

# Colombians slam Trump's interference in presidential election

US interference directed by the Trump administration has already influenced elections in Ecuador, Argentina, and Honduras, swinging votes to right-wing militarists determined to unravel what's left of their countries' social sectors while authorizing harsh repression against their opponents. Now, as Colombia's presidential runoff approaches, The Grayzone visits Huila, Colombia, near the border with Ecuador, to hear what voters think about Trump's backing of ultra-right candidate Abeldardo De La Espriella and his threats against the country if it elects leftist Ivan Cepeda. Produced by Oscar Leon, shot by Bladimir Sanchez Espitia ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

## #Speaker 1

The presidential election in Colombia between Abelardo de la Espriella and Iván Cepeda left a polarized country. Instances of ballot and tally sheet alterations documented by citizens cast a veil of institutional mistrust before the presidential runoff. Even though Cepeda eventually walked back President Petro's fraud accusations, saying, "We have not found evidence of events of such magnitude or depth as to warrant a formal statement." But beyond Petro's ability to prove foul play, the question remains: how can a Trump candidate win an election in Colombia?

Just as in Argentina, Ecuador, and Honduras, it was a direct and effective intervention by the Trump administration, something it also attempted unsuccessfully in Canada and Hungary. The Grayzone traveled to Huila, right in the border area with Ecuador, aiming to learn how the local population has been affected by U.S. electoral intervention and to speak with some of the local progressive voters. A border hub between Putumayo and Cauca, Huila is situated in a flashpoint for Colombia's continued civil war and social conflict.

## #Speaker 2

In the case of the United States, there are already precedents demonstrating that, in many parts of Latin America, they have exerted influence in matters ranging from wars to the ousting of presidents. Here in Colombia specifically, we witnessed this recently with the U.S. action of placing President Petro on the Clinton List as a drug trafficker.

## #Speaker 3

The governments of Ecuador and the United States have indeed exerted influence on the Colombian elections, insofar as they have dispatched observers to monitor the voting. Likewise, people are paying close attention to how relations between Ecuador and the United States might shift depending on the outcome for each candidate.

### **#Speaker 1**

U.S. interference began with political statements by Trump, Rubio, and, of course, Bernie Moreno regarding Colombia and Petro. The rhetoric gradually intensified, accusing President Petro of failing to fight the war on drugs and going so far as to place him and his wife on the infamous Clinton List as collaborators in drug trafficking and illicit activities. These accusations were amplified by mainstream media.

### **#Speaker 1**

Effectively influencing the public.

### **#Speaker 4**

First, he betrayed the agreement he made with me during our personal conversation, which was not to intervene in Colombia, yet he threatened missile strikes. I went to speak with him. I believe we parted on friendly terms. He must allow the Colombian people the freedom to vote and choose. He needs to stop humiliating nations, launching missiles at them, issuing military threats, and undermining international humanitarian law.

### **#Speaker 1**

Trump also unleashed his local enforcer, U.S.-born Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa, who established tariffs on bilateral trade, effectively shutting down commerce across the border, otherwise bustling with trade. The losses are in the hundreds of millions. He even militarily attacked the border, bombing the Colombian side and raiding, imprisoning, and torturing Colombian citizens on the Ecuadorian side of the border.

### **#Speaker 5**

This strategy involves portraying, reinforcing, and underscoring, through that cliché image of drug traffickers, both the Colombian government and the Colombian population. It is within this context that the episode involving attacks on fishermen's boats took place. And while it is true that some of those individuals may have been trafficking, that was nonetheless a military operation carried out by the United States government. The objective behind this, undertaken with the support of the country's right-wing factions, was to establish influence, specifically to identify the people and the

government itself with the drug trade. It is an objective they continue to pursue to this day and one they will not cease attempting to achieve.

## **#Speaker 2**

Well, Colombia, I believe, has reached a moment of extreme polarization. There are certain internal political games being played among senators, among certain political figures from the past who simply refuse to let go and insist on continuing their macabre little schemes. They have begun soliciting international assistance and favors, as we have witnessed with certain U.S. senators, for instance, and with other senators who have aligned themselves with Ecuador, ultimately attempting to toy with the future trajectory of this country.

## **#Speaker 1**

The creation of conflict between Colombia and Ecuador is one of the main instruments of Trump's great American project to consolidate power. The Monroe Doctrine is implemented through a new Condor-like plan and advanced by figures such as former presidents Álvaro Uribe and Juan Orlando Hernández, who was pardoned by President Trump for his narco-trafficking charges, as well as current presidents Milei and Daniel Noboa. This strategy has been pursued not only through Trump-style tariffs and taxes on Colombian products, but also through a continuous stream of provocations and false reports. These include several false-positive-style attacks, as well as bombings of boats on the Pacific coast. In these cases, the emphasis appeared to be on producing results rather than gathering evidence, with body counts taking precedence over substantiated findings. Yes, the false positives policy of counterinsurgency is back.

