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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colombia's increasingly effective efforts to mitigate the power of the FARC and other illegitimately armed groups in the country can offer important lessons for the Peruvian government as it strives to prevent a resurgence of *Sendero Luminoso* and other illegal non-state actors. Both countries share certain particular challenges: deep economic, social, and in the case of Peru ethnic divisions, the presence of and/or the effects of violent insurgencies, large-scale narcotics production and trafficking, and a history of weak state presence in large tracts of isolated and scarcely-populated areas. Important differences exist, however in the nature of the insurgencies in the two countries, the government response to them and the nature of government and society that affects the applicability of Colombia's experience to Peru.

The security threat to Panama from drug trafficking and Colombian insurgents —often a linked phenomenon— are in many ways different from the drug/insurgent factor in Colombia itself and in Peru, although there are similar variables. Unlike the Colombian and Peruvian cases, the security threat in Panama is not directed against the state, there are no domestic elements seeking to overthrow the government — as the case of the *FARC* and *Sendero Luminoso*, security problems have not spilled over from rural to urban areas in Panama, and there is no ideological component at play in driving the threat. Nor is drug cultivation a major factor in Panama as it is in Colombia and Peru.

The key variable that is shared among all three cases is the threat of extra-state actors controlling remote rural areas or small towns where state presence is minimal. The central lesson learned from Colombia is the need to define and then address the key problem of a “sovereignty gap,” lack of a legitimate state presence in many part of the country.

Colombia's success in broadening the presence of the national government between 2002 and the present is owed to many factors, including an effective national strategy, improvements in the armed forces and police, political will on the part of government for a sustained effort, citizen buy-in to the national strategy, including the resolve of the elite to pay more in taxes to bring change about, and the adoption of a sequenced approach to consolidated development in conflicted areas. Control of territory and effective state presence improved citizen security, strengthened confidence in democracy and the legitimate state, promoted economic development, and helped mitigate the effect of illegal drugs.

Peru can benefit from the Colombian experience especially in terms of the importance of legitimate state authority, improved institutions, gaining the support of local citizens, and furthering development to wean communities away from drugs. State coordinated "integration" efforts in Peru as practiced in Colombia have the potential for success if properly calibrated to Peruvian reality, coordinated within government, and provided with sufficient resources. Peru's traditionally weak political institutions and lack of public confidence in the state in many areas of the country must be overcome if this effort is to be successful.

INTRODUCTION

The death of the top military commander of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) alias “Jorge Briceño” aka “Mono Jojoy” on September 22, 2010 in a bombing raid conducted by the Colombian military highlighted the progress that country has made in a decade-long effort to establish legitimate state authority throughout its national territory. At the time of his death, Briceño was hunkered down in underground bunkers dug into the mountains in the municipality of La Uribe, located in the so-called “Macarena” region of Meta Department, about 210km south of Bogotá. Four of the six municipalities of the Macarena region, along with a municipality in neighboring Caquetá Department constituted the 42,000 square km demilitarized zone (*zona de despeje*) created in an agreement between then-President Andrés Pastrana and the FARC in 1998 to facilitate peace talks. This area of Colombia had been a traditional FARC stronghold before 1998, but the *zona de despeje* arrangement allowed the FARC near sovereign control over the area for 28 months. The FARC responded by turning it into a command and control center for its national operations, for stationing thousand of its fighters, as well as for industrial-scale coca production during the 28-month period while the *despeje* agreement remained in force.

In the wake of the failed peace process, which ground to a halt in early 2002, the Colombia government initiated what was to become an increasingly effective campaign to roll back the power of the FARC and other illegally armed groups in the country and in the process take control over large areas of national territory where legitimate state presence had been usurped or where it had never existed. The government’s eventual success in the Macarena region, the heartland of FARC military strength and a mainstay in its cocaine-based economic support structure, resulted from strategic and tactical decisions taken during President Alvaro

Uribe's second term in office aimed at a sequenced approach to the consolidation of state authority, starting with securing territory by the military, followed by the establishment of a police presence, the eradication of coca production, either voluntary or forced, and the eventual rise of a legal economy. The Macarena region in fact became the first test case of this new strategy, manifested in the "Plan of Integral Consolidation of the Macarena" (PCIM) launched by the government of Colombia with support from the United States and the Netherlands in August 2007. This sequenced approach to security and development was subsequently applied to other highly conflictive areas of Colombia, such as the "Montes de María" highlands in Bolívar and Sucre departments, in the southern part of the Department of Tolima and in the Department of Nariño.

