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FM AMBASSAD LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5749
INFO AMBASSAD BOGOTA
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AMBASSAD PANAMA
AMBASSAD LONDON
USAFSO HOWARD AFB PM
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PM
DEAHQ WASHDC
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L
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TERREP

DIA FOR AT-5/OS-1D/DB-6D2/JSI-4B/DB-3C
DEA FOR OF, PS, OC, OI
PANAMA FOR ADS

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PHUM, PTER, PE
SUBJECT: ALLEGED MASSACRE AT POMATAMBO AND PARCCO

1. (C) SUMMARY: THE ARMED FORCES' CLAIM TO HAVE KILLED IN OCTOBER IN AYACUCHO 13 TERRORISTS, INCLUDING AN SL LEADER, HAS COME UNDER INCREASING SCRUTINY. THE LEFTIST PRESS SURFACED CLAIMS OF A MASSACRE, CONFLICTUAL

SUPPOSEDLY BASED ON EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS. FOUR RESPECTED JOURNALISTS VISITED THE AREA LAST WEEK, AND

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BECAME CONVINCED THAT THE ARMY HAD SUMMARILY EXECUTED 12 (NOT 13) CIVILIANS; THE ARMY FORCED THE REPORTERS TO LEAVE THE AREA THAT DAY. THE SENATE HAS PROMISED AN INVESTIGATION, BUT HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS ARE SKEPTICAL THAT A SERIOUS INQUIRY WILL OCCUR. THERE IS STILL MUCH THAT IS UNCLEAR ABOUT THE KILLINGS. MILITARY SUMMARY EXECUTIONS APPEARED TO HAVE DECLINED SINCE 1985, BUT WE CANNOT RULE ONE OUT IN THIS CASE. THUS FAR THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND THE MILITARY HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO ALLEGATIONS OF WRONGDOING. WE EXPECT THE SENATE INVESTIGATION TO BE COMPARED CLOSELY TO THE AMBITIOUS 1985 SENATE ACCOMARCA INQUIRY. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) IN OCTOBER THE ARMED FORCES REPORTED THAT 13 TERRORISTS, INCLUDING SL LEADER CLAUDIO "CAMARADA CASELLY" BELLIDO HAD DIED IN CONFRONTATIONS ON OCTOBER 22-23 IN POMATAMBO AND PARCCO ALTO IN AYACUCHO. THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OFAssertions IN THE LEFTIST PRESS THAT IN FACT THE ARMY HAD KILLED INNOCENT CIVILIANS. MORE RECENTLY, INHABITANTS OF THE VILLAGES REPORTEDLY CHARGED--VIA THE MEDIA--THAT A MASSACRE HAD OCCURRED. THERE WAS NO GOVERNMENT RESPONSE.

3. (U) ON NOVEMBER 20, FOUR REPORTERS FROM THE WEEKLY CARETAS (GORRITI AND MEDRANO), THE DAILY EXPRESO (NED) AND LONDON TIMES (STRINGER NICHOLAS ASHESHIOV) VISITED THE TWO TOWNS, LOCATED WITHIN A FAIRLY DANGEROUS PART OF THE AYACUCHO EMERGENCY ZONE. ACCORDING TO CARETAS STORY AND DCM'S CONVERSATION WITH ASHESHOV, THE REPORTERS
OF EIGHT OF THE TWELVE MISSING PERSONS WERE FOUND AT MUNGASPUNCO MOUNTAIN. "CAMARADA CASZELLY" WAS NOT AMONG THE DEAD. THE REPORTERS--ALL SEASONED VETERANS OF COVERING AYACUCHO AND SL--FOUND THE VILLAGERS' ACCOUNTS TO BE PERSUASIVE AND MUTUALLY CONSISTENT.

4. (U) AN UNEXPECTED TWIST MARKED THE END OF THE REPORTERS' TRIP. UPON THEIR RETURN TO THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF VILCASHUAMAN, THEY WERE SUMMONED TO THE MILITARY COMMAND, AND ORDERED TO REMAIN THERE UNTIL THAT AFTERNOON, WHEN THREE OF THEM WERE ORDERED TO RETURN TO AYACUCHO BY MILITARY HELICOPTER, AND ONE TO DRIVE BACK IN HIS CAR. THE JUSTIFICATION WAS CONCERN ABOUT THE REPORTERS'
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SAFETY (ALTHOUGH DRIVING AT NIGHT THERE IS VERY
DANGEROUS), AND THE MILITARY'S POWER IN THE EMERGENCY
ZONE TO SUSPEND FREEDOM OF TRANSIT. CARETAS AND OTHER
MEDIA SUBSEQUENTLY DENOUNCED THE MANEUVER AS AN ATTEMPT

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TO RESTRICT PRESS FREEDOM IN THE EMERGENCY ZONE.

5. (U) MEANWHILE, THE SENATE AGREED LAST WEEK TO
EMPOWER A COMMISSION (PROBABLY HUMAN RIGHTS) TO
INVESTIGATE THE KILLINGS. NEITHER THE MILITARY NOR
THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH HAS ISSUED A RESPONSE TO THE
EVENTS.

6. (C) COMMENT: IT IS STILL VERY UNCLEAR WHAT
OCCURRED IN POMATAMBO AND PARCCO. BOTH ARE IN
AN AREA WHERE SL HAS LONG HAD FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, AND
THE SUPPORT OR ACQUIESCENCE OF SOME OF THE POPULACE.
WE CANNOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME OR ALL
OF THE DEAD WERE SL MEMBERS OR SYMPATHIZERS. THE
MANNER OF DEATH IS ALSO UNCLEAR: THE REPORTERS
DID NOT SEE THE BODIES, OR AREAS WHERE THEY WERE
KILLED, AND OF COURSE COULD NOT IDENTIFY THE
VICTIMS. IF THE ARMY HAS ANY EVIDENCE TO-
SUPPORT ITS VERSION THAT THE DEATHS OCCURRED IN
COMBAT, IT HAS YET TO PRESENT IT. THERE HAVE BEEN
NUMEROUS ALLEGATIONS, AND A NUMBER OF PROVEN CASES,
OF SUMMARY EXECUTIONS OF PEASANTS BY THE SECURITY
FORCES. ALTHOUGH THIS PRACTICE APPEARED TO HAVE
DECLINED (BUT NOT ENDED) SINCE GARCIA SHOOK UP THE
MILITARY IN SEPTEMBER 1985 (ACCOMARCA MASSACRE),
WE CANNOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT EXCUSES
HAVE OCCURRED AGAIN. AN IMPORTANT POINT TO WATCH
WILL BE THE CONDUCT OF THE SENATE INVESTIGATION, PLUS
ANY EXECUTIVE BRANCH OR ATTORNEY GENERAL (FISCAL)
INVESTIGATION. WE EXPECT THE SENATE'S ACTION TO BE
COMPIRED CLOSELY TO THE AMBITIOUS 1985 SENATE ACCOMARCA
INVESTIGATION. POINTING TO THE ABSENCE OF THE PROMISED CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION OF THE JUNE
PRISON KILLINGS, LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS ARE SKEPTICAL THAT A SERIOUS INQUIRY WILL ENSUE. WATSON