

Improving Security Policy in Colombia

I. OVERVIEW

President Álvaro Uribe's eight-year military campaign against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has taken a heavy toll on Colombia's largest insurgent organisation. The government is now working to consolidate security gains by expanding state presence in several of the formerly most conflict-ridden regions. This strategy faces numerous challenges, not least because FARC's command and control structure has not collapsed. The insurgents are adapting to military pressure through guerrilla warfare tactics, aggressive recruitment among rural populations, broadened involvement in drug trafficking and alliances with other armed groups and drug-trafficking organisations. Colombia's next president, Juan Manuel Santos, will take office on 7 August. As part of an integrated conflict resolution strategy, his government must increase the country's law enforcement and military capability against all illegal armed groups, including FARC. It also has to strengthen institutions, expand the rule of law, rigorously protect human rights, reduce poverty and design the political/negotiations component of a successful conflict resolution strategy. Security consolidation can only take root if Colombia tackles its pervasive problems of organised violence, criminality and illegality in an integrated manner.

Uribe's sustained military campaign against FARC has produced tangible results but did not break the backbone of the 45-year old insurgency. While FARC has lost thousands of fighters due to deaths in combat, captures and desertions, it is estimated to still have 8,000-10,000 troops. Coerced recruitment of new members, mostly children and youngsters, among vulnerable groups such as Afro-Colombians and indigenous communities is ongoing. FARC has resorted to guerrilla tactics and the massive use of antipersonnel mines as well as snipers. It has expanded its participation in drug trafficking in Colombia and other parts of Latin America, particularly Panama, Venezuela, Brazil and Ecuador.

A number of FARC units have formed alliances with other illegal armed groups, including paramilitary successors and new illegal armed groups (NIAGs), such as Rastrojos and Paisas. Alliances are mostly centred on drug trafficking. While often temporary and fragile, as with Colombia's second-largest insurgent group, the National Liberation

Army (ELN), they add a new dimension to the conflict. Uribe's military strategy against FARC was successful up to a point because it aimed at a more or less clearly defined and identified target. The threat posed by paramilitary successor groups, NIAGs and other criminal actors, and the alliances between them and FARC and ELN, is of a different, less structured and visible kind. There is mounting evidence that Colombia's security forces lack a strategy to confront this new threat.

The new government should reassess current security policy and the efforts underway to consolidate the gains made under Uribe. The incoming Santos administration should acknowledge that Colombia has still not reached the post-conflict phase and implement an integrated conflict resolution strategy, which will be the subject of a forthcoming Crisis Group report. On security issues, the government should:

- ❑ Maintain military pressure on FARC while effectively responding to the insurgents' new *modi operandi* and their broadened participation in drug trafficking, while avoiding the human rights violations that have tarnished the record of the armed forces. This requires improving military intelligence and operational capacities as well as regional security cooperation, particularly with Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. As tense relations with Venezuela have facilitated an increase in cross-border crime, the incoming Colombian government has to make every effort to open a new chapter of bilateral cooperation in order to effectively cut off supply routes, support networks and trafficking chains. Relations with Ecuador also need to be fully re-established.
- ❑ Develop and implement a comprehensive citizen security strategy to address the different threats emerging from FARC, ELN, paramilitary successors and NIAGs to both rural and urban populations. This strategy should be based on in-depth analysis of the new tactics of, and alliances among, the different armed groups and their impact on citizen security. Increased protection of civilians, especially among vulnerable groups such as indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, is essential.
- ❑ Tackle the threat posed by paramilitary successors and NIAGs by (a) officially acknowledging the expansion and complex nature of paramilitary successors and

NIAGs and the severe humanitarian impact caused by their actions; (b) stepping up efforts to integrate effective law enforcement with military measures; and (c) decisively fighting and ending collusion and ties between illegal armed groups and members of local authorities and the security forces.

- Advance military and citizen security policy reform in tandem with the implementation of the security consolidation strategy so as to increase the chances of success of the latter and rapidly shift it to a civilian-led operation with a whole-of-government budgetary commitment.

II. FARC: A SPENT FORCE?

Since 2007, the government's military strategy has focused on isolating the FARC secretariat from the rest of the organisation and forcing it to splinter. Crisis Group research across Colombia (Bogotá and Antioquia, Nariño, Chocó, Norte de Santander, Meta and Sucre departments) indicates that in 2010 FARC's military capacity is strongly reduced and the organisation is experiencing serious co-ordination and communication problems. Nevertheless, FARC has continued to adapt to government military pressure and is not at the point of collapse.¹

In 2002, the insurgents were present in roughly half of Colombia's territory (in 514 out of a total of 1,098 municipalities). In 2009, insurgent military actions were registered in only 206 municipalities.² FARC activity today is mostly in Cauca, Caquetá, Nariño, Huila and Meta departments, which are also of strategic importance for drug trafficking.³ Recently, FARC activity has also increased

again in Arauca.⁴ Insurgent presence in the southern part of Bolívar and the Middle Magdalena River Valley region used to be strong but has been much reduced, and FARC has been driven out of most regions on the Atlantic coast.⁵ Its presence has also been reduced in Antioquia and Chocó departments.⁶ In 2010, the guerrilla organisation is estimated to have around 8,000-10,000 combatants, organised in 61 fronts (*frentes*), of which only 30 are believed to be active, and a mobile structure consisting of an estimated fifteen to sixteen mobile columns (*columnas móviles*) and around thirteen smaller companies (*compañías*).⁷

Persistent government pressure has forced FARC to reduce the size of its fronts and rely more on the mobile columns for offensive purposes. The Teofilo Forero column that operates in Caquetá and Huila is among the most active and aggressive. Its record includes the kidnapping of the twelve Valle de Cauca deputies in 2002, the bombing of the Nogal Club in Bogotá in 2003 and the abduction and murder of Caquetá Governor Luis Francisco Cuéllar in December 2009. Other important mobile units are the Daniel Aldana and Mariscal Sucre columns

no en el Norte de Cauca", *Semana*, 10 May 2010; and "FARC Atacaron Norte del Cauca", *El Pais, Cali*, 21 February 2010.

⁴ Arauca, which for the last three years experienced a relative calm, has again become an epicentre of violence. In the first six months of 2010 there were 79 reported homicides, making Arauca the department with the highest number of violent deaths per 100,000 residents, according to the national Ombudsman Volmar Pérez. Local authorities have requested the national government to adopt preventive measures to protect civilians. With the declared war by FARC on ELN in Arauca, the situation is expected to get worse. See Section III.A below. "Arauca, Departamento con más Muertos Violentas en 2010", *El Nuevo Siglo*, 4 June 2010.

⁵ Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian organisation, Bogotá, 16 December 2009; international organisation, Bogotá, 22 January 2010; "Informe Especial 2009: El Declive de la Seguridad Democrática?", Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, November 2009.

⁶ FARC's presence along the Atrato River has substantially decreased. FARC mans sporadic and temporary checkpoints but has no permanent presence. Equally, FARC no longer controls its former strongholds in eastern Antioquia and has been pushed to the Bajo Cauca region and Urabá. Its traditionally strong presence in the poor urban neighbourhoods of Medellín has also decreased. Crisis Group interviews, municipal authorities, Medellín, 4 February 2010; international non-governmental organisation (NGO), Quibdó, 18 February 2010.

⁷ While the real figure is unknown, estimates of FARC membership at the end of 2009 range from 8,000 to 14,000. Crisis Group interview, United Nations Security Department (UNDSS) officer, 16 February 2010. In April 2010, Armed Forces Commander Freddy Padilla said that the number of FARC members has dropped from 26,000 in 2002 to 8,000 in 2010. "A las FARC sólo le quedan 8,000 Hombres", *El Espectador*, 27 April 2010. See also "Golpes Silenciosos", *Semana*, 26 December 2009.

¹ Crisis Group Latin America Report N°30, *Ending Colombia's FARC Conflict: Dealing the Right Card*, 26 March 2009, p. 6.

² Crisis Group interview, Dirección de Inteligencia Policial (DIPOL), Bogotá, 26 January 2010. By 2009, three additional municipalities had been created, bringing the total number to 1,101.

³ Cauca has been at the heart of violent confrontations in the first months of 2010. In May 2010, new confrontations took place between FARC and the army in the northern part of the department. This is the area of the 6th front and the Jacobo Arenas column, and a traditional FARC stronghold. In the latest attack the military reported that FARC was using civilians as human shields, as well as taking refuge in the indigenous reservations located nearby. Victims included two indigenous women who died in crossfire in one of the reservations. Several other people were injured. The government has declared Cauca as a priority area and has since November 2009 reinforced the army in northern Cauca with 2,500 troops. According to the local population, FARC has become more violent towards civilians in response to increased government offensives. "Sigue Infer-

in Nariño. They provide important funds to the secretariat through drug trafficking and are also responsible for the 29th front's rearguard security.⁸

High levels of desertion have weakened FARC and lowered morale among its rank and file. In 2009, 2,128 FARC members defected, down from 3,027 in 2008. Desertions in January 2010 were up by 7 per cent on January 2009 figures, from 197 to 210, and in the period 1 January-1 June 2010, 936 FARC members deserted.⁹ It appears that the reintegration packages offered by the government are stimulating desertions, as is army radio propaganda.¹⁰ Particularly problematic for FARC has been the increasing loss, especially since 2008, of mid-ranking commanders with a long record in the organisation. The proportion between demobilised mid-ranking commanders and demobilised troops changed from 1/27 in 2002 to 1/3 in 2009.¹¹ The loss of these members seriously affects FARC's cohesion because mid-ranking commanders tend to be responsible for maintaining discipline and morale among the troops and establishing relationships with local populations.

