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FROM NARCO CARTELS TO CRIMINAL NETWORKS:

The Structural Transformation of Organized Crime in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Executive Summary

Latin America and the Caribbean's major criminal groups can no longer be narrowly understood as regional suppliers moving cocaine through global markets. That image belongs to an earlier phase. Today, several of these organizations exercise territorial authority, draw revenue from both licit and illicit economies, and shape political life from below. Across the region, they are moving into strategic sectors, exploiting weak regulation, and turning new financial technologies into instruments of concealment and control.

The region's criminal landscape has entered a more complex and dangerous phase. These groups have moved beyond narcotics into a wider illicit economy while embedding themselves more deeply in global logistics networks, including major European ports such as Antwerp, Hamburg, Le Havre, Rotterdam, and Valencia. Their resilience no longer depends on violence alone. It rests on the protective systems they build around themselves, the revenue streams they command, and the local authority they accumulate where the state is predatory, selective, or absent.

This is a governance problem as much as a security problem. Criminal groups are not simply attacking the state from outside. In many places, they work through the everyday machinery of public authority, turning institutional weakness into leverage and public office into a source of protection. This is the core of criminal governance. It allows armed groups to absorb enforcement pressure, recover from territorial disruption, and survive leadership losses.

> *The region's criminal landscape has entered a more complex and dangerous phase.*

SIX MACRO-SHIFTS

The report identifies six major shifts:

- **First**, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted criminal logistics in the short term but deepened poverty, weakened state capacity, and expanded informal economies in ways that accelerated criminal expansion once restrictions were lifted.
- **Second**, criminal groups diversified their revenue portfolios across a widening array of sectors and supply chains, increasing their resilience to enforcement shocks.
- **Third**, criminal logistics globalized. Cocaine production reached record highs, and Mexican, Brazilian, Colombian, and Ecuadorian networks moved closer to European ports and distribution markets.
- **Fourth**, state responses across the region tilted toward militarized emergency models that can reduce visible violence in the short term while leaving criminal finance, corruption, and governance structures intact.
- **Fifth**, organized crime's corrosive effect on democratic institutions intensified through the capture of electoral, judicial, municipal, and security institutions.
- **Sixth**, a harder U.S. security posture reshaped the hemisphere through terrorist designations, lethal maritime strikes, coercive diplomacy, deeper operational partnerships, and pressure on governments viewed as insufficiently aligned with Washington's counter-narcotics and counter-migration priorities.

From September 2025 through June 2026, U.S. forces reportedly conducted at least 62 lethal strikes against alleged drug-trafficking vessels in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific, killing 207 people.[1] Public reporting remains fragmented, and U.S. authorities have often not publicly identified the specific organization, individuals killed, or evidentiary basis for the alleged trafficking links. Washington has increased pressure on Brazil including by designating the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) and Comando Vermelho (CV) as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, or FTOs, in June 2026 (State Department 2026). Brazilian officials had sought to redirect cooperation toward financial intelligence, real-time data sharing, and disruption of trafficking and arms flows. These measures have produced disruption including legal controversy, diplomatic friction, and business uncertainty whose regional implications remain uncertain.[2]

SELECTED FINDINGS

The report features a number of high-level findings:

- Criminal organizations and networks now govern significant territories across the region, providing dispute resolution, protection, employment, and social order in communities where state authority is absent, predatory, selectively present, or collusive.
- Recent research estimates that roughly 14 percent of respondents across 18 Latin American countries report that local criminal groups provide order or reduce crime, corresponding to roughly 80 million people exposed to some form of criminal governance.
- More than 30 armed groups compete for influence across the Amazon Basin, now a multi-layered criminal economy where illegal gold, timber, land, wildlife, drugs, and emerging critical minerals generate revenue, territorial control, and political influence.
- Criminal organizations have established direct operational presence in major European cities. Cocaine seizures across EU member states reached 419 metric tons in 2023. Where seizures have fallen in some ports, especially after Antwerp's 2023 peak, the trend should be read alongside displacement toward France, Spain, West African routes, sea drops, and more sophisticated concealment techniques. This is adaptation, not necessarily contraction.
- The Bukele model in El Salvador has generated a powerful regional demonstration effect. It has normalized a post-liberal security paradigm that delivers visible order but carries durable risks for due process, accountability, and democratic governance.

The report treats organized crime as a security, governance, business, development, and democratic threat. The record shows that military crackdowns, absent structural reform, displace rather than resolve criminal governance. They leave financial infrastructure intact, produce human-rights costs that undermine legitimacy, and create conditions for criminal reconstitution.

Two Brazilian operations illustrate the strategic choice facing the region. A crackdown in Rio de Janeiro in October 2025 produced headlines and short-term territorial disruption (Muggah 2025). A financial-intelligence operation culminating in August 2025 raids in São Paulo targeting the PCC's money-laundering architecture produced more significant structural disruption of the organization's financial capacity (Receita Federal 2025). Building the capacity to execute the São Paulo model at scale—through financial-intelligence units, prosecutorial integration, transnational analysis, and democratic accountability—is one of the defining security challenges of the next decade.[3]

Introduction

Latin America and the Caribbean have long borne a disproportionate share of the world's criminal violence. Yet the years from 2020 to 2026 marked a structural shift rather than simple continuity. Criminal organizations diversified beyond narcotics, deepened their territorial control, and embedded themselves in legal sectors including fuel retail, agriculture, finance, logistics, mining, transport, and port services. The most powerful groups no longer merely move illicit goods; they set rules, tax markets, corrupt public agencies, control prisons, intimidate political candidates, and shape the conditions under which citizens, businesses, and local governments operate.

Transnational networks that once supplied European criminal intermediaries at arm's length increasingly moved into direct management or facilitation of port logistics, infrastructure corruption, and permanent operational presence in major destination cities. This matters for Europe, North America, West Africa, and global business because criminal exposure now travels through legal supply chains, not only illicit markets.

State responses oscillated between institutional neglect and military repression. Since 2022, the Salvadoran *mano dura* model has generated powerful regional resonance despite documented human rights costs and unresolved structural vulnerabilities. Since 2025, another externally driven dynamic reshaped the landscape. The second Trump administration has led to the designation of several criminal organizations by the U.S. as terrorist entities; the escalation of military strikes against alleged drug-trafficking vessels; the expansion of joint operations with selected partners such as Ecuador; intensifying diplomatic pressure on countries including Colombia and Brazil; and the capture of then-president Nicolás Maduro in January 2026.

This report assesses that evolving landscape in thirteen sections. It begins with structural conditions and historical context (Section 1), followed by violence trends from 2020 to 2026 (Section 2). Section 3 examines criminal network architecture and revenue portfolios. Section 4 surveys regional and national trends. Section 5 assesses direct material risks to the formal private sector. Section 6 analyses Washington's shifting security posture. Section 7 examines the structural transformation of Latin American criminal networks in Europe. Section 8 turns to the Amazon Basin as a criminal frontier. Section 9 documents technological adaptation. Section 10 evaluates state responses. Sections 11 and 12 examine public perceptions and democratic risk. It concludes with strategic recommendations (Section 13).

> *"The era of the vertically integrated, hierarchically commanded drug trafficking organization is receding. Networked criminal organizations require networked intelligence responses."*

Section 1. Structural Conditions

Latin America and the Caribbean register among the highest homicide and victimization rates in the world. But the region is not uniformly violent, and it is not uniformly governed by criminal groups. It contains some of the Western Hemisphere's most functional democracies alongside polities in which the state's monopoly on violence has effectively collapsed, most acutely in Haiti and Venezuela. Between these poles, most states navigate inadequate institutional capacity, high criminal revenue, pervasive impunity, and chronic citizen insecurity (Muggah and Aguirre 2024, 2018; UNODC, 2023a).

The structural conditions sustaining organized crime are well documented. They have not fundamentally changed over the past six years, but their interaction has intensified. Geographic endowment makes the Andean region the world's most cost-effective coca cultivation environment and positions Central America, Mexico, the Caribbean, and parts of the Amazon as critical transit corridors (UNODC, 2023b). Economic inequality—Latin America remains among the world's most unequal regions, with a Gini coefficient consistently above 0.46—creates large labour pools for criminal recruitment and limits the opportunity costs of criminal employment (World Bank, 2025; ECLAC, 2023).

Impunity, with homicide clearance rates in many countries below 10 percent, removes deterrence and signals institutional incapacity (UNODC 2023; Muggah and Aguirre, 2018; UNDP, 2013).[4] Uneven, predatory, selectively present, or collusive state authority in peripheral urban and rural areas creates governance vacuums that criminal organizations fill with their own dispute resolution mechanisms, protection services, and social hierarchies (Uribe et al., 2022; Lessing, 2021; Barnes, 2017).

The key enabling condition, however, is not simply state absence. Criminal governance often expands where the state is absent, predatory, selectively present, or collusive. Criminal authority can emerge where police, prison officials, municipal brokers, procurement systems, customs offices, or political patrons tolerate, tax, regulate, or collaborate with criminal actors (Muggah 2026a, 2026b; 2006g; Uribe et al, 2025). More state presence does not automatically mean less criminal governance. In some places, parts of the state help produce it.

The COVID-19 pandemic deepened state fiscal constraints, contracted social service provision, expanded informal labour markets, and weakened already fragile institutions, generating the violence rebounds that followed in 2021 and 2022 across multiple countries simultaneously (UNODC, 2023b; Muggah and Dudley, 2021). Homicide data quality requires an upfront methodological note. Venezuelan official statistics are unreliable and subject to political suppression (Human Rights Watch, 2024a). Haitian data collection has been severely disrupted by gang control of urban infrastructure (UN Security Council, 2024). The true toll of lethal criminal violence almost certainly exceeds official counts.

