

*The Secretariat of the Fifteenth Annual
Virginia International Crisis
Simulation Presents:*



**Fuerzas Armadas
Revolucionarias de Colombia**

Chaired by Malerie Ma

VICS XV

¡Bienvenidos camaradas!

My name is Malerie Ma and I am a fourth year at the University of Virginia. I am a Foreign Affairs and Spanish double major and a minor in East Asian Studies. My current academic interests include Sino-South American relations as well as the Sino-ASEAN dynamic. I am also in the process of writing a thesis on Spanish poetry of the nineteenth century.

While the Secretariat of FARC-EP may seem like an unorthodox cabinet to have at a Model UN conference, however, I think that this particular committee will be both challenging and exciting. I expect a lot of creativity from all of my delegates and the success of this committee truly relies on each person's commitment to keeping an open, inventive, and resourceful mind. After all, unlike more conventional UN simulations, this particular committee will be unfettered by certain moral and legal obligations.

One thing to keep in mind while researching for this committee is that while some of the positions I have assigned to delegates currently is being filled by an actual person, I do not want each delegate to simply mimic what his/her personality has done in the past, that would be far too easy! Being assigned an actual person does pose some interesting issues of balance for each delegate. You will have to stay true to the personality that you have been assigned, but also be able to extrapolate your position to make decisions in the future based on past actions.

Another thing to note while doing research is the use of the words *paramilitary* and *guerrilla*. Usually a paramilitary refers to a group that is used and organized like a traditional military force, but is not an official force. However, how this word is used is largely based on the status of the group and so can be quite subjective. In the case of Colombia, a paramilitary refers to armed right-wing groups who are armed legally and do not oppose the government. FARC-EP, an illegally armed, left-wing group in staunch opposition to the current government would be referred to as guerrillas.

One last thing to keep in mind about the committee itself is that this committee will be run in English, knowledge of Spanish may very well be helpful but is not a requirement. The guide that follows provides a brief historical outline and a more detailed assessment of some of the issues that we will be dealing with. While I have tried to present a fairly coherent account of the issues, please do not hesitate to email me if you should have any questions, and I look forward to meeting you all soon!

Sincerely,
Malerie Ma
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A. Committee Mechanics and Expectations

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo – FARC-EP*) Cabinet is a modern day simulation of the situation in Colombia. Delegates should be aware of any developments in the current situation until the actual conference, however they will not be held accountable for any developments that may occur over the course of the conference.

I. Committee Mechanics

FARC-EP is organized hierarchically along military lines. It is governed by a six-person secretariat (the Secretariat of the Central High Command) led by the Commander-In-Chief (The Chair will represent the Commander in Chief). Decisions made by the secretariat are binding and all members are expected to comply with them (including the members of the secretariat). In order to create a more engaging committee atmosphere, this committee will have additional members representing different interests.

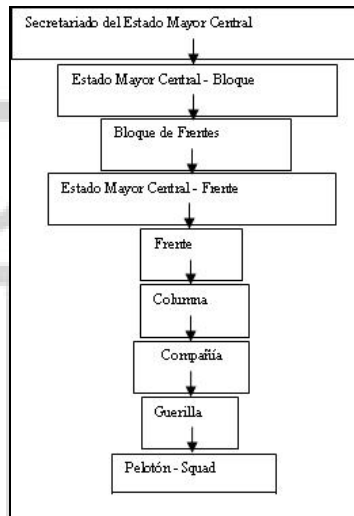


Figure 1: Organizational chart of FARC-EP

zone. Central High Command – Front performs the same functions as the Central High Command – Block, but for each front. A Front is one or more columns. A column is two or more companies. A company is composed of two guerrillas. A Guerrilla is composed of two squads. A squad is the most basic unit within FARC-EP and consists of twelve fighters. Hence, attacks or orders will be passed down from the

Secretariat and then down through the chain of command.

Most of the research regarding organizational capacity – types of weapons possessed, budgetary restraints, etc. – will either be mentioned in this guide or must be discovered by the delegates for themselves. The Dias will provide some guidance in committee on the plausibility of certain attacks through expert presentations and other interactive communication, but this should be used sparingly.