Lacking legitimacy and facing ever greater difficulties connecting politically to Colombian society, FARC has been unable to capitalise on the string of unilateral and unconditional releases of mostly civilian hostages it has carried out since early 2008. The hostages-for-prisoners swap remains a cornerstone of FARC's strategy to regain some political ground,¹² but not even the highly symbolic

release of Sergeant Pablo Moncayo, who had spent more than a dozen years in FARC captivity, and army soldier Josué Calvo in March 2010 could prompt the Uribe administration to seriously consider a swap. To the contrary, the release was interpreted by the government and many in the country as a feeble attempt by FARC to influence the first round of presidential elections on 30 May.

After Moncayo's and Calvo's release, FARC announced an end to unilateral hostage releases and called on Colombians to boycott the presidential polls. All presidential candidates distanced themselves from the insurgents and announced that they would continue the security policy against FARC if elected. Following the army's successful rescue of four police and army officers in mid-June 2010, nineteen military and police personnel remain in FARC captivity. The number of civilians being held by FARC and whose families are being extorted is disputed.¹³

A. GUERRILLA WARFARE TACTICS

FARC's diminished capacity and capability is forcing it to avoid large-scale confrontations with government armed forces or attempts to seize towns and villages as it still did in the early 2000s. However, insurgent armed actions increased again between 2008 and 2009,¹⁴ reversing the general trend during the eight years of the Uribe government that showed a substantial decrease. Trying to adapt to the changing and ever more hostile security environment, FARC is relying increasingly on guerrilla warfare tactics.

In 2009, FARC conducted approximately 100 light armed attacks (*hostigamientos*) with security forces lasting less than three hours,¹⁵ as well as numerous attacks involving explosives, kidnappings and damage to infrastructure.¹⁶

⁸ Crisis Group interview, Batallón de Infantería de Marina No.70- BAFLIM 70, Tumaco, 24 February 2010.

⁹ See Crisis Group Report, *Ending Colombia's FARC Conflict: Dealing the Right Card*, op. cit., p. 7; "Logros de la Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática – PCSD", Ministry of Defence, January 2010 and April 2010; "Programa Atención Humanitaria al Desmovilizado, entregas voluntarias desmovilizados, 1 Enero–1 Junio 2010", Ministry of Defence, undated.

¹⁰ Crisis Group interviews, political analysts, Bogotá, 14 December 2009, 20 January 2010; Medellín, 4 February 2010. Radio station "Marina Estéreo", broadcast over 95 per cent of the Nariño territory and part of Cauca, has contributed to individual demobilisations, especially in the region around the Barbacoas municipality. Crisis Group interview, Batallón de Infantería de Marina No.70- BAFLIM 70, Tumaco, 24 February 2010.

¹¹ "La Reintegración de Mandos Medios de las FARC-EP", op. cit. Whereas in 2004 only nine FARC members with sixteen to 40 years in the organisation deserted, in 2008 they numbered 106. "Las FARC: Un Año despues de Jaque", Siguiendo el Conflicto: Hechos y Análisis, No.55, Fundación Ideas para la Paz, June 2009.

¹² FARC has dropped its longstanding condition of a demilitarised area in which to negotiate a swap. On the hostages-for-prisoners swap see also Crisis Group Report, *Ending Colombia's FARC Conflict: Dealing the Right Card*, op. cit., pp. 26-28; and Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°17, *Colombia: Making Military Progress Pay Off*, 29 April 2008, pp. 2-4.

¹³ In a 2010 report, the government agency Fondelibertad states that out of the 2,800 cases of kidnapped individuals registered in their databases between 1996 and 2007, only 125 could be confirmed in the comprehensive verification exercise undertaken in 2009. As of April 2009, another 614 cases remained unclear. "Realidad del secuestro de las víctimas en Colombia", Fondelibertad, March 2010. The NGO País Libre has questioned the process and the results of the verification exercise, criticising the lack of transparency and the criteria used. Crisis Group interview, director Fundación País Libre, Bogotá, 18 June 2010.

¹⁴ The government reports a 210 per cent increase in insurgent activities in 2009: from 52 violent actions in 2008 to 161 in 2009. "Logros de la Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática – PCSD", January 2010, op. cit.

¹⁵ Crisis Group interview, senior Ministry of Defence official, Bogotá, 19 January 2010.

¹⁶ In contrast to the numbers of the Ministry of Defence cited above, the Colombian think-tank Fundación Seguridad y De-

Increased use of snipers and anti-personnel mines¹⁷ are responsible for the greatest number of victims.¹⁸ Sniper attacks, which were relatively uncommon until 2006, more than doubled from 87 in 2007 to 177 in 2009.¹⁹ Apparently, FARC does not have any difficulties securing a steady flow of weapons.²⁰ Makeshift anti-personnel mines, improvised explosive devices and unexploded ammunition have proved to be a cheap and effective means to inflict damage on government forces.²¹ As mines can be easily moved, mined areas change, making it more difficult for the armed forces to detect them, and for civilians to stay clear of them.²² They have prevented manual eradication of coca crops, especially in the Norte de Santander, Antioquia and Nariño departments.²³

mocracia reports 323 violent actions in 2009, a decrease by 12 per cent from its 2008 figures, whereas Colombian think-tank Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris reports that in the period 1 January to 20 October 2009 FARC carried out 1,429 violent actions – which is more than in all of 2008 (1,353 actions). Both think-tanks used different criteria than the Ministry of Defence. “National Security Assessment 2009”, Fundación Seguridad y Democracia, December 2009; and “Informe Especial 2009: El Declive de la Seguridad Democracia?”, op. cit. Some of these actions included blowing up the aqueduct in Villavicencio (Meta) on 6 March 2009 or using a woman as a suicide bomber to attack the police station in Samaniego (Nariño) on 29 July 2009. Crisis Group interview, international humanitarian organisation, Pasto, 10 February 2010; “Detenidos Cuatro Presuntos Guerrilleros de las FARC por Atentado a Acueducto”, Vanguardia, 3 April 2009.

¹⁷ FARC mining is illegal; Colombia has ratified the UN Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention). Colombian law 759 of 2002 adopted the provisions of the Ottawa Convention.

¹⁸ Crisis Group interviews, international humanitarian organisation, Bogotá, 23 January 2010; municipal authority, Pasto, 15 February 2010.

¹⁹ Ariel Fernando Ávila Martínez, “FARC: Dinámica Reciente de la Guerra”, 2008, *En Qué Está la Guerra*, Arcanos N°14, Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, December 2008, p. 19; and “Informe especial 2009: El Declive de la Seguridad Democrática?”, op. cit, p. 6.

²⁰ Following a tip that 4,000 Chinese rifles had been introduced into Colombia via Panama, as of April 2010, the police had confiscated 1,663 rifles. Reportedly, they were destined for FARC and other illegal armed groups. 6,000 arms were confiscated in the previous two years. “Por Puerto de Buenaventura y Urabá llegan los Embarques-FARC y Bandas entraron 10 mil Armas de Guerra en 2 años”, *El Tiempo*, 18 April 2010.

²¹ The average mine planted by FARC costs an estimated \$12. “Informe y Analisis de la Situación de las Minas Antipersonal y Municiones sin Explotar”, Gobernación de Nariño, January 2010.

²² Crisis Group interview, humanitarian organisation, Pasto, 9 February 2010.

²³ Crisis Group interviews, Medellín, 3-5 February 2010; Pasto, 9-15 February 2010; Cúcuta, 1-2 March 2010. The UN esti-

Mines are also used to control populations by confining them and restricting their mobility.²⁴ Although FARC continues to claim that its actions are aimed at the military alone and occasionally advises the population on the existence of minefields, civilians are still very much affected.²⁵ In 2009, the government registered 674 mine victims: 442 military personnel and 232 civilians. This represents an overall decrease of 15 per cent compared to 2008,²⁶ possibly due to mine clearing and prevention campaigns carried out by the government.²⁷ Organisations involved in monitoring and verification suggest that under-reporting is a more likely explanation.²⁸ Antioquia, Meta, Bolívar and Caquetá are heavily mined.²⁹ In the past years there has also been an increase in mine incidents in Nariño, with civilian victims outnumbering the victims among the security forces during the period January 2007 to March 2010.³⁰ Mines remain a high risk even after clearing as FARC often replants them in previously cleared areas.

mates that more than 100,000 mines have been planted to protect coca cultivations in northern Antioquia. Crisis Group interview, international organisation, Medellín, 3 February 2010.

²⁴ In remote municipalities in Nariño, several community members and leaders confirmed that FARC forbids inhabitants to leave their villages during certain hours by laying mines along footpaths, in order to isolate and control populations. Crisis Group interviews, Nariño, 11-13 February 2010.

²⁵ Crisis Group interview, international humanitarian organisation, Cúcuta, 1 March 2010.

²⁶ “Informe de Gestión Programa Presidencial de Acción contra Minas Anti-Personal (PAICMA) Enero – Diciembre de 2009” Vicepresidencia República de Colombia, 2010, p. 10; “Logros de la Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática – PCSD”, April 2010, op. cit.

