

Roadside bomb kills 8 police in Colombia

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BOGOTA, Colombia --

Nine police officers were killed in the deadliest rebel attack this year when a roadside bomb planted by leftist rebels destroyed their passing truck on Wednesday, a police spokesman said.

The heavily armed police unit was supporting a team eradicating coca bushes, the base ingredient of cocaine, near Landazuri, 100 miles north of Bogota, Sgt. Alberto Cantillo, a police spokesman in Bogota, told The Associated Press.

Police said the bomb was planted by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Latin America's oldest and most potent rebel insurgency, which helps finance itself through cocaine smuggling.

"Where there's coca, you'll find guerrillas," said Cantillo.

Six other officers were injured, Cantillo said. All were members of a mobile unit operating out of the northeastern city of Bucaramanga.

Right-wing paramilitary groups also profit from the drug trade in Colombia, the source of 90 percent of the cocaine consumed in the United States, which gives some \$600 million a year in aid to Colombia, largely to attack the problem.

Last year 26 military and police officers were killed while protecting crews manually uprooting coca bushes or applying the herbicide glyphosate from U.S.-supplied crop-duster planes.