The crisis staff and I will also provide constant updates, briefings, and news articles for delegates. The pace of the committee will be incredibly fast, so decision-making should occur as quickly as possible.

Basic FARC-EP structure from the Secretariat downwards is as follows. The Central High Command - Block¹ is the governing body for each of the respective blocks. The Block of Fronts coordinates between five or more fronts within a specific

¹ FARC-EP has seven main operational regions. A “block” is the name of the military command of each operational region. Each block is composed of between five to fifteen fronts depending on the size of the area and population. There are also more elite and mobile fronts attached to some blocks or under direct command of FARC-EP High Command.

II. Committee Expectations

As members of the Secretariat, delegates will be operating in a crisis atmosphere. Committee meetings are held in secret locations and remain vulnerable to government raids. Delegates will be expected to draft press releases, action orders, and confidential agreements with other groups or governments. Since the meeting location is always open to changes due to potential infiltration, other forms of communication may or not be available.

Ongoing communications may be disrupted or intercepted at any time. Delegates must make do with what they have.

In regards to Parliamentary Procedure, I have found that in unorthodox committees, it is easier for delegates to operate and respond to crises when not adhering to strict Parliamentary Procedure. I prefer to operate in an extended moderated caucus, with unmoderated caucuses punctuating debate so that delegates make work more freely among themselves. While I prefer to run committee outside the parameters of Parliamentary Procedure, delegates should still have at least a basic knowledge of Parliamentary Procedure. Perhaps more than a knowledge of Parliamentary Procedure, delegates should be sure to have experience in a crisis committee. I also retain the right to re-institute Parliamentary Procedure at any time.

Delegates should have detailed knowledge of their role and a general familiarity of all positions, since they may be asked to assume different ones in crisis situations. Outside research *beyond this background guide* is assumed, because the guide should merely be a starting point of useful resources for research, rather than the Bible of the committee.

Position papers are mandatory, and there are special requirements for this committee that must be followed.

- 1) Papers must be no less than three pages, double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point Times font. There is no maximum length
- 2) Position papers should not be an explanation of your position within the Secretariat, but a substantive action report of how you think FARC-EP should respond to all the threats

presented in this guide. There are three main issues presented here, so position papers must be divided into three clearly marked sections with the threats labeled. Your thoughts about how FARC-EP should respond to these threats must be presented as well argued and well-referenced recommendations, not philosophical musings. Footnotes on each page are encouraged (do not use in-text citations or endnotes). Papers will be graded based on four criteria: clarity of thought, quality of research, organization, and innovation, and will be returned.

B. Brief Overview of the Republic of Colombia and Its Government

I. A Brief History

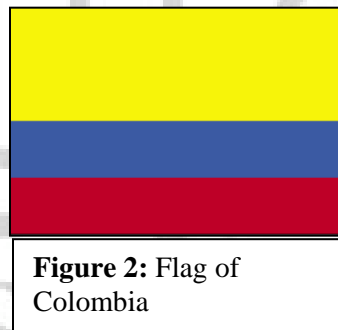


Figure 2: Flag of Colombia

In 1820 colonies in South America rebelled and achieved independence

from the Kingdom of Spain. Gran

Colombia, as the new nation was known, broke into three separate states (Ecuador, Venezuela, and Colombia) a decade later in 1830.

Clashes between groups of rival elites mark the pages of Colombian history. What the various political, social, and economic elite groups² have been able to maintain as a

² This type of subordination has its roots in the strict social hierarchy imposed during Spanish rule which placed native people in a class clearly below those of Spanish descent.

constant is the exclusion of other groups and social institutions. Unlike some other Latin American nations, Colombia is rare in that “the country has been dominated more by civilian than by military rule. Because military forces have been denied political power, the civilian elites have had only themselves, divided into rival groups to contend within the political arena.”³

While the various social classes are clearly distinguished from another, they nevertheless are strictly bound to one another as exemplified by the patron-client relationship. In rural areas, peasants rely on the propertied upper class in order to farm. This relationship was also easily exploited by local political bosses who were able to “organize” large masses of people to vote for a particular candidate often through threats and intimidation. Another facet that developed as a result of this relationship was an “inherited hatred”⁴ which continues to plague members of different classes throughout each generation.