Section 2. Violence Trends: 2020-2026

The record of criminal violence in Latin America and the Caribbean is one of divergence rather than uniformity. The region accounts for approximately 14 percent of global homicides while containing less than nine percent of the world's population (UNODC, 2023a). It is routinely characterised as the world's most lethal outside active war zones, with over 40 of the world's 50 most violent cities located here (Muggah and Aguirre, 2024). Yet aggregate figures hide a more complex story: some countries achieved real violence reductions, while others experienced historic deterioration.

The first year of the pandemic produced counterintuitive effects. Lockdowns temporarily reduced street crime and homicide in several urban settings. Criminal organizations, however, used reduced police visibility and mobility restrictions to consolidate territorial control, reorder internal hierarchies, and expand illicit economies less dependent on street-level activity. Colombia's conflict dynamics were displaced rather than resolved, with FARC dissident groups accelerating expansion into territories vacated by the formal demobilization process (INDEPAZ, 2026).

As pandemic restrictions eased, pent-up criminal competition reasserted itself. Ecuador became the defining deterioration case. Its homicide rate rose from roughly 6 per 100,000 in 2018 to 50.91 per 100,000 in 2025, when the country recorded 9,216 intentional homicides (Primicias, 2026). Competition over Guayaquil's port corridors, prison systems, extortion rackets, and cocaine export routes helped turn Ecuador from a relatively stable middle-income democracy into one of the hemisphere's most violent countries.

Ecuador's deterioration undercuts the claim that emergency militarization alone can structurally disrupt criminal governance. Military deployment may suppress visible violence for a time. Without prison reform, corruption control, port security, prosecutorial capacity, and financial disruption, criminal networks adapt and reconstitute.

Haiti's catastrophic spiral accelerated following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, enabling gang networks to extend control over critical infrastructure (Muggah 2026c, 2025a). Brazil's Amazon simultaneously became a theater of environmental crime-linked violence, with record deforestation accompanied by lethal confrontations between criminal miners and indigenous defenders (INPE, 2022).

A regional inflection point occurred in early 2022. Following 87 murders attributed to gangs in a single weekend, El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele declared a state of exception, suspending a range of constitutional protections, including due-process rights. Over the following eighteen months, more than 75,000 people were imprisoned. Official homicide rates fell sharply, though subsequent research has questioned the degree to which the crackdown, rather than prior covert negotiations, drove the reduction (Escano et al., 2025). The political resonance was immediate. Leaders in Ecuador, Honduras, and Panama invoked the Salvadoran model, often without acknowledging its costs or its unresolved vulnerabilities.

Massacre violence expanded across the region during this period. Unlike individual homicides, massacres often signal active territorial warfare and competition for corridors, markets, and communities.

They imply a depth of organizational infrastructure that headline homicide statistics alone cannot capture (InSight Crime, 2024a; Durán-Martínez, 2018). Research shows that massacre violence clusters in transition zones where criminal territorial control is actively contested (Uribe et al., 2025; GiTOC, 2023). A decline in massacres can indicate improved security. It can also indicate criminal consolidation: deeper governance with lower visible violence.

The geographic pattern of massacre violence reflects the uneven distribution of criminal competition across the region. Colombia recorded over 90 massacres in 2023 despite active pursuit of negotiated ceasefires under the *paz total* framework (INDEPAZ, 2026). In Ecuador, the assassination of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio in August 2023 demonstrated that criminal penetration of political life had reached the highest levels of the state.[5] And in Haiti, massacre frequency increased sharply following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021 as competing gang coalitions fought to fill the governance vacuum (UNSC, 2024; Muggah 2025, 2026).[6]

Mexico's record of massacre violence stands apart. Its massacre violence is concentrated in states where cartel competition is most intense—Guerrero, Michoacán, Zacatecas, and Chihuahua. This is not episodic criminal excess. It is the logic of armed groups asserting and defending territorial boundaries. Organized violence was further destabilized from mid-2024 onward by the fragmentation of the Sinaloa Cartel following the U.S.-facilitated capture of Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, which triggered a violent internal succession crisis (Jorgic, 2024; U.S. DOJ, 2024). From 2025, the Trump administration's designation of major cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) combined with increased operations targeting suspected drug vessels introduced a further layer of disruption and displacement, adding volatility without resolving the structural conditions that sustain criminal territorial competition (White House, 2025; WOLA, 2026).

Mexico's criminal landscape became more volatile again in early 2026. In February, Mexican forces killed Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) leader Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes, "El Mencho," triggering retaliatory violence. In late April, Mexican forces captured Audias Flores Silva, "El Jardinero," a senior CJNG figure viewed by some officials as a possible successor (Sanchez, 2026). These developments may disrupt CJNG command-and-control in the short term, but they also reinforce a familiar lesson from leadership-decapitation campaigns: removing leaders can fragment groups, intensify succession struggles, and shift violence without dismantling the financial, territorial, and governance infrastructure that sustains them.

Femicide constitutes a distinct and chronic dimension of criminal violence. Organized crime drives part of this toll through territorial control that limits women's freedom of movement and exit options, trafficking economies that expose women and girls to lethal violence, and hypermasculine norms embedded in gangs and cartels (ECLAC, 2025). Femicide rates tend to be higher in municipalities with extensive gang territorial control, and violence reduction strategies that lower overall homicide counts can leave femicide rates largely unchanged if they do not address the criminal governance structures that produce gendered violence. Progress on legal frameworks across the region – with most countries now having specific femicide legislation – remains inadequately translated into prosecutorial practice, with conviction rates consistently low and impunity functioning as a structural enabler of continued violence.

Section 3. Criminal Network Architecture

Understanding how criminal groups are organized is essential to understanding the region's security trajectory. The old image of the vertically integrated cartel is increasingly misleading. The dominant model now combines franchise, confederation, and joint venture logistics (GiTOC, 2023). Brand-name organizations – CJNG, Sinaloa, CV, PCC – maintain strategic coordination and supply chain functions while delegating territorial management, extortion, and retail operations to semi-autonomous local operators and affiliated gangs. Leadership decapitation strategies produced the unintended consequence of creating more fragmented, adaptive, and often more violent successor organizations (Trejo and Ley, 2020). Network-centric criminal organizations require network-centric intelligence approaches.

Extortion has become the primary point of contact between criminal organizations and civilians across parts of Central and South America. Global cocaine production reached a record 3,708 metric tons in 2023. The 2025 World Drug Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) confirms that cocaine production, seizures, and use all reached new highs in 2023, with cocaine becoming the fastest-growing illicit drug market. Methamphetamine production, dominated by Mexican cartels, constitutes a major secondary stream. Fentanyl and synthetic opioid trafficking remain among the period's fastest-growing criminal revenue streams, with Mexican cartels sourcing key precursor chemicals largely from abroad, including China.

Illegal artisanal and small-scale gold mining has become a major alternative revenue source across Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela. Extortion has become the primary point of contact between criminal organizations and civilians across parts of Central America and Ecuador. Migrant smuggling expanded dramatically as record numbers crossed the Darién Gap. Environmental crime, cybercrime, human trafficking, fuel theft, and resource theft complete an increasingly diversified portfolio.

A critically underappreciated dimension of this landscape is the depth of criminal governance: the provision of order, protection, employment, dispute resolution, and market regulation by criminal organizations. This is not a peripheral feature of organized crime. It is one of the main reasons criminal groups endure (Muggah, 2026a; 2026b; Uribe et al., 2025; Lessing, 2021; Arias, 2017; Barnes, 2017). Criminal governance creates constituencies with material interests in the continuation of criminal authority, generates legitimacy that coercion alone cannot sustain, and produces social structures that survive the arrest or death of individual leaders. Intelligence that treats criminal organizations as purely economic actors underestimates their resilience and misidentifies the levers of lasting disruption.

> *Criminal governance creates constituencies with material interests in the continuation of criminal authority, generates legitimacy that coercion alone cannot sustain, and produces social structures that survive the arrest or death of individual leaders.*

Criminal governance becomes politically consequential through three linked mechanisms. Coercion alters who can run, campaign, investigate, govern, or report. Suppression narrows participation, civic monitoring, journalism, and local accountability. Substitution makes security and "control" the dominant test of political credibility, displacing prevention, anti-corruption, social policy, and due process (Muggah, 2026a, 2026g). These mechanisms are strongest where state authority is uneven, selective, predatory, or collusive.

Table 1. Criminal groups in the Americas (Top 20): 2020-2026

The twenty organizations below account for a large share of organized criminal violence, trafficking, and governance activity across the hemisphere. Two trends stand out: PCC's transnational expansion beyond Brazil, and Tren de Aragua's emergence from Venezuela as one of the hemisphere's most dynamic criminal franchises.

