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Institution:	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
Title/Style of Cause:	Afro-Colombian Communities v. Colombia
Doc. Type:	Decision on Precautionary Measures
Dated:	2 January 2002
Citation:	Afro-Colombian Communities v. Colombia, Inter-Am. C.H.R., OEA/Ser.L/V/II.117, doc. 1 rev. 1, Ch. III, para. 21 (2002)
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21. On January 2, 2002 the Commission granted precautionary measures on behalf of afro-Colombian communities in 49 hamlets in the Naya river basin in Buenaventura. The available information indicates that since the end of November 2001 there have been approximately 300 paramilitary members in northern Cauca and the southern part of Valle del Cauca, in the municipalities of Timba, Suárez, and Buenos Aires, who have threatened the Naya and Yurumanguí river indigenous, afro-Colombian, and campesino communities. The petitioners indicated that since December and January 2001, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) had been present in the upper Naya up to Carmen and Yurumanguí threatening the inhabitants to make them leave the area. On December 27, 2001 the threats were repeated. In its request, the Commission asked the State, firstly, to take steps to provide for unarmed civil protection and effective perimeter control by law enforcement, to prevent armed incursions into the Naya and Yurumanguí basins by the mouth of the Pacific, in consultation with the Naya Community Council and the petitioners. Secondly, the State was asked to take preventive measures, including having a law enforcement presence at the mouths of the Yurumanguí and El Naya as a control measure to prevent illegal actors from entering the hamlets where the afro-Colombian communities reside; and to provide for the immediate and ongoing presence of entities, such as the Office of the Public Prosecutor of the Nation and the Office of the Ombudsman, headquartered in Puerto Merizalde, in coordination with the National Office of the Ombudsman in Bogotá, as dissuasive, preventive mechanisms. Thirdly, the State was asked to strengthen its early warning system by implementing effective communication systems. Finally, it was asked to launch an investigation into the acts of violence alleged in the request and to try and punish the perpetrators. In its reply, the State indicated that the Presidential Program for Human Rights and the Ministry of the Interior met with governors and mayors in the region and that law enforcement, the Third Brigade of the National Army, and certain naval units were engaged in intelligence and information-gathering efforts. The Office of the Ombudsman reported that it was implementing ongoing observation in the region, in coordination with the early warning system. The State also reported that the National Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General's Office was conducting an investigation, which was in the probable cause phase. The Commission has continued to receive complaints from the petitioners about threats and acts of intimidation and violence against the protected communities.