



By: TA | AP Brief

Colombian President designated as a priority target by the DEA



Colombian President Gustavo Petro has been designated a “priority target” by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration as federal prosecutors in New York probe his alleged ties to drug traffickers, according to people familiar with the matter and records seen by The Associated Press.

DEA records show Petro has surfaced in multiple investigations dating to 2022, many based on interviews with confidential informants.

The alleged crimes the DEA has investigated include his possible dealings with **Mexico’s Sinaloa cartel** and a scheme to leverage his “**total peace**” plan to benefit prominent traffickers who contributed to his presidential campaign.

The records also suggest the use of law enforcement to smuggle cocaine and fentanyl through Colombian ports.

The “priority target” label is reserved for suspects DEA deems to have a “significant impact” on the drug trade. It’s unclear when the DEA gave Petro that designation.

Petro denied all ties to drug traffickers and maintained he never accepted their funds during his campaign.

Writing on X Friday, he argued that U.S. legal proceedings would ultimately dismantle accusations from the Colombian far right, a group he claims is actually the one involved with traffickers.

Colombia’s Embassy in Washington downplayed what it called “unverified” and anonymous reports of preliminary law enforcement investigations against Petro.

“The reported insinuations have no legal or factual basis,” the embassy said in a statement.

The inquiry

In recent months, prosecutors in Brooklyn and Manhattan have been questioning drug

traffickers about their ties to Petro and specifically about allegations the Colombian president’s representatives solicited bribes to block their extradition to the United States, according to one of the people who weren’t authorized to discuss the ongoing inquiry and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

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The person said it wasn’t clear whether federal prosecutors have implicated Petro in any crime.

The investigation is focusing at least in part on allegations that representatives of Petro solicited bribes from drug traffickers at the Colombian jail La Picota in exchange for a promise that they not be extradited to the U.S., one of the people said.

Petro has consistently denied allegations of drug trafficking, particularly after Trump labeled him an “illegal drug leader” and the Treasury Department **sanctioned** him in late 2025 for alleged ties to the trade without offering evidence.