²⁷ There are currently six military squads dedicated to mine clearing, expected to rise to fourteen in 2010. They operate in the Amazonas, Antioquia, Chocó, Cundinamarca, Meta, Nariño, Huila and Tolima departments. “Los Arrancaminas”, *Cambio*, 20 August 2009. According to a humanitarian organisation in Nariño, local authorities in some municipalities have tried to teach inhabitants how to identify mines and what to do when they encounter them. Crisis Group interview, humanitarian organisation, Pasto, 9 February 2010.

²⁸ Many incidents are not reported. Reasons include a lack of awareness of reporting procedures by both victims and medical personnel, threats by armed groups, difficulties in accessing registration offices, lack of identification documents of the victim and fear of being charged for the mine by FARC (the group charges the victim or his or her relatives up to \$250 per mine).

²⁹ Out of all mine-related incidents between 1990 and 2010, 20 per cent occurred in Antioquia, 13 per cent in Meta, 8 per cent in Bolívar and 7 per cent in Caquetá. Programa Presidencial de Acción contra Minas Anti-Personal (PAICMA), “Departamentos con Mayor Frecuencia de Eventos 1990 – Marzo 2010” at www.accioncontraminas.gov.co.

³⁰ 143 civilians and 83 members of the security forces were affected in Nariño. “Víctimas Civiles y Militares de Contaminación por Armas por Municipio entre 2007 y 2010”, Programa

B. RECRUITMENT AND INCURSIONS INTO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Responding to desertions, the capture or the death in combat of thousands of fighters,³¹ FARC has restructured and geographically reorganised its units and is making efforts to recruit new combatants. FARC has lost most of its support among the population;³² most recruits join FARC due to a lack of education and opportunities, financial distress or direct or indirect coercion.³³ Minors and members of indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations are particularly vulnerable to recruitment, especially in Nariño, Chocó, and Cauca departments and the Urabá, Catatumbo and Bajo Cauca regions, as well as in FARC's traditional strongholds in Caquetá, Meta and Huila departments.³⁴ The average recruitment age has decreased and is today estimated to be 11.8 years.³⁵

Presidencial de Acción contra Minas Anti-Personal (PAICMA), undated.

³¹ In 2009, 2,638 members of guerrilla groups deserted, 2,252 were captured and 584 were killed. These figures include members of the ELN and three other small guerrilla groups – Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL), Ejército Revolucionario Guevarista (ERG) and Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) – though the vast majority belonged to FARC. “Logros de la Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática – PCSD”, April 2010, op. cit.

³² Crisis Group interview, international organisation, Medellín, 3 February 2010.

³³ For example, in Tumaco, FARC offers the displaced \$50 and a weapon to join, which many do out of despair. Crisis Group interview, Catholic Church representatives, Tumaco, 24 February 2010. In some cases, for example the Awá people in Nariño, a lack of education leads recruits to join armed groups. Crisis Group interview, indigenous community leader, Pasto, 15 February 2010. In La Macarena and Catatumbo, parents are obliged to send some of their children to FARC as part of “the family quota to the revolutionary cause” and there are also reports in Catatumbo of the 33rd front allegedly trafficking people to areas far from their communities of origin to fill FARC's ranks. Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian agency and local government, Cúcuta, 3-4 March 2010; government official, Puerto Rico (Meta), 13 April 2010.

³⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Bogotá, 16 December 2009; Medellín, 3-5 February 2010; Nariño, 8-14 February 2010; Cali, 22 February 2010.

³⁵ As stated by the director of the Colombian office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, this is down from 12.9 the year before. “Las FARC Aumentan el Reclutamiento de Menores para Sustituir Desertores”, *Cambio*, 9 July 2009. Approximately 85 per cent of children who join FARC do so voluntarily. Crisis Group interview, government official, Bogotá, 18 January 2010. Though this may be true, many, including the Colombian government, argue that minors do not have the capacity to make a rational decision to join an armed group.

As Uribe's Democratic Security Policy (DSP) has been successful in driving FARC further into remote jungle areas, indigenous populations have suffered. Communities are frequently caught in the crossfire between insurgents and government forces. They suffer from food and agrochemical supply shortages as the army cuts them off in an attempt to prevent the supplies from reaching illegal groups, aggravating humanitarian conditions.³⁶ In 2009, homicide rates in these communities increased by 63 per cent from 2008, and many of their leaders and representatives are subject to threats and displacements.³⁷ In July 2009, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Situation of Human Rights and Liberties of Indigenous People, James Anaya, described the situation of indigenous communities in Colombia as “grave, critical and highly alarming”. He reiterated the importance of the early warning system, an initiative of the Colombian ombudsman's office, as an important mechanism to identify and prevent violence against indigenous people.³⁸

The indigenous populations are caught in a vicious circle. FARC frequently accuses them of being government informants, while the army insists they collaborate with the insurgents by providing shelter in their territories.³⁹ The Awá community has been particularly affected, having been accused of providing refuge to FARC fighters in Nariño and being caught in the crossfire between the

³⁶ The army is restricting the flow of goods into Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities along the Rio Bojayá (Chocó), while at the same time FARC has surrounded these communities with mines to prevent the army from advancing further. Five tribes are at risk of extinction due to confinement and malnutrition caused by such restrictions. Crisis Group interviews, international humanitarian agency, Quibdó, 18 February 2010; indigenous organisation, Quibdó, 19 February 2010. As the army fights FARC in Guaviare, attempting to isolate the Eastern Bloc, traditional indigenous practices have been affected threatening their survival. “Sur Oriente: una Lectura sobre el Conflicto y la Situación de Derechos Humanos. Año 2008”, CODHES, February 2009.

³⁷ “Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of the Human Rights in Colombia”, A/HRC/113/72, 4 March 2010, p. 14.

³⁸ “Informe del Relator Especial sobre la Situación de los Derechos Humanos y de las Libertades Fundamentales de los Indígenas, James Anaya, Nota preliminar sobre la Situación de los Pueblos Indígenas en Colombia”, Asamblea General, Consejo de Derechos Humanos, 24 September 2009; on the early warning system, see also Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°21, *The Virtuous Twins: Protecting Human Rights and Improving Security in Colombia*, 25 May 2009.

³⁹ In the period 2001-2008, about 70 per cent of the total Guayabero population (estimated at 1,118) in Guaviare department has been displaced because of the deterioration of the security environment and increasing intensity of armed actions by government forces and FARC in the region. Crisis Group interview, NGO, Bogotá, 16 December 2009.

army and the guerrillas.⁴⁰ In February 2009, FARC committed two massacres in their reserves in which over twenty Awá members were killed, including minors and pregnant women.⁴¹ Another massacre of members of the Awá community happened in August 2009.⁴² Massive displacements have taken place following these incidents. Mine usage by FARC is also uprooting indigenous communities, forcing displacement and disintegration of families.⁴³ In some cases, direct negotiations between community members and FARC have decreased use of mines. While these efforts have even been supported by some local authorities, they are strongly opposed by the central government.⁴⁴

C. REGIONAL LINKS AND INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG TRAFFICKING

Based on evidence gathered in military operations, the Uribe administration has declared that FARC has links to over 30 countries worldwide.⁴⁵ While this could be exaggerated,⁴⁶ FARC leader Alfonso Cano has designated Europe as a strategic area for expanding FARC activities outside Colombia. According to Colombian intelligence officials, the insurgents may be trying to establish contact points in Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris under the auspices of the Bolivarian Continental Coordination Body (Coordinadora Continental Bolivariana).⁴⁷ Europol has also indicated that FARC recently sent representatives to some European countries to disseminate information and create clandestine cells to facilitate drug trafficking and the procurement of arms. However, in 2009 no individuals related to FARC were arrested for terrorism-related offences in European Union (EU) member states.⁴⁸

In early 2010, two U.S. State Department reports claimed there is strong evidence that FARC (as well as the ELN) is supported by President Chávez and the Venezuelan security forces, while Colombian intelligence sources suggest that at least four Venezuelan Bolivarian militia groups have direct links with FARC.⁴⁹ Although Chávez

⁴⁰ Awá community leaders believe that the army has targeted Awá members for allegedly being FARC sympathisers because military commanders have been pressured by the Uribe government to achieve results. Crisis Group interviews, Awá leader, Pasto, 15 February 2010; local government authority, Pasto, 10 February 2010.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interview, local government authority, Pasto, 10 February 2010. FARC subsequently published a letter regretting the death of eight members of the Awá community and blaming the army for using civilians as human shields. Open letter by the FARC, March 2009, "Respuestas a las FARC", Colombianos y Colombianas por la Paz, at www.colombiano.sporlapaz.com.

⁴² Investigations regarding the August massacre are ongoing and have proven to be complex. While most evidence points towards FARC, there have been claims that some of the perpetrators could have been Awá. Leaders of the Awá community have denied these accusations. Crisis Group interview, Awá community leaders, Pasto, 15 February 2010. Complaints have also been filed related to the potential responsibility of security forces. In October 2009, the police arrested three members of the criminal group Los Cucarachos as suspects in the massacre. "Indígenas piden que no se Desvíe Investigación sobre Masacre de 12 Awá", *Semana.com*, 1 September 2009; "Banda los Cucarachos Responsable de Masacre a Indígenas Awá", *El Espectador*, 6 October 2009.

⁴³ For example, the Nukak reserve in Vichada has been almost completely abandoned due to land mines placed by FARC.

