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MEAC Findings Report 27

How Rank Affects the Transition to Civilian Life: Lessons from the Reintegration Process in Colombia

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FEBRUARY 2023

MANAGING EXITS
FROM ARMED CONFLICT

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KEY FINDINGS

- In some ways, rank-and-file ex-combatants and former mid-ranking commanders are similar – family and fatigue appear to influence both populations to exit armed groups – highlighting areas where certain policies and practices can be scaled up for all.

- There are, however, important differences across these populations, particularly with regard to the enhanced threats and pressures on mid-ranking commanders during the reintegration process. Such divergent experiences suggest that aspects of the reintegration process need to be tailored to the particular needs of beneficiaries.

- Current "Total Peace" efforts would benefit from a differential approach to promoting defection, demobilization, and reintegration. Without one, there is the risk of history repeating itself and war's middle management cycling back into conflict.

Background

About MEAC

How and why do individuals exit armed groups, and how do they do so sustainably, without falling back into conflict cycles? These questions are at the core of UNIDIR's Managing Exits from Armed Conflict (MEAC) initiative. MEAC is a multi-year, multi-partner collaboration that aims to develop a unified, rigorous approach to examining how and why individuals exit armed conflict and evaluating the efficacy of interventions meant to support their transition to civilian life. MEAC seeks to inform evidence-based programme design and implementation in real time to improve efficacy. At the strategic level, the cross-programme, cross-agency lessons that will emerge from the growing MEAC evidence base will support more effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. The MEAC project and accompanying case studies are supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA); the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO); the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs; the UN Development Programme (UNDP); and the International Organization for Migration (IOM); and is being run in partnership with the Secretariat of the Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience; UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO); UNICEF; and the World Bank.

About this Series

The MEAC findings report series seeks to put evidence about conflict prevention, conflict transitions, and related interventions into the hands of policymakers and practitioners in real time. The reports present short overviews of findings (or emerging findings) across a wide range of thematic areas and include analyses on their political or practical implications for the UN and its partners.

About this Report

This report is based on data collected as part of an original self-administered survey conducted with individuals who are currently going through or have been through the ARN's reintegration process for National Liberation Army (ELN) defectors, ex-combatants from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP) who demobilized before the peace agreement, and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). This survey took place between May and September 2022 thanks to the cooperation agreement established between MEAC and the Reincorporation and Normalization Agency (ARN by its Spanish acronym) in Colombia; MEAC is grateful to the ARN for its collaboration in this work. The survey was rolled out with all current and former reintegration process participants who have active contact information on file with the ARN with respondents who were located across the country. The survey inquired after their conflict experiences and their transitions into civil life, economic situation, personal security, psychosocial vulnerabilities, and support networks. This report compares some of the experiences of former rank-

and-file combatants and former mid-ranking commanders, that may affect their transition to civilian life. These findings may be useful to government, UN, and NGO partners working to address conflict and build peace amidst the changing landscape of insecurity and vulnerability in Colombia. The report ends with an examination of key policy and programmatic implications of these findings.

The Reintegration Process in Colombia

How an armed group is structured, and the rank of the individuals attempting to exit it, are important considerations when designing and implementing defector and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR)-like programmes. The UN Integrated DDR Standards recognize that while the organization seeks to apply principles of equal treatment in its programmes, "Special packages for [armed group] commanders may be necessary to secure their buy-in to the DDR process, and to ensure that they allow [rank-and-file] combatants to join the process."[1] Better understanding the incentive structures, as well as the needs and experiences, of armed group leadership – at different levels – and rank-and-file associates is key to designing effective interventions for dismantling or transforming armed groups. The following Report seeks to do just that by examining the different trajectories of mid-ranking commanders and rank-and-file ex-combatants (from an array of armed groups) who were participating in the Colombian reintegration process. Using original survey data, the Report seeks to provide insights into the value of a differential approach to reintegration assistance, which is timely given recent discussions about addressing active armed groups in Colombia under a "Total Peace" strategy.

