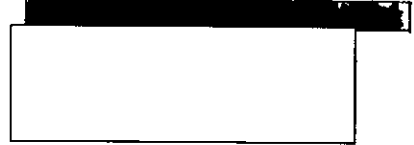


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# Senior Executive Intelligence Brief

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**Thursday, 16 September 1999**

**National Security Information**

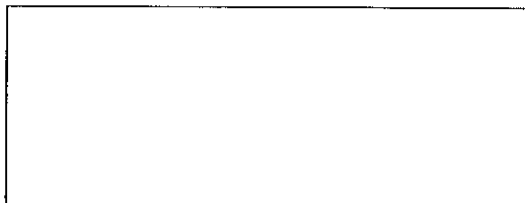
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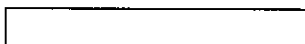


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~~Top Secret~~**AMERICAS****Colombia:**  
*Analytic Perspective***Armed Groups Filling Power Vacuum in Rural Areas**

Insurgent and paramilitary groups are fighting for control of more rural areas, as Bogota is closing police stations and military posts. [redacted]  
[redacted] they cannot defend small, isolated installations against insurgent attacks.

— About 20 percent of Colombia's 1,074 municipalities—roughly equivalent to counties—lack a police presence. [redacted]  
[redacted]

— The police pullout from six towns in eastern Antioquia Department late last month set the stage for heavy fighting between insurgents and paramilitaries [redacted]  
[redacted]

Armed paramilitary groups dominate many regions because rural landowners and businessmen see them as the best defense against kidnapping, extortion, and murder at the hands of the insurgents. Police and military garrisons often are passive, preoccupied with their own security, and not responsive to calls to protect the citizenry.

— President Pastrana recently fired the local military and police commanders in the Norte de Santander Department because they did not prevent several massacres despite advance warning.  
[redacted]

*Local military commanders do not challenge paramilitary groups operating in their areas because they see the insurgents as the common foe.* [redacted]

The withdrawal of government security forces intensifies concerns about public safety, undermines economic activity in the hinterlands, and fosters migration to Colombia's cities. The closure of police stations often is followed by the closure of banks, which hurts businesses such as the cattle industry. [redacted]

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