Efforts by the Colombian government have neutralized the military capabilities of the FARC. Briceño and the remnants of the once-powerful FARC fronts in the Macarena region had been pushed deeply into the mountainous hinterland of the area and limited to small-scale defensive operations several years before his demise. This process was repeated on a national scale. During the past decade, Colombia came back from the brink of a national meltdown to the point where its security is no longer threatened by insurgents, paramilitaries, and criminal gangs – all fueled by the narcotics industry. Colombia's progress since the launching of the bilateral initiative with the United States known as "Plan Colombia" in 2000 offers important lessons for other states threatened by the forces that undermined legitimate authority in Colombia. More specifically, its integrated approach to consolidating state control may in particular serve as an important point of reference. While the effectiveness of the PCIM in the Macarena and similar efforts elsewhere in Colombia still require further assessment, the strategic approach to security and development they embody makes sense in the Colombian case.

This essay will review the lessons learned from Colombia's efforts at consolidating legitimate state control – specifically the case of the PCIM – and their applicability to Peru, a country once gravely threatened by violent insurgencies and still marked by deep economic, social, and ethnic divisions that could lead to future conflict, as well as the implications for Panama's Darien Region. Both countries are affected by narcotics production and trafficking and a history of very weak state presence in large tracts of isolated and scarcely-populated areas. Important differences exist, however, in the nature of the FARC and *Sendero Luminoso* insurgencies, and even more in the Darien Region, the government response to them, and in the nature of government and society in the two countries that will affect the applicability of Colombia's experience to Peru or Panama. Nonetheless, there is value in reviewing the key lessons from Colombia in light of the future challenges faced by Peru, and perhaps Panama.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE COLOMBIAN EXPERIENCE

Colombia's central weakness throughout its history has been the inability of government to exercise authority over much of its national territory. (This analysis is derived from: Peter DeShazo, Johanna Mendelson Forman and Phillip McLean, *Countering Threats to Security and Stability in a Failing State: Lessons from Colombia, CSIS 2009*.) This sovereignty gap had been a consistent factor in Colombia's history, but it rose to prominence with the coca boom in the 1990s when insurgencies such as the FARC and Army of National Liberation (ELN) used ungoverned areas as a staging ground for attacks against state presence in urban areas– isolated military bases and police stations being favorite targets. Drug production fueled the power of the insurgents, as well as the paramilitary armies that took form during the 1990s both as a counterweight to FARC influence in many rural areas and to contest the insurgents for control over coca production and drug trafficking. Colombia's

difficult geography, vast ungoverned spaces and the drug industry all conspired against the traditionally weak Colombian state. By the late 1990s, the insurgents were capable of defeating the ineffective and demoralized Colombian army in pitched battles at the battalion level, while the Colombian National Police didn't stand a chance against better armed and more numerous guerrilla units. State authority imploded all over the country as the FARC carried out a strategy of expanding its theatre of operations, controlling strategic corridors allowing its different fronts to link up and facilitate the movement of drugs, supplies and weapons, and gradually encircling Bogotá and other principal cities.

Recovery from Colombia's precipitous slide towards potential state failure began during the Pastrana administration (1998-2002) when the Colombian army began to be reorganized and increased in size. This process accelerated during the first term in office of President Alvaro Uribe (2002-2006). More importantly, Uribe and his advisors developed a coherent counter-insurgency strategy based on taking and holding territory, protecting local populations, controlling key geographic corridors essential to drug trafficking and supply and mobility for insurgents, and demobilizing the paramilitary forces that in the end threatened democracy and state authority as gravely as did the FARC. This strategy – the “Democratic Security Policy” very correctly identified the sovereignty gap as the central problem in Colombia and the strengthening of legitimate state control the key antidote. This policy was adjusted and upgraded over time, but it essentially was executed during the entire eight-year period of Uribe's presidency, with continuation into the new administration of Juan Manuel Santos (2010-).

