



2.1.7. Other groups

The Bolivarian Liberation Forces (FBL, Fuerzas Bolivarianas de Liberación), also known as the Patriotic Forces of National Liberation (FPLN, Fuerzas Patrióticas de Liberación Nacional) or *boliches*, are a Venezuelan guerrilla movement that operates with the acquiescence of the government.^{[514](#)} Although the FBL maintains a military structure, it also pursues political objectives, including 'defending the Bolivarian Revolution', influencing local and regional political offices, and, to a lesser extent, participating in criminal economies that finance its operations.^{[515](#)} The FBL also operates along the Colombia–Venezuela border alongside FARC dissident groups,^{[516](#)} controlling illegal border crossings and extorting migrants and smugglers of cattle and gasoline.^{[517](#)}

In August 2025, the US designated the Cartel of the Suns as a 'Foreign Terrorist Organization' (FTO), citing involvement in 'terrorist violence', drug trafficking, and support for Tren de Aragua, and asserting that the network was headed by President Maduro and other senior officials.^{[518](#)} For information on the removal of Maduro by the US, see section [1.8 Aftermath of US intervention](#). Several countries, including Argentina, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago, issued similar 'terrorist' designations.^{[519](#)} Following Maduro's capture, however, the US Justice Department issued a revised indictment that removed the claim that the Cartel of the Suns was an organised cartel, and while prosecutors continued to accuse Maduro of drug-trafficking involvement, they now describe the Cartel of the Suns as a 'patronage system' and a broader 'culture of corruption' fuelled by narcotics profits.^{[520](#)} Experts noted that Cartel of the Suns is a term coined by Venezuelan media in the 1990s to describe officials corrupted by drug money.^{[521](#)} According to InSight Crime, the Cartel of the Suns refers to networks within Venezuela's armed forces implicated in criminal activities such as gasoline smuggling, illegal mining, corruption schemes, and especially drug trafficking.^{[522](#)} Rather than a single hierarchical organisation, it functions as a loose constellation of cells embedded across the army, navy, air force, and National Guard, spanning all ranks and operating similarly to drug-trafficking structures.^{[523](#)} The degree of coordination among these cells remains unclear.^{[524](#)}

InSight Crime also reported that Mexican traffickers have begun retreating from Zulia state due to shifting political conditions, tighter state control over trafficking routes, and changes in Colombia's cocaine trade that have reduced the state's value as a logistics hub.^{[525](#)}

- [514](#)

InSight Crime, FBL/FPLN, 14 February 2023, [url](#)

- [515](#)

InSight Crime, FBL/FPLN, 14 February 2023, [url](#)

- [516](#)

IWPR, Apure-Arauca Sociedad Anónima, 2023, [url](#); InSight Crime, FBL/FPLN, 14 February 2023, [url](#)

- [517](#)

InSight Crime, FBL/FPLN, 14 February 2023, [url](#)

- [518](#)

USDOS, Terrorist Designations of Cartel de los Soles, 16 November 2025, [url](#)

- [519](#)

InSight Crime, Cartel of the Suns, 16 January 2026, [url](#)

- [520](#)

New York Times (The), Justice Dept. Drops Claim That Venezuela's 'Cartel de los Soles' Is an Actual Group, 6 January 2026, [url](#). See also: US, Department of Justice, Sealed superseding indictment, S4 11 Cr. 205 (AKH), n.d., [url](#)

- [521](#)

New York Times (The), Justice Dept. Drops Claim That Venezuela's 'Cartel de los Soles' Is an Actual Group, 6 January 2026, [url](#)

- [522](#)

InSight Crime, Cartel of the Suns, 16 January 2026, [url](#)

- [523](#)

InSight Crime, Cartel of the Suns, 16 January 2026, [url](#)

- [524](#)

InSight Crime, Cartel of the Suns, 16 January 2026, [url](#)

- [525](#)

InSight Crime, Why Mexican Traffickers Are Leaving Zulia, Venezuela, 5 November 2025, [url](#)