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TELEGRAM

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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7315  
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
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PANAMA FOR ADS

DIA FOR IR BRANCH

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: PTER, SHUM, PINS, PE  
SUBJ: (U) PERUVIAN TERRORISTS LOSE THE INITIATIVE

1. (C) BEGIN SUMMARY: SENDERO LUMINOSO TERRORISTS NOW FACE THE SAME TYPE PRESSURES THAT UP TO A FEW MONTHS AGO THEY EXERTED IN THE AYACUCHO EMERGENCY ZONE AS THE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT RE-ESTABLISHES ITS PRESENCE IN RURAL AREAS. THE MILITARY WAS RELUCTANT TO PROVIDE THE LOGISTICS THE POLICE NEEDED UNDER AUTHORITY FOR MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER WAS DELEGATED TO THE ARMED FORCES. SINCE PRESIDENT BELAUNDE DID SO AT YEAR END, THE MILITARY INTRODUCED INCREASING NUMBERS OF THEIR OWN PERSONNEL, WHERE THEY ARE PERFORMING  
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BASICALLY DEFENSIVE FUNCTIONS, WHILE THE POLICE-BENEFITTING

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FROM MILITARY TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND WEAPONRY-- ARE PROVIDING MORE AGGRESSIVE PATROLLING. PRESS REPORTS FROM THE AREA ARE EVEN LESS RELIABLE THAN PREVIOUSLY, BUT THE STEPPED UP GOVERNMENT PACE IS OBVIOUS. POLICE MORALE HAS COMPLETELY TURNED AROUND. THE SPECIAL COMMISSION NAMED BY BELAUNDE TO INVESTIGATE THE FULL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATHS OF EIGHT NEWSMEN BY ISOLATED VILLAGERS IS TURNING UP UNEXPECTEDLY FAVORABLE INFORMATION. ONE OF THE COMMISSION'S TOP EXPERTS TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT SL MADE A NUMBER OF STUPID ERRORS AND FOUND THEMSELVES CAUGHT UP IN TIMELESS FEUDS, ENDING BY BEING HATED BY THE VERY VILLAGERS WHOSE SUPPORT THEY REQUIRED. ADDITIONALLY, POLICE AND SECURITY FORCE BEHAVIOR HAS BEEN BETTER THAN THOUGHT AND, WITH IMPROVED MORALE, POPULAR SUPPORT IS INCREASING. THE COMMISSION FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF OUTSIDE SUPPORT OF WEAPONRY. THE CAMPAIGN TO ELIMINATE SENDERO LUMINOSO IS OFF TO A GOOD--IF BELATED--START. END SUMMARY.

2. (LOU) RETURN OF GOVERNMENT PRESENCE. FOR MUCH OF 1982, GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES IN THE AYACUCHO AREA WITHDREW FROM SMALL, EXPOSED OUTPOSTS TO STATIC, DEFENSIVE POSITIONS IN LARGER COMMUNITIES. SENDERO LUMINOSO (SL) UNITS EXPANDED INTO EVACUATED AREAS AND MAINTAINED PRESSURE ON DEMORALIZED POLICE AND CIVIL AUTHORITIES THROUGH CAMPAIGN OF ASSASSINATIONS AND AMBUSHES AND ATTACKS ON ISOLATED OUTPOSTS.

3. (C) THIS PICTURE DRAMATICALLY CHANGED AFTER PRESIDENT BELAUNDE PUT THE MILITARY IN CHARGE OF MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER IN THE AYACUCHO EMERGENCY ZONE AT YEAR-END. IN IMITATION OF THE PATTERN ESTABLISHED IN  
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1982. BUT THIS TIME IN REVERSE, THE RESTORATION OF THE GOVERNMENT PRESENCE IN SMALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES PUT PRESSURE ON SENDERO AND OCCASIONED THE WITHDRAWAL OF SL ACTIVISTS FROM COMMUNITIES WHERE PREVIOUSLY THEY HAD FREE REIN. ARMED FORCES UNITS FREED THE GUARDIA CIVIL (POLICE) FROM GUARD DUTIES AND ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUPPLY AND BACKUP, THEREBY ENABLING THE POLICE TO TAKE A MORE AGGRESSIVE STANCE AND INITIATE PATROLS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. THESE TWO FACTORS BROUGHT A THIRD MAJOR CONSEQUENCE: THE COERCED COOPERATION SL IMPOSED UPON

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MUCH OF THE RURAL POPULATION IS BREAKING DOWN IN COMMUNITIES WHERE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY RETURNED. IN SOME CASES, A RESTORED GOVERNMENT PRESENCE IS ENCOURAGING VILLAGERS TO INFORM ON SL SYMPATHIZER, TO CAPTURE AND TURN IN SL ACTIVISTS, AND, AT TIMES, TO TAKE THE OFFENSIVE AND KILL SENDERISTAS BEFORE SECURITY FORCES CAN ARRIVE.