To carry out his Democratic Security Policy, Uribe understood that the size and capability of the armed forces and police would have to be increased substantially, that it

needed far greater mobility, and that substantial amounts of resources would have to be dedicated to this effort on a sustained basis. Accordingly, spending on security rose sharply during the first years of the Uribe administration, funded in part by a special tax on Colombia's wealthiest citizens and businesses and with support from the United States. Between 2002 and 2009, Uribe increased the size of the armed forces by 39 per cent and the police by a third. As importantly, he increased the number of professional soldiers in the army – the core counterinsurgency force – by 56 per cent during the same period, forming scores of new brigade and battalion-sized units, many trained by the United States under Plan Colombia assistance. A local home guard force called *soldados de mi pueblo* (“hometown soldiers”) was stood up, organized in special platoons of 40 men and based largely in rural towns in some 600 locations across the country, largely to hold down territory, disrupt insurgent supply corridors and demonstrate state presence, freeing up more elite troops for combat missions.

In parallel, the Colombian National Police was vastly expanded and strengthened. From 2002 to 2009, nearly 300 new police stations and sub-stations were established, mainly in rural areas, and staffed with national police. The existing force of rural police (*carabineros*) was expanded to some 7,400 strong, with special “mobile squadrons” of heavily-armed units trained as light infantry created to patrol particularly conflictive areas and to assist in narcotics eradication.

A major effort was made to increase the mobility of the Colombian armed forces and police, based on rotary airlift capability. At the beginning of the Pastrana administration, the armed forces had about 20 helicopters. By 2008, Colombia operated the third largest fleet of Black Hawk (UH 60-L and AH 60L) helicopters in the world, with more than 70 units (as of 2009) and a total helicopter fleet of nearly 200 in 2008. These assets gave the Colombian armed forces with

an enormous advantage in counter-insurgency operations in mountainous and rural areas. Other aircraft, such as the Embaer 314 “Super Tucano” light attack plane (the aircraft used in the bombing raids against the FARC camps that resulted in the deaths of top FARC leaders “Raúl Reyes” and “Mono Jojoy”) were added to the fleet.

Colombian counterinsurgency capabilities improved in many other ways, often with U.S. support. Training, professionalization, intelligence capability, administration, supply, maintenance of equipment, night operational capability, NCO training, and human rights awareness were all improved substantially.

With improvements in the size, capability, and strategy and tactics of the armed forces and police, Colombia was able to neutralize the FARC, virtually eliminate the ELN as a force, bring about the demobilization of nearly 30,000 paramilitary fighters, and substantially reduce the weight of the drug economy as a factor affecting the country’s security and development. In the wake of the killing of Briceño/Mono Jojoy, the FARC should be nearing the point in which it is willing to consider peace talks. While criminal gangs engaged in drug trafficking still put a serious strain on law enforcement, they no longer pose a state security threat. Colombia still faces serious challenges, including deeply entrenched poverty, inequality, weak judicial systems, and persistently high levels of crime, but the crisis stage has been passed and the future of the country is more positive than anyone could have hoped ten years ago.

In 2007, the Colombian government, with U.S. support, shifted gears in its effort to establish effective state presence in areas formerly controlled by illegal armed groups. That year, it undertook a new strategy for consolidating state authority that was first applied in the Macarena region of Meta department-- the PCIM. (For a mid-stream evaluation of the effectiveness of PCIM, see: Peter DeShazo, Phillip

McLean and Johanna Mendelson Forman, *Colombia's Plan de Consolidación Integral de la Macarena An Assessment*, CSIS, June 2009). This was a sequenced approach by which areas secured by the military – in this case the very effective Task Force Omega of the Colombian armed forces – are gradually turned over to police forces for law enforcement and narcotics eradication. As areas become secure enough, PCIM civilian employees enter the areas to engage local populations in rounds of discussions on the kinds of projects and activities most needed in each community to promote economic and social development. These efforts are aimed at producing letter-of-reference agreements between PCIM development entities and local communities – in essence obtaining “buy-in” from resident populations for the individual development projects to be carried out. In the case of the Macarena, local communities were most concerned about the need for tertiary roads to get cash crops to market, access to farm machinery and to credit, the need for technical assistance to farmers, and land titling to leverage credit and provide stability for rural communities. To better coordinate civil-military efforts, PCIM established a “fusion center” for each project, basically a small headquarters operation on the ground in the zone itself, out of which all elements of the PCIM operated.

