golfo/](https://www.contagioradio[.]com/politicos-y-militares-fueron-claves-en-la-expansion-de-las-agc-o-clan-del-golfo/)

- *Humana Radio* published<sup>24</sup> an article on 6 May 2022 that covered the Twitter interaction between Gustavo Petro and Alvaro Uribe regarding the armed strike. The article concludes its coverage of their debate by stating that “Petro expressed his solidarity with the victims.”
- *Voz* published<sup>25</sup> an article on 13 May 2022 alleging President Ivan Duque used the violence of the armed strike to replace the governor of Medellin in a “coup” and stated that the incumbent administration would use all of its “tricks,” both legal and illegal, to prevent Gustavo Petro from winning the presidential election.

Chalecos and other ALMAC affiliates began to push messaging that Gustavo Petro and his Historic Pact platform was the only solution to the violence in the country following the Gulf Clan’s armed strike.



**Graphic 15: Telegram message from Chalecos on 13 May 2022 declaring Petro the only peace candidate.**

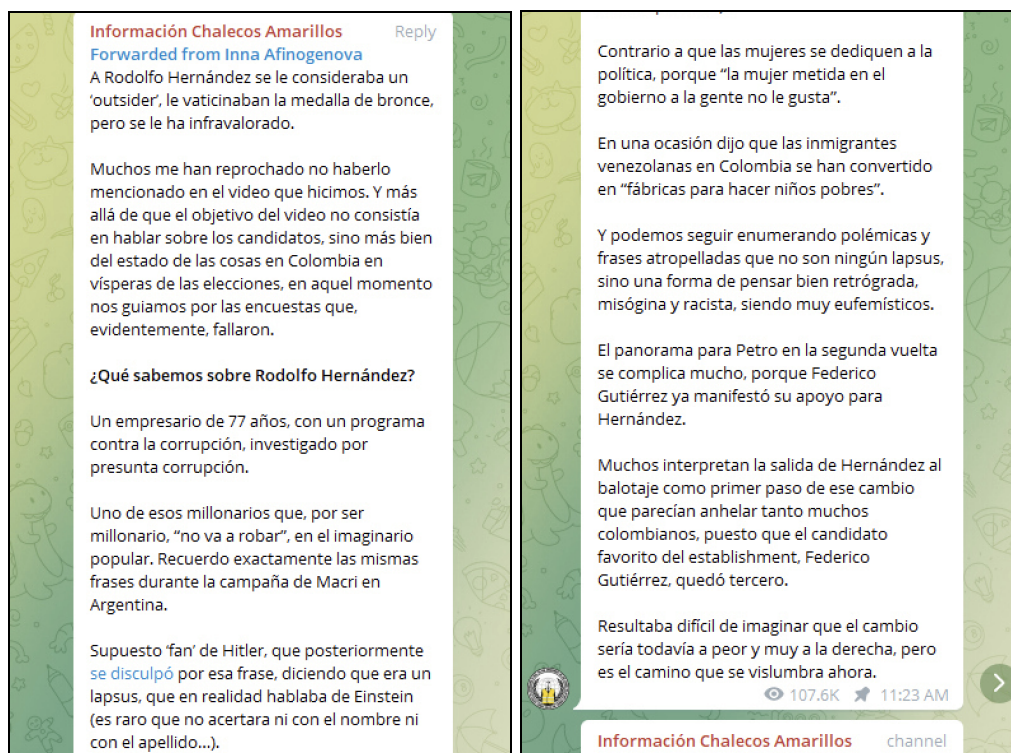
The polling shift that began during the Gulf Clan’s “armed strike” continued resulting in Gustavo Petro capturing 40 percent of the popular vote and moving on to the second round against entrepreneur and anti-corruption candidate Rodolfo Hernandez, who got 28 percent of the vote. Federico Gutierrez finished in third with 23 percent of the vote following his collapse in the polls that began after the Gulf Clan’s “armed strike” began on 5 May 2022. The collapse of Gutierrez in the polls guaranteed that both

<sup>24</sup> [https://humanaradio\[.\]com.co/uribe-denuncio-que-desde-el-clan-del-golfo-exigen-votar-por-petro/](https://humanaradio[.]com.co/uribe-denuncio-que-desde-el-clan-del-golfo-exigen-votar-por-petro/)

<sup>25</sup> [https://semanariovoz\[.\]com/el-golpe-de-estado-de-duque-en-medellin/](https://semanariovoz[.]com/el-golpe-de-estado-de-duque-en-medellin/)



candidates in the second round of the Colombian presidential election favored peace negotiations with FARC dissidents and the ELN.<sup>26</sup> Chalecos and other ALMAC affiliates were quick to launch attacks against Hernandez following his advancement to the second round, making comparisons to former U.S. President Donald Trump, and tying him to the country's political establishment,<sup>27 28</sup> attacking his record as mayor,<sup>29</sup> and stating that Hernandez was farther to the right than Gutierrez.<sup>30</sup>



**Graphics 16 & 17 : Message forwarded into the Chalecos channel on 30 May 302022 following the results of the first round**

## AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Chalecos was less active in pushing out information regarding the Colombian election following Petro's first round victory, which could indicate that other actors in the ALMAC network were providing significant coverage of Petro and allowed the Chalecos network to focus on other efforts. Nisos researchers observed that Chalecos spent most of its time since the end of the first round on 29 May posting information from Russian sources on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and on the mass regional boycott of the U.S.-hosted Summit of the Americas. The expansion of the Chalecos network to reporting

<sup>26</sup><https://www.infobae.com/en/2022/04/05/rodolfo-hernandez-proposed-including-the-eln-in-the-peace-agreement-with-the-farc/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://semanariovoz.com/rodolfo-hernandez-lo-mismo-de-siempre/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.contagioradio.com/era-previsible-que-rodolfo-prefiriera-al-uribismo-petro/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://semanariovoz.com/rodolfo-hernandez-un-candidato-con-rabo-de-paja/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://humanaradio.com.co/fico-apunta-alianza-con-rodolfo-hernandez-si-no-pasa-a-segunda-vuelta/>



on these broader geopolitical events is likely to continue and be spread throughout the ALMAC network.



**Graphics 18 & 19: Chalecos messages denigrating the U.S.-led Summit of the Americas and sharing what appears to be information from the Russian Ministry of Defense.**

Nisos researchers also noticed that Chalecos has also begun reporting on the secessionist movement in Catalonia, Spain. The network is likely engaging in this issue due to the lack of a language barrier and due to the fact that secessionist sentiments rising in a NATO country during the Russian invasion of Ukraine would be beneficial to the alliance. In addition, many of the messages sent by Chalecos aimed at provoking unrest in Catalonia occurred ahead of the NATO summit that was being hosted in Madrid from 28 - 30 June 2022.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_196144.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_196144.htm)



**Graphic 20: Chalecos promoting Catalanian separatism**

The advantage of introducing Spanish-language reporting on these events is beneficial to Russia, as networks like Chalecos will not be held accountable for inaccurate or misleading reporting like traditional news organizations. Nisos researchers assess that continuing to track the spread of Spanish language disinformation will be essential for identifying these networks and assessing their impact on the electoral outcomes and public opinion in the region.