⁴⁴ Crisis Group interview, local government authority, Pasto, 10 February 2010.

⁴⁵ "El Mundo de las FARC", *Semana*, 4 January 2009.

⁴⁶ It appears that the majority of connections FARC has outside of Latin America are mainly symbolic and do not provide any substantial support to the armed group. Crisis Group interviews, political analysts specialised in FARC, Bogotá, 20 January 2010; Medellín, 4 February 2010. Some political analysts believe that the Colombian government is manipulating information in order to prove that President Chávez does indeed support FARC. Crisis Group interviews, political analysts, Bogotá, 18 January, 20 January, 15 March 2010; international humanitarian organisation, Cúcuta, 2 March 2010.

⁴⁷ "FARC Preparan Campamento Bolivariano en Europa: lo estaría Organizado Rodrigo Granda", *El Tiempo*, 31 January 2010. The Bolivarian Continental Coordination body was created to bring together Latin American social organisations to support the struggle against "interventionism, neo-colonialism, and capitalist globalisation", and against Plan Colombia.

⁴⁸ "TE SAT 2010 EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report", EUROPOL, 2010.

⁴⁹ The two reports are: Dennis Blair, "Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence", February 2010; and "Drugs and Chemical Controls", International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, vol.I, United States Department of State, March 2010. Colombian intelligence states that the Venezuelan Bolivarian militias El Movimiento Armado y Revolucionario para la Liberación Carapaica, Frente de Resistencia Popular Tupanmaro-Movimiento 28 de Abril, las Fuerzas Bolivarianas de Liberación and Tropa Revolucionaria Cubano-Venezolana have received training from FARC and have also been communicating

no longer openly states his support for FARC as a legitimate movement for the advancement of the Bolivarian project, FARC continues to enjoy tacit support in Venezuela, ranging from symbolic gestures, such as naming a public library after Manuel Marulanda,⁵⁰ to feeble efforts to prevent FARC from using Venezuelan territory as a safe haven.⁵¹ Such concerns have been repeatedly expressed by the Colombian government and President Chávez's failure to adequately address them suggests that he tolerates these practices.⁵²

For decades, FARC has financed its war effort through drug trafficking and other criminal activities.⁵³ Uribe's military offensive has increasingly denied the insurgents sources of income, particularly from kidnappings for ransom.⁵⁴ In response, the insurgents have deepened their

involvement in the drug trade. In the past, FARC was mostly active in the protection of coca crops,⁵⁵ but the recent confiscation of the computer of Edgar Tovar, who was the leader of the 48th front and headed some of the drug trafficking activities in southern Colombia, has shed new light on the extent of FARC's involvement.⁵⁶ FARC has become more active in drug trafficking outside Colombia and has formed an extensive network of alliances with other criminal groups, both in Colombia and abroad. There are indications that the insurgents control some parts of the trafficking routes via the Pacific, Panama and Venezuela.⁵⁷ Reportedly, FARC has established permanent bases in Brazil for cocaine trafficking purposes.⁵⁸

with the FARC Secretariat. "El 'Dossier' del Nexo de FARC y las Milicias", *El Tiempo*, 8 February 2010. By presidential decree, in October 2009, Chávez formalised the existence of the Bolivarian Militias (Las Milicias Bolivarianas) as part of the National Armed Forces, alongside the army, navy, air force and national guard.

⁵⁰ "FARC Sabían desde hace Seis Meses de la Biblioteca 'Manuel Marulanda Velez' en Venezuela", *El Tiempo*, 9 March 2010.

⁵¹ Crisis Group interviews, Cúcuta, 1-2 March 2010; Bogotá, January 2010. FARC Secretariat members Timochenko and Iván Márquez are likely in Venezuela. Crisis Group interview, senior official, Ministry of Defence, Bogotá, 19 January 2010. Venezuela has also been accused of acting as an intermediary between FARC and the Spanish terrorist group ETA and facilitating training sessions between the two groups conducted on its territory. On 1 March 2010, Spanish High Court Judge Eloy Velasco accused the Venezuelan government of collaborating with FARC and ETA in a 26-page indictment. Arturo Cubillas Fontán, a mid-level official in the Venezuelan administration, is accused of serving as the main link with ETA in Latin America and of facilitating the joint training sessions on the Venezuelan border in 2003. President Chávez has responded that such allegations are unacceptable but that he will offer his full support to the investigations. Andrés Garibello, "Juez Revela Nexos de FARC-ETA y Venezuela", *El Tiempo*, 2 March 2010.

⁵² Crisis Group interviews, academics in international relations and experts in FARC, humanitarian workers and representatives of a religious community, Cúcuta, 1-2 March 2010. In its latest statement on FARC's presence in Venezuela, the Colombian government claimed a meeting between FARC and the ELN about their recent alliance was held in the Zulia State in Venezuela. "En Tres Citas se Pactó la Alianza entre el ELN y las FARC", *El Tiempo*, 23 January 2010. See also Section III.A.

⁵³ See also Crisis Group Report, *Ending Colombia's FARC Conflict: Dealing the Right Card*, op. cit., p. 12; and Crisis Group Latin America Report N°11, *War and Drugs in Colombia*, 27 January 2005.

⁵⁴ Kidnappings have decreased by almost 97 per cent under the Uribe government, as logistics and costs have become too burdensome. Crisis Group interview, senior official, Ministry of Defence, Bogotá, 19 January 2010.

⁵⁵ Carlos Medina Gallego (ed.), *FARC-EP. Temas y Problemas Nacionales 1958-2008* (Bogotá, 2009); and Crisis Group Latin America Report N°25, *Latin American Drugs 1: Losing the Fight*, 14 March 2008.

⁵⁶ Edgar Tovar was chief of security for the late FARC commander Raúl Reyes. Tovar was killed in January 2010, in a joint operation between the Colombian police and national air force in the Putumayo department in southern Colombia. Information deciphered from his computers by government intelligence identified seven FARC members as the key persons for managing drug trafficking within the organisation, in particular alias "Mincho" commander of the 30th front, who has extensive contacts in Central America, and alias "Becerro" of the 57th front, who has established contacts with arms dealers in Central America and Europe. "El Mapa Mafioso de las FARC", *El Tiempo*, 8 March 2010.

⁵⁷ Crisis Group interviews, local authority, Pasto, 10 February 2010; international organisation officer, Cali, 26 February 2010; local authority, Cúcuta, 2 March 2010; "El Mapa Mafioso de las FARC", op. cit. FARC is believed to control some of the exit points and means of transport of the drugs, as well as the contacts with traffickers in Central America and Mexico. Ricardo Ospina, "Así Funcionaría la Estructura del Narcotráfico de las FARC", Caracol Radio (online), 5 April 2010. See also Crisis Group Report, *Latin American Drugs 1: Losing the Fight*, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

⁵⁸ Brazilian media, quoting leaked federal police reports, reported in May 2010 that FARC has permanent bases in the northern Brazilian jungles, in particular around Manaus, and is being pushed deeper into the country as a result of sustained pressure exerted by the Colombian army. From these camps the guerrillas traffic drugs into Brazil and arms and chemical precursors into Colombia. This is also where Colombian drug trafficker José Samuel Sanchez operated until he was captured in May 2010 by Brazilian police together with seven Brazilian nationals who jointly ran a vast trafficking network of arms and drugs with direct links to FARC. "Colombia pide a Brasil Extradición del Presunto Guerrillero de las FARC", *El Tiempo*, 18 May 2010; and "Permanent FARC Bases in Brazil", *LatinNews Daily*, 21 May 2010. An estimated 80 tons of cocaine enters Brazil each year, from Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay. "Brazilian Police Bust FARC-linked Drug Operation", Reuters, 8 May 2010.

Although not all fronts are involved in the illegal business, FARC is concentrating its presence in municipalities with coca cultivations. In 2008, of the municipalities where FARC was present almost half (48 per cent) had coca cultivations, compared to 30 per cent in 2006.⁵⁹ A year-long investigation by the Colombian anti-narcotics police found that FARC could control the production of nearly 70 per cent of all drugs in Colombia.⁶⁰ It discovered that eight fronts have abandoned most of their traditional insurgency activity and are now almost entirely dedicated to the drug business. These are the 30th front in Valle del Cauca, the 29th front in Nariño, 63rd front in Caquetá, 15th front in Amazonas and 48th front in Putumayo, the 60th and 6th fronts in Cauca, which are active in the drug production stages and export, and the 57th front in Chocó in the border area with Panama concentrating on trafficking. In addition, the 33rd front in the Catatumbo region (Norte de Santander) is heavily involved in drug trafficking to Venezuela.⁶¹

The key men believed to run FARC drug trafficking are alias “Mincho”, “Kokoriko”, “Cadete” and “Jimmy”, operating from different strategic production areas.⁶² In addition, the Southern and Eastern Blocs, headed by alias “Fabián Ramírez” and “Mono Jojoy” respectively, are important. Other fronts heavily involved in drug trafficking, and in collaboration with NIAGs (see Section III.B) are the 29th front and the Daniel Aldana column in Nariño, dedicated to the protection of cultivation and trafficking routes, and the 18th and 58th fronts, operating in Córdoba, which control the largest number of cultivations and laboratories.⁶³

There is also evidence suggesting a permanent FARC presence in Ecuador. In 2009, the Ecuadorian army discovered eight new FARC bases in Ecuadorian border provinces and in March 2010 it destroyed a FARC camp in Sucumbíos province which was used to manufacture explosives.⁶⁴ While political relations between Colombia

and Ecuador have been unstable,⁶⁵ military cooperation to limit FARC’s mobility across the border seems to have improved with the reactivation of the Binational Border Commission (Combifron) in November 2009 and increased sharing of intelligence between the two armies.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, there are still large unprotected areas along the border where drug trafficking and contraband thrive.⁶⁷ FARC’s Daniel Aldana column is particularly active in Ecuador’s northern border region with Colombia. The Colombian government also believes that Ecuadorian border officials and members of the armed forces are vulnerable to corruption.⁶⁸

FARC is also using drug and arms trafficking routes through Peru and Panama. In the former, the group has established connections with criminals for securing arms deals⁶⁹ and there are allegations of links with remnants of Shining

Ecuadoriano Destruye Base de las FARC en Frontera con Colombia”, *www.hoy.com.ec*, 31 March 2010.