#	Organization	Home country	Publicly documented active presence	Estimated size range	Primary activities
1	**Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC)**	Brazil	Brazil; Paraguay; Bolivia; Peru; broader facilitation links in Europe and West Africa	30,000–40,000	Cocaine trafficking, arms trafficking, illicit mining, penetration of fuel supply chains, money laundering, and extortion
2	**Comando Vermelho (CV)**	Brazil	Brazil; Paraguay; Bolivia; parts of neighboring South America	20,000–30,000	Cocaine trafficking, territorial control, extortion, arms trafficking
3	**Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG)**	Mexico	Mexico; United States; Colombia; Ecuador; broader international trafficking links	15,000–20,000	Fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, extortion, migrant smuggling, fuel/mineral theft
4	**Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13)**	El Salvador / USA	United States; El Salvador; Guatemala; Honduras; also reported in Belize, Costa Rica, Italy, Mexico, Spain	10,000–20,000	Extortion, drug trafficking/ distribution, human smuggling, murders, territorial intimidation
5	**Barrio 18**	El Salvador / USA	El Salvador; Guatemala; Honduras; Mexico; United States; also reported in Canada, Italy, Spain	10,000–20,000	Drug trafficking, extortion, human smuggling, murders
6	**Los Choneros**	Ecuador	Ecuador; Colombia; Peru	10,000–12,000	Drug trafficking, hired killings, kidnappings, political violence, weapons smuggling
7	**'Ndrangheta**	Italy	Italy; strong operational links to Colombia and supplier countries; Europe, Australia, Canada	6,000–7,000	Cocaine wholesale/import brokerage, money laundering, infiltration of legal economy
8	**Sinaloa Cartel**	Mexico	Mexico; United States; Canada; Andean source-country ties; facilitators in Europe and Asia	5,000–15,000	Fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, money laundering, extortion
9	**Clan del Golfo**	Colombia	Colombia; Panama; Venezuela; Costa Rica; Honduras	4,000–8,000	Cocaine trafficking, extortion, illegal mining, attacks on officials and civilians
10	**Viv Ansanm (coalition)**	Haiti	Primarily Port-au-Prince metropolitan area; also Artibonite, Centre, West departments	3,000–7,000	Territorial control, kidnapping, extortion, attacks on state infrastructure, drug transit

continuation

#	Organization	Home country	Publicly documented active presence	Estimated size range	Primary activities
11	**Tren de Aragua**	Venezuela	Venezuela; United States; multiple Latin American countries; Spain	2,500–5,000	Extortion, kidnapping, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, drug trafficking, illegal mining
12	**Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)**	Colombia	Colombia; members and leaders also reported in Venezuela	2,500–3,500	Armed assaults, extortion, hostage-taking, drug trafficking/ taxation, illegal mining
13	**EMC / FARC-EP dissidents**	Colombia	Southern and northeastern Colombia; some members in Venezuela	2,000–3,000	Cocaine trafficking, extortion, land control, armed attacks
14	**Los Lobos**	Ecuador	Ecuador	2,000–5,000	Drug trafficking, extortion, prison control, attacks on officials
15	**Oficina de Envigado**	Colombia	Colombia; some international trafficking and money-laundering links	2,000–4,000	Cocaine trafficking, extortion, contract killing, money laundering
16	**Cártel del Noreste (CDN)**	Mexico	Northeast Mexico; trafficking and migrant-smuggling routes into the United States	2,000–4,000	Drug trafficking, extortion, kidnapping, migrant smuggling, fuel theft
17	**Segunda Marquetalia**	Colombia	Colombia; Venezuela	1,500–3,000	Cocaine trafficking, extortion, arms
18	**Sindicatos mineros (network category)**	Venezuela	Venezuela; border zones with Brazil, Colombia, Guyana	1,000–3,000	Illegal gold mining, extortion, violent protection, some trafficking links
19	**Jamaican organized-crime networks**	Jamaica	Jamaica; United Kingdom; United States; Canada; Cayman Islands	1,000–3,000	Cocaine/cannabis trafficking, extortion, money laundering
20	**Primeiro Grupo Catarinense PGC / South Brazil networks**	Brazil	Southern Brazil; Paraguay; Argentina; Bolivia	1,000–2,000	Cocaine trafficking, arms, money laundering

Note: Size estimates are indicative and non-comparable. Membership, affiliation, territorial presence, and levels of operational control vary by source and method. Some estimates count core members; others include associates, prisoners, local brokers, franchise partners, or affiliated gangs.

Criminal revenues in the Americas are commonly estimated to exceed $120 billion annually, with less than 1 percent of illicit funds successfully seized (GiTOC, 2023). Dominant laundering mechanisms include real estate investment in Montevideo, Panama City, and Miami; trade invoice manipulation; cryptocurrency layering; free-trade zone exploitation; and offshore beneficial-ownership concealment (FATF, 2023; Europol, 2023). The beneficial-ownership gap remains one of the largest structural vulnerabilities in the global anti-money-laundering architecture.

Section 4. Regional and National Trends

The criminal organizational landscape plays out differently across the region's highly varied national and sub-regional contexts. Mexico's security crisis combines scale, institutional complexity, and geopolitical entanglement in ways distinct from the rest of the region. Competition between the Sinaloa Cartel and CJNG remains central, but both organizations operate through local plaza operators, brokers, and affiliated gangs (GiTOC, 2023). The López Obrador government's strategic non-confrontation approach produced a stable, high-violence equilibrium (Trejo and Ley, 2020). President Claudia Sheinbaum inherited an environment complicated by Sinaloa Cartel fragmentation after the U.S.-facilitated capture of El Mayo Zambada in July 2024 (Jorgic, 2024; U.S. DOJ, 2024).

In February 2026, Mexican armed forces killed CJNG leader Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes, "El Mencho," in a major operation in Jalisco. The aftermath—road blockades, arson, and coordinated retaliatory violence—highlighted both CJNG's resilience and the recurring risk that decapitation can trigger fragmentation and short-run violence spikes (Dudley, 2026). The succession picture sharpened in late April 2026, when Mexican forces captured Audias Flores Silva, "El Jardinero," a senior CJNG figure viewed as a possible successor (CBS, 2026). These episodes create acute uncertainty over succession and territorial control, with likely spillovers into local governance, extortion economies, and tourism-sensitive regions.

Mexico's political-criminal dimension became more explicit in April 2026, when U.S. prosecutors charged Sinaloa Governor Rubén Rocha Moya and nine other current or former Mexican officials with allegedly partnering with the Sinaloa Cartel to distribute narcotics into the United States (US, 2026). The indictment remains an allegation. Rocha Moya denied the accusations, and Mexican authorities contested the evidentiary basis. Even so, the case illustrates the report's central point: organized crime is a market problem as well as a struggle over state office, police protection, and electoral authority.

The Bukele government's *estado de excepción* became the region's most-watched security experiment and its most contested. Official homicides fell from among the world's highest rates to among its lowest within eighteen months. Yet the surface statistics obscure a darker ledger. Subsequent research has questioned the degree to which enforcement, rather than prior covert government-gang negotiations, drove the reduction (Escano et al, 2025). The underlying criminal financial architecture—the money flows, laundering networks, and political protection rackets that sustained MS-13 and Barrio 18—was largely left intact. El Salvador may have suppressed visible gang violence while preserving the conditions for its return.

Guatemala remained a byword for criminal-political fusion, though the 2023 election of Bernardo Arévalo represented a rare democratic counter-current. His presidency faced systematic judicial harassment from entrenched anti-reform networks, a reminder that electoral outcomes and institutional capture can coexist for extended periods (WOLA, 2026). Honduras extended its state of exception under President Xiomara Castro, achieving measurable homicide reductions against a backdrop of deepening civil liberties restrictions (ACLED 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2024b).[7] Nicaragua presents the starkest case: under Ortega, formal security stability is maintained through coercion and tacit accommodation with

criminal transit networks, producing order without democratic governance.
In Colombia, President Gustavo Petro's *paz total* initiative produced mixed results. Negotiations with the ELN yielded partial ceasefires that repeatedly stalled, undermined by splinter factions, continued extortion, and the absence of meaningful state control in conflict zones. Dissident FARC factions expanded their footprint precisely in areas where negotiation space created security vacuums. Colombia's coca economy continued generating record outputs regardless of political dialogue.[8]
The Trump administration's 2025 bilateral pressure—including threats of tariffs and sanctions following disputes over deportation flights—introduced political friction into one of the hemisphere's most important security relationships at a moment when criminal-network disruption required closer cooperation, not less.

Venezuela continues to function as a criminalized state incubator with region-wide consequences, but the country should not be described as a single, coherent, vertically integrated narco-state. The more accurate description is a fragmented criminal-governance ecosystem built through institutional decay, protection markets, corrupt officials, security-sector complicity, colectivos, Colombian armed-group linkages, illegal mining, extortion, migrant exploitation, and cocaine transit.

Maduro's capture in January 2026 removed the apex figure from this order, but it did not dissolve the networks and revenue streams that sustained it. The conditions that produced Tren de Aragua, the Cartel de los Soles, and multiple colectivo formations did not disappear with Maduro's removal. They are now being renegotiated, fragmented, and contested.

Over 8 million Venezuelans were displaced or had left the country by 2026—the largest migration crisis in the Western Hemisphere. That displacement created vulnerable populations systematically exploited by traffickers, extortionists, smugglers, and criminal recruiters along migration routes and in destination cities.

