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FEATURED Q&A

How Much Progress Is Colombia Making on 'Total Peace'?



Colombian President Gustavo Petro recently signed agreements with the Comunereros del Sur rebel group. // File Photo: Colombian Government.

Q Colombia's Comunereros del Sur rebel group, which has about 200 fighters, on April 5 began handing over explosive devices and signed other agreements with the Colombian government that could lead to the rebels' eventual disarmament and reintegration. The rebel group recently broke away from the National Liberation Army (ELN). The deal came amid escalating paramilitary violence in multiple regions of Colombia, including in the Catatumbo and Arauca regions. What is the significance of the agreement between Colombia's government and Comunereros del Sur? To what extent does it suggest President Gustavo Petro's administration might make further progress on peace talks with other rebel groups? With about one year left in his term, how well is Petro's "Total Peace" strategy working?

A Kent Eaton, professor of politics at the University of California, Santa Cruz: "Well into his third year as president, the fact that Petro's 'Total Peace' strategy has so far only led to the demobilization of one rather small rebel group (the Comunereros del Sur) can be interpreted as a sign of failure. After all, there were only about 200 Comunereros, and they only operated in 10 municipalities in just one department (Nariño). Furthermore, the alignment of political views between them and Petro may also have facilitated this deal, which could easily unravel if the right returns to the presidency next year. The significance of the April 6 agreement, however, can be seen in its territorially tailored approach, which illustrates an important reality of the Colombian conflict. As Petro told the U.N. Security Council last year, Colombia doesn't have a national conflict, but rather multiple regional

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TODAY'S NEWS

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Pope Francis' Funeral to Be Held Saturday

The funeral of Pope Francis, a native of Argentina and the first pontiff from the Americas, will be held Saturday in St. Peter's Square, the Vatican announced today.

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BUSINESS

Atlas Receives \$510 Million in Financing for Chile Solar Project

Atlas Renewable Energy secured \$510 million in financing to finish building a solar and battery storage facility in northern Chile.

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POLITICAL

Maduro Rejects Bukele's Prisoner Swap Proposal

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Monday rejected Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele's proposal to swap 252 Venezuelans held in El Salvador for an equal number of "political prisoners" in Venezuela.

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Maduro // File Photo: Facebook Page of Nicolás Maduro.

POLITICAL NEWS

Maduro Rejects Bukele's Prisoner Swap Proposal

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Monday rejected Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele's proposal for a prisoner swap, Bloomberg News reported. Bukele on Sunday proposed exchanging 252 Venezuelans who were deported to El Salvador from the United States for an equal number of "political prisoners" in Venezuela. Maduro rejected the proposal in remarks broadcast on state television.

“What Bukele must do immediately today is sign a decree to release the 252 Venezuelans to Venezuela.”

— Nicolás Maduro

“What Bukele must do immediately today is sign a decree to release the 252 Venezuelans to Venezuela,” said Maduro, Bloomberg News reported. Maduro also demanded that Bukele give Venezuela's government information about the detainees' physical condition and legal situation, the news service reported. Venezuelan leaders have said for weeks that they want to do “whatever it takes” to secure the Venezuelans' release from El Salvador's CECOT prison. Maduro did not mention Bukele's demand about political prisoners in Venezuela, though Bukele did name some, including journalist Roland Carreño, lawyer and human rights activist Rocío San Miguel, and Rafael Tudares, the son-in-law of former Venezuelan presidential candidate Edmundo González, Bloomberg News reported. “Unlike our detainees, many of whom have committed murder, others have committed rape and some have even been arrested multiple times before being deported, your political prisoners have committed no

crime,” Bukele said in a post directed at Maduro on X. “The only reason they are imprisoned is because they opposed you and your electoral fraud,” Bukele added.

