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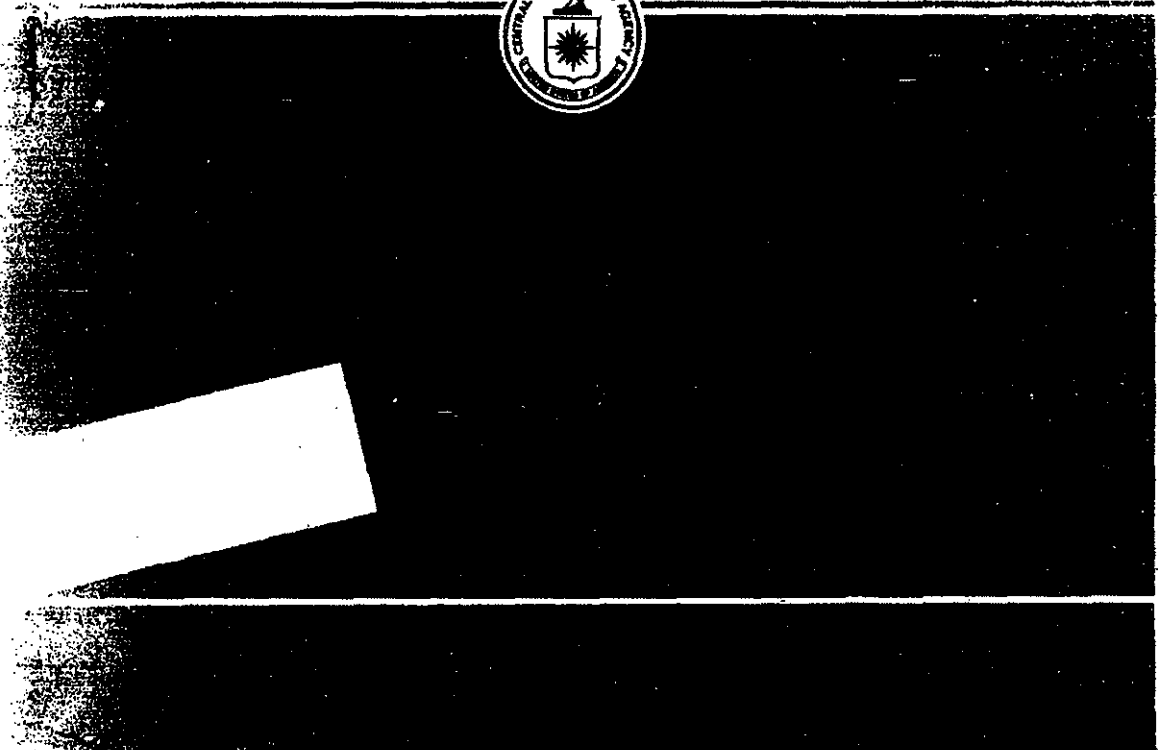


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14 November 1992

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1298

~~Top Secret~~**COLOMBIA: Responding to Insurgent Attacks**

*Although President Gaviria's new emergency decrees to deal with the guerrillas' unprecedented coordinated offensive are receiving broad public support, they will have little other immediate effect.* [redacted]

In the wake of 40 bombings that have killed four people and injured 80 this week, Gaviria has banned contact with the guerrillas by governors, mayors, and the media. He also has ordered banks to freeze the insurgents' assets and has given the Army temporary police powers in remote areas. Legislators and the domestic media are rallying behind Gaviria. [redacted] bankers, however, reportedly are voicing fears of retaliation if they restrict the guerrillas' accounts. [redacted]

To underscore his hard line, Gaviria yesterday replaced all three service chiefs and the armed forces commander with younger generals and announced that 33 new counterinsurgency companies will be formed next year. [redacted]

**Comment:** The Army's response is unlikely to be enough to halt insurgent activity immediately. The rebels probably will continue to avoid major engagements with the Army, but they will keep up their attacks on oil pipelines, industrial and transport facilities, and police outposts in the next several weeks. They may also try to prolong their bombing campaign in major cities, although resource limits probably will force them to suspend it soon. [redacted]

Gaviria's actions are eliciting strong support from a public that is fed up with insurgent- and narcotics-related violence. His moves probably will chasten his critics and help turn attention away from the scandal surrounding drug kingpin Pablo Escobar's escape. Although ousted military leaders' reputations were badly damaged by the Escobar fiasco and by their inability to contain rebel violence, their firings are not enough to strengthen the military's hand significantly. [redacted]

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