Ecuador's collapse from relatively stable middle-income democracy to declared internal armed conflict is the period's most dramatic security deterioration. Competition between Los Choneros, Los Lobos, Tiguerones, and Aztecas for control of Guayaquil's port corridors helped drive Ecuador's homicide rate from roughly 6 per 100,000 in 2018 to 50.91 per 100,000 in 2025, when the country recorded 9,216 intentional homicides (Muggah, 2025d; ICG, 2025c). These groups operate as franchise structures and service providers for larger transnational trafficking networks, including Mexican cartels, which use Ecuador's dollarized economy and containerized port infrastructure as a transit and laundering platform for Andean cocaine destined for European markets.[9]

Haiti represents the hemisphere's most acute case of gang-state collapse, with criminal federations controlling an estimated 90 percent of Port-au-Prince by 2025 (Muggah, 2026c; UN Security Council, 2024). The Viv Ansanm coalition, uniting formerly rival gang federations G9 and G-Pèp under the leadership of Jimmy Chérizier ("Barbecue"), demonstrated an organizational sophistication that outpaced the Haitian National Police and stalled the Kenya-led Multinational Security Support Mission. The mission struggled with a basic mismatch: it was designed as a stabilization force, not a counter-criminal governance operation. It has since been replaced by an UN-endorsed anti-gang suppression force (Muggah, 2026c).

Section 5. Criminal Targeting of Economic Sectors

Criminal organizations increasingly represent an economic threat to the formal private sector as well as a security threat to states. During the period under review, organized crime groups expanded their predatory engagement with the formal economy, moving from opportunistic extortion toward structured relationships with specific sectors (Muggah and Glenny, 2025; GiTOC, 2023; World Bank, 2025). Companies operating in Latin America—including U.S. and European multinationals in agriculture, logistics, mining, financial services, fuel, and retail—face direct and growing exposure to criminal predation. This exposure is material, not only reputational or political.

Hydrocarbon theft has become a significant criminal revenue stream, with organized networks operating at industrial scale. In Mexico, fuel theft has cost the state tens of billions of pesos annually, with groups such as the Cartel Santa Rosa de Lima specializing in what is described locally as *huachicoleo* (Woolston, 2025). In Brazil, fuel adulteration and theft costs the retail sector an estimated R$10 billion annually, with criminal groups adulterating gasoline, diesel, and biofuels at the distribution level and laundering proceeds through legally registered retailers (Muggah, 2026h, 2025c).

Extortion economies have matured from street-level predation into structured taxation systems imposed across entire sectors. In Ecuador, criminal organizations institutionalized protection payments (known as the *vacuna* system), penetrating small retailers, construction, transport, and fishing industries, with documented arson, kidnapping, and targeted assassination against non-compliant operators (Muggah, 2025d; GiTOC, 2023). In Mexico, CJNG and Sinaloa affiliates moved beyond drug revenues into agricultural extortion, most visibly in Michoacán's avocado and lime sectors (Erickson and Owen, 2022; Woolston, 2025).

Criminal infiltration of ports and logistics infrastructure is among the most strategically significant developments of the period. In Brazil, cargo theft organized by criminal networks recorded more than 10,000 incidents in 2024, with losses rising sharply when fuel-related theft and fraud are included (Muggah, 2025c). In Ecuador, criminal control of Guayaquil port logistics affects all companies using the facility, with logistics providers documenting systematic extortion of workers and pressure to facilitate cocaine concealment in outbound containers (Muggah, 2025d).

> *"Consumers in Europe and North America routinely purchase goods that have subsidized organized crime at multiple points in the supply chain."*

The port of Antwerp has become one of the principal receiving nodes for Latin American cocaine in Europe, with Belgian authorities documenting the corruption of port workers, logistics personnel, scanner operators, and other insiders recruited to move containers before customs inspection (Rankin 2026; OCCRP 2024).[10] Similar patterns have been documented in Rotterdam, Hamburg, Valencia, Le Havre, and other European ports (Europol, 2023).

The fall in Antwerp seizures after the 2023 peak should not be read as a simple decline in trafficking. European authorities describe a displacement-and-adaptation pattern involving rerouting through France and Spain, West African staging points, sea drops, new concealment methods, and persistent surplus cocaine availability (Rankin, 2026). Seizure data should be treated as a routing indicator, not only as an interdiction success metric.

European companies operating in Latin America face criminal predation risks that are material, growing, and poorly captured by conventional risk frameworks. The risks are systematic rather than episodic. They travel through supply chains in ways that create exposure without physical presence. Companies need criminal governance due diligence alongside country-risk analysis (FATF, 2023; EU Commission, 2023).

Section 6. The U.S.'s Shifting Security Posture

The recent shift in U.S. security posture goes beyond an intensification of counternarcotics cooperation. It marks a doctrinal change in which organized crime is increasingly framed through counterterrorism, hemispheric security, migration control, and coercive diplomacy. Since 2025, Washington has moved across four tracks: designating criminal organizations as terrorist entities; using lethal military force against alleged trafficking vessels; targeting Venezuela's criminalized state architecture; and deepening operational partnerships with governments willing to accept a more militarized "narco-terrorism" frame (WOLA, 2026; Congressional Research Service, 2025).

The legal architecture came first. In February 2025, Washington designated eight criminal organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) and Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs): Tren de Aragua, MS-13, Sinaloa Cartel, CJNG, Cárteles Unidos, Cártel del Noreste, Cártel del Golfo, and La Nueva Familia Michoacana. Subsequent designations extended the model to Haiti's Viv Ansanm and Gran Grif, Ecuador's Los Choneros and Los Lobos, Venezuela's Cartel de los Soles, and the PCC and CV in Brazil (U.S. Department of State, 2025; 2026). These moves expand sanctions exposure, material-support liability, immigration consequences, financial-sector compliance burdens, and prosecutorial reach (Stuenkel 2026).[11] They also blur the boundary between organized crime and terrorism in ways that carry diplomatic and legal consequences far beyond law enforcement (Muggah 2025b).

The operational shift has been even more consequential. From September 2025 through May 2026, U.S. forces reportedly conducted 58 lethal strikes against vessels alleged to be linked to designated terrorist organizations in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific, killing 193 people by mid-May 2026 (AP, 2026, Gedeon, 2026). The campaign represents a shift from interdiction, seizure, arrest, and prosecution toward a battlefield-style targeting model. U.S. officials describe the strikes as attacks on narco-terrorist networks. Human-rights organizations and UN experts have argued that alleged drug trafficking should be addressed through law-enforcement processes unless there is an imminent threat to life (OHCHR, 2025a, 2025b).

Venezuela became the most dramatic expression of this posture. Maduro's capture in January 2026 removed the apex figure from Venezuela's criminalized authoritarian order, but it did not dismantle the underlying ecosystem of corrupt officials, security actors, colectivos, Colombian armed-group linkages, prison-origin networks, illegal mining economies, extortion, migrant exploitation, and cocaine transit. The evidence now available supports a fragmented criminal-state and criminal-governance architecture rather than a single vertically commanded narco-state (OHCHR, 2023; ICG, 2025a). The policy challenge therefore extends beyond regime decapitation to the reorganization of protection markets, coercive authority, and illicit revenue flows under conditions of institutional uncertainty (Varese, 2026; InSight Crime, 2025).

Ecuador illustrates the partnership track. After the U.S. designated Los Choneros and Los Lobos as FTOs and SDGTs in September 2025, Ecuador became the clearest test case for U.S. operational support to a Latin American government fighting designated criminal actors. In March 2026, U.S. and Ecuadorian forces launched joint operations against newly listed FTOs. This cooperation occurred against the backdrop of Ecuador's record 2025 homicide rate and the continued expansion of extortion, port infiltration, kidnapping, and illegal mining.

Brazil was the next major diplomatic test. Washington classified the PCC and Comando Vermelho as FTOs as of June 2026. Brazilian officials and analysts had resisted the terrorism frame and emphasized financial-intelligence cooperation instead (Muggah, 2026f). This distinction is strategically important. The terrorist designation extends U.S. sanctions, material-support exposure, and compliance burdens across Brazilian supply chains and financial institutions. It also generates tensions over sovereignty and politicizes security cooperation in an election year. A financial-chokepoint strategy, by contrast, is more consistent with the evidence that PCC and CV resilience depends on money laundering, logistics, prison governance, arms flows, and collusive protection networks rather than on charismatic leaders alone.

The combination of intensified U.S. maritime operations, escalated law enforcement in traditional transit corridors, and the Venezuelan political transition produced documented and anticipated displacement of cocaine trafficking flows across secondary corridors. French Guiana, Suriname, Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, the French Antilles and Sint Maarten warrant elevated scrutiny because they combine logistical value, jurisdictional complexity, financial-sector exposure, and limited dedicated law-enforcement capacity (OCRTIS, 2025; Europol, 2025; FATF, 2023). Enforcement pressure on one corridor reliably shifts trafficking to alternative routes unless it is paired with financial disruption, corruption control, prosecutorial follow-through, and demand-side strategies (UNODC, 2025).

Haiti represents a further theater of direct U.S.-adjacent intervention. In 2025, private security contractors deployed at the request of Haitian authorities. They did so with tacit U.S. support and began operating alongside the erstwhile Kenya-led Multinational Security Support Mission and the new Gang Suppression Force in Port-au-Prince, providing close protection for critical infrastructure, training for Haitian National Police units, and in some reported cases direct participation in counter-gang operations including with the use of drones (Muggah 2026c, 2025a; ICG, 2025d). The expansion of contractor roles in support of a newly mandated gang suppression force raises accountability concerns because the legal framework governing use of force, evidence collection, and civilian protection remains unclear (Human Rights Watch, 2025; Amnesty International, 2025).

Section 7. Latin American Crime Networks in Europe

European cocaine seizures nearly doubled in five years, but seizures capture only part of the story. They measure enforcement activity and trafficking flows, not the total scale of the market. The displacement effects generated by U.S. operations in the Western Hemisphere have not only shifted criminal flows within Latin America and the Caribbean. They have also increased pressure on European markets and infrastructure that were already under strain. A relationship once defined mainly by supplier-buyer transactions has become more integrated (Europol, 2023). By 2025, several Latin American networks were no longer just shipping cocaine to Europe. They were helping manage port logistics, recruit corrupt insiders, coordinate container extraction, and maintain representatives in destination cities.