Economically, Colombia has primarily based itself on export goods, especially coffee. In the late 1800s coffee was the key export crop and by the 1900s profits from the coffee trade were the major sources of

revenue and investment in the new industrial sector.

Economic modernization in the 1900s brought along a host of social changes and demands from the working class which threatened the position of the traditional elite. The rise of guerilla activity is especially notable during the 1960s through the 1990s.

In the 1960s, the National Front⁵ represented a significant change in the political history and also presented the nation with a new threat, communism.

II. The Governmental System

Since independence Colombia has had ten constitutions, the last of which was adopted in 1886. The various constitutions have all focused on three main issues: the division of powers, strength of the chief executive, and the role of the Roman Catholic Church.

The government is divided into three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The president is elected every four years by direct popular vote. Consecutive terms are not allowed, although, former presidents may run for re-election after sitting out one term. The Executive branch also encompasses a thirteen member cabinet and other administrative agencies. The President also has several legislative powers that allow



Figure 3: Álvaro Uribe Vélez, Incumbent President, since 7 August 2002

³ “Hanratty, Dennis M. and Sandra W. Meditz, eds. *Colombia A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1988.

<<http://countrystudies.us/colombia/>>.

⁴ This term, coined by Robert H. Dix, identifies an “affiliation adopted by the members of the lower classes determined largely by the affiliation of their patrons and their families”. Basically the lower classes tended to vote opposite whatever the elite classes would purely out of social hatred.

⁵ The National front (1958-1974) was a period in which the two main political parties (the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party) agreed to let the opposite party govern, switching ever four presidential terms.

him/her to “promulgate decrees with the force of law called decree-laws.”⁶

The Colombian Congress, like the American Congress, is divided into two houses. Both houses are responsible for initiating, amending, interpreting, and repealing legislation as well as several other duties.

The Judiciary branch encompasses the Supreme Court, district superior, circuit, municipal, and lower courts, as well as the Council of State.⁷

One particular point of interest about the Colombian political system is its long history of party politics. There are two traditional parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, that have consistently dominated the political process. However, Colombian democracy has been somewhat marred by a history of political violence. Periods of intense political violence have resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths.⁸

In 1988, Colombia took dramatic steps towards breaking the elitist tradition by holding its first direct, popular elections for mayors. However, while these measures have resulted in a modicum of political

⁶ Hanratty.

⁷ The Council of State specifically supervises a set of administrative courts that inspect governmental acts and decrees.

⁸ Some analysts have linked this political violence once again to the traditional elitist nature of the political system.

equality, economic inequality remains a pressing issue that continues to erupt in political instability and violence.

C. The Origins and Development of FARC-EP

FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) was founded in the 1960s⁹ after the establishment of the National Front. FARC was officially established as the military wing of the Colombian Communist Party in 1965 when communist militants and peasant self-defense groups banded together.

The goals of FARC were to represent the rural poor against the Colombian elite and to “oppose US influence in Colombia, the privatization of natural resources, multinational corporations, and rightist violence.”¹⁰

FARC is the largest and best-equipped rebel group in Colombia. The organization is regularly estimated to have between 9,000 and 12,000 members.¹¹ It operates in roughly one-third of the country, concentrating operations in the jungles of the south and east.



Figure 4: The official flag of the FARC which features the group’s logo superimposed over the flag of Colombia. Their logo consists of their initials, an open book, and two crossed semi-automatic rifles.

⁹ There are actually two predominant guerilla groups in Colombia, FARC and the ELN (National Liberation Army) These two groups are historical rivals and are both considered terrorist organizations by the US State Department. The ELN is an amalgamation of students, Catholic radicals, and left-wing intellectuals who strive to emulate Castro’s rule in Cuba. Both groups have similar agendas, although the ELN is slightly more ideologically bent than FARC.

¹⁰ Hanson, Stephanie. “FARC, ELN: Colombia’s Left-Wing Guerillas”. *Council on Foreign Relations*. 19 August, 2009/

¹¹ In 2001 membership was at an all-time high of 16,000 members, although by 2008, the head of the US Southern Command testified that FARC had been reduced to approximately 9,000 fighters.