Overview

In Colombia, the reintegration process is the longest standing intervention to support the transition to civilian life for individuals leaving armed groups. It was founded to coincide with a national security policy that encouraged both individual demobilizations of guerrillas, and collective demobilizations agreed with paramilitary groups in the early 2000s. Since then, 53,000 people have entered the reintegration process, which was developed by the Government and implemented by the ARN or one of its predecessor agencies, such as the Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR).[2] The reintegration process provides a set of benefits and actions agreed by the ARN and each beneficiary participating in the process, to address vulnerabilities, facilitate skill development, and enable civic and citizen engagement over a period of seven years.[3] The reintegration process includes eight

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[1] The United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, *Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards*, (New York, United Nations, 2014), p. 27.
[2] Agencia Para La Reincorporación y La Normalización "La Reintegración en cifras", Accessed 16 January 2023.
[3] Resolution 1356 of 2016.

dimensions: security, family, personal, economic, health, habitat, education, and citizenship. Currently, 2,688 ex-combatants are still active in the process.[4]

Since 2008, the reintegration process (in CONPES 3554 of 2008) recognizes that having served in a leadership role in an armed group may influence one's reintegration trajectory. As a result, there have been efforts to reintegrate former high-ranking commanders through the Justice and Peace process (not addressed here) and identify former mid-ranking commanders who may have different needs and face different threats in their transition within the reintegration process.[5] The policy called for a special reintegration plan for this subgroup that considered their different attributes, capacities, and skills.[6] As of today, however, no special reintegration plan is in place for those who leave armed groups after serving in a mid-level command role. As indicated elsewhere, "on the part of the ARN, in general terms, the institutional offer does not differentiate between mid-ranking commanders and rank-and-file demobilized combatants."[7] While the Ministry of Defense's demobilization programme recognizes the "hierarchy" of these individuals when they are demobilized, the ARN does not do the same in their transition to their reintegration process, blurring the distinctions and homogenizing the institutional benefits for both former mid-ranking commanders and rank-and-file ex-combatants.

There is evidence that former mid-ranking commanders face particular challenges in transitioning to civilian life. It has been documented that some of them have struggled with discrimination, rejection, and/or stigma, causing them to hide their identities in order to avoid these risks.[8] For these reasons – and due to security threats – some have been driven to go into hiding.[9] Government policies[10] have put more pressure on mid-rank commanders – compared to the rank-and-file – to cooperate with the state security forces and the justice system in order to dismantle illegal armed groups in exchange for economic and legal benefits. This is because former mid-rank commanders are uniquely positioned in the chain of command of an illicit organization. Being between the high commanders and the rank-and-file combatants, they are the axis of communication, control, and operations of these organizations.[11] Furthermore, mid-level commanders have additional characteristics that distinguish them from those at the top of the organization. In practice, they have control over territories, direct command over troops, and influence over communities.[12] In many ways, they are more knowledgeable, from being the first recipients of intelligence information from their operating regions to having greater proximity to, knowledge of, and control over the

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[4] Departamento Nacional de Planeación (DNP), *Evaluación de operaciones y resultados de la política de reintegración social y económica de desmovilizados* (Bogotá, Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2018).

[5] Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social, *Documento Conpes 3554 de 2008*, (Bogotá, Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2008).

[6] Ibid

[7] Gerson Iván Arias, Natalia Herrera, and Carlos Andrés Prieto, "Mandos medios de las FARC y su proceso de desmovilización en el conflicto colombiano: ¿Una apuesta para la paz o para la guerra?", Serie Informes No. 10 (Bogotá, Fundación Ideas Para la Paz, 2010).

[8] Observatorio de Procesos de Desarme, Desmovilización y Reintegración – ODDR, *La reintegración de mandos medios de las FARC-EP*, (Bogotá D.C., Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2009)

[9] Ibid,

[10] Decreto 128 of 2003 and Decreto 2767 of 2007.

[11] Gerson Iván Arias, Natalia Herrera, and Carlos Andrés Prieto, "Mandos medios de las FARC y su proceso de desmovilización en el conflicto colombiano: ¿Una apuesta para la paz o para la guerra?", Serie Informes No. 10 (Bogotá, Fundación Ideas Para la Paz, 2010).

[12] Ibid., Juanita Vélez, "El peligroso olvido de los mandos medios", *La Silla Vacía*, 22 December 2016.

communities and activities in their territory.[13] They are responsible for ensuring and managing the organization's finances at the local level, which makes them particularly strategic sources of information about armed group operations, and increases the likelihood that the military and other state entities will seek them out for intelligence. Due to this, they are often threatened by those groups from which they are demobilized and pressured by the military to divulge information on the workings of their former group and comrades.