European markets now absorb a very large share of global cocaine flows, with demand concentrated in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain, and Belgium (EUDA, 2024). European street prices – typically between USD60 and USD90 per gram – provide substantially higher profit margins than North American markets, incentivizing criminal investment in European distribution infrastructure (UNODC, 2024a). The primary cocaine entry routes operate through five corridors: the North Atlantic route through Antwerp, Rotterdam, and Hamburg; the South Atlantic route through West African staging points; the Iberian route through Spain and Portugal; the Caribbean-Atlantic route; and the air courier route, disproportionately through Brazil's Guarulhos international airport (Europol, 2023; UNODC, 2024a).[12]

Table 2. European cocaine seizures (selected jurisdictions)

Jurisdiction / entry point	2022	2023	2024	Networks commonly linked in public reporting	Main origin countries of networks
Belgium (Antwerp; plus Zeebrugge noted for 2023)	110t	121t	44t	Colombian supplier networks; Brazilian PCC; Albanian/Balkan brokers; Moroccan- and Belgian-based port/logistics facilitators	Colombia; Brazil; Albania/Balkans; Morocco; Belgium
Netherlands (national)	51t+	60t	38t	Colombian supplier networks; Dutch trafficking brokers; Albanian/Balkan and Moroccan logistics networks; some public cases also point to Sinaloa-linked facilitators	Colombia; Netherlands; Albania/Balkans; Morocco; Mexico
Spain (national)	58t	118t	123t	Colombian and Ecuador-linked supply chains; Galician and Spanish brokers; some cases involving Sinaloa-linked facilitators	Colombia; Ecuador; Spain; Mexico

continuation

Jurisdiction / entry point	2022	2023	2024	Networks commonly linked in public reporting	Main origin countries of networks
Portugal (national)	17t	22t	23t	Colombian supplier networks; Brazilian PCC/CV-linked trafficking routes; Lusophone brokerage and maritime facilitators	Colombia; Brazil; Portugal
Germany (national)	~21t	43t	24t	Colombian supplier networks; German and Turkish/Balkan logistics cells; some Europol-linked cases show Dutch-led networks using Hamburg as an entry point	Colombia; Germany; Netherlands; Turkey/Balkans
France (national)	27.6t	23.2t	53.5t	Colombian and Brazilian supply chains; French/Belgian logistics cells; maritime trafficking via Le Havre; Caribbean/French Guiana-linked courier routes	Colombia; Brazil; France; Belgium; French Guiana/Caribbean territories
Italy (national)	26.1t	n/p	n/p	Colombian supplier networks; 'Ndrangheta as key wholesale broker/importer; Italian port and logistics facilitators	Colombia; Italy
EU Member States (total)	**323t**	**419t**	**n/p**	**Multiple transnational supply and brokerage networks**	**Colombia; Brazil; Mexico; Ecuador; Albania/Balkans; Morocco**

Note: Figures refer to reported cocaine seizures and are not fully harmonized across jurisdictions. Some entries are national all-agency totals, while Belgium/Antwerp-Bruges and the Netherlands rely heavily on customs and port reporting. Seizure data reflect enforcement intensity, reporting practices, trafficking flows, concealment methods, and route displacement; they should not be read as a direct measure of total cocaine availability. Network attribution is indicative and based on public reporting, not case-by-case judicial attribution. **n/p** means not yet published or not identified in comparable public reporting.

In May 2026, Spanish authorities reported what was described as Europe's largest cocaine seizure to date after intercepting the Comoros-flagged vessel Arconian off the Canary Islands. The final haul was reported at roughly 30 tonnes of cocaine, surpassing the previous European record of approximately 25 tonnes seized in Hamburg in 2024 (Viudez and Lopez-Fonseca, 2026). The case demonstrates how European cocaine flows are not simply rising or falling by jurisdiction, but adapting across maritime corridors, flags of convenience, concealment methods, and enforcement pressure points.

Europol's Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment identified the shift from arm's-length supply to systematic corruption and operational control of European port infrastructure as a defining escalation (Europol, 2023). Criminal organizations with corrupted port access route shipments through inspection lanes managed by compromised officials. They receive real-time intelligence through recruited insiders ranging from dock workers and crane operators to IT personnel with access to cargo-tracking systems.

By 2026, the most important European port trend is adaptation under pressure. Scanning and enforcement at Antwerp and Rotterdam appear to have produced tactical displacement rather than strategic contraction. Criminal groups increasingly use alternative European ports, West African staging points, sea drops, spoofed routing, and more sophisticated concealment inside legitimate cargo (Europol 2026).[13] For Latin American and European intelligence services, seizure data should be read as a map of route adaptation as well as a record of enforcement success.

Venezuelan criminal networks, especially Tren de Aragua, have developed human-smuggling operations that follow Venezuelan migration flows to Spain and Portugal. These networks provide initial assistance with housing and employment while extracting extortion payments and recruiting into criminal operations (InSight Crime, 2025; Europol, 2024). By 2025, Spanish and Portuguese law enforcement reported that Tren de Aragua cells had consolidated territorial presence in specific urban neighborhoods, replicating the extortion-based governance model documented in Chilean and Peruvian cities (Europol, 2025).

The police breakthroughs against EncroChat, Sky ECC, and ANOM gave investigators unprecedented access to the private communications of criminal networks, producing vast intelligence that led to major arrests, seizures, and follow-on investigations across multiple countries. They revealed the extent to which European and Latin American criminal networks had become operationally integrated, sharing logistics, financial services, and corruption assets across jurisdictions in ways traditional bilateral law-enforcement cooperation had failed to detect (Europol, 2023; Europol, 2025).

> *Europol and national agencies increasingly treat port infiltration not as a peripheral vulnerability, but as a systemic governance failure.*

Section 8. The Amazon Basin's Criminal Economies

The Amazon Basin has become one of the world's most significant criminal economic frontiers. A decade ago, the basin was primarily treated as a transit zone for narcotics. It is now a multi-layered criminal economy encompassing illegal mining, timber trafficking, land-grabbing, wildlife trafficking, and systematic extortion of formal economic actors (Nobre et al., 2026; Muggah and Szabo, 2025; Igarapé Institute and InSight Crime, 2023a; Waisbich et al., 2022). The convergence of dozens of distinct armed groups operating across the basin has produced a governance crisis whose consequences extend far beyond the immediate security domain (GiTOC, 2023).

There are well over 30 distinct armed organizations with territorial presence in the Brazilian, Colombian, Peruvian, Venezuelan, Bolivian, and Ecuadorian Amazon. One estimate suggests that over two thirds of all Amazonian municipalities in these six countries have the presence of at least one criminal group (Amazon Underworld 2025).[14] This landscape includes Colombian armed groups such as the ELN, Estado Mayor Central, and Segunda Marquetalia; Venezuelan sindicatos mineros operating across Venezuelan-Brazilian and Venezuelan-Guyanese border zones; and locally constituted criminal groups in frontier Brazilian states including Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia, Acre, and Amapá (Igarapé Institute, 2024; Igarapé Institute and InSight Crime, 2022).

Garimpagem remains the Amazon's largest criminal economy by revenue and territorial footprint (UNODC and GRID, 2024). The Yanomami security and health crisis of early 2023, a direct consequence of the criminal mining invasion of indigenous Yanomami territory, demonstrated the catastrophic human consequences of criminal mining governance (Scherf and da Silva, 2023). Mercury contamination from artisanal gold processing has damaged fish stocks that form the dietary foundation of riverine Indigenous communities (Basta et al., 2021). A criminal gold economy has spread across border areas connecting Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Guyana, and Suriname,[15] stitched together by illicit financial flows, protection arrangements, and state complicity (Igarapé Institute, 2023; Igarapé Institute, 2024; Igarapé Institute, 2025; Risso et al., 2021).

Timber trafficking represents another major criminal economy in the Amazon, combining illegal logging with land-grabbing, cattle ranching, and soy cultivation that enters formal supply chains (Environmental Investigation Agency, 2023). Critical minerals represent an emerging frontier, with criminal organizations beginning to tax and control access to cassiterite, coltan, niobium, and rare earth element extraction sites, replicating the *garimpagem* model with new commodities (Ionava, 2026; Muggah, 2026d).

One of the Amazon criminal economy's most consequential features is the integration of illegally sourced commodities into formal global supply chains. Timber, gold, beef, soy, and critical minerals produced through criminal operations enter international trade through legitimate commercial channels via fraudulent land-title registration, falsified timber-origin certificates, gold laundering through intermediary refiners, and commodity aggregation at processing points that obscure criminal origin (Environmental Investigation Agency, 2023; Global Witness, 2024; Waisbich et al., 2022; Muggah, 2025e). The EU Deforestation Regulation

imposes due-diligence obligations on companies placing cattle, soy, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, timber, and rubber products on the European market. Criminal adaptation to compliance systems is already underway (EU Commission, 2023).