4. (LOU) PUBLIC CONSEQUENCES. THE QUICKENED PACE OF EVENTS IN AYACUCHO PRODUCED BANNER HEADLINES IN THE PRESS. BUT THE SENSATIONAL COVERAGE IS TAKING ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN, WITH SUCCESSIVE RUMORS "CONFIRMING" EARLIER ACCOUNTS, ONLY TO BE FOLLOWED BY LATER DENIALS. THE MOST PROMINENT SUCH RUMORS OF THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS CENTER ON THE REPORTED DEATH OF SL LEADER AND FOUNDER ABIMAEZ GUZMAN AND THAT OF CARLOTA TELLO CUTTI (COMRADE CARLA), A LESSER SL LEADER WHO WAS AMONG THOSE FREED DURING THE MARCH 1982 AYACUCHO JAIL BREAK. OFFICIAL SOURCES DENY BOTH THESE REPORTS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT, HOWEVER, DENIED ANY OF THE CONFLICTING AND EXAGGERATED ACCOUNTS OF SENDERO DEAD.

5. (S) THE PERUVIAN MILITARY'S OWN TIGHTLY HELD ESTIMATES OF TERRORIST CASUALTIES ARE CONSIDERABLY SMALLER THAN ANYTHING PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS.

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6. (S) ROLE OF THE MILITARY. THE EXAGGERATION AND RUMOR THAT CHARACTERIZE PRESS COVERAGE OF AYACUCHO DEVELOPMENTS SPILL OVER INTO THE MEDIA'S TREATMENT OF ARMED FORCES INVOLVEMENT IN THE ANTI-TERRORIST CAMPAIGN. THE PRESS ACCURATELY HIGHLIGHTS THE FOREFRONT ROLE PLAYED BY THE GUARDIA CIVIL'S "SINCHIS" (THE ANTI-TERRORIST POLICE UNIT). THE MEDIA ALSO OCCASIONALLY REFER LOOSELY TO "COMBINED"

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PANAMA FOR ADS

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MILITARY-POLICE UNDERTAKINGS WHICH WE CANNOT CONFIRM ARE TAKING PLACE. PRESIDENT BELAUNDE HAS SAID THAT THE MILITARY WOULD BE PROVIDING LOGISTICS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND TRANSPORT, AS WELL AS GUARDING AND PATROLLING TARGETED INSTALLATIONS AND PROVIDING CIVIC ACTION AND ENGINEERING SUPPORT. POLICE WERE TO SPEARHEAD ANTI-TERRORIST OPERATIONS. WE DO NOT EXCLUDE SPORADIC MILITARY INVOLVEMENT, ESPECIALLY WHERE SL UNITS HAVE ATTACKED SITES JOINTLY MANNED BY POLICE AND SOLDIERS. BUT NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE COUNTRY TEAM LEADS TO A CONCLUSION THAT PERUVIAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES SEEK TO CIRCUMVENT THE PRESIDENT'S DIRECTIVE.

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7. (LOU) VIGILANTISM. THE OPPOSITION CHARGED, IN THE WAKE OF THE DEATH OF EIGHT PERUVIAN JOURNALISTS

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(LIMA 1131), THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS ENCOURAGING INDIGENOUS AYACUCHO COMMUNITIES TO COUNTER "REVOLUTIONARY JUSTICE" WITH A SPIRIT OF FRONTIER JUSTICE OF THEIR OWN. GOP OFFICIALS DISPLAY SENSITIVITY ON THIS POINT. PRESIDENT BELAUNDE TRIED TO DOWNPLAY THE ISSUE AT HIS FEBRUARY 20 PRESS CONFERENCE BY REFERRING TO CERTAIN INCIDENTS REPORTED IN THE PRESS AS THE PRODUCT OF A "SPIRIT OF DISCORD" AND RIVALRY AMONG HIGHLANDS COMMUNITIES, RATHER THAN AS THE RESULT OF ANTI-SL VIGILANTISM.

8.

PARTIALLY SUSTAINED BELAUNDE'S VIEW IN A FEBRUARY 19 CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR AND PAO. SAID THE RURAL POPULATION OF AYACUCHO IS NOT HOMOGENOUS. COMMUNITIES IN THE HIGHLANDS TRADITIONALLY FELT THEMSELVES SEPARATE FROM THOSE IN THE VALLEYS, AND THIS SENSE OF DIFFERENCE NURTURED GRIEVANCES. SENDERO'S ENTRY ONTO THE SCENE DISTORTED AND AGRAYATED THESE RIVALRIES, SINCE SENDERO TENDED TO FIND ITS SUPPORT (OR TO COERCE COMPLIANCE) FROM THE VALLEY COMMUNITIES. THE RETURN OF GOVERNMENT FORCES TILTED THE BALANCE AWAY, THIS TIME FAVORING THE HIGHLAND VILLAGERS, WHO ARE TEMPTED TO SETTLE SCORES.