⁵⁹ Following the 2008 bombing of a FARC camp in Angostura in Ecuador which killed FARC Commander Raúl Reyes along with 25 others, including four Mexicans and one Ecuadorean, Quito severed diplomatic relations with Bogotá. Judicial proceedings against then Defence Minister Juan Manuel Santos and the army high command were initiated in Sucumbíos province, but were later suspended after talks between the two governments. The appointment of military Chargeés d’Affaires from both countries eased the situation, until the provincial court in Sucumbíos reactivated the legal case against Santos and Colombia’s army high command in April 2010, suggesting the possibility of indicting Uribe for ordering the bombing.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group interview, senior Colombian government official, 14 January 2010. Combifron, whose primary objective is the coordination, evaluation and supervision of military and police security issues on the border, was created in 1996 but suspended after the Angostura attack. Since reactivation, shared information and intelligence led to attacks against the FARC 48th front in the border region conducted simultaneously, although separately, by the two armies. While Colombian Defence Minister Gabriel Silva has highlighted the success of military cooperation between Colombia and Ecuador, President Correa has declared that Ecuador does not, and will not, conduct joint military operations with Colombia. “Cooperacion Fronteriza”, *El Tiempo*, 23 January 2010; and “Rafael Correa Descartó Operaciones Militares Conjuntas entre Ecuador y Colombia en la Frontera”, *El Tiempo*, 26 February 2010.

⁶¹ Between Nariño and Ecuador there may be up to 39 illegal entry points where trafficking thrives. Crisis Group interview, senior police officer, Pasto, 15 February 2010.

⁶² Crisis Group interview, senior government official, Bogotá, 14 January 2010.

⁶³ In November 2009, Colombian police intercepted a shipment of 11,200 detonators from Peru and in January 2010 Peruvian police disbanded an organisation that had been smuggling weapons stolen from Peruvian military arsenals to FARC. “From Military Arsenals to Drug Gangs and Guerrillas”, *Latin American Security and Strategic Review*, January 2010.

⁵⁹ “Colombia: Monitoreo de Cultivos”, UNODC, June 2009, p. 70; and “Colombia: Monitoreo de Cultivos”, UNODC, June 2007, p. 69.

⁶⁰ “Las FARC se Fortalecen como Cartel del Narcotráfico, Revela Informe de la Policía”, Caracol Radio (online), 18 February 2010.

⁶¹ Crisis Group interviews, Cúcuta, 1-2 March 2010.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Crisis Group interviews, local authorities, Pasto, 10, 15 February 2010; international organisation, Cúcuta, 1 March 2010. These findings were also confirmed by an investigation conducted by the attorney general’s office, and disseminated by Caracol Radio. Ricardo Ospina, “Así Funcionaría la Estructura del Narcotráfico de las FARC”, op. cit.

⁶⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Pasto, 9-15 February 2010. “En el 2009, Ejército de Ecuador Encontró Ocho Bases de las FARC en su Territorio”, *El Tiempo*, 25 January 2010; and “Ejército

Path (Sendero Luminoso).⁷⁰ Panama, with its strategic location and relatively unguarded coastlines, is becoming an increasingly attractive trafficking route.⁷¹ According to information recovered from Tovar's computers, FARC is present in the Darien region between Panama and Colombia and has established drug trafficking routes from Turbo, in the Gulf of Urabá, to Panama.⁷² The Panamanian authorities believe that the country's steep rise in homicides is due to an increase in drug trafficking and the government is collaborating closely with U.S. counter-narcotics efforts to address the problem.⁷³

Further south in Paraguay, officials, including President Fernando Lugo, have recently stated that there is clear evidence of links between guerrilla group Ejercitodel Pueblo Paraguayo (EPP) and FARC.⁷⁴ Intelligence reports indicate that the EPP has been trained by FARC in kidnapping and other terrorist techniques, and actually received a portion of the ransom money paid for the release of kidnapping victims held by EPP.⁷⁵ Paraguayan authorities also

⁷⁰ Information from Raúl Reyes's computers indicated that one of FARC's priorities was to strengthen remnants of the Peruvian Shining Path, which after the capture of its leader, Abimael Guzmán, basically collapsed. Analysts estimate the guerrilla organisation today has between 350 and 600 members. It is suffering from growing internal divisions, affecting its cohesion and restricting its territorial reach, but over the last couple of years it has increased its armed actions and deepened its involvement in drug trafficking. Between August 2008 and May 2009 the guerrillas killed 33 members of the Peruvian security forces and wounded 48. Civilians have also been affected by violence perpetrated by the group, in particular in the drug trafficking areas around Valle del Río Apurímac and Ene (VRAE) and Alto Huallaga. The Shining Path's role appears to be confined to protection of trafficking routes and levying taxes on coca cultivators, although there are indications that some fronts have their own cultivations.

⁷¹ As counter-narcotics efforts in Mexico are stepped up, Panama is becoming an increasingly important point on the route of drugs destined for the U.S. and Europe. "Drugs and Chemical Controls", International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Vol I, U.S. Department of State, March 2010.

⁷² In January 2010, Panamanian authorities killed three FARC members.

⁷³ In the period 2006-2009, Panama's homicide rate more than doubled, from eleven to 23 per 100,000 inhabitants. "Drugs and Chemical Controls", op. cit.

⁷⁴ EPP, whose origins date back to 1992 (it has only operated under its current name since 2008), is estimated to have around 100 members. "El EPP, una Organización Criminal con Sólida Estructura", *ABC Digital*, 18 January 2010; and Daniela Dasantis, "Paraguay Deploys Troops to Hunt Armed Leftist Group", Reuters, 26 April 2010. It has been accused of the kidnapping and murder of Cecilia Cubas, daughter of former President Raúl Cubas, in 2004, as well as the murder of one policeman and four civilians in April 2010.

⁷⁵ Paraguayan national Maria Edith Bordón was kidnapped in 2001 by a group close to the Paraguayan Radical Party, which

confirmed that a series of attacks against state and military facilities, as well as four kidnappings by EPP in the last two years, bore the trademarks of FARC methods.

III. ALLIANCES BETWEEN ARMED GROUPS

A. FARC-NEW ILLEGAL ARMED GROUPS (NIAGS)

Of particular concern today are alliances between FARC and new illegal armed groups (NIAGs).⁷⁶ At present, the police recognise the existence of six groups with a total of 2,580 members operating in 159 municipalities in eighteen departments: Rastrojos (under the command of Jaime and Luis Calle Serna), ERPAC (under the command of alias "Cuchillo"), Los Paisas, Los Urabeños (under the command of alias "Mauricio"), Renacer (under the command of "Raúl") and Los Machos (under the command of alias "Don H").⁷⁷ Other sources indicate, however, that the number of members is considerably higher and maintain that, in addition to the six groups recognised by the authorities, the Águilas Negras are another NIAG.⁷⁸

One of the principal objectives of the NIAGs is to continue working the drug trafficking, contraband and extortion rings formerly operated by paramilitary organisations.⁷⁹ To do so, they are forming alliances with other NIAGs, drug traffickers and guerrilla groups. Crisis Group has found that in some cases FARC and NIAGs have formed

later became EPP and to which her family paid \$1 million for her release. FARC, according to an email written by Raúl Reyes to Rodrigo Granda and Orley Jurado, received 30 per cent of this sum. Information from Reyes's computers also shows that several Paraguayans have travelled to Colombia to participate in trainings conducted by FARC. "El 'Dossier' de los Nexos de las FARC con la Guerrilla en Paraguay", *El Tiempo*, 27 April 2010.

⁷⁶ On NIAGs see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°20, *Colombia's New Armed Groups*, 10 May 2007.

⁷⁷ Crisis Group interview, DIPOL, Bogotá, 27 January 2010.

⁷⁸ In over 25 interviews conducted by Crisis Group in Pasto, Nariño, Cúcuta and Cali between January and March 2010, there were constant references to the existence of this group. Although the police insists that the name is merely a creation by common criminals for instilling fear in the population, this does not appear to be the case. This was also confirmed by the OAS Mission supporting the peace process in Colombia (MAPP-OEA) in its 11th quarterly report dated 26 June 2008. Colombian think-tank Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, which maintains that NIAGs may have up to 10,000 members, also declares the existence of the Águilas Negras. "Informe especial 2009: El Declive de la Seguridad Democrática?", op. cit.

