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Unidad 6, Perspectivas

Los secretos de la paz en Colombia

Why Colombia’s Peace Deal is Failing

00:11

David Noriega: Three years ago this week, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, agreed to laid down arms in a historic peace deal.

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Woman: The Nobel Peace Prize Laureate of 2016...

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David Noriega: The agreement raised hopes around the world that Colombia’s decades long civil war would finally come to an end. It even won the country's then president the Nobel Peace Prize.

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David Noriega: But Colombia since the peace deal has been anything but peaceful. The country was reminded of that in January, when a bombing at the police academy in the capital left 21 dead.

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David Noriega: That bomb was placed by the army of national liberation, or ELN, one of the largest of the armed groups that had stepped in to fill the void left by the FARC.

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David Noriega: The ELN has been around since 1964. It’s the only Marxist guerilla army left in the Americas. But its stronger now than it's been in years. It gained 1000 new members in the year after the peace deal was signed.

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David Noriega: In the jungles of the pacific coast, they hide out in groups of 20 or so combatants.

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David Noriega: They never stay in one place for long, but they make themselves comfortable with satellite TV and internet. Yesenia joined the ELN when she was 17. 20 years later, she’s a commander and she doesn’t go anywhere without her dog, a bomb sniffing Labrador they took from the army and renamed Coronel.

03:25

David Noriega: While we were in their camp, an army helicopter flew overhead.

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David Noriega: What they thought was a single flyover turned into several helicopters circling for hours to unload soldiers in the jungle nearby. In less than 30 minutes, Yesenia’s unit had packed up camp.

04:10

David Noriega: Behind the breakdown of the peace process is a string of broken promises by the Colombian government. At this camp for former FARC rebels, one of many designed to help them reintegrate into society, the government promised land for farming and machines for a shoe factory. None of that has come through.

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David Noriega: The camps are guarded 24/7 by the army and police who are there to protect the former guerillas from right-wing paramilitaries and other old enemies. Since they gave up their weapons, 127 immobilized FARC rebels have been murdered.

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David Noriega: The job of pushing the government to keep its promises has fallen to community leaders and activists.

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David Noriega: Luis Vásquez spends his days convincing demobilized FARC guerillas to stick with the peace process and find legal work, instead of taking up arms again. But there’s only so much people like him can do. And more 2000 former rebels have taken up arms again. Here in the heart of Colombia's top cocaine producing region, the old units of the FARC simply reformed as drug mafias.

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David Noriega: So, Vásquez does his best to mitigate the violence. In December, he helped broker a cease-fire between the new rival armed factions.

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David Noriega: That military strategy has failed and the continued existence of the ELN proves it.

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David Noriega: After the army's helicopters drove them out of their camp, Yesenia’s unit relocated to a small village up-river.

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David Noriega: The village has no running water or other basic services. To keep good relations with civilians, the ELN often gives them cash to help with medical care or other necessities the government doesn’t buy. The ELN’s top commander in the region goes by Uriel.

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