Recidivism - the return of former members of armed groups to conflict activity or other criminal engagement - among former mid-ranking commanders has been partly attributed to the combination of a lack of a special reintegration programme for them, and the fact that armed groups are particularly interested in their knowledge and skill sets.[14] Mid-ranking commanders are sought after not just by armed groups, their own or competitors, but also criminal groups linked to drug trafficking or other illicit economies that perceive their extensive geographical, financial, and military knowledge as an advantage in enhancing their illegal activities.[15] In response to such entreaties, former mid-ranking commanders join criminal groups or start their own new criminal enterprises.[16]

Such cases were making it clear that "the lack of a special programme for demobilized mid-level commanders increases the risk that their peacebuilding potential may be redirected, once again, towards illegality and violent action".[17] In addition to addressing the re-recruitment targeting mid-ranking commanders will likely receive, a specialized reintegration response would also need to address the enhanced legal instability this population faces.[18] Other problems associated with the absence of a differential programme for formerly mid-ranking ex-combatants within reintegration programmes have to do with the particular challenges this sub-population faces in accessing education and creating enticing labour opportunities. This Report seeks to better understand these challenges and explore the implications of a lack of differential programming in order to inform efforts to effectively dismantle armed groups, including under the current 'Total Peace' strategy.

Findings

The following report provides an overview of the experiences of former mid-ranking commanders compared to former rank-and-file combatants in the Colombian reintegration process, highlighting how rank could affect transitions to civilian life. This is particularly important because many

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Gerson Iván Arias, Natalia Herrera, and Carlos Andrés Prieto, "Mandos medios de las FARC y su proceso de desmovilización en el conflicto colombiano: ¿Una apuesta para la paz o para la guerra?", Serie Informes No. 10 (Bogotá, Fundación Ideas Para la Paz, 2010). This publication cites unspecified MAPP-OEA reports that say that mid-ranking commanders – both those who formally demobilized and those who did not – re-entered armed groups. It also cites data from the Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración (now the ARN) from November 2009, which shows a relationship between low-income levels and recidivism among mid-ranking commanders.

[15] Juanita Vélez, "El peligroso olvido de los mandos medios", *La Silla Vacía*, 22 December 2016.

[16] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH), "Modelos para exportar: paramilitarismo en el Urabá antioqueño, Sur de Córdoba, Bajo Atrato y Darién (1983-2006)." Tomo I Informe No.13 (Bogotá, CNMH, 2022)

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid. It is not clear how cooperation with the State can resolve their legal situation, and the uncertainty of being sent to jail affects their reintegration process or there are risks that some crimes committed by these people remain unresolved.

participants in the reintegration process and scholars who have studied it have argued that there isn't space for ex-combatants to voice their perceptions of the process and highlighted the need for a feedback system that will allow them to express their opinions and needs within the process.[19] Without these insights, it can be difficult to tailor programming to the specific needs of different sub-populations of participants. This report examines the MEAC survey data that speaks to these needs and experiences in an effort to provide evidence to support further tailoring of programmatic interventions for those defecting and/or demobilizing from armed groups.

The findings outlined in this report are based on data collected through a self-administered survey between May and September 2022, thanks to cooperation between MEAC and the ARN. MEAC and its implementing research partner in Colombia, Fundación Conflict Responses, collected data through a self-administered survey sent by text message to current and former participants in the Colombian reintegration process. Of those with current contact information, 139 current and former process participants completed the survey. The survey data has been analysed here in a way that allows comparison between two sub-samples within this group: former rank-and-file members of the armed groups (64 respondents) and former mid-ranking commanders (37 respondents). The report highlights programmatic and policy implications that could support relevant stakeholders in strengthening interventions that currently include former mid-ranking commanders or will do so in the future.