The experience of PCIM and other such efforts in Colombia is yet to be fully evaluated. Certain conclusions can, however, be drawn from the PCIM that are relevant elsewhere. The consolidation of effective security is essential but the sooner military units can be replaced by civilian police the better. At the same time, policing needs to be community-based, with officers and agents reaching out to the local communities to win their trust. Without effective security, counter-drug initiatives and social and economic development will not be possible. The PCIM experience also underscored the need for a greater civilian role in the consolidation of state presence. The military part – in the case of Colombia – was important but buy-in to the model of

integral development from the Ministry of Defense has been more enthusiastic than from other ministries, especially key ones such as Agriculture or the social development agency *Acción Social*. Civilian inputs at an early stage in the process are necessary to enlist citizen support and cooperation. This must be across the board – including teachers, health workers, and support for incipient municipal government, agricultural extension, judicial authorities, and sources of credit.

In the case of PCIM, greater civilian resource support from within the Colombian government was identified as the key ingredient that would determine the success or failure of integrated development efforts. For that reason, the establishment of a government coordinating body to supervise efforts such as PCIM led by a figure reporting directly to the president and with the authority to elicit and obtain resources from the civilian ministries and agencies is essential. As guerillas are pushed out of areas and state authority is established, local residents need to see the value of a state presence immediately in terms of improving their lives. This is especially important if the cultivation of coca is to be carried out on a sustained basis. Local farmers must be convinced that government authority is permanent, that there is no future in growing coca but also that viable alternatives exist. Forced eradication with no follow-up in terms of even short-term subsidies or cash payments for local farmers will alienate them from the state.

The key lessons learned from Colombia's experience include:

- A Colombia-specific response was required to address Colombia's crisis – not a formulaic approach.
- The root of Colombia's security crisis stemmed from a weak state incapable of exercising legitimate state authority and solution of the crisis needed to be based on remediation of this phenomenon, including

undercutting the ability of non-state factors to use force.

- Illegal narcotics were not the root of the problem but an exacerbating factor, creating an asymmetric resource relationship between illegal armed groups and the state.
- Colombian efforts underscored the concept of security as a public good. The focus on security and the government's ability to exercise authority became the key deliverable of the Uribe administration.
- Progress in delivering state security generated strong support for the government among the Colombian people.
- Colombia's counter-guerilla campaign never became a war against its own people. Colombia's armed forces did not engage in widespread human rights violation but rather won popularity as a defender of public security.
- Colombia's security strategy from the start included counter-drug and economic development aspects, but these became more integrated and effective components only over time. They were dependent on the establishment of security as a precondition.
- A successful security strategy required sustained political will and resources. Colombian elites were expected to pay the lion's share of the expense through higher taxes.
- As the internal conflict abated, efforts shifted from the military to the law enforcement sphere, with fewer troops and more police needed.
- Police in Colombia are still in the necessary process of adapting from the mentality of garrison forces to community-based police interfacing with the people.
- Control of territory and effective state presence led to a sharp reduction in crime and violence.
- Government control over territory, key transportation, energy and communications

infrastructure has enhanced prospects for economic development.

- The rule of law remains Colombia's weakest element and the one requiring the most enhanced attention by the government. The future of effective and sustained state control will depend on far more government resources being dedicated to the rule of law.
- Counter-drug efforts cannot be successful or sustained without a legitimate state presence on the ground.
- Counter-drug campaigns must be multi-faceted, balancing eradication with the establishment of security and development.
- If insurgents or drug gangs have the capability of forcing or cajoling farmers into growing coca, the chances for cultivation of legitimate crops will be poor. Appeals to grow substitute crops when coca remains an option are not effective.
- "Alternative development" initiatives to drugs are likely to fail unless they are carried out in an environment of reasonable state presence and control. They must also be economically feasible.

APPLICABILITY OF LESSONS FROM THE COLOMBIAN EXPERIENCE IN PERU

Peru's experience with *Sendero Luminoso* (SL) and the *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* (MRTA) differed from Colombia's efforts against its own insurgencies in several important ways. Furthermore, differences in the nature of Peruvian and Colombian society have an important bearing on the applicability of Colombia's efforts at consolidating an integral development strategy. There are, nonetheless, important similarities and useful points of reference.