The PCC controls or taxes cocaine transshipment through key Amazonian river ports, including Tabatinga, Benjamin Constant, and Manaus, competing with Comando Vermelho-linked networks for drug supply-chain control in border regions where state presence is episodic and institutional authority is mediated through criminal intermediaries (Muggah, 2024b; GiTOC, 2023). The PCC's diversification into gold mining revenues, timber trafficking taxation, and systematic extortion of loggers, miners, and land-grabbers represents a qualitative shift in Amazon criminal governance. The organization is not only moving drugs through the Amazon; in some areas, it is regulating extractive activity (Risso et al., 2021).

The Amazon therefore illustrates the larger argument of this report. At least 344 of 772 municipalities of the Legal Amazon have the presence of the PCC and CV (FBSP 2025).[16] Criminal governance includes armed territorial control, market regulation, taxation of economic actors, public-agency penetration, infrastructure access, commodity laundering, and coercion of environmental defenders, Indigenous communities, prosecutors, journalists, and local officials.

Figura 1. The Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) deactivates illegal gold-mining rafts on the Novo River, on the boundary of Jamanxim National Forest, in Pará.

Foto: Felipe Werneck/Ibama

Section 9. Criminal Networks and New Technologies

Criminal groups across the Americas are adapting faster than many police and justice systems. Organizations that two decades ago relied mainly on couriers, prepaid phones, and cash now use encrypted communications, drones, satellite internet, cryptocurrency, social media recruitment, and AI-enabled fraud. The technological challenge is not criminal invincibility, but institutional asymmetry: many criminal groups are more agile than the agencies meant to investigate them (GiTOC, 2023; Europol, 2023).

The adoption of end-to-end encrypted communications platforms represents a major operational shift. The collapse of EncroChat, Sky ECC, and ANOM between 2020 and 2023 gave investigators an unprecedented window into the structure, financial flows, and corruption networks of criminal groups with Latin American supplier relationships (Europol, 2023; Europol, 2025). The criminal response was rapid: movement to self-hosted encrypted platforms, open-source messaging services without centralized servers, and compartmentalized multi-platform communications designed to prevent single-point compromise.

Low-earth-orbit (LEO) satellite internet services represented a step change in connectivity for criminal operations in remote environments, effectively dissolving the geographic isolation that had previously constrained coordination between jungle-based production sites and urban logistics networks (Muggah and Glenny, 2026; Muggah, 2022). Social media platforms—particularly Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook—have become primary criminal recruitment channels, with Tren de Aragua's use of these platforms for recruiting vulnerable Venezuelan migrants documented by multiple law enforcement agencies since 2022 (InSight Crime, 2025; DHS, 2024).

The deployment of commercially available drones has accelerated across multiple operational applications, with cartels using them to identify, track, and coordinate attacks on law enforcement in ways that directly mirror military battlefield applications (Dudley, 2026; Muggah and Glenny, 2026). Criminal organizations have also deployed drone swarms to monitor interdiction operations in real time. Brazilian criminal organizations have adopted AI-powered voice synthesis and deepfake video tools for financial fraud, generating significant losses across multiple jurisdictions (Chainalysis, 2024).

Law-enforcement agencies face capability gaps in satellite communications interception, counter-drone systems, AI-generated fraud detection, and cryptocurrency tracing. Legal and judicial frameworks in many jurisdictions lag criminal adoption curves by several years (Europol, 2023; Europol, 2025; FATF, 2023). The response must be institutional as well as technological, combining stronger analytical capacity, interagency coordination, legal tools, and faster international cooperation.

> *“Low-earth-orbit satellite services have dissolved the geographic isolation that once constrained coordination between jungle-based production sites and urban logistics networks.”*

Section 10. State Responses, Outcomes, and Trade-Offs

State responses to organized crime span a widening spectrum, from El Salvador's maximalist suppression to Colombia's negotiated accommodation to Uruguay's patient institutional reform. A notable trend is the drift toward harder tactics across a broad range of countries, including several with strong democratic traditions. Visible insecurity generates pressure for decisive action, often rewarding spectacle over reform.

The Bukele model produced genuine improvements in public-security statistics, but at documented costs that raise questions about sustainability and transferability. The criminal financial architecture was largely not disrupted. A strategy that removes gang members from the streets while leaving financial and logistical infrastructure intact creates the conditions for eventual reconstitution (Escano et al, 2025; Lessing, 2021). Ecuador's declaration of internal armed conflict under President Noboa drew explicitly on the Bukele model, deploying military forces into prisons and urban areas and producing short-term violence reductions alongside human-rights concerns. The country's subsequent homicide deterioration in 2025 showed the limits of emergency framing when it is not paired with prosecutorial capacity, prison reform, corruption control, port security, and financial disruption (Muggah, 2025d; ICG, 2025c).

Colombia's *paz total* demonstrated both the potential and the inherent limitations of negotiated security governance. Violence reductions in areas covered by active ceasefires were measurable, but armed groups participated in negotiations while simultaneously expanding territorial control and trafficking operations, using ceasefire periods to rearm, recruit, and consolidate economic positions (ICG, 2025a). The structural coca economy continued generating criminal revenues regardless of political negotiations (UNODC, 2023c; Posada, 2022).

In Rio de Janeiro, a major security operation in the Complexo da Penha and adjacent favelas produced a high body count and disrupted CV territorial control, but human-rights organizations documented civilian deaths, due-process violations, and displacement of CV operations into adjacent communities. By early 2026, CV was reconstituting its presence at the operation's periphery (Amnesty International, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2024c). This is the familiar pattern of *mano dura*: short-term territorial disruption without lasting organizational dismantling (Cutrona et al, 2025; Muggah, 2019).

In São Paulo, a parallel but conceptually distinct operation targeted PCC financial infrastructure rather than street-level operators, building on years of financial intelligence work coordinated with mutual legal assistance requests to Portugal, Paraguay, Uruguay, and the United Arab Emirates. The operation froze approximately 2 billion reais in assets, indicted dozens of PCC financial operatives, lawyers, real estate professionals, and financial sector employees, and activated several extradition requests—a disruption that prosecutors and analysts assessed as the most significant blow to PCC financial infrastructure in the organization's history (FBSP, 2025; Muggah, 2025c).

This contrast is strategically important. The Rio model disrupts territory and produces immediate visibility. The São Paulo model disrupts money, protection, and laundering capacity. The first can be politically rewarding; the second is more likely to weaken the infrastructure that allows criminal governance to survive.

Section 11. Public Perceptions and the Politics of Security

Militarized state response models do not emerge in a political vacuum. They are shaped by public perceptions of insecurity that create powerful incentives for punitive escalation, regardless of evidence on structural effectiveness. Surveys consistently identify insecurity as one of the region's top public concerns (Latinobarómetro, 2023; LAPOP, 2023). LAPOP's 2023 AmericasBarometer found that more than one in three Latin Americans reported being a direct victim of crime in the preceding twelve months – the highest victimisation rate of any region surveyed globally (LAPOP, 2023). Victimization rates are typically highest in urban areas, among lower-income populations, and in gang-controlled territories, where extortion, robbery, and forced displacement are chronic rather than exceptional (Bergman, 2018; UNDP, 2013).

This direct victimization experience produces measurable support for heavy-handed enforcement (Muggah, 2026a, 2026b). Latinobarómetro surveys found that majorities in several Latin American countries express support for security measures that restrict civil liberties when framed as necessary responses to gang and criminal violence (Latinobarómetro, 2023). Support for the Bukele model among Central American and Andean publics has made it electorally attractive even to governments with otherwise democratic orientations (Escano, McDowall and Pridemore, 2025). In Brazil, surveys show support for *mano dura* policing in states with high criminal victimization, even among communities that most frequently experience police violence (FBSP, 2024).

The paradox is that demand for aggressive security action coexists with low trust in the institutions tasked with providing it. Confidence in police is consistently below 40% in Latinobarómetro surveys, and trust in the judicial system is below 30 percent in many countries (Latinobarómetro, 2023). Governments face strong incentives to sustain or escalate emergency frameworks because doing so is electorally rewarding (Bergman, 2018; Muggah and Aguirre, 2018; Cutrona et al, 2026).[17] Agencies that prioritize short-term operational effectiveness over internal accountability are systematically degrading the social foundation on which long-term effective policing depends (World Bank, 2025). The political economy of insecurity favors visible force over slower, more costly institutional repair

This is the substitution mechanism in political form. When insecurity becomes the dominant test of state competence, candidates and governments compete over visible performances of control rather than over slower institutional reforms. This narrows the policy menu, raises the electoral cost of restraint, and makes exceptional measures appear normal even where their long-term effects on accountability, due process, and institutional legitimacy are damaging.

Section 12. Democratic Risks as a Core Threat

Public pressure for punitive security measures, combined with weak institutional constraints on executive power, creates the deepest threat examined in this report: organized crime's corrosive effect on democratic governance itself. This threat operates through three mutually reinforcing mechanisms: coercion, suppression, and substitution (Muggah 2026a, 2026b).

The first mechanism is coercion. Criminal organizations systematically target elected officials, candidates, voters, election administrators, prosecutors, journalists, community leaders, and judges. Threats, selective killings, intimidation, and territorial vetoes alter who can run, campaign, investigate, report, adjudicate, or govern. The result is not always visible fraud, but often a quieter narrowing of democratic choice before citizens reach the ballot box.

The second mechanism is suppression. Criminal governance narrows participation and information even where elections formally proceed. It does so by making visibility costly for voters, journalists, civic organizers, candidates, election workers, prosecutors, and local officials. Suppression may not require mass abstention or formal manipulation. It can operate through no-go zones, constrained rallies, silent withdrawals, self-censorship, forced brokerage, and the disappearance of credible local alternatives.