In 1982, FARC held its Seventh Guerilla Conference at which point the group organized a group of highly secret cells and outlined a Strategic Plan. A new form of armed struggle was unveiled and the initials “EP” (for *Ejército del Pueblo* or *People’s Army*) was added to the name. The restructuring that occurred as a result of this conference produced a much more efficient and deadly organization. Unfortunately, recruitment remained low and in the late 1980s an internal conflict resulted in a split where former commanders within FARC-EP



Figure 5: Map of FARC-EP controlled areas.

created their own guerilla group, the Ricardo Franco Front Command – South. At this point, the political commander of FARC, Jacobo Arenas created a series of strategic approaches which stressed both political and military growth. A “double fronts” goal was also set, aiming to double the size of FARC-EP and set concrete dates for future takeovers by the 1990s.

In 1984, the Patriotic Union was created as the political wing of FARC-EP, however the movement was not confined to FARC-EP, members of the Colombian Communist Party and several other civil movements also participated. Unfortunately, certain groups within the Patriotic Union disagreed with the armed struggle of FARC-EP and shortly

after its creation, the Patriotic Union ceased to exist, partly due to internal disagreement, but also due to the assassination/disappearance of roughly 3,000 members.

By 1985, FARC-EP had joined with several other guerilla groups (EPL, M-19, and ELN) to create the Guerrilla Coordinating Board, which later evolved into the Simón Bolívar Guerilla Coordinating Board. This group was responsible for negotiating between the various groups as well as the Colombian government. Success was limited and while some groups were appeased, FARC-EP decided to continue its armed struggle against the government.

In the early 1990s, while talks between FARC-EP and the Colombian were still ongoing, a massive strike upon a FARC-EP compound was carried out by the Colombian army. The rationale provided for the attack was that FARC-EP was not committed to negotiations. In this same period, senior political leader of FARC-EP, Arenas died. While negotiations resumed, violence from both sides of the table also continued. By 1993, negotiations were officially suspended due to prolonged violence and a lack of progress.

In 1999, then president Andrés Pastrana once again entered into peace negotiations with FARC and ceded control of a 42,000 square mile area to the FARC, however, after a series of unproductive negotiations and continued terrorist attacks,¹² Pastrana

¹² The series of terrorist acts included the hijacking of an aircraft, the attack on several small towns and cities, the kidnapping of several political figures, and the arrest of the Irish Colombia Three. The Colombia Three case involved the arrest of three members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) who were accused of training FARC-EP members in certain aspects of guerrilla warfare and weapon making methods. A series of highly incriminating evidence was produced

suspended the talks and ordered Colombian forces to begin retaking FARC-controlled areas.

In 2002, when Uribe assumed office, he followed in Pastrana's footsteps and launched an aggressive campaign against FARC, aided by money sent by the United States via Plan Colombia.¹³ Between 2002 and 2005, it was believed that FARC-EP was undergoing a campaign of strategic withdrawal due to the aggressive actions of Pastrana. While large scale operations have largely ceased, FARC-EP continues to hold several Colombian political figures hostage and has demanded a system for prisoner exchange.

In 2008 FARC-EP faced a number of significant setbacks including several successful government raids which resulted in the rescue of at least fifteen FARC-EP held hostages. Additionally, a raid in March 2008 led to the death of Paul Reyes, FARC's first spokesman and a member of the secretariat.

As of today, kidnapping, bombings, murder, mortar attacks, narcotrafficking, extortion, and hijacking continue to be the main vehicles for FARC-EP aggression until the organization regains some of its military and political strength. While some larger military campaigns have been organized, they have been mostly unsuccessful. After a raid in July 2009, the Colombian military discovered several man-portable antitank

during the trial of the Colombia Three, however, a key witness suspiciously disappeared during the hearings, and later, the Colombia Three vanished while on bail and returned to Ireland.

¹³ Plan Colombia is a multibillion dollar counternarcotics aid package largely initiated by former President Pastrana. It engages in a variety of activities including aerial fumigation to eradicate coca plants.

missiles¹⁴ which have led to speculations about a recent resurgence in the military capacity of FARC.