The rise and fall of SL took place during a quite limited period of time compared with the history of the FARC – still ongoing – in Colombia, due to important differences between the two insurgent groups. While both movements were inspired by Marxism, the FARC paid far less attention to ideology than SL, which became totally imbued with revolutionary zeal. While the FARC had a definite hierarchy, its leadership was more dispersed than SL, which had an undisputed leader who developed an extraordinary cult of the personality around him. The collapse of SL with the capture of Abimael Guzmán in 1992 has had no replication in Colombia with the death of “Manuel Marulanda” although the Colombian strategy of putting extreme pressure on top FARC leadership is over time bearing fruit and has greatly weakened that organization. The ideological fanaticism of SL caused it to commit incredible acts of savagery directed against local, often indigenous populations in Peru, resulting in the alienation of SL from most of society. For its part, the FARC also committed widespread abuses and failed to gain popular support, but was more pragmatic and patient in launching attacks against the state. Because SL had a greater presence in towns, with Guzmán establishing his headquarters in Lima, *Sendero* could be more easily dealt with by Peruvian security forces than the FARC, which operated over a vast area of territory. SL’s larger size (perhaps 23,000 fighters at peak compared with the FARC’s peak order of battle strength of about 17,000) was concentrated in a smaller space, rendering it a more accessible target.

The Peruvian response to SL underscored in reverse some of the lessons from Colombia. The terrible human rights violations committed by the Peruvian army during the Belaúnde administration (1980-1985) in counter SL helped fuel support for the insurgency, whereas Colombia’s armed forces never engaged in a war of terror against their own citizens. The excellent relationship between the Colombian armed forces and the civilian government – particularly

during the Uribe administration – was clearly not the case during the years of the Alan García government (1985-1990), although García did rein in the human rights abuses. Colombia's long tradition of civilian control of the military certainly set it apart from Peru in this regard. Both Colombia and Peru's armed forces were underfunded during key periods when they faced a determined insurgency and only improved as more resources became available, including for salaries. Peru's army, however, was never transformed into the professional counter-insurgency force that Colombia's became. Increased intelligence capability played an especially important role in undermining both SL and the FARC – above all in allowing for the capture or killing of top leadership.

Lack of legitimate state authority played a large role in encouraging illegal armed groups in both countries. Colombia is moving more effectively to resolve that problem. While the SL insurgency was largely crushed by the mid-1990s, the state presence in many areas of Peru remains weak – even in areas of relatively larger population, especially in the heavily indigenous areas of the central and southern Andes. Although SL alienated indigenous populations with its violence and fanaticism, the Peruvian state did not profit much from this process. Widespread distrust of the government remains in the highland areas of the country where the SL insurgency was especially strong – as evidenced by the large vote in those areas for the anti-system candidate Ollanta Humala in the 2006 presidential election. The defeat of SL was not followed by the consolidation of an effective state presence in the highlands: judicial authorities, police, and economic development. Continued poverty and alienation remains a fact of life in the highland and well as Amazon regions. The violent confrontation between police units and indigenous protestors in the Amazon region town of Bagua in June 2009 which resulted in several dozen deaths underscored the

confrontational mentality and degree of alienation that exists with regard to the state.

It is highly likely that in the April 2011 presidential elections, indigenous voters in Peru will turn out in large numbers to vote for a candidate who runs against the status quo – like Humala in 2006. A possible scenario for Peru would be a re-channeling of the frustration and violence unleashed by SL along ethnic rather than class lines, with important elements of the indigenous population turning away from the national state. Indigenous political participation in Peru has traditionally been mobilized by non-indigenous parties or movements, including the Marxist left, reformist military elements, and radical populists, but this is changing with the rise of indigenous-based movements such as *Peru Plurinacional*. Indigenous people in the Andes and Amazon have not substantially shared in the benefits of Peru's rapidly expanding economy during the past decade, which has exacerbated the already-great social and economic disparity between Lima and the coast, on the one hand, and the highlands on the other.

Peru's leadership can take away some important lessons from Colombia and from that country's recent efforts to promote integrated development. One regards the legitimacy and authority of the state, manifested in control of territory but also in the presence of state institutions and services that enlist the support of local citizens. While expectations for improvements are high in Colombia and frustration could set in if not attended to, there is already alienation from the state in some heavily indigenous areas of the state in Peru. The Peruvian government needs to make a much larger effort to establish an effective police-based security presence in these areas, but with strong community ties.