Incentives to Demobilize

Higher-ranking members of armed groups often have fewer incentives to demobilize than low-ranking foot soldiers as they enjoy more benefits from their position (e.g., financial, social) and have more to lose if they leave (e.g., prioritized for prosecution or made an example of by the state). This is the case in Colombia, where across a number of armed groups, mid-ranking commanders have typically been in charge of the drug business as well as other forms of armed group financing. As a result, mid-ranking commanders have been reluctant to demobilize and lose their economic power and lucrative salaries.[20] Given the likely intransigence to exiting by mid-ranking commanders, it is important to better understand the incentives that motivated participants of the reintegration process to demobilize, so as to inform future defector messaging.

The MEAC survey found that mid-ranking and rank-and-file respondents cited similar motivations for leaving their armed group.[21] Fifty-six per cent of former rank-and-file respondents and 49 per cent of former mid-ranking respondents selected the answer option "missed my family". And roughly half said "I was tired"[22], and just over half said they "wanted to enter the reintegration process".[23] This finding suggests that the principal reasons for leaving armed groups may be similar across ranks. The similar responses for these top motivations suggest some factors are universal and some

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[19] Gerson Iván Arias, Natalia Herrera, and Carlos Andrés Prieto, "Mandos medios de las FARC y su proceso de desmovilización en el conflicto colombiano: ¿Una apuesta para la paz o para la guerra?", Serie Informes No. 10 (Bogotá, Fundación Ideas Para la Paz, 2010).

[20]Juanita Vélez, "El peligroso olvido de los mandos medios", *La Silla Vacía*, 22 December 2016.

[21] In response to the question "Why did you leave the armed group?"

[22] 49 per cent of former rank-and-file respondents and 51 per cent of former mid-ranking respondents selected this option.

[23] 51 per cent of former rank-and-file respondents and 51 per cent of former mid-ranking respondents selected this option.

appeals (to come home to family) may be received positively by combatants regardless of rank. Discrepancies in responses to other answer options, however, suggest certain differences. Former mid-ranking respondents were more likely to say that internal violence/threats (27 v. 14 per cent) and disillusionment with group leadership (49 v. 33 per cent) motivated their exits than rank-and-file members. It is unclear if these two dynamics are related, that is to say if threats and violence are the reason for the disillusionment or are issued against those mid-ranking commanders whose loyalty and faith in the group's leadership is seen as waning. Future efforts to promote defection, specifically with mid-ranking commanders, should take such motivations into account. Given the potential for internal threats to follow mid-ranking commanders after they have left the group and the connection between security threats and recidivism,[24] the reintegration process should address the differentiated security needs of ex-combatants. This may be particularly important for mid-ranking commanders, as the news of attacks against them are likely to further diminish their peers' incentives for defecting.

Security Threats to Former Mid-ranking Commanders

Security threats, especially those that come from armed groups, represent a threat to sustainable transitions to civilian life due to the physical threat to the safety of ex-combatants, and due to the risk that individuals will return to criminal activity in order to find self-protection. Former mid-ranking commanders often face greater threats due to their previous visibility within the hierarchy of their armed groups, increasing the risk that they are targeted for retaliation.[25] This is evident in the MEAC survey data which shows that former mid-level commanders were 10 percentage points more likely to report having been threatened by an armed actor since they started the reintegration process than rank-and-file members (63 to 53 per cent).[26] Mid-ranking commanders may indeed be targeted by armed groups who want to prevent them from sharing information with the State, or in retaliation for acts for which they were responsible during their time in the armed group. Interestingly mid-ranking commanders attributed these threats to the Clan del Golf and the FARC dissident groups, neither of which are the groups from which ex-combatants in the reintegration process exited,[27] and the ELN, which formed a very small portion of the total sample.

In general, across both ranks, ex-combatants were more likely to be threatened by the group they had exited from, or its successor. For example, of the total of respondents who were part of the FARC and were threatened (40 people), 33 knew that those threats had come from the FARC dissident groups; and of the total of people who were part of the ELN and were threatened (21 people), 16 knew they had received those threats from ELN. This suggests that these groups do

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[24] Gerson Iván Arias, Natalia Herrera, and Carlos Andrés Prieto, "Mandos medios de las FARC y su proceso de desmovilización en el conflicto colombiano: ¿Una apuesta para la paz o para la guerra?", Serie Informes No. 10 (Bogotá, Fundación Ideas Para la Paz, 2010).

[25] Juanita Vélez, "El peligroso olvido de los mandos medios", *La Silla Vacía*, 22 December 2016.