⁷⁹ Crisis Group Report, *Colombia's New Armed Groups*, op. cit.

temporary partnerships for drug-trafficking purposes,⁸⁰ while in others they have fought for control of the drug trade.⁸¹ In isolated cases, such as the alliance between FARC and the Rastrojos in Nariño, links have been formed on the basis of family ties.⁸²

Alliances have also been formed between two groups in order to drive a third group out of a strategic area. Though unconfirmed by Crisis Group, there have been reports of collaboration in some areas between NIAGs and the army in order to expel FARC, as well as of collusion between NIAGs and members of the army and police.⁸³ Recent

⁸⁰ In the Bajo Cauca region (Antioquia), where FARC has been weakened over the years, the group appears to be collaborating with the Paisas at the cultivation stage. In Catatumbo, FARC has a strong presence in the rural areas and is able to control much of the coca cultivation and processing. It collaborates with the Rastrojos and Águilas Negras, which dominate the urban areas and control micro-trafficking and logistics. Crisis Group interviews, Medellín, 3-5 February 2010; Cúcuta, 1-2 March 2010. FARC also collaborates with the powerful Norte del Valle cartel (CNDV), trafficking drugs from production sites in Nariño and Cauca to the Pacific coast for export. "El Mapa Mafioso de las FARC", op. cit. Despite the death and the capture of the former leaders of the CNDV, Wilber Varela (alias "Jabón") and Diego Montoya (alias "Don Diego"), according to the U.S. Department of State the cartel continues to export over 50 tons of cocaine annually to Mexico, the U.S. and Europe. In April 2010 Ramón Quintero, another key leader of the cartel, was captured in Ecuador. "Capturan en Ecuador al Narcotraficante Ramón Quintero Sanclemente", *Semana*, 14 April 2010. Increasingly, the Rastrojos and to a lesser extent the Machos, which started as the armed factions of the cartel, are taking over and controlling much of its drug-trafficking activities. According to MAPP-OEA, the strongest alliances between FARC and NIAGs are found in the lowlands, the Pacific coast, southern Bolívar and southern Córdoba. "FARC y Bandas Criminales tienen Pactos de no Agresión, dice Jefe de Misión de la OEA en Colombia", *El Tiempo*, 5 May 2010.

⁸¹ For example, FARC and the Rastrojos appear to be disputing the control of trafficking routes in the Garrapatas region (northern Cauca). In southern Córdoba, where FARC controls cultivation, there are disputes among the different NIAGs to be the sole purchaser of the coca paste from FARC. There have been confrontations between the Rastrojos and the Machos in Chocó over cultivations and trafficking routes. Crisis Group interviews, Bogotá, 25 January 2010; Pasto, 9-15 February 2010; Quibdó, 18 February 2010; Cali, 22, 26 February 2010.

⁸² Crisis Group interview, international humanitarian organisation, Pasto, 10 February 2010.

⁸³ Several interviews conducted by Crisis Group in Medellín, Pasto, Cali, Tumaco and Cúcuta suggested that elements of the security forces may be colluding with various NIAGs. In Bajo Cauca (Antioquia), some people said that NIAGs and police and army units jointly patrol and intimidate communities. Crisis Group interview, journalists, Medellín, 5 February 2010. In Valle del Cauca there have been accusations that the Rastrojos and the military share intelligence on FARC. Crisis Group interview, international humanitarian organisation, Cali, 26 Feb-

research on NIAGs confirmed a serious concern over the capacity that these groups have to corrupt and form links with state authorities and institutions.⁸⁴

In regions where there are internal disputes within NIAGs, with various sub-groups or cells acting autonomously, it is sometimes easier for a cell to enter into collaboration with FARC than to collaborate with other NIAG cells. For example, in the Bajo Cauca region the Rastrojos dominate, operating much like a franchise with many sub-groups but without a central command structure. As FARC is comparatively weak here, it is seeking to form alliances with different Rastrojos-affiliated sub-groups.⁸⁵ This has created situations in which one FARC front may have alliances with several different NIAG cells that are locked in conflict with one another.

FARC may also be consolidating alliances with Mexican drug cartels, which are strengthening their participation in the Colombian drug trade. Direct relations between cartels in Juárez (Mexico) and drug traffickers in Medellín appear to exist. Reportedly, relationships exist between the Rastrojos and the Mexican Beltrán Leyva group, while Colombian police reports indicate that the Beltrán Leyva cartel also has relations with Los Paisas. A police raid in Barranquilla in early March 2010 discovered that "Valenciano", one of the leaders of the Oficina de Envigado (a criminal structure based in Medellín heavily involved in drug trafficking) has been building up relationships with "Los Zetas" (the former armed faction of the Gulf of Mexico cartel, which has recently transformed into a cartel in its own right with strong presence in Guatemala) for the shipment of cocaine from Colombia to Mexico. According to the police, Los Urabeños and Los Zetas work together, while ERPAC and the Rastrojos have connections with the Sinaloa-Juárez cartel.⁸⁶

ruary 2010. In Chocó, Norte de Santander and Nariño, sources suggest that the military is permitting NIAGs to traffic illegal goods freely. Crisis Group interviews, Pasto, 9-15 February 2010; Quibdó, 17-19 February 2010; Cúcuta, 1-2 March 2010.

⁸⁴ Crisis Group interviews, international humanitarian organisation, Cali, 26 February 2010; Pasto, 9-15 February 2010; Quibdó, 17-19 February 2010; Cúcuta, 1-2 March 2010; "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of the Human Rights in Colombia", op. cit.; and "Herederos de los Paramilitares – La Nueva Cara de la Violencia en Colombia", Human Rights Watch, February 2010.

⁸⁵ Crisis Group interview, international humanitarian organisation, Medellín, 3 February 2010.

⁸⁶ Crisis Group interview, humanitarian organisation, Medellín, 3 March 2010; "From Military Arsenal to Drug Gangs and Guerrillas", *Latin American Security and Strategic Review*, January 2010; and "El Mexicano de las Farc", *Semana.com*, 2 May 2010.

B. FARC–ELN

On several occasions in the past, FARC and ELN announced the formation of an alliance. The most recent announcement of this kind became public in December 2009. The agreement was the outcome of several meetings between members of the ELN Central Command and FARC Secretariat, as well as other high-ranking guerrillas, and aimed at ending the bloody struggle between the two guerrilla organisations and building a united front against the Uribe administration.⁸⁷ Significantly weakened over the last decade by the Colombian army, paramilitaries and FARC (which reportedly is responsible for killing over 150 ELN members between 2002 and 2009), ELN particularly stood to benefit militarily from this alliance.⁸⁸ However, due to the profound animosity between the two insurgent organisations fuelled by a protracted feud over control of territory, populations and drug trafficking corridors (especially in Arauca department), the extent of the alliance was questionable from the start.

Presently, a truce still appears to exist in some regions where FARC and ELN fought each other for years (Nariño and Cauca departments). Cooperation which existed between ELN and the NIAG Rastrojos in Nariño to expel FARC from the region seems to have ended as a result of the FARC-ELN alliance.⁸⁹ But in Arauca department,

bloody clashes reportedly resumed again in May.⁹⁰ This was preceded by a statement in January 2010 by alias “Grannobles”, commander of FARC’s 10th front in Arauca, that ELN would be fought until eliminated. He ordered his fighters to target the group’s commanders, political leaders and their followers in Arauca.⁹¹

C. DEADLY IMPACT

The impact of this emerging constellation of a broad range of criminal and armed actors and alliances among them is felt in many parts of the country. The fragmented nature of the groups and the unpredictability of their interactions complicate their identification and control.

Areas with a high presence of illegal armed groups are where most alliances or disputes between them occur. These tend to be near borders or areas along the strategic drug-trafficking corridors,⁹² with the south-western part of the country being particularly affected.⁹³ Short-lived alliances and disputes have generated elevated levels of violence and are having a detrimental impact on civilians, who have been displaced, massacred and had their children recruited.⁹⁴ These dynamics have also increased the number of selective homicides among the illegal armed

⁸⁷ From the ELN: Alan García and Pablo Beltrán (members of ELN Central Command). From FARC, Iván Márquez (secretariat member), Rodrigo Granda (FARC’s international spokesman) and Jesús Santrich (member of the Central High Command). “Entre Tres Citas se Pactó la Alianza entre el ELN y las FARC”, *El Tiempo*, 23 January 2010.

⁸⁸ ELN, which in the early 2000s had an estimated strength of 4,000, is believed to have lost between 1,500 and 2,000 members between 2000 and 2007. In 2009 alone, 492 ELN fighters defected from the organisation. The ELN is currently estimated to have around 1,500 members. “Logros de la Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática – PCDS”, January 2010, op. cit.; “Colombia’s ELN Rebels Show New Vigour”, BBC News (online), 5 November 2009. For a deeper analysis, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°16, *Colombia: Moving Forward with the ELN?*, 11 October 2007.

⁸⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Medellín, 3–5 February 2010; Pasto, 9–15 February 2010; Cali, 22 February 2010; Cúcuta, 1–2 March 2010. ELN has lost 88 per cent of its territorial presence during the Uribe government (down from 237 municipalities in 2002 to only 28 in 2009). Crisis Group interview, Colombian police personnel, Bogotá, 27 January 2010. However, it is still present in many of the strategic coca production areas and trafficking corridors, such as Nariño, Norte de Santander, Arauca and Chocó. To strengthen its finances and increase its forces, ELN has begun cooperating with local traffickers and international networks despite its traditional position of keeping out of drug trafficking. Crisis Group interview, humanitarian organisation, Bogotá, 16 December 2009. For further information on ELN’s

involvement in drug trafficking, see Crisis Group Report, *Latin American Drugs 1: Losing the Fight*, op. cit.

