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**Latin America**

**REGIONAL AND  
POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

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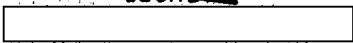
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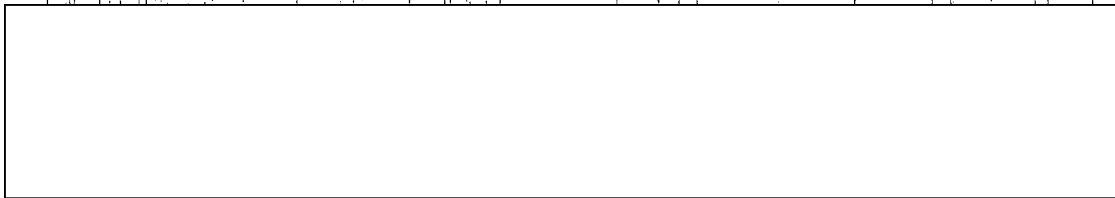
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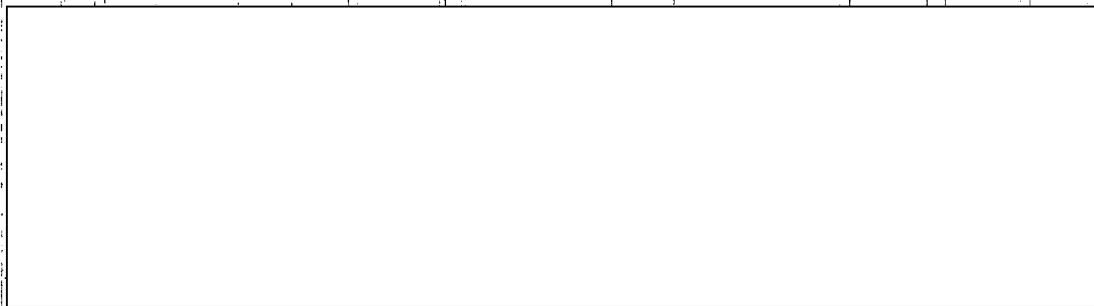


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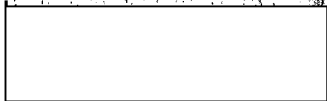


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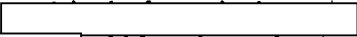


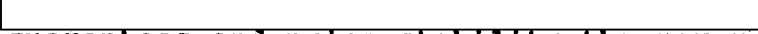
Bolivia: Obstacles to Coca Crop Substitution

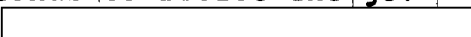
In an effort to curtail the production of coca and the flow of cocaine, the Bolivian government, with assistance from the US, is attempting to implement a large-scale crop substitution program. Still in the embryonic stage, the program faces serious, and perhaps insurmountable, obstacles.

Coca production has been an integral part of the cultural and economic life of Bolivia for hundreds of years; it is ideally suited to the harsh environment and rugged terrain of the country. The plant requires virtually no cultivation and can be harvested up to four times a year. Although middlemen receive most of the profits from coca production, the *campesinos* nonetheless are financially dependent on their earnings from the crop.

Another aspect of the problem is the suitability of alternative crops. Sugar, coffee, cotton, certain fruits, and other products have been tentatively identified, but none are as inexpensive and easy to grow as coca. Even assuming an ideal replacement is found, there is no guaranteed international market.

There is concern that the proposed substitutes are subject to wide price fluctuations. 

 without price guarantees and price stability the government's crop substitution efforts are likely to fail. The resultant alienation and loss of political support from the *campesinos*, in turn, could adversely affect governmental stability.

One group of *campesinos* has already voiced open opposition to the program and intends to resist the government's plan. Nevertheless,  the *campesino's* cooperation can be secured provided that machinery, irrigation, cooperatives, and other forms of

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assistance are supplied. [ ] also seeking an accord with the US which would assure a stable market with equitable prices for the replacement crops.

It is unlikely, however, that any price agreement can be reached. If the Bolivians are to continue the program, they will have to endure a certain amount of economic risk, social disruption, and political dissatisfaction. At best, crop substitution will be a long time coming. In the interim, coca production is likely to continue to increase.

If crop substitution efforts should fail, the prospects for coca regulation are slim. In many cases, the significant, large-scale coca fields are under the aegis of the same Bolivian "intocables" (untouchables) or mafia figures who control the country's cocaine smuggling networks. These individuals have substantial political and financial resources and are, in effect, beyond the law.

Moreover, neither the amount of coca under cultivation nor the exact location of the fields is presently known, and aerial surveillance methods have not yet been developed. Unlike Mexico and Turkey, helicopters cannot be used effectively in Bolivia for monitoring or eradication programs because of the high altitudes involved.

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