Colombia has also demonstrated that without a legitimate state security presence on the ground, effective counter-drug

activities, especially manual eradication, is ineffective. Likewise, so-called “alternative development” projects aimed at substituting other crops for coca will fail if the cultivation and commercialization of coca remains an option. However, the state must provide transitional resources, subsidies, and services to communities involved in eradication of coca, as well as longer-term inputs to activate a sustainable legal economy. Enlisting the private sector and civil society in this effort is also important.

The idea of the state coordinating its “integration” efforts in conflict zones makes sense in Peru – at least in terms of better coordination, both at the national and the local level of the many state entities needed to improve security, counter-drug efforts, economic development, governance, and the delivery of social services. Presidential support for such an initiative is essential, since the resources of many different government entities must be enlisted – resources that many of them would rather invest elsewhere unless directed to do so from the top. While Peru’s national security is not threatened by an insurgency, it should nonetheless look to the case of Colombia in terms of the benefit of special taxes levied on those most able to pay and specifically focused on certain key improvements – such as strengthening the judiciary, rural infrastructure, health, and education in areas of civil unrest or heavy coca cultivation.

Colombian society refused to deal with the terrible problems afflicting the country until it was almost too late and still must not be complacent, since substantial weaknesses remain in terms of the rule of law, governance, and poverty. Peru beat back the SL insurgency, but at a deep and lingering cost. Despite its notable economic successes, Peru still faces many of the institutional weaknesses of the past, but in a society lacking the political consensus and public support for the state that Colombia enjoys. Peruvian leaders should take note of the lessons from Colombia and redouble their own efforts to strengthen legitimate state presence in areas where

it is weak and begin to reverse the confidence gap that distances many citizens from their government.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DARIEN

The Darien region of Panama, including the Province of the Darien and portions of the Comarca of Kuna Yala, have long been affected by the activities of drug trafficking and the presence of both FARC insurgents and paramilitary units crossing the border from neighboring Colombia. By all indications, security concerns in the Darien caused by drugs and the FARC have sharpened in recent years, the former a reflection of an increase in drug trafficking out of the Colombian Department of the Chocó, which borders the Province of Darien, and the latter the result of successes by the Colombian government against FARC fronts in the Urabá region of Antioquia, causing FARC units to seek refuge in Panama.

The security threats to Panama from drug trafficking and Colombian insurgents – often a linked phenomenon -- are in many ways different from the drug/insurgent factor in Colombia itself and in Peru, although there are similar variables. Unlike the Colombian and Peruvian cases, the security threat in Panama is not directed against the state, there are no domestic elements seeking to overthrow the government – as the case of the FARC and *Sendero Luminoso*, security problems have not spilled over from rural to urban areas in Panama, and there is no ideological component at play in driving the threat. Nor is drug cultivation a major factor in Panama as it is in Colombia and Peru.

The key variable that is shared among all three cases is the threat of extra-state actors controlling remote rural areas or small towns where state presence is minimal. The security threat to Panama is derived from the larger effects of drug trafficking, threats to the safety and well-being of the largely

indigenous population of the Darien, concerns about accelerated environmental degradation in the rich Darien rainforest, and the potential that extra-state elements could eventually control a piece of national territory in Panama. These variables have regional and international implications, including for the United States.

Colombia's response to the insurgent/drug threat is also partially valid for Panama – mainly regarding the need for an effective state presence in the Darien region. Panama has no armed forces and it is therefore necessary to strengthen the tactical units of the *Servicio Nacional de Fronteras* and the National Police in Panama to provide a security presence capable of dealing with well-armed insurgents and drug traffickers. The Darien is Panama's largest province but with the smallest population – much of the province is national park, and sectors of the Kuna Comarca are similarly unpopulated, further complicating the task of establishing a state presence. Panamanian authorities should look to protect citizens and build their presence in small towns and capacity to patrol rural areas. Other manifestations of the state, such as courts, municipal government, teachers, and health centers need to be expanded. As in Colombia, the government of Panama must take measures to provide local inhabitants with economic support, promote small-scale but environmentally sustainable agriculture and pay special attention to the needs of the Embera and Wounaan indigenous communities. A major threat to the region is deforestation, another key security concern for Panama, especially if it results in the cultivation of coca leaf. In this regard, preventing squatters from other areas in the country from settling in the Darien should be a priority for Panamanian authorities.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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