⁹⁰ “Crisis Humanitaria por Ruptura de Pacto FARC-ELN”, *El Tiempo*, 24 June 2010.

⁹¹ “Las Ordenes de Grannobles”, *El Espectador*, 19 May 2010.

It appears that the truce between ELN and FARC commanders in Arauca was initially facilitated by representatives of the Catholic Church, in an attempt to stop the violent feud between them which saw each side waging a war to eliminate the other’s popular support within the communities, producing mass displacement and considerable bloodshed for many years. Crisis Group interview, Catholic Church representative, Bogotá, 22 January 2010.

⁹² Such as the border areas Catatumbo, Nariño and Urabá, or drug-trafficking corridors such as those between Tolima and Chocó and Bajo Cauca towards Turbo.

⁹³ With the demobilisation of the former AUC bloc Libertadores del Sur, the Organización Nueva Generación (ONG) quickly took over its business and expanded rapidly in the region. ONG has now been almost completely defeated by the Rastrojos, who have also collaborated with ELN to expel FARC from the region. Águilas Negras and the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia are also present in the region.

⁹⁴ Crisis Group interview, international humanitarian organisation, Medellín, 3 February 2010; “Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of the Human Rights in Colombia”, op. cit., pp. 14–15; and “Bandas Emergentes, Mayores Generadoras de Violencia”, *El Nuevo Día, Ibagué*, (online), 13 April 2010.

groups, often motivated by vengeance.⁹⁵ The state response has been to reinforce army units, in particular in the south west, but this has not led to a decrease in the levels of violence.⁹⁶

In regions where one illegal armed group dominates, there is less violence, as there are fewer armed confrontations. For instance, in the eastern Llanos region ERPAC has managed to consolidate its power and has what seems to be a fairly stable alliance with FARC.⁹⁷ Together, they reportedly traffic an estimated two to three tons of cocaine per month.⁹⁸

The interactions between the groups involved in drug trafficking are also affecting urban areas. A perverse effect of the government's effort to curtail the massive international trafficking of drugs through Plan Colombia has been the emergence of micro-trafficking in cities and increased levels of violence.⁹⁹ While FARC's urban presence has been significantly reduced, NIAGs and other criminal organisations with links to NIAGs and guerrilla drug suppliers are fighting for control of the increasingly lucrative micro-trafficking business. Urban criminal bands are highly localised and their control is often confined to a certain neighbourhood, which they jealously guard and fiercely contest. Medellín, where the homicide rate increased significantly between 2008 and 2009, has been

particularly affected.¹⁰⁰ Cali, Cúcuta, Buenaventura and to a certain extent Bogotá have also suffered a similar evolution.¹⁰¹

Notwithstanding the limitations and the often temporary, fragile and atomised nature of alliances, the partnerships between illegal armed groups over criminal and drug trafficking interests is adding a new dimension to the Colombian conflict, leading to a deterioration of security and endangering the civilian population.

⁹⁵ "Bandas Emergentes, Mayores Generadoras de Violencia", op. cit.

⁹⁶ The Pacific Joint Command (Commando Conjunto Pacífico) was created in December 2009 in response to the deteriorating security situation in the Pacific coast. It has jurisdiction in six departments in south-western Colombia. In Nariño, the army has increased its forces from 5,000 troops in 2007 to 12,000 in 2009, aiming to reach 37,000 in 2015. The 23rd brigade, created in February 2009, has jurisdiction over all of Nariño, apart from a strip along the Pacific coast where the marines are. Despite the increase in troops, local authorities report serious security problems along the heavily militarised road between Barbacoas and Tumaco. Crisis Group interview, local government authorities, Pasto, 10, 15 February 2010.

⁹⁷ This is also the area where the army has been particularly forceful in decimating FARC, especially in the Macarena region where the security consolidation program is being piloted.

⁹⁸ "Cuchillo y el Loco Barrera sacan al Mes de 2 a 3 Toneladas de Coca", *El Nuevo Siglo*, 20 April 2009.

⁹⁹ As the government has forcefully and so far unsuccessfully focused on cocaine supply reduction, with important resources provided through Plan Colombia, there are indications that internal demand is increasing and cocaine is now readily available on Colombian streets at low prices. Crisis Group interview, government official, Medellín, 4 February 2010; Cali, 22 February 2010; senior police official, Cúcuta, 2 March 2010; "Nueva Estrategia Antidrogas de EU es más Equilibrada: Naranjo", *El Nuevo Siglo*, 13 May 2010.

¹⁰⁰ The local government program *Medellín cómo vamos?* describes an increase of 107 per cent between 2008 and 2009 – from 45.6 to 94.5 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. The publication "Re-pensando la Seguridad: Percepciones y Representaciones en Torno a la Seguridad en Medellín" (Medellín, 2010), pp. 23-24, jointly published by the Personería de Medellín, the Instituto Popular de Capacitación and the University of Antioquia, states an increase by 85.6 per cent (from 1,137 homicides in 2008 to 2,182 homicides in 2009). Much of the violence is related to the extradition of Don Berna, the former leader of the paramilitary Cacique Nutibara bloc, in May 2008. When he was in charge, the city was relatively calm. The majority of the killings in 2009 occurred between members of the "combos" and "bandas" gangs, of which there are believed to exist between 150 and 300. Confinement, extortion and threats are the most common crimes affecting communities. The local attorney general's office attributed the increase in violence to disputes between guerrilla groups, NIAGs and urban combos. It also drew attention to the increased killings of minors, a reflection of the growing trend of these groups recruiting young boys and girls. Crisis Group interviews, Medellín, 3-5 February 2010.

¹⁰¹ Micro-trafficking and a rapid increase in homicides was a pressing problem in Cali in 2009, where homicide rates increased by 17 per cent from 2008 to 2009. Crisis Group interviews, Cali, 21, 26 February. The police in Cúcuta has made combating micro-trafficking a priority, recognising that it is the cause of the majority of homicides in this town. Crisis Group interview, senior police official, Cúcuta, 2 March 2010. Buenaventura is a strategic trafficking hub for drugs. The attorney general attributed the car bomb in March 2010 to drug-related crime, forcing President Uribe to summon his National Security Committee to Buenaventura on 26 March 2010. In Bogotá, the police obtained evidence with the capture of some deputies of the major drug kingpins – such as alias "Loco Barrera", "Cuchillo" and "Comba" – that drug traffickers are also taking refuge in the capital. "Informe especial 2009: El Declive de la Seguridad Democracia?", op. cit. Local authorities have expressed concern over homicides attributed to hired killers (*sicarios*) linked to drug-trafficking networks. But despite an increase in homicide rates between 2008 and 2009, from 21.3 per 100,000 inhabitants to 22.7 per 100,000, homicide rates in Bogotá have decreased significantly since 2000 when they were 37.7 per 100,000. "En Bogotá hay 22.7 Homicidios por cada 100,000 Inhabitantes", *El Tiempo*, 25 March 2010.

IV. STATE RESPONSE

A. FARC'S UNLIKELY MILITARY DEFEAT AND SECURITY CONSOLIDATION CHALLENGES

Despite the success in reducing FARC's offensive capability and reasserting the presence of the security forces in all municipalities across Colombia, it is unlikely that FARC can be defeated militarily.¹⁰² The organisation can still inflict serious damage and appears to have a stable supply of weapons. Nor have government forces managed, after eight years of DSP and arguably the most aggressive military campaign against a guerrilla commander in the history of the country, to capture or kill FARC's leader, Alfonso Cano.¹⁰³ Since the government's heavy blows against FARC's leadership in 2008, no other Secretariat member has been captured or killed.

Between 2002 and 2007, the Uribe administration and the armed forces focused on the military struggle against FARC and achieved tangible results. At times, the single-minded pursuit of that goal produced serious human rights abuses by members of the armed forces, including extrajudicial executions (*falsos positivos*).¹⁰⁴ Starting from 2007, the government began to broaden its military approach by introducing a consolidation strategy. The main objective of this strategy is to strengthen the presence of state institutions in areas that formerly had a strong insurgent presence by establishing the justice sector, health and education agencies and development plans and programs.

The strategy is to be implemented in fifteen regions, although so far work has only started in La Macarena and Montes de María regions.¹⁰⁵ The results in these two pilot regions will guide and determine the future of the consolidation strategy,¹⁰⁶ and both have to date reported successes and failures which need to be carefully analysed

by the next government to ensure that corrective measures and pertinent modifications are made.¹⁰⁷ Consolidation efforts to expand the rule of law and establish civilian state institutions in Colombia's regions need to go hand-in-hand with improvements to current military and citizen security policy.

Consolidation efforts in Montes de María have improved security and provided renewed hope for the local population. Due to increased state presence and engagement, both the national and international donor community have been able to implement development projects and provide jobs for the inhabitants. In so doing, FARC's presence has substantially decreased. But there are problems with the consolidation strategy. Public policy is being dictated largely by the military, limiting the role of civilian institutions which should take the lead. Equally problematic, the responsibilities of the different institutions and agencies involved in the strategy have not been made clear, nor are there specific budget lines for consolidation efforts. Basic public, judicial and social services are still inadequate. Though the government maintains that the Montes de María region is a post-conflict area, it is not.

