



Editorial

UNIDAD DE ANÁLISIS POLÍTICO Y SEGURIDAD CORPORATIVA

ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT **SITUATION**

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REGIONAL

Transnational Organized Crime:
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LOCAL

What are the ZUTs and how have they been received in the midst of the conflict and peace negotiation attempts?





What medium- and long-term consequences could be expected in Kashmir and the region following high tensions between India and Pakistan?

The recent conflict between India and Pakistan in Kashmir has revived one of the world's most protracted and dangerous disputes, with global implications due to the nuclear status of both countries. The escalation began on April 22, 2025, when a terrorist attack in Pahalgam (Indian Kashmir) left 26 people dead, mainly Hindu tourists. India blamed Pakistan-backed groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba-linked Kashmir Resistance Front (TRF), which triggered a series of military reprisals ([DW](#), 2025).

The dispute over Kashmir dates back to 1947, when the partition of British India left this Muslim-majority territory under the control of a Hindu maharaja who chose to join India. This led to the first Indo-Pakistani war and the division of the territory into two sectors separated by the Line of Control, which is still in force today. Three subsequent wars (1965, 1971 and 1999) and an independence insurgency in Indian Kashmir since the 1980s (with more than 40,000 deaths) have perpetuated the tension between India and Pakistan ([Infobae](#), 2025).



Resource: Infobae, 2025.

Following the April attack, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, bombing suspected terrorist camps in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, with at least 30 casualties reported. Pakistan responded with missile and drone strikes against Indian targets, marking the first time in five decades that both countries conducted deep air raids into enemy territory. U.S. mediation brought about a cease-fire on May 13, although both sides claimed victory ([The New York Times](#), 2025).



The crisis left significant material damage, civilian casualties and the collapse of key diplomatic mechanisms. India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty (1960), vital for Pakistan, while both countries expelled diplomats and restricted visas ([El Salto](#), 2025). Although open war was avoided, nationalist rhetoric intensified: in Pakistan, the military sought to regain legitimacy after criticism of its role in the internal political crisis, while India reinforced its national security narrative in the run-up to elections ([The New York Times](#), 2025).

The conflict remains a geopolitical time bomb. The Chinese presence in northern Kashmir, the militarization of the region and the activity of armed groups will maintain tension. Although the ceasefire prevented a nuclear escalation, the lack of bilateral dialogue and the political instrumentalization of the conflict in both countries make new cycles of violence likely. The international community, especially the US, will need to maintain active mediation to prevent a local incident from escalating into a regional catastrophe. A definitive solution would require addressing not only territorial claims, but also human rights and self-determination in Kashmir, historically neglected issues.



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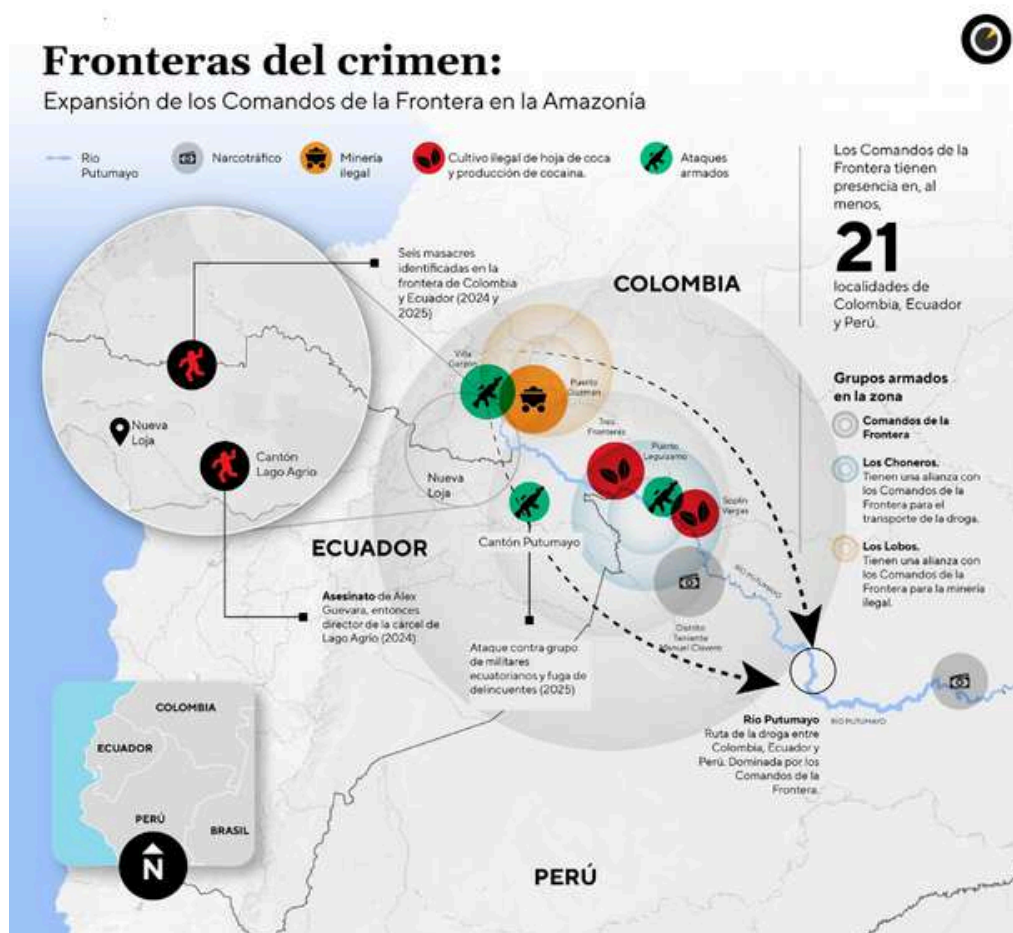
Transnational Organized Crime: Comandos de Frontera in Ecuador.