BUSINESS NEWS

Atlas Gets \$510 Mn in Financing for Chile Solar Project

Miami-based solar energy firm Atlas Renewable Energy has secured \$510 million in financing from at least five banks to finish building a combined solar and battery storage facility in northern Chile, the company announced Monday. Atlas' Estepa facility in Chile's Antofagasta region has a planned solar power capacity of 215 megawatts—enough to power the equivalent of around 200,000 households each year—and a battery storage capacity of 418 megawatts. In December, Atlas signed a power-purchase agreement with mining conglomerate Grupo CAP to supply 75 percent of the project's electricity output, news site Renewables Now reported. “We are proud to continue our role as strategic partners to some of the most important companies operating in the mining and energy sectors,” Alfredo Solar, regional manager for the Southern Cone at Atlas, said Monday in a statement. Atlas operates three other active solar energy power plants in Chile, in addition to solar projects in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay. The Estepa plant, which will be Atlas' first combined solar and energy storage system in the country, is scheduled to open commercial operations in 2026, the company said.

U.S. Antimony Resumes Operations at Mexico Facility

U.S. Antimony Corporation on Monday announced it has resumed operations at a smelting facility in Mexico, reversing a decision

NEWS BRIEFS

Pope Francis' Funeral to Be Held Saturday

The funeral of Pope Francis, the first pontiff from the Americas, will be held Saturday in St. Peter's Square, the Vatican announced today, Reuters reported. Francis, a native of Argentina, died Monday at age 88 of a cerebral stroke. Among the world leaders expected to attend the funeral are U.S. President Donald Trump, Argentine President Javier Milei and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Celsia Acquires Renewable Power Facilities Under Development in Colombia

Colombian power utility Celsia, a subsidiary of the Grupo Argos conglomerate, on Monday announced that it has acquired five planned renewable power plants in Colombia with a total generating capacity of 675 megawatts from Irish firm Mainstream Renewable Power. Celsia will acquire three solar parks and two wind farms that are currently in development; pre-construction work has only been completed on one of the projects, a 100-megawatt solar plant with a planned opening date of 2026, news site PV Tech reported.

Vallourec to Supply Steel Pipelines to Brazil's Petrobras for Offshore Site

French firm Vallourec has won a contract to supply steel pipelines to Brazilian state-run oil company Petrobras' planned expansion of an offshore drilling site, Vallourec announced this morning. The Búzios field is Brazil's second largest in terms of daily oil production; Petrobras discovered new oil resources at the field in February, Reuters reported. Petrobras plans to expand production and open five new drilling units at the site by 2028, for which Vallourec will supply steel pipelines at an undisclosed value.

more than a year ago to end its activities in Latin America, Reuters reported. U.S. Antimony is the United States' largest smelter of antimony, a critical mineral used in ammunition, missiles and batteries. The company's decision to restart its smelting facility in Ciudad Madero, in Tamaulipas state, comes amid disruptions to antimony supply chains between the United States and China. China accounts for approximately half of global antimony production. In December, the Chinese government outlawed exports of the critical mineral to the United States, Reuters reported. The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump last week launched a formal trade inquiry into critical minerals imports, which could result in higher U.S. duties on antimony imports from China. U.S. Antimony plans to produce some 200 tons of commercial-grade antimony at its facility in Mexico through at least the end of this year, the company told Reuters on Monday. Mexico is now subject to 25 percent tariffs on automobiles, steel and aluminum that it exports to the United States, but it was spared the 10 percent flat fee that Trump imposed earlier this month on products from all countries that fall outside of the USMCA trade agreement. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Monday that she has yet to reach an agreement with Trump on lifting automobile and metals tariffs, Bloomberg News reported. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the March 18 issue of the Advisor.]

Shell, NGC Plan Survey in Venezuelan Waters: Report

Dutch oil major Shell and Trinidad and Tobago's National Gas Company (NGC) plan to complete a survey expedition over the next few weeks to assess oil and gas resources in an offshore field in Venezuelan waters, two sources close to the matter told Reuters on Monday. Shell and NGC aim to maximize the amount of information they are able to gather about the Dragon field before their license from the U.S. government to operate in the area expires on May 27, the wire service reported. The administration of

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conflicts, each with its own dynamic. To cite one example, whereas the ELN (from which the Comuneros split) and the Estado Mayor Central of the FARC are fighting each other in Nariño, they have united against the Gulf Clan in Antioquia. In his remaining time, Petro should prioritize similar regional initiatives wherever these seem most promising, which could still result in a composite or patchwork of regional peacemaking rather than the elusive 'Total Peace.' It's not just that 'Total Peace' with national-level actors is hard to broker, but that it's probably not the right solution for the problem at hand, which the 2016 peace accord got right in the emphasis it placed on the concept of 'territorial peace.'"