[26] In response to the question "Have you been threatened by an armed actor since you started your transition to civilian life?"

[27] Former members of the Clan del Golfo and the FARC dissident groups are not eligible to enter the reintegration process, but rather the "differential assistance" process created under Decree 965 (2020).

seek to retaliate against former members who have defected and entered the state reintegration process.[28]

Invitations to Join an Armed Group

The same knowledge and positioning that leads mid-ranking commanders to be targeted at a higher rate than rank-and-file ex-combatants,[29] may also motivate armed groups to try to re-recruit them. Sixty-three per cent of mid-ranking commanders in the reintegration process – versus 47 per cent of rank-and-file members – said they had been approached by an armed group trying to recruit them since they exited their group.[30] Knowledge of invitations by and contact between armed groups and reintegration process participants is common, even if invitations are not received by all at equal rates. When asked "Why do you think some people do not complete the reintegration process?" the majority of respondents from both former ranks said because people "they go back to armed groups,"[31] highlighting that the potential for re-recruitment and recidivism is significant.[32]

While they may be more sought after, mid-ranking commanders are less likely than rank-and-file respondents to report having been tempted by the invitation(s) (9 v. 20 per cent). Former mid-ranking commanders have greater hurdles to leaving an armed group, but they may also have greater hurdles to rejoining one. Better understanding what keeps them out and on the path to a civilian life would be useful in designing reintegration processes. Likewise, adopting a differentiated approach that addresses the reasons why rank-and-file participants might be tempted to return to an armed group will be important for strengthening the process.[33]

Legal Uncertainty and Other Factors that Influence Continued Participation in the Process

One of the main factors that has affected the reintegration process of mid-ranking commanders in the past has been legal uncertainty.[34] This legal uncertainty was the result of confusion around the types of transitional justice requirements mid-ranking commanders needed to fulfill. The MEAC

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[28] It is interesting to highlight that former mid-ranking commanders and rank-and-file members responded similarly when face with such threats. Each population reported changing their place of residence due to security issues, (78 per cent of former mid-ranking commanders v. 76 per cent of rank-and-file respondents).

[29] Juanita Vélez, "El peligroso olvido de los mandos medios", *La Silla Vacía*, 22 December 2016.

[30] Question – "Since leaving your former armed group, have you been invited to return to an armed group?"

[31] More precisely, 70 per cent of former mid-ranking participants and 66 per cent of former rank-and-file respondents reported this answer.

[32] In addition, 35 per cent of former mid-ranking respondents and 22 per cent of former rank-and-file respondents selected the answer option "difficulties to access the ARN services" as a reason why people drop out of the reintegration process. In addition, no former mid-ranking respondents selected "there isn't enough consultation in the process", while 11 per cent of former rank-and-file respondents selected this answer option. While it is difficult to infer too much from these results as it is unclear whom the respondent is thinking of (and thus know their rank), these findings raise a question as to whether rank impacts access to ARN services and consultation. More research would be needed to better determine the relationship at hand.

[33] Cristal Downing, Kyle Johnson, Ángela Olaya, and Sofía Rivas, "Recidivism Risks in the "Differential Assistance" Process for People Exiting Criminal Groups in Colombia," *MEAC Findings Report* 25 (New York: United Nations University, 2022).

[34] Gerson Iván Arias, Natalia Herrera, and Carlos Andrés Prieto, "Mandos medios de las FARC y su proceso de desmovilización en el conflicto colombiano: ¿Una apuesta para la paz o para la guerra?", Serie Informes No. 10 (Bogotá, Fundación Ideas Para la Paz, 2010).

survey data corroborates the importance of legal uncertainty, particularly for certain strata of ex-combatants: mid-ranking respondents were more likely to list legal uncertainty as a potential reason to abandon the reintegration process than rank-and-file respondents (22 per cent v. 9 per cent). Indeed, legal uncertainty was the most selected option for former mid-ranking commanders, surpassing other relevant factors such as better income-generating opportunities outside the reintegration process – which was the most selected answer option among former rank-and-file respondents. Conversely, "legal uncertainty" also seems to motivate mid-ranking commanders to stay in the process. Fifty-seven per cent of mid-ranking respondents said that legal certainty motivated them to continue in the process (making it the second-most selected answer option for this group, after family) compared to 45 per cent of rank-and-file respondents who selected this answer option (making it the third-most selected option, after family and education). These findings highlight the centrality of legal uncertainty in determining whether mid-ranking commanders fully and sustainably exit armed group life and the importance of strengthening the legal framework and clarity around mid-ranking commanders' reintegration.