The murder of eleven Ecuadorian military personnel in the Amazonian region of Alto Punino on May 9, 2025, set off alarm bells about the growing threat of transnational organized crime at the regional level. The ambush was perpetrated by an armed cell of Comandos de Frontera, which attacked a unit of the 19th Napo Jungle Brigade with explosives, rifles and grenades. The event, which took place in an area marked by illegal gold mining, provoked a strong response from the Ecuadorian government, which deployed 1,500 soldiers to locate and neutralize those responsible. During the confrontations, alias “Compadre”, identified as the main leader of this criminal structure in Ecuadorian territory and in charge of extortion of illegal miners, was killed ([El Tiempo](#), 2025).

Comandos de Frontera emerged in 2017 in Putumayo, Colombia, following the signing of the Peace Accords with the defunct FARC. Originally known as “La Mafia”, they adopted their current name in 2020 and quickly established themselves as one of the most powerful criminal organizations in the region. Their main activity is drug trafficking, controlling coca crops and trafficking routes to Ecuador and Brazil. They also derive income from illegal mining and extortion.

Under the leadership of Giovanni Andres Rojas, alias “Araña”, currently under arrest and pending extradition to the US, they have expanded their presence from Putumayo into other departments such as Nariño, Cauca, Amazonas and Caquetá. Their allies include “La Constru” and, in Ecuador, the “Los Lobos” gang. Their main enemies, meanwhile, include the Segunda Marquetalia, with whom they broke off relations in 2024 due to differences over the “Paz Total” negotiations ([El Tiempo](#), 2025).

In Ecuador, Comandos de Frontera have extended their influence especially in the province of Sucumbíos, using illegal mining as a source of financing and territorial coverage. Their presence has been reported in Amazonian areas such as Alto Punino, where they operate informal mining camps. Ecuadorian authorities have identified logistical and strategic links with local groups such as “Los Lobos”, which has allowed them to establish support networks and facilitate drug and arms trafficking. The ambush of the Ecuadorian military not only exposed the military capacity of these groups, but also their potential access to privileged intelligence information, which increases the threat level to Ecuador's national security ([Infobae](#), 2025).



Resource: Ojo Público, 2025



Looking ahead, the threat from the Comandos de Frontera in Ecuador and other neighboring countries is expected to continue to grow, especially if they consolidate as a key player in transnational organized crime networks. Their strengthening in Colombia, combined with expanding criminal alliances and an increasingly lucrative illegal economy, gives them a solid base to project beyond their traditional borders. Institutional weaknesses in peripheral areas and the lack of a coordinated strategy among states to combat these structures allow them to consolidate as multinational crime networks. Without a strong regional response that combines military action, shared intelligence and socio-economic opportunities for affected communities, territorial control and associated violence could increase throughout the Amazon region.



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What are the ZUTs and how have they been received in the midst of the conflict and peace negotiation attempts?

The recent creation of a Temporary Location Zone (ZUT) in Norte de Santander has generated strong national controversy, mainly due to confusion with the distension zones established during the failed Caguán peace process (1999-2002). This has raised doubts about possible territorial concessions to Organized Armed Groups (GAOs). However, the government has been emphatic in pointing out that the ZUTs are not equivalent to clearance zones. They are veredal spaces, located within municipalities and under state surveillance, where the public forces maintain a presence in the surrounding areas. Even with these clarifications, uncertainty persists, especially in regions such as Catatumbo, where violence continues to be a constant and attempts to move towards a negotiated solution face multiple challenges ([Razón Pública](#), 2025).

ZUT are temporary mechanisms created to facilitate the concentration of members of armed groups in the process of transition to legality. They function as controlled spaces for the beginning of the process of laying down arms, identification of combatants and transition to reincorporation. In the case of Catatumbo, the ZUT was located in the municipality of Tibú in order to concentrate the Frente 33 of the Estado Mayor Central, a dissidence of the extinct FARC-EP.

These zones operate under strict security protocols, with police and army presence, and seek to offer guarantees for an orderly exit from the conflict. They do not imply a withdrawal of the State, nor do they imply zones closed to the public forces. They are guarded spaces, with institutional presence, designed to consolidate peace in its final phase ([Ariel Ávila, 2025](#)).

Area of interest (Catatumbo-Tibú)



A recent precedent that illustrates the potential of the ZUT is the case of Samaniego, Nariño. There, the implementation of a similar zone allowed the concentration of the Frente Comuneros del Sur, formerly linked to the ELN, in a process of laying down arms that brought positive effects to the region. Since the process with the GAO, Nariño has reported a notable reduction in massacres, assassinations of social leaders, confinements and displacements, generating an atmosphere of relative tranquility. This case has been cited as an example of how, with political will and institutional coordination, the ZUTs can become effective catalysts for territorial peace. ([Ariel Ávila, 2025](#)).

In the short and medium term the outlook for the ZUT in Tibú is uncertain and marked by considerable risks, especially due to the ELN offensive. As Emiro Roperio, signatory of the peace agreement, warned, without a dialogue with this structure (dominant in the territory) it will be difficult to consolidate peace. The ELN perceives Frente 33 as an enemy and its hostility could lead to confrontations that endanger both ex-combatants and the civilian population. In this context, the State must prioritize the protection of communities, strengthen negotiation channels and offer real incentives for demobilization. ZUTs could be a key tool on the road to peace, but only if they are part of a comprehensive strategy that promotes sustainable solutions to the conflict. ([Caracol Radio, 2025](#)).

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