D. Issue 1: Generating Revenue and International Finance

If the ultimate goal of FARC-EP is military and thus political triumph over the current Colombian political system, then financing their operation is certainly one of the most important intermediary goals for the entire organization.



Figure 6: Map of coca cultivation density

The bulk of FARC-EP revenue is generated from the illegal drug trade. Experts

have estimated that "FARC takes in between \$500 million and \$600 million annually."¹⁵

Of the 110 operational units, at least 65 are involved in some aspect of the drug trade.¹⁶

Whether or not drug activity is limited to local areas or is of a more international persuasion is an issue of debate among government agencies. The 2007 UN World Drug report claims that the majority of drug smuggling in Colombia is controlled by professional smuggling groups, while

¹⁴ www.nctc.gov/site/groups/farc.html

¹⁵ <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9272/> It should also be noted that FARC-EP initially resisted entering the drug trade which it saw as beneath its ideological underpinnings. In the 1980s the group began taxing the cocaine trade to finance itself, until it became completely enmeshed in the industry.

¹⁶ FARC-EP members are strictly forbidden to use drugs.

FARC-EP is focused more on the cultivation and processing of coca. The United States, however, claims that FARC-EP supplies at least 50% of the world's cocaine and at least 60% of the cocaine in American markets is supplied by FARC-EP.¹⁷ What is certain is that FARC-EP taxes almost every stage of the drug business, from the chemicals needed to process coca bushes into cocaine and opium poppies into heroin to delivery fees.

FARC-EP also finances itself from kidnappings, extortion schemes, and a "tax for protection and social services" in the countryside. This added to the revenue from the drug trade makes FARC-EP probably the wealthiest insurgent group in the world.

Questions to Consider:

There are several questions that delegates should ponder about regarding this treat and FARC-EP. Some of them include:

1. Certainly while FARC-EP is one of the best financed insurgent groups in the world, continued revenue generation is not a sure thing. In light of the current economic crisis, revenue projections for the group have plummeted. How should FARC-EP continue to bolster its drug trade in order to generate revenue?
2. Given the heightened efforts in the "war on drugs" (i.e. Plan Colombia), what can FARC-EP do to avoid government crackdowns? Foreign aid is also a large component to Plan Colombia, is there anything FARC-

¹⁷ The US government has even frozen the assets of several individuals suspected of being narcotics traffickers.

- EP can do to curb this inflow of foreign capital?
3. While FARC-EP has traditionally focused its revenue generation efforts in the drug industry, are there any other industries FARC-EP should consider investing in?



Figure 7: An anti-FARC banner, reading "No more kidnappings, nor more lies, no more deaths, no more FARC".

E. Issue 2: Public Image, Opinion, and Recruitment

I. On the Domestic Front

The majority of FARC-EP's actions are violent. FARC-EP is responsible for the majority of ransom kidnappings in Colombia and the group usually targets wealthy landowners and other elites, foreigners, and prominent political figures. FARC-EP also engages in a number of other illegal

activities including, but certainly not limited to, importing arms, exporting drugs, and recruiting minors. A number of their attacks have also resulted in quite a few innocent deaths. As a result, public opinion has largely turned away from this group which has acquired a bloodthirsty image among commoners.

Local populations are an important source of support for FARC-EP which not only recruits heavily from their ranks, but also as an ally against the government. Without the people's support, many of the ideological motivations behind FARC-EP cease to exist and the group loses more and more credibility.

Likewise, the constant start-and-stop nature of negotiations between FARC-EP and the government have painted the group as a highly



Figure 8: Hugo Chávez, Incumbent President of Venezuela since 2 February 1999

uncooperative organization that only seeks to better its members while turning its back on its original motivations. A letter written by Colombian intellectuals (including celebrated Colombian author, Gabriel García Márquez) denounced FARC-EP further damaging the group's public image.