La Macarena could be classified as the most symbolic of state recovered zones. Previously a FARC stronghold riddled with violence and drug trafficking, the municipalities of this region in the Meta department today enjoy an 80 per cent reduction in coca cultivation and effective security in a large portion of the territory. FARC units still operate in parts of La Macarena, but their control has been greatly reduced and they have been confined to fewer and more remote zones.¹⁰⁸

As in Montes de María, however, obstacles to consolidation persist and demand the attention of the state if they are to be overcome. The main problems revolve around difficulties in building trust between the state and a local population which it had for decades abandoned. The government needs to provide sustainable alternatives to illegal crops, prioritise civilian leadership over military participation in policy design and implementation, clearly articulate the roles of different agencies and institutions and better engage local authorities. Consolidation efforts in both La Macarena and Montes de María are not sustainable without specific financial allocations in the national

¹⁰² Some believe that military defeat is possible, arguing that statistics have demonstrated that only 30 per cent of conflicts worldwide have been resolved via negotiations, and the remainder by military defeat. Crisis Group interview, academic expert on conflict resolution, Bogotá, 14 January 2010.

¹⁰³ Army units were increased to over 6,000 troops in the Central Mountain Range of the Andes in southern Tolima, where Cano is thought to be hiding. "Seis Mil Hombres Buscan a Alfonso Cano en el Páramo de los Valles, en la Cordillera Central", *El Tiempo*, 2 June 2008.

¹⁰⁴ See Crisis Group Latin America Report N°21, *The Virtuous Twins: Protecting Human Rights and Improving Security in Colombia*, 25 May 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Crisis Group interview, senior government official, Bogotá, 8 January 2010.

¹⁰⁶ Crisis Group interview, vice-presidency, Bogotá, 14 January 2010.

¹⁰⁷ Crisis Group will publish an in-depth analysis of security consolidation efforts in Montes de María and La Macarena in July 2010.

¹⁰⁸ Between 12 and 17 April 2010, Crisis Group conducted interviews with local authorities, humanitarian organisations, community leaders, international organisations, government agencies, church representatives, donors, police and army personnel in Granada, Mesetas, Vistahermosa, Villeavencio, Puerto Rico and San Juan de Arama.

budget. Issues relating to formalisation of land titles also need urgent attention.

B. NIAGS: NOT ON THE RADAR SCREEN

While the focus of the DSP has been FARC, resources and efforts to address the increasing threat posed by NIAGs have been insufficient. Their expansion and changes in tactics suggest that their strength, capability and role in local politics in some regions may be greater than the authorities acknowledge.¹⁰⁹

Various reasons account for this inadequate response. In some cases the police either ignore or downplay the threat of NIAGs entirely,¹¹⁰ while in others there is will to act but no physical capacity to combat these groups and act on information.¹¹¹ In other areas, there is simply no permanent police presence.¹¹² Another common problem is the lack of coordination between the police and the army.¹¹³ Collusion between NIAGs and some regional authorities may be another reason. A complex issue, possibly related to deficiencies in police intelligence, is the inability of police to identify the leaders of NIAGs, which prevents them from eliminating command structures.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Though direct NIAG involvement in politics has not been confirmed, criminal groups reportedly attempted to influence the legislative elections of March 2010 in Sucre, Nariño, Valle del Cauca and Chocó departments. Crisis Group interview, community leaders, Sincelejo, 23 March 2010; non-governmental electoral monitoring organisation, Bogotá, 7 May 2010.

¹¹⁰ Crisis Group was told by police commanders in several departments, such as Nariño, Sucre and Meta, that NIAGs either do not exist or that their presence is negligible. Crisis Group interviews, police officials, Pasto, 15 February 2010; San Onofre, 25 March 2010; Vistahermosa, 13 April 2010.

¹¹¹ Crisis Group interviews, international humanitarian organisation, Bogotá, 22 January 2010; Church representative, Tumaco, 24 February 2010.

¹¹² For example, in the mountain municipality of Policarpa in Nariño department there is almost no state presence. With no permanent military or police presence, Rastrojos can control the inhabitants of some of the villages in that region. "Herederos de los Paramilitares – La Nueva Cara de la Violencia en Colombia", Human Rights Watch, February 2010.

¹¹³ The army does not have the authority or mandate to deal with NIAGs. When they encounter these groups or suspect their presence and wish to take action, they must alert the police. According to high-ranking police officers, coordination problems with the military are difficult to overcome. Crisis Group interview, senior police officers, Bogotá, 26 January 2010.

¹¹⁴ Officers are frustrated by the fact that they appear to be chasing a hydra – when they knock off one of the visible heads of a group, another reappears immediately. No structural or serious damage is caused and they are often unsure who they should be pursuing. Crisis Group interviews, senior police officials, Bogotá, 26 January 2010.

The police are not unconcerned by the emergence and strengthening of NIAGs, as well as the impact they have on human security, and are thus increasing their efforts to combat them.¹¹⁵ However, the police estimate of 2,580 members operating in 159 municipalities in 18 departments may be a gross underestimation.¹¹⁶ In Nariño, local government estimates indicate that the Rastrojos alone may have between 3,000 and 4,000 members.¹¹⁷ Underestimating the threat these groups pose could prevent the authorities from allocating adequate resources and manpower to tackle these groups, allowing them to continue to expand. Some political analysts are concerned that NIAGs may seek to position themselves as political actors in the conflict, which could lead to their becoming Colombia's third generation of paramilitaries.¹¹⁸ Whether or not NIAGs are as powerful and organised as some suggest, it is clear that the government should not be compla-

¹¹⁵ To do so, the police has divided the country into four operational zones: 1) Urabá, Sucre, Antioquia, Córdoba and Chocó, where the principal objective is to fight crime in the border areas and identify the leaders of armed groups; 2) Norte de Santander, Cesar and southern Bolívar, where efforts are focused on countering drug trafficking and finding drug deposits and warehouses; 3) Nariño, Valle del Cauca, Cauca and southern Chocó, where they focus on illicit crops, maritime export routes, identifying and neutralising Rastrojos leaders; and 4) the eastern Llanos, where the priority is combating illicit enterprises and weapons trafficking. Crisis Group interview, senior police officers, Bogotá, 26 January 2010.

¹¹⁶ Nuevo Arco Iris believes the figure is closer to 10,000. "Informe Especial 2009: El Declive de la Seguridad Democrática?", op. cit. Human Rights Watch affirms these groups are present in at least 173 municipalities across 24 departments. "Herederos de los Paramilitares – La Nueva Cara de la Violencia en Colombia", op. cit. The OAS-MAPP believes that NIAGs are present in 153 municipalities. Crisis Group interview, Bogotá, 16 December 2009.

¹¹⁷ Crisis Group interview, senior local government official, Pasto, 10 February 2010.

¹¹⁸ Crisis Group interviews, political think-tank, Bogotá, 11 December 2009; international organisation, Bogotá, 14 December 2009; and "Siguiendo el Conflicto: Hechos y Análisis", Fundación Ideas para la Paz, January 2010. Many analysts draw parallels between the emergence of the paramilitaries, especially as they existed before the formation of the AUC, and the emergence of NIAGs. Crisis Group interviews, political think-tanks, Bogotá, 11, 14 December 2009; international organisation, Bogotá, 16 December 2009. Additionally, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is currently evaluating the nature of these groups to determine whether all or any of them can be classified under international humanitarian law as parties to the internal conflict in Colombia (1977 Protocol II to Geneva Conventions). Some humanitarian organisations and NGOs consider that some NIAGs – especially the Rastrojos – fit this definition. Crisis Group interviews, international organisations, Cúcuta, 1 March 2010; Bogotá, 13 May 2010.

cent or maintain that Colombia is now at a “normalisation” stage.¹¹⁹

V. CONCLUSION

Colombian security forces’ military successes against FARC have led the outgoing Uribe administration to maintain that after eight years of intense struggle the insurgents are close to final defeat and that the country has entered the post-conflict phase. While FARC has suffered very significant blows, in particular since 2007, there are signs that it has been able to adapt to military pressure and is not on the verge of collapse. The porosity of Colombia’s borders with Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela and expanding criminal networks in and beyond Colombia allow FARC to secure a steady flow of arms and funding through deeper involvement in drug trafficking. Temporary alliances of FARC units with some paramilitary successor groups and NIAGs, which operate in many parts of the country of strategic importance for drug-trafficking and other criminal activities, ensure continued income for the insurgent organisation.

The fragmentation of Colombia’s armed and criminal groups as well as the unpredictability and impact of their alliances is adding a new dimension to the Colombian conflict, is leading to a renewed deterioration of the security situation and is endangering the civilian population. The response of the Uribe administration has been inadequate. Clinging to a post-conflict discourse, it has largely turned a blind eye to the threat posed by NIAGs and FARC, which has been weakened but not defeated. As part of an integrated conflict resolution strategy, the incoming government under Juan Manuel Santos should address these problems and acknowledge that Colombia has still to reach the post-conflict era. Otherwise there is a serious risk that security consolidation efforts may be undermined.

Bogotá/Brussels, 29 June 2010

¹¹⁹ The term “normalisation” was used by Colombian police officers when referring to the evolution of the security environment in Colombia in the past couple of years. Crisis Group interview, DIPOL, Bogotá, 26 January 2010.

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