A **Gwen Burnyeat, lecturer in social anthropology at the University of Edinburgh:** "On April 5, the Colombian army, with monitoring by the Organization of American States' Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia, destroyed a stockpile of weapons belonging to Comuneros del Sur (CdS), a guerrilla group in the southern department of Nariño, formerly part of the ELN. The government also signed the sixth and seventh agreements with this group thus far; respectively, a truth-seeking mechanism led by the National Center for Historical Memory, and the substitution of 5,000 hectares of coca crops. The peace process with CdS is methodologically innovative—it

is tightly focused territorially to the 10 municipalities where CdS has historically been present for the last 32 years, and it includes the governor of Nariño and mayors of these municipalities, as well as local communities, including Indigenous authorities. This model, called 'local peace co-construction,' incorporates lessons from the peace process with

“The negotiations with CdS have motivated other tables to make progress...”

— Gwen Burnyeat

the FARC, which had little buy-in from local authorities. This is the first concrete result from the nine negotiating tables opened with different armed groups by Petro's 'Total Peace' policy. The negotiations with CdS have motivated other tables to make progress, such as an agreement reached with the Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillera group to eradicate 30,000 hectares of coca in Putumayo and Nariño. However, the Petro administration is short on time and under pressure from the United States to extradite guerrilla leaders, and conflict dynamics in regions like Catatumbo have deteriorated. It remains to be seen whether the process with CdS can consolidate, and whether other processes can advance quickly enough."

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U.S. President Donald Trump earlier this month moved ahead by five months the deadline for Shell and NGC to cease operations in Venezuela, citing a breakdown in negotiations on migration with the government of President Nicolás Maduro. Shell and NGC would be legally obligated to pay taxes to Venezuela's government on revenue from the Dragon project, which was planned to produce around 200 million cubic feet per day of natural gas as soon as 2026, Reuters reported. Trinidadian Prime Minister Stuart Young announced on April 8 that his

government would appeal the decision to move up the expiration of the Dragon project's sanctions waiver license, newspaper Trinidad and Tobago Newsday reported. In preparation for the Dragon project's license being potentially renewed at an undetermined date, Shell and NGC have chartered at least one marine survey vessel to conduct work in the coming weeks to determine drilling locations and pipeline design, sources told Reuters on Monday. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the March 28 issue of the weekly Energy Advisor.]

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A **Laura Lizarazo, associate director for the Andean region at Control Risks:** “This is a major milestone not only for the government’s peace-building agenda, but also for Colombian society. It is not about prematurely overestimating a development that, still in its early stage, is highly positive and promising. It is a tangible step toward violence de-escalation under a more localized, pragmatic and sustainable approach, offering a viable alternative to the maximalist, more ambitious framework of Total Peace. The potential to replicate this ‘localized peace’ model with other groups—or with pro-peace factions or larger organizations—will depend on local conflict dynamics (whether or not the group is dominant in a certain area) and whether the balance of power offers sufficient incentives for committing to peace. At the same time, the exceptional nature of this development underscores the broader shortcomings of President Gustavo Petro’s Total Peace initiative. It has functioned more as a political priority than as a well-defined comprehensive state policy. Despite early momentum with civil society and other branches of government, the president failed to establish clear,

context-specific guidelines, objectives and tailored negotiation strategies for engaging with the diverse array of armed and criminal groups operating in the country. Constant backtracking, improvisation, miscommu-

“**This is a major milestone not only for the government’s peace-building agenda, but also for Colombian society.”**

— Laura Lizarazo

nication and contradictions within Petro’s own cabinet undermined the credibility and effectiveness of the Total Peace initiative. With only 16 months remaining in his term—and most armed groups maintaining their belligerent and criminal posture—the likelihood of the initiative achieving further meaningful results is low.”

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

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Upcoming Events

Eighth Annual Latin America Energy Conference – Shifting Currents: Energy and Geopolitical Realignment in the Americas

April 22, 2025 | 9:30 a.m. ET

Perspectives on Remittance Flows in 2025

April 24, 2025 | 9:15 a.m. ET

Hacia un sector privado activo en el fortalecimiento del Estado de derecho

May 13, 2025 | 5:00 p.m. Buenos Aires time

