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ACTION INL-01

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1. President Samper hosted a "Summit on Public Order" October 8 to bring together departmental governors, mayors, and the ministers of interior, labor and defense (acting) to discuss how to address common crime. Governors proposed changes in national legislation to crack down on juvenile offenders, to outlaw possession of even small amounts of drugs, and to reduce penalties for car theft and carrying unlicensed weapons (to allow those convicted to serve probation rather than jail time). Governors also appealed for additional funds for juvenile detention facilities.

2. Alvaro Uribe Velez, governor of Antioquia Department, used this forum to advocate the proliferation of the controversial civilian rural security cooperatives known collectively as "Convivir." Uribe argued that Antioquia's 56 security cooperatives, conceived to provide counter-guerrilla intelligence to local military and police authorities, have led to the capture of guerrilla leaders in the region. Uribe has also called for the arming of some of these groups, which the government originally insisted would consist of unarmed, civic-minded citizens. Some mayors in Antioquia, however, UNCLASSIFIED

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including mayor Gloria Cuartas of Apartado in Antioquia's Uraba region, have rejected the Convivir concept.

3. Comment: Most human rights observers believe the Convivir groups pose a serious danger of becoming little more than vigilante organizations. An embassy contact at the Defensoria del Pueblo (office of the government human rights ombudsman) confirmed regional offices of the Defensoria have begun to receive complaints against these groups for exceeding their mandate. One such complaint received at the national Defensoria cited a document distributed by the rural security cooperatives of Norte Del Cauca who declared their intention to "physically eliminate" 100 individuals on an attached list.

4. Comment Con'd: Samper presumably convoked this meeting to demonstrate that his administration wants to get tough on crime, as well as providing a forum for departmental leaders to air their concerns. However, as some of the governors told the press, the summit produced no concrete results. Garza

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TREASURY FOR OASIA/INL K. PARKINSON

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1. President Samper hosted a "Summit on Public Order" October 29 together Departmental Governors, Mayors, and the Ministers of Interior, Labor, and Defense (acting) to discuss how to address common concerns proposed changes in national legislation to crack down on juvenile offenders, to outlaw possession of even small amounts of drugs, and to reduce penalties for car theft and carrying unlicensed weapons (to allow those convicted to serve probation rather than jail time). Governors also appealed for additional funds for juvenile detention facilities.

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4. Comment Con'd: Samper presumably convoked this meeting to demonstrate that his administration wants to get tough on crime, as well as providing a forum for departmental leaders to air their concerns. However, as some of the governors told the press, the summit produced no concrete results. Garza