## **#Speaker 2**

Donald Trump, along with our very own neighbor Ecuador, indirectly influences our country's politics, given that they have repeatedly asserted and declared that the progressive government in Colombia is a failure. This went so far as to result in the closure of our southern borders and led to numerous conflicts with the Trump administration, which even went so far as to disparage our rather effective efforts in the fight against drug trafficking and money laundering. Many Colombian politicians travel to the United States to spread lies on their behalf. They seek to seize control of the government once again.

## **#Speaker 6**

It has become apparent that the relationship between the Ecuadorian right wing and the Colombian right wing involves a very obvious maneuver designed to influence current politics or the ongoing elections. How is this evidenced? Well, first, we see President Uribe traveling to Ecuador, yes, to establish a certain type of agreement with the Ecuadorian government. Following that visit, tariffs were imposed—unjustified tariffs that seemed to come out of nowhere.

## **#Speaker 1**

The forefather of Uribism, Álvaro Uribe, a former president sentenced to 12 years in prison, known for spearheading a particularly brutal campaign of paramilitary killings with the support of the military and the connivance of the United States, and who has demonstrated the same appetite as Trump's for false positives, visited Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa in secret in February 2026. Noboa is himself a war hawk, a Miami-born millionaire, and a key U.S. ally in the region.

The secret visit took place shortly before Ecuador imposed tariffs of 50%, threatening to later increase them to 100% on trade with Colombia, effectively paralyzing cross-border commerce and severely impacting the economy of regions such as Huila, where these interviews are being conducted. The meeting was intended to remain secret, and Uribe initially denied that it had taken place. However, a post by Lavinia Balbonesi, the wife of President Daniel Noboa, exposed the encounter when she shared photographs of the meeting on social media. Despite the revelation, the incident received little to no attention from major news outlets.

## **#Speaker 5**

At this moment, the Colombian government, through seizures, the arrests of major drug kingpins, and the military interdiction of specific drug trafficking routes, such as the Catatumbo and the Cañón del Miqui, has caused those routes to migrate toward other countries, specifically toward Ecuador. So, let's put it this way: this country has truly confronted the issue of drug trafficking structurally, institutionally, and militarily. And yet, the United States government attempted to cast doubt on these efforts by placing the national government on that list, variously known as the list or the Clinton list, even seeking to include the president himself. The aim, evidently, was to delegitimize a leftist government and, by doing so, influence the elections.

## **#Speaker 1**

Del Espriella has pledged to implement a model similar to Javier Milei's, doing away with all social programs as well as the peace process currently being pursued by Gustavo Petro's administration.

## **#Speaker 2**

Petro's government is allocating increased investment to education. It has supported the military forces, specifically boosting food allowances and improving living quarters for rank-and-file soldiers through social investment, and it provides assistance to the elderly. Furthermore, efforts have been made to strengthen the guarantees enabling people to retire. Significant investments are being made in the construction of facilities in areas that previously lacked access to university education, education that is now tuition-free.

## **#Speaker 2**

There is a rather stark social divide.

## **#Speaker 5**

Consequently, these social policies have been geared toward mothers whose children are in vulnerable situations, toward young people attending universities and institutions to train themselves to become the future of Colombia, and also toward the elderly. This very inequality fuels a search for opportunities—opportunities that are, in turn, offered by criminal networks.

## **#Speaker 1**

Yet none of this matters to Donald Trump, now a quasi-emperor of the Latin American subcontinent. If Colombia falls into his fold, only Mexico and Brazil—already under intense lawfare, asymmetric operations, and intelligence plots—will be left standing. This marks a stark contrast with a few years ago, when a semi-independence movement dominated the subcontinent. Donald Trump plans to apply a new U.S. doctrine of domination over the entire continent and the cannibalization of its own allies' resources, primarily through intelligence agencies and vassal governments, relying on political, intelligence, and mainstream media assets, but also with the military, as we have seen in Venezuela and Cuba. There is a lot of presence of armed groups.

## **#Speaker 2**

There is a heavy presence of armed groups here. One can find everything from domestic and international factions to even Mexican cartels operating in this region of the country. We already know that drugs, specifically drug trafficking, constitute an extremely lucrative business. There are gringo bases here—seven U.S. military bases—though I really don't know what function they serve, whether they actually aid the cartels or help combat drug trafficking, given that the United States is, after all, the primary consumer of these substances. The evolution of the situation has reached a point where, even though we vote in fear, one chooses to vote nonetheless—voting in fear for the sake of hope.

## **#Speaker 1**

The candidates' approaches could not be more dissonant. Abelardo de la Espriella's strong suit is supposed to be the fight against armed groups and criminals, yet he promises no social investment, but rather profound cuts—and above all, subservience to Trump and the rest of his backers. Meanwhile, Zepeda's proposal is to increase troops' pay and invest in new security infrastructure, while continuing to invest in social development. But most importantly, to put Colombia above Trump's and the transnational corporations' interests—something like Colombia First, with the risk it entails.