II. On the International Front

While FARC-EP is classified as a terrorist organization by both the United Nations and a host of other nations, there are still some states that remain sympathetic to their cause. As the Colombian government continues to exact strict measures upon FARC-EP operatives, the flow of members into Ecuador and Venezuela has increased. Some Colombian officials have even accused Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez of giving the group \$250 million in aid¹⁸ and of providing computer materials as well as three-Swedish-made anti-tank weapons to the group. Despite these allegations, Chávez has acted as an unofficial negotiator between Colombia and FARC-EP, arranging for a series of hostage exchanges.

Chávez continues to be one of FARC-EP's greatest defenders, urging European and Latin American governments to stop labeling the group as a terrorist organization. He and the group both share similar views on the role of the United States in the region, which is that the US is a dangerous and destabilizing power whose continued influence in the area is an extension of imperialistic tendencies stemming from the Monroe Doctrine.

Besides Venezuela, Cuba¹⁹ has also provided some medical care and political

¹⁸ Hanson.

¹⁹ FARC-EP has repeatedly stated that Castro's Cuban state is one of the models that it hopes to emulate in the event of their victory.

consultation to FARC-EP. Ties to other terrorist organizations, such as the IRA, are also a prominent component of FARC-EP's international activities.

Questions to Consider:

1. Without sacrificing the mission of FARC-EP, how can this organization turn the tide of public opinion back in its favor? Is there a way to remind the people of the true goal of FARC-EP and how a victory for the group, is a victory for the people?
2. Child combatants are an issue of extreme contention between local people and FARC-EP. Human Rights Watch has estimated that between 20 and 30% of FARC-EP members are under 18 years of age. How can FARC-EP continue to recruit new members without incurring the increasing wrath of the local population?
3. While Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez is considered by many to be a dangerous extremist, his support for FARC-EP has been undeniably useful, how can FARC-EP continue to encourage other states to either support them, or at the very least, stop condemning them? Are there other international groups, states that FARC-EP should appeal to?
4. Considering how many issues FARC-EP already has to deal with, is an international presence truly necessary for FARC-EP?
5. Besides consulting with various international groups, FARC-EP's operations are largely confined to Colombian borders, perhaps this would be an opportune time to make its presence known in the international arena?

F: Issue 3: Political Development

The Patriotic Union in the 1980s was the closest FARC-EP has come to establishing a true political party. While FARC-EP has historical connections to the Colombian Communist Party, political activity has never been at the forefront of FARC-EP endeavors.

The termination of the Patriotic Union program, however, was largely due to the murder of the majority of its members than its productivity. What FARC-EP does have is a history of being involved in peace talks with the Colombian government. While skeptics say that FARC-EP only enter these talks to legitimize their social justice cause, however there can be no argument against the fact that there have been positive outcomes to some of these peace talks.

While FARC-EP has had several political spokesmen, there has not been a successful effort to establish a true political branch of FARC-EP, the time for this type of development is now at hand. Examples of other insurgent groups creating their own political branches abound, one of the most successful being Herri Batasuna which was a Basque nationalist political party created out of the group, Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain. This group was successful in being voted into the Spanish Parliament on more than one occasion until the outlaw of the party in 2003.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is the development of a political wing possible for FARC-EP? Is it a worthy endeavor?
2. Would the creation of a political wing follow the ideological tradition of FARC-EP? Could it be misconstrued as a restructuring of the group as a more moderate organization?

3. While FARC-EP has participated in several peace negotiations and has had succeeded in acquiring several beneficial outcomes, is there a way to continue to negotiate successfully without creating a political wing? Or will the absence of a true political wing simply continue the legacy of start-and-stop negotiations?
4. What are the logistical issues with creating a political wing?

G: Sources

This is by no means a comprehensive list of sources, merely a short list of references, which should serve as a springboard for further research.

1. For a more thorough introduction to Colombian both the CIA World Factbook and Country Studies by the US Library of Congress provide excellent outlines:
 - a. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/co.html>
 - b. <http://countrystudies.us/colombia/>
2. The Council on Foreign Relations provides a more detailed account of FARC-EP as does GlobalSecurity.org:
 - a. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9272/>
 - b. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/farc.htm>
3. The book, Terror, Insurgency, and the State edited by Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O'Leary, and John Tirman provides an interesting perspective on a number of insurgent groups, including but not limited to FARC-EP. If you are at all interested in the further study of this topic in

general, I highly recommend this book.



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