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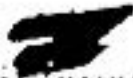


NO RELEV

GUATEMALA: Political Violence

Guatemala is experiencing a new wave of political killings and abductions. [redacted] the number of kidnappings jumped from 12 in August to 56 in September—the first full month of Chief of State Mejia's rule. In two cases this month Guatemalan employees of the US Agency for International Development have disappeared, and [redacted] believes the government is responsible. The Christian Democrats publicly accused rightwing leaders—in concert with local authorities—of the murder last week of three party officials. Two leaders of a new leftist party also have been abducted [redacted]

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Comment: Although leftist insurgent groups are responsible for some of the increased violence, the characteristics surrounding the incidents and the victims involved—as well as similarities to past patterns of violence in Guatemala—indicate that security forces and ultrarightist civilian elements are almost certainly heavily involved. Unless Mejia takes forceful steps to reverse the trend and to account for the missing AID employees, his efforts to enhance Guatemala's image abroad are likely to fall. Moreover, if violence against moderate and leftist political parties is left unchecked, some parties, particularly the new ones, are likely to be afraid to participate in the elections set for next year [redacted]

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NON-RELEVANT (NR)

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