The third mechanism is substitution. Insecurity crowds out other political agendas and makes "control" the dominant measure of credibility. This allows emergency powers, militarized policing, prison expansion, and exceptional legal categories to become electorally attractive even when they weaken accountability. The Bukele model is the period's defining example: a dramatic reduction in visible violence paired with mass detention, suspended rights, and weakened due process (Escano et al., 2025).

These three mechanisms reinforce each other. Criminal organizations that capture judicial and electoral institutions reduce the constraints on government security responses. Governments that erode judicial oversight reduce the constraints on criminal organizations with political connections. The result is a pathway toward criminal governance at the state level: political systems in which the boundary between public authority and criminal authority becomes blurred, to the mutual benefit of political and criminal elites (Uribe et al., 2025; Trejo and Ley, 2020).

External securitized framings can intensify this feedback loop. U.S. counterterrorism designations, lethal maritime strikes, the Maduro operation, joint operations in Ecuador, FTO designations for organized crime groups from Mexico to Brazil all signal that "serious" security policy is increasingly defined through exceptional tools. That posture may disrupt some criminal networks. It may also legitimate domestic emergency politics, compress policy debate, and strengthen substitution dynamics in countries already facing public pressure for visible coercive action.

> *"The result is a converging pathway toward criminal governance at the state level: political systems in which the boundaries between state authority and criminal authority become structurally blurred, to the mutual benefit of political and criminal elites."*

Section 13. Strategic Recommendations

The region does not need another generic call for "more security." It needs a practical agenda that targets the systems that make criminal governance profitable: money, ports, prisons, procurement, political protection, and weak accountability. The task is to do more than arrest more people; it is to make criminal rule harder to finance, harder to protect, harder to launder, and harder to convert into political influence.

The recommendations below follow directly from the analysis. They are designed for governments, intelligence services, prosecutors, regulators, private firms, donors, and external partners. They start from a hard premise: many states in the region are uneven, under-resourced, politicized, or partially compromised. Reforms must therefore be layered, auditable, and able to function even where local chains of command cannot be fully trusted.

Follow the money, not just the gunmen

Financial intelligence should become the backbone of organized-crime policy. The São Paulo model—prioritizing money flows over street-level personnel—offers the clearest regional template. Governments should build or reinforce specialized financial-intelligence task forces that bring together prosecutors, tax authorities, customs, central banks, financial-intelligence units, police, and vetted intelligence analysts.

The first priority should be to map criminal money through fuel retail, real estate, logistics firms, fintechs, ports, gold trading, public procurement, construction, and agricultural supply chains. These are the sectors where criminal profits are laundered, political relationships are built, and legal businesses become instruments of protection.

Operational priorities should include beneficial-ownership analysis, trade-based money-laundering detection, cryptocurrency tracing, shell-company mapping, unexplained-wealth investigations, and asset-freezing capacity. Success should not be measured mainly by arrests or seizures. It should be measured by disrupted laundering channels, frozen assets, dismantled protection networks, convictions of facilitators, and reduced criminal access to legal markets.

Shift from leadership decapitation to functional disruption

Leadership removals can matter, but they rarely dismantle criminal governance on their own. In some cases they fragment groups and trigger succession violence. Security services should move from a personality-centered model to a systems-centered model.

The key question should be not only who leads the group, but who moves the money; who controls the prison wing; who corrupts the port; who provides weapons; who manages political protection; who handles procurement; who intimidates witnesses; and who negotiates with local officials?

Target packages should focus on criminal functions: finance, logistics, corruption, violence management, prison governance, arms supply, cyber-enabled fraud, territorial taxation, and political brokerage. This requires analytical units that can connect criminal, commercial, and political data across agencies and borders.

Treat ports as strategic infrastructure, not customs facilities

Ports are now among the most important battlefields in the regional and transatlantic crime economy. Santos, Guayaquil, Buenaventura, Cartagena, Callao, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Valencia, Le Havre, and smaller Atlantic and Caribbean nodes should be treated as strategic infrastructure exposed to criminal capture.

Port security should move beyond scanners and seizures. It should include workforce vetting, corruption-risk mapping, container anomaly detection, secure reporting channels for workers, rotation of vulnerable personnel, protection for whistleblowers, and joint port-intelligence cells linking customs, police, prosecutors, port operators, and private logistics firms.

The Belgian Haven for Corruption (Belgian Federal Judicial Police anti-port corruption unit) model should be studied for adaptation in major Latin American export ports. Enforcement gains at one port must be matched by anticipatory intelligence sharing with France, Spain, Portugal, West African partners, and smaller Atlantic and Caribbean jurisdictions likely to absorb rerouted flows. Otherwise, success in one port simply becomes displacement to another.

Build prison intelligence and prison governance reform into every strategy

Prisons are places of detention, but in many countries they are also command centers, recruitment hubs, dispute-resolution arenas, and financial coordination points. No organized-crime strategy will succeed if prisons remain under criminal governance.

Governments should create vetted prison-intelligence units linked to prosecutors and financial investigators. These units should map leadership structures, communication channels, extortion flows, staff corruption, visitor networks, legal intermediaries, and the movement of money into and out of prisons. Prison reform should prioritize control of communications, protection of vulnerable prisoners, staff vetting, anti-corruption monitoring, separation of high-risk leaders, and independent oversight. Mass incarceration without prison governance reform can strengthen criminal organizations rather than weaken them.

Protect elections where criminal coercion is most concentrated

Criminal governance becomes democratic erosion when it changes who can run, campaign, vote, report, investigate, or govern. Electoral protection should therefore be targeted, not symbolic. Electoral authorities, prosecutors, police, civil society monitors, and local governments should jointly identify high-risk municipalities before election cycles begin. Risk indicators should include candidate threats, attacks on journalists, militia or gang territorial control, extortion spikes, procurement anomalies, police capture, prison-linked intimidation, and sudden candidate withdrawals.

Protection should include secure reporting channels, rapid-response teams, emergency relocation for threatened candidates or witnesses, special prosecutors for political-criminal violence, and public dashboards tracking attacks on candidates, campaign workers, journalists, and community leaders. The objective is to protect individuals and preserve real political choice in places where armed actors seek to narrow it.

Make lawful security politically competitive

The politics of insecurity generally rewards spectacle. Governments and parties therefore need a stronger public narrative that makes lawful, accountable security visible and credible. This does not mean rejecting enforcement. It means pairing enforcement with constraints that protect legitimacy.

Security plans should include clear public metrics: homicide, extortion, disappearances, police lethality, case clearance, asset recovery, prison violence, complaints against security forces, and time-bound review of emergency powers. Emergency measures should include sunset clauses, legislative renewal, judicial review, disclosed performance indicators, and independent monitoring of use of force. The aim is to avoid a false choice between paralysis and *mano dura*. Governments can be tough on organized crime without being careless with democracy. In fact, lasting security depends on exactly that distinction.

Use U.S. capabilities, but avoid importing every U.S. frame

Washington's harder posture creates both opportunities and risks. U.S. financial intelligence, sanctions tools, extradition capacity, port-security support, aerial and maritime surveillance, and real-time data sharing can help disrupt criminal networks. But an overbroad terrorism frame can also create sovereignty backlash, compliance overreach, intelligence frictions, and legal exposure for firms operating in territories where criminal governance shapes ordinary commercial life.

Latin American governments should engage the United States selectively and strategically. They should deepen cooperation on financial disruption, arms trafficking, drug precursor chemicals, fugitive tracking, port security, cyber-enabled laundering, and asset recovery. They should insist on legal clarity around maritime strikes, rules of engagement, intelligence sharing, target selection, and post-strike evidentiary disclosure. Cooperation that enables lawful interdiction, seizure, arrest, prosecution, and financial disruption is materially different from cooperation that facilitates lethal targeting without transparent evidence or due process. Regional partners should make that distinction explicit.

Prepare now for displacement from Venezuela, Ecuador, and the maritime campaign

Criminal networks adapt quickly to shocks. Maduro's capture, intensified U.S. maritime strikes, and joint operations in Ecuador will not eliminate trafficking. They will change routes, brokers, storage points, and protection markets.

Regional intelligence services should establish a displacement-monitoring mechanism focused on French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, the French Antilles, Sint Maarten, as well as West African staging points, and secondary European ports. This mechanism should track seizures, suspicious shipping patterns, financial anomalies, airstrip activity, fishing-fleet movements, container routing, corruption cases, and sudden changes in local violence.

Deep bilateral security cooperation with Colombia should be treated as a strategic imperative regardless of presidential-level tensions. Colombia remains central to cocaine production, armed group dynamics, intelligence collection, and regional route analysis.

Figure 2. IBAMA's Specialized Inspection Group (GEF) deactivates illegal mining sites in Jamanxim and Rio Novo National Parks, in Pará.

Foto: Felipe Werneck/Ibama

Treat environmental crime as organized crime

The Amazon Basin requires a dedicated criminal-intelligence framework. Illegal gold, timber, land-grabbing, wildlife trafficking, cattle laundering, and emerging critical-minerals markets are not merely environmental issues; they are criminal-governance systems that generate revenue, territorial control, corruption, and violence.

Financial-intelligence work should target gold-purchasing intermediaries, timber export chains, land-title fraud, illegal airstrips, river logistics, fuel supply, mercury markets, and refiners that launder illegal commodities into legal trade (Igarapé 2025).[18] Governments and companies should apply criminal-risk mapping to gold, beef, soy, timber, cocoa, rubber, and critical minerals before those commodities enter international supply chains. The objective should be to move environmental crime from the margins of security policy to the center of anti-corruption, anti-money-laundering, Indigenous protection, and climate-security strategies.