9. (C)

IN THE AYACUCHO AREA DURING THE PAST WEEKS. IN SOME WAYS, THE REPORT WILL  
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BE MORE FAVORABLE THAN THE GOP HAD REASON TO EXPECT. -ALL EXPERTS ON THE ADEAN HIGHLANDS--WERE SURPRISED TO FIND THAT POLICE BEHAVIOR WAS REMARKABLY GOOD AND PUBLIC ANTIPATHY MUCH LESS THAN ANTICIPATED. WHILE THEY IDENTIFIED SOME EXAMPLES OF EXCESSES, ON BALANCE THE SECURITY FORCES ACTED WITH RESTRAINT. THE EXPERTS ALSO SATISFIED THEMSELVES THAT SL WAS AN INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT, NOT SUPPORTED BY FOREIGNERS; WEAPONS CAPTURED FROM THE TERRORISTS HAD BEEN TRACED TO SOURCES IN THE SAME COUNTY (THIS, OF COURSE, DOES NOT SQUARE WITH PRESIDENT BELAUNDE'S)

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FREQUENT--BUT UNDOCUMENTED--REFERENCES TO FOREIGN SUPPORT FOR SL

10. (C) COMMENT: PRESIDENT BELAUNDE'S DECISION TO EXPAND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ARMED FORCES IN THE TERRORIST EMERGENCY ZONES IS PRODUCING INITIAL SUCCESS. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE SL ASSUMED THE "ARMED STRUGGLE", THE TERRORISTS SUFFERED A CLEAR PSYCHOLOGICAL SETBACK IN THEIR HEARTLAND. THE SECURITY FORCES ARE NOT ALWAYS PROVIDING EXEMPLARY MODELS OF BEHAVIOR, BUT, ON BALANCE, WE BELIEVE THEY ARE DEMONSTRATING RESTRAINT AND RESPECT FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY.

11. (S) THE POLICE NOW HAVE SOME OF THE EQUIPMENT AND OTHER SUPPORT THEY NEED. THEIR MORALE IS PERKED; A COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION FROM THEIR DESPAIR JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO. THE PRESENCE IN FORCE OF DISCIPLINED MILITARY UNITS IMPROVES THE POLICE SENSE OF PROFESSIONALISM. SEVERAL EMBASSY SOURCES CONCUR IN THE VIEW THAT THESE INITIAL SUCCESSES ARE PRODUCING A SELF-REENFORCING EFFECT ON MILITARY-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS. ONE SENIOR ARMY GENERAL, NOT PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS AN ADMIRER OF THE PRESIDENT, HAS SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT TOOK THE RIGHT TACK IN GIVING THE TROOPS A LIMITED ROLE, LEAVING THE POLICE ON THE ANTI-SL FRONT LINE AND THE ARMED FORCES MORE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED

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IN THE PUBLIC EYE WITH CIVIC ACTION PROJECTS

12. (C) BUT IT IS MUCH TOO EARLY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO DECLARE VICTORY. THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE ELUSIVE ABIHAEL GUZMAN AND OTHER TOP SL LEADERS ARE UNKNOWN. SL'S DEMONSTRATED DURABILITY MUST BE ATTRIBUTED AS MUCH TO THE FANATICISM AND DEDICATION OF THESE LEADERS AS TO THE FERTILE GROUND OF POVERTY AND NEGLECT AFFLICTING THE EMERGENCY ZONE. THE SENDERO'S RETREAT CAN BE BLAMED, AT THIS POINT, MORE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S EARLIER ABDICATION OF AUTHORITY (AND SL'S HASTY OVEREXTENSION) THAN ON ANY COMBINATION OF SOCIAL-ECONOMIC REFORM AND BRILLIANT TACTICAL STRATEGY. SENDERO IS ALSO SUFFERING THE CONSEQUENCES OF ITS ERRORS. ZEALOUS DEDICATION TO ARMED STRUGGLE REPLACED A MORE CAUTIOUS, LONG-TERM STRATEGY OF MAKING FRIENDS AND BUILDING ALLIANCES AMONG TRADITIONALLY OPPRESSED VILLAGERS. IN A FEW MONTHS,

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**SENDERO USED UP MUCH OF THE POLITICAL CAPITAL IN THE  
COUNTRYSIDE THAT IT SPENT YEARS ACCUMULATING.  
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