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Murder Of Lorena Henao Montoya Signals New Power Struggle Among Colombian Traffickers

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Assassins killed Lorena Henao Montoya as she was heading home.

Last week, assassins took out Lorena Henao Montoya, aka “Widow of the Mafia,” in Armenia, Colombia, in what authorities believe was a hit ordered by the current drug organizations controlling the cocaine trade in the country. Henao Montoya is the widow of Iván Urdinola Grajales, the former leader of the Norte Del Valle cartel who died in prison in 2002 after he was mysteriously poisoned.

Colombian law enforcement intelligence reports indicate Henao Montoya had returned to the Norte Del Valle region of Colombia to start a new organization loyal to her family, which has been involved narcotrafficking for more than 20 years, according to *El Tiempo*.

However, she found herself at odds with two nephews of her deceased husband who had reformed the criminal band, Machos, and aligned themselves with the paramilitary group Urabeños to topple their enemies in the criminal organization called Rastrojos. Henao Montoya did not approve of the alliance with the Urabeños.

Henao Montoya was the second old school drug lord murdered in Colombia last two months. On Nov. 30, assassins killed Alejandro Bernal, a former high-ranking member of the Medellin cartel who allegedly was trying to get back into the coke business too.

The widow was murdered by two hitmen riding on a motorcycle, the preferred method of Colombian drug gangs, on Dec. 27. The killers were disguised as police officers and were accompanied by two accomplices in another car that blocked Henao Montoya’s path. They also killed her associate, Lucio Quintero Marin, who along with Henao Montoya was captured in Panama in 2004. The real Colombian authorities intercepted the assassins at a gas station and took them into custody.

Henao Montoya had been released from Colombian prison in May 2011. She was first captured nine years ago in Panama, American and Colombian authorities found documents showing she owned 60 percent of her husband’s businesses. The documents helped agents convict her and five Norte Del Valle members of money laundering and illicit enrichment. Henao Montoya and her brother-in-law, Raul Grajales were sentenced to 8 years in prison.

She was released and deported back to Colombia in 2009. There she was jailed and sentenced to 12 years in prison. A judge let her go two years ago after deciding she had already served enough time for her crimes.

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