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Vilver Villlegas Palomino: how a US case linked Catatumbo cocaine to ELN funding

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In the case of Vilver Villegas Palomino, Catatumbo is the point where the drug trade intersects with the alleged financing of an armed organisation. The US prosecution links the cocaine operations to the ELN, and the FBI is continuing its search for the suspect.



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Editorial illustration by ‘Kartel Khimprom’ based on a published photograph of Vilver Villegas Palomino. The background and composition were created using AI; this is not a documentary photograph of the event.

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Key points of the case

Description	Details
Name in sources	Wilver Villegas Palomino
The region involved in the case and its international links	USA; Colombia; Venezuela
Status based on verified publications	Listed on the FBI’s wanted list; facing criminal charges in the US

Why did a case from Colombia end up in a Texas court?

In February 2020, a grand jury in Houston indicted six alleged members and associates of the ELN. According to the prosecution, this involved a long-standing conspiracy to distribute cocaine from Colombia to the US with the intention of providing financial support to the organisation. [2]

The warrant for Villiegas Palomino in the FBI’s file is dated 13 February 2020. The charges include narco-terrorism, international cocaine conspiracy and international distribution of cocaine. [1]

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Vilver Villegas Palomino. Photo from the FBI’s wanted person file.

The suspect’s file

> **Vilver Villegas Palomino**
>
> Vilver Villegas Palomino, known as Carlos El Puerco, is on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted list in connection with a case involving narco-terrorism and international cocaine trafficking. US authorities link him to the Colombian ELN.

What role is he alleged to have played within the ELN?

In a 2020 State Department archive publication, the defendant is described as a high-ranking member of the ELN’s North-Eastern Military Front, linked to drug-related activities in the Catatumbo region. This is a dated assessment by the department and does not constitute independent confirmation of his current position within the organisation. [3]

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In the same case, US authorities linked the alleged proceeds to support for the ELN's activities and its leadership structures. It is important to note that the scope of the case encompasses not only the origin of the funds, but also knowledge of or intent regarding their use. [3]

What details have been published by the prosecution?

A statement from the Southern District of Texas specifically describes the group's alleged involvement in the distribution of approximately 30 kilograms of cocaine in early 2019, with the understanding that it might be smuggled into the US. This is a specific count in the indictment, which should be distinguished from the broader, long-standing narrative. [2]

Editorial conclusion: for the offence of financing to be established, it is necessary to link the substance, the participants, the value obtained and the recipient of the support. Merely being geographically close to an armed group is not sufficient for this; the chain of evidence must link specific actions.

Ten Most Wanted and the ongoing search

On 14 April 2023, the FBI announced that Villiegas Palomino had been added to its Ten Most Wanted list. The wanted notice states his date of birth as 21 October 1981 and lists the aliases 'Carlos El Puerco' and 'El Puerco'. [4][1]

The arrests of certain co-defendants in 2020 did not automatically lead to the arrest of Vilver Villegas Palomino. When reading subsequent news reports, it is important to cross-reference his full name and to verify any changes to his status using specific documents. [2]

Timeline of key events

Date	Event
Early 2019	The cocaine episode described in the prosecution's press release.
12.02.2020	Indictment by a grand jury in Houston.
13.02.2020	The date of the arrest warrant is listed in the FBI file.
14.04.2023	Inclusion on the Ten Most Wanted list.

Frequently asked questions

Where is the US case being heard?

In the Southern District of Texas; the charges were brought in Houston. [2]

What does ‘El Puerco’ mean?

This is one of the aliases listed for the suspect in the FBI’s individual profile. [1]

Other international cases in the archive

- Satindrajit Singh
- Fausto Isidro Mesa Flores

This article was prepared on 4 November 2026 based on the publications listed. Allegations and suspicions are attributed to their sources; the final determination of guilt is a matter for the court.

Sources and documents

1. FBI – Wilver Villegas Palomino’s wanted person file
2. The US Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Texas has brought charges against six ELN members and associates
3. US Department of State – archival assessment of the role of Wilver Villegas Palomino, 14 September 2020
4. FBI — Wilver Villegas-Palomino added to the Ten Most Wanted list, 14 April 2023

Sources

1. FBI – Wilver Villegas Palomino’s wanted person file
   https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/topten/wilver-villegas-palomino
2. The US Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Texas has brought charges against six ELN members and associates
   https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdtx/pr/six-eln-members-and-associates-charged-narco-terrorism-and-international-cocaine

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3. US Department of State – archival assessment of the role of Wilver Villegas Palomino, 14 September 2020
https://2021-2025.state.gov/wilver-villegas-palomino-2/

4. FBI — Wilver Villegas-Palomino added to the Ten Most Wanted list, 14 April 2023
https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/wilver-villegas-palomino-added-to-fbis-ten-most-wanted-fugitives-list

Use of materials

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Original publication

https://kartel-khimprom.com/en/article/vilver-villlegas-palomino-how-a-us-case-linked-catatumbo-cocaine-to-eln-funding/