Other factors – particularly family - appear to have a similar sway on ex-combatant regardless of rank. Eighty-nine per cent of former mid-ranking respondents and 80 per cent of former rank-and-file respondents said they were motivated to remain in the reintegration process because of their family. These findings reinforce the literature's idea that family support is one of the most important factors to ensure ex-combatants' successful transition to civilian life, and thus, to avoid recidivism, as MEAC has discussed elsewhere.[35] In addition to family support, almost no differences were found across these groups for the answer options "health services offered" and "income-generating opportunities". Education and psychosocial support also received similar responses across groups (with a 6 per centage point difference). Altogether, these findings suggest that the two groups have largely similar motivations for staying in the reintegration process, even if they have slightly different needs for certain types of support. Alternatively, as individuals who held higher ranking positions and therefore more authority in their former groups, it is possible that former mid-ranking commanders are less willing to admit that they are motivated by (and therefore may need) these two services.

Policy and Programmatic Implications

The data presented in this report show differences and similarities in the perceptions and experiences of former rank-and-file and former mid-ranking participants in the reintegration process. Some of those differences are key to understanding the different journeys out of armed groups and the motivations different populations have for staying out of them, which reinforce the idea that future processes must adopt a differentiated approach. This is especially relevant in light of the announcement of a "Total Peace" strategy, which seeks to demobilize active armed groups through dialogue, including the ELN, Clan del Golfo, and the FARC dissidents. Should this initiative prove

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[35] Cristal Downing, Kyle Johnson, Ángela Olaya, and Sofía Rivas, "Recidivism Risks in the "Differential Assistance" Process for People Exiting Criminal Groups in Colombia," *MEAC Findings Report* 25 (New York: United Nations University, 2022).

successful, there is the chance that many former mid-ranking commanders may demobilize from the multi-unit FARC dissident structures, necessitating tailored strategies that take their needs and experiences into account from an early stage.

Also, as mentioned previously, formed mid-rank commanders are the ones who provide the most intelligence information to the State on the internal functioning of a group - something that exposes them to threats and other security risks - and at the same time, because of that same *know-how*, they become attractive to other armed groups, leading to heightened recidivism risk. This implies that the State's intervention strategies must consider how intelligence efforts impact the ability of groups and/or their members – including mid-ranking commanders – sustainably lay aside weapons and rejoin civilian life. Recalibrating its approach and/or adopting differential security measures may help address the particular threat dynamics around mid-ranking commanders.

In areas where there are similarities among mid-ranking commanders and rank-and-file ex-combatants, the State can scale up interventions and messaging. This is particularly true regarding the similarities in motivations to leave armed groups (e.g., family, fatigue) and to stay in the reintegration process (e.g., family). For example, defector messaging campaigns that feature calls from family members telling their loved ones to come home may resonate with armed group members regardless of rank. Likewise, engaging families around the reintegration process may help keep all types of participants motivated to stay in the programme. Future interventions can capitalize on such similarities to drive implementation forward, which coupled with greater consultation in the process to allow for adaption to different individuals' needs in real time.

Finally, the findings illustrated here demonstrate that the adaptation of the process to the needs of different former ranks should go beyond programmatic considerations to legal ones, which impact an individual's willingness to stay on the path to a civilian life. A robust legal framework that takes these different ranks into account is essential. For example, if former mid-ranking commanders are expected to contribute to truth or other reparations efforts, as was the case with the AUC, their legal framework will be different and should also be strong, like that of the rank-and-file and indeed the high-level commanders who were covered by the Justice and Peace process.

These adjustments will be critical to the success of the "Total Peace" policy. Without a differential approach between former rank-and-file and former mid-ranking commanders, the risk may be to repeat the history of previous peace processes. To truly build peace in Colombia, future processes must be tailored to different armed group experiences to ensure that war's middle management does not cycle back into conflict.

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