Bring business into the response without outsourcing security to it

Private firms are already exposed to criminal governance through extortion, logistics corruption, money laundering, cargo theft, illegal commodities, fuel fraud, and supplier coercion. Governments should create structured channels for threat intelligence with firms in logistics, mining, agriculture, finance, fuel retail, construction, and ports.

These channels should be practical: typologies of extortion, red flags for supplier capture, beneficial-ownership alerts, secure reporting mechanisms, and sector-specific guidance for high-risk municipalities and ports. Companies should be encouraged to map criminal-governance exposure in their supply chains, rather than only conventional corruption risk.

In countries where groups designated as FTOs are present, compliance exposure extends beyond direct transactions to suppliers, distributors, logistics providers, fuel retailers, port workers, contractors, and local intermediaries operating in areas of criminal influence. Firms need to prepare for that possibility without treating entire communities or sectors as criminal.

Invest in people, not just platforms

Technology matters, but tools without skilled analysts rarely change outcomes. Intelligence services need analysts who understand criminal finance, ports, prisons, procurement, environmental crime, cyber-enabled fraud, and political protection networks. Prosecutors need case-builders who can turn intelligence into admissible evidence. Judges need the capacity to handle complex organized-crime and financial cases safely and independently. The most important technology investment may therefore be institutional: vetted teams, secure data-sharing, protected witnesses, trained analysts, interoperable databases, and prosecutors who can build cases that survive in court.

Build safeguards for compromised environments

Many of the institutions tasked with fighting organized crime are themselves vulnerable to corruption, intimidation, or political capture. Reform strategies must be designed for partial trust. Candidate protection, witness protection, procurement integrity, internal affairs, port security, prison oversight, and financial-intelligence units should be layered, auditable, and capable of bypassing compromised local chains of command.

Independent oversight should not be treated as a constraint on security. It is a condition for security that can survive contact with corruption. This is the institutional counterpart to the coercion–suppression–substitution framework: protect political actors from coercion, protect participation and information from suppression, and keep legality electorally viable against substitution politics.

Conclusion

Latin American organized crime has entered a new phase. It is more geographically diffuse, economically diversified, globally integrated, technologically adaptive, and embedded in legal markets than at any previous point. The challenge lies in the capacity of criminal groups to move drugs, kill rivals, govern territory, tax economies, corrupt institutions, shape elections, and insert themselves into the supply chains that connect Latin America to Europe, North America, Africa, and Asia.

The evidence demonstrates that organized crime in the region is far more than a law-enforcement problem. It is a business problem, a development problem, and a democratic problem. Record cocaine production feeds European markets through networks that have moved from wholesale supply toward influence over ports and logistics chains. More than 30 armed groups compete across the Amazon Basin, where illegal gold, timber, land, wildlife, and critical minerals now generate revenue and territorial power. Transnational networks exploit migration corridors, prisons, financial-system weaknesses, technology gaps, and commodity supply chains across multiple continents.

Washington's harder posture has added a powerful external shock. SDGT and FTO designations, repeated lethal strikes against alleged drug-trafficking vessels, and increasingly coercive diplomacy have generated tensions and disruption. They have also produced displacement effects, diplomatic friction, sovereignty concerns, compliance risks, and legal and humanitarian controversy. U.S. capabilities can help regional partners disrupt financial flows, arms trafficking, ports, precursors, fugitives, and laundering networks. A broad narco-terrorism frame can also compress debate, intensify emergency politics, and make exceptional measures appear normal.

Maduro's capture in January 2026 removed the apex figure from Venezuela's criminalized authoritarian order and opened a volatile period of criminal reorganization. But it did not dismantle the underlying criminal-governance ecosystem. Protection markets, illegal mining, migration exploitation, corrupt security actors, armed brokers, and trafficking corridors will reorganize unless they are actively mapped, disrupted, and prosecuted. The same logic applies elsewhere. Killing leaders, raiding neighborhoods, or intercepting shipments may generate headlines but rarely destroys the systems that allow criminal rule to survive.

The central lesson of the six-year period is that militarized suppression without structural reform displaces rather than resolves criminal governance. It can reduce visible violence in the short term while leaving financial, social, and political infrastructure intact. In some cases, it fragments groups, hardens prisons, shifts routes, raises human-rights costs, and weakens the legitimacy of the very institutions needed to sustain security.

The alternative is less spectacular and more durable. Follow the money. Secure the ports. Reform the prisons. Protect elections. Disrupt procurement capture. Trace beneficial ownership. Build prosecutable cases. Protect witnesses. Audit emergency powers. Work with firms without outsourcing security to them. Use U.S. capabilities without importing every U.S. frame. Treat environmental crime as organized crime.

This is not a soft agenda; it is a harder one. It requires states to build capabilities that criminal groups fear more than raids: honest prosecutors, protected witnesses, financial analysts, port-intelligence cells, prison oversight, procurement transparency, interoperable data, and courts that can withstand intimidation and political pressure.

The strategic question is whether governments can change what security policy rewards. If the region continues to reward spectacle, criminal governance will adapt, routes will shift, and democratic institutions will keep eroding from below. If governments reward lasting disruption—measured by dismantled laundering networks, safer elections, cleaner procurement, accountable policing, secure ports, and recovered public authority—then organized crime can be constrained without trading away democracy.

The task for the next decade is to make lawful authority more credible than criminal authority in the places where citizens, firms, and local governments experience power every day.

List of Acronyms

AML — Anti-Money Laundering

ANP — Agência Nacional do Petróleo, Gás Natural e Biocombustíveis (Brazil's National Petroleum Agency)

CBP — U.S. Customs and Border Protection

CIMI — Conselho Indigenista Missionário (Indigenous Missionary Council, Brazil)

CJNG — Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (Jalisco New Generation Cartel)

COP — Conference of the Parties (UN Climate Conference)

CPJ — Committee to Protect Journalists

CV — Comando Vermelho (Red Command, Brazil)

DEA — U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

DHS — U.S. Department of Homeland Security

DNA — Direzione Nazionale Antimafia (National Anti-Mafia Directorate, Italy)

ECLAC — Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

EMC — Estado Mayor Central (Central General Staff, FARC dissident faction, Colombia)

ELN — Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army, Colombia)

EUDA — European Union Drugs Agency

EUDR — EU Deforestation Regulation

FARC — Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)

FATF — Financial Action Task Force

FBSP — Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública (Brazilian Public Security Forum)

FBI — Federal Bureau of Investigation

FTO — Foreign Terrorist Organization

GiTOC — Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime

GLO — Garantia da Lei e da Ordem (Guarantee of Law and Order, Brazil)

HAVCOR — Haven for Corruption (Belgian Federal Judicial Police anti-port corruption unit)

IBAMA — Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources

ICG — International Crisis Group

INDEPAZ — Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz

INPE — Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais

ISA — Instituto Socioambiental

JIATF-South — Joint Interagency Task Force South

LAPOP — Latin American Public Opinion Project

MS-13 — Mara Salvatrucha
MSS — Multinational Security Support Mission
NCA — National Crime Agency
NORTHCOM — United States Northern Command
OFAC — Office of Foreign Assets Control
OHCHR — Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PCC — Primeiro Comando da Capital
PEMEX — Petróleos Mexicanos
REDD+ — Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SDGT — Specially Designated Global Terrorist
SESNSP — Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública (Mexico)
SOCTA — Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment
SOUTHCOM — United States Southern Command
UNDP — United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR — United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC — United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USDT — Tether
VRAEM — Valle de los Ríos Apurímac, Ene y Mantaro
WOLA — Washington Office on Latin America

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How to Cite:

IGARAPÉ INSTITUTE. From narco cartels to criminal networks: the structural transformation of organized crime in Latin America and the Caribbean . Rio de Janeiro, 2026. Available at: https://igarape.org.br/en/publications

DOI Number:

10.5281/zenodo.20418095

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The Igarapé Institute is an independent think-and-do tank that designs and delivers evidence-based solutions, strengthens public policies, and scales effective practices in security, nature, and climate while fostering collaboration and positive impact from the local to the global levels.

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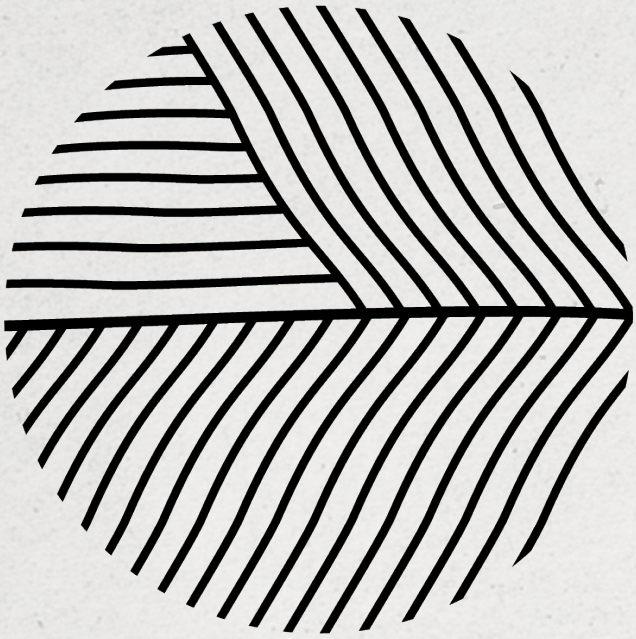

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