

Los Choneros

OVERVIEW

AS OF JANUARY 2026

The Ecuador-based gang Los Choneros is a major driver of destabilizing violence in Ecuador. Since forming in the 1990s, the group has operated on a franchise model, allowing loosely affiliated gangs to create new fronts using its name. This flexible approach has enabled Los Choneros to continue to pursue a wide range of illicit activities despite the arrest of its leader, Jose Adolfo Macias Villamar, a.k.a. Fito, in June 2025. Los Choneros uses prisons and illegal gold mines as operational bases and cooperates with the Mexico-based Sinaloa Cartel and with Albanian cartels to facilitate drug shipments globally.

Operating Area

Primarily in Manabi, Ecuador; operates in at least 10 of Ecuador's provinces and in Colombia and Peru

Members

Approximately 12,000

Tactics And Targets

Los Choneros engages in a range of violent and criminal activities, including hired killings; kidnappings; political assassinations; and the smuggling of weapons, explosives, and drugs.

Terrorist Group Designation

The State Department designated Los Choneros a foreign terrorist organization in September 2025.

KEY LEADERS

**Jose Adolfo Macias Villamar**

a.k.a. Fito

Los Choneros Leader, extradited to the US in July 2025

**Francisco Manuel Bermudez Cagua**

a.k.a. Churron

Senior lieutenant to Jose Adolfo Macias Villamar



Los Choneros *(continued)*

KEY LEADERS *(continued)*



Adolfo Jair Macias Penarrieta

a.k.a. Fito Junior

Money launderer; Jose Adolfo Macias Villamar's son



Hector Javier Villa Zambrano

a.k.a. Danny Villa

Manages Los Choneros's operations in the port of Manta, Ecuador, along a key drug trafficking route

NOTABLE ATTACKS

July 2025

Manabi, Ecuador

Clashes with rival gang, Los Lobos, resulting in 20 deaths in three days

September 2021

Guayaquil, Ecuador

Clashes with Los Lobos at Litoral Prison, resulting in the deaths of 119 prisoners

