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INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 INR-07 SS-00 CIAE-00 NSCE-00 NSAE
PM-10 PA-01 INM-07 INRE-00 SP-02 PRS-01 DS-01
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FM AMBASSAD LIMA
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INFO AMBASSAD BOGOTA
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USAF 50 HOWARD AFB PM
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DIA FOR OA-5/05-4D/DB-6G2/JSI-48/DB-3C1

USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD JOHN YOULE

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PTER, PGOV, PE
SUBJECT: FIRST ARREST OF RODRIGO FRANCO COMMAND SUSPECTS

REF: LIMA 7391

1. (C) SUMMARY: WITH LITTLE OVER TWO MONTHS REMAINING UNTIL ITS ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY, THE SELF-STYLED "COMANDO RODRIGO FRANCO" (CRF) HAS SUFFERED ITS FIRST ARRESTS. THE CAPTURE OF THE ALLEGED CRF ADHERENTS COMES JUST DAYS AFTER A GROUP REPRESENTING VARIOUS POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SECTORS DELIVERED A PETITION TO THE CONFIDENTIAL CONFIDENTIAL

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CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES PRESIDENT REQUESTING AN

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INQUIRY INTO THE COMMAND'S ACTIVITIES. DESPITE EARLIER DENIALS, MINISTER OF INTERIOR MANTILLA AND PRESIDENT GARCIA HAVE CONCEDED THAT THE CRF EXISTS, AND MAY SEE SOME POLITICAL ADVANTAGES IN PRESSING AHEAD WITH AN INVESTIGATION. END SUMMARY.


3. (C) THE DETAINMENT OF THE THREE SUSPECTS FOLLOWS CLOSELY ON THE HEELS OF THE GARCIA ADMINISTRATION'S RECENT ADMISSION OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE CRF. LAST WEEK MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR AGUSTIN MANTILLA BECAME THE FIRST HIGH LEVEL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY TO CONCEDE THAT THE CRF EXISTS. NONETHELESS, MANTILLA CATEGORICALLY CONFIDENTIAL

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DENIED THE OPERATION OF STATE-SPONSORED TERRORISM IN PERU. [THE INTERIOR MINISTER IS ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL FIGURES IN THE NEW CABINET, AND RUMORS ALLEGE HE PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN DIRECTING THE CRF.]

4. (C) PUBLIC CALLS FOR AN INQUIRY INTO THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CRF HAVE BEEN INCREASING. ON MAY 18, UNITED LEFT DEPUTY MANUEL PIQUERAS PRESENTED CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES PRESIDENT HECTOR
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VARGAS HAYA WITH A PETITION REQUESTING THE
FORMATION OF AN INVESTIGATORY COMMISSION. IN
DELIVERING THE PETITION, PIQUERAS WAS ACCOMPANIED
BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, ORGAN-
IZED LABOR, AND THE EQUIVALENT OF THE AMERICAN
BAR ASSOCIATION IN LIMA. THE QUESTION OF WHETHER
A COMMISSION WILL BE FORMED HAS BEEN SUBSEQUENTLY
HOTLY DEBATED IN THE LOWER HOUSE. THE DISCUSSIONS
WERE PUT ON HOLD WHEN CHAMBER PRESIDENT VARGAS
HAYA CLOSED THE DAY'S SESSION AT AN EARLY HOUR.
THE DEBATE REMAINS ON HOLD. (IF THE MATTER IS
NOT TAKEN UP AGAIN BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE GOES
INTO RECESS AT THE END OF MAY, IT WILL BE DELAYED
AT LEAST UNTIL THE NEXT CONGRESS IS CONVENED ON
JULY 28.)

5. (C) FOR HIS PART, PRESIDENT GARCIA PUBLICLY
ANNOUNCED HIS SUPPORT FOR A THOROUGH PROBE TO
DETERMINE THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ESCALATING
SPIRAL OF VIOLENCE AND THREATS. IN GARCIA'S
WORDS, THE INTIMIDATION OF POLITICIANS AND
JOURNALISTS -- BY MEANS OF DEATH THREATS COMING

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FROM EXTREMISTS AFFILIATED WITH GROUPS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM -- HAS BECOME A KIND OF "NATIONAL SPORT". SEEKING TO DISCOUNT THE CHARGES OF POSSIBLE LINKS BETWEEN APRA AND THE CRF, GARCIA WENT ON TO OPINE THAT RIGHTISTS ELEMENTS ARE BEHIND THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMAND, AND THAT HIS "GOVERNMENT ISN'T RIGHTIST". GARCIA CITED AS AN EXAMPLE THE ASSASSINATION ON MAY 17 OF SOVIET-EDUCATED UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR ABELARDO LUDENA LUQUE (REF A). AFTER REFERING TO LUDENA'S APPARENT LEFTIST CONFIDENTIAL CONFIDENTIAL

LEANINGS, THE PRESIDENT ALLUDED TO THE LIKELY INVOLVEMENT OF THE RIGHT BECAUSE, HE EMPHASIZED,
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HIS ADMINISTRATION "IS NOT ANTICOMMUNIST."

6. (C) COMMENT: IF INDEED THE THREE ARRESTEES ARE MEMBERS OF THE CRF, THE COMMAND’S PRESENCE IN LORETO DEPARTMENT HAS PROBABLY BEEN PROMPTED BY THE RECENT RASH OF SENDERO LUMINOSEO (SL) ACTIVITY THERE. THE CRF IS KNOWN TO SOW ITS OWN BRAND OF TERROR, FOLLOWING BEHIND THE SL IN AN ATTEMPT TO CONVINCE INHABITANTS THAT THEY SHOULD BE MORE FEARFUL OF THE CRF THAN OF THE SL.

7. (C) EVEN IF A FORMAL INQUIRY COMMISSION INTO THE OPERATION OF THE CRF IS CONSTITUTED, IT IS LIKELY TO RUN INTO INNUMERABLE STUMBLINGBLOCKS, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE INERTIA THAT FREQUENTLY BESEETS GOVERNMENT COMMITTEES. STILL, WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT THE BROAD BASED SUPPORT FOR SUCH AN INVESTIGATION SHOWS SOME INSTITUTIONAL CONCERN FOR ATTACKING PERU’S TERRORISM PROBLEMS. THE PUBLIC OUTRAGE OVER THE GROWING VIOLENCE THAT RECENTLY CLAIMED THE LIVES OF TWO PARLIAMENTARIANS AND OF ABELARDO LUDENA PROBABLY WAS A FACTOR IN GARCIA’S AND MANTILLA’S DECISIONS TO TAKE A PUBLIC STAND ON THE ISSUE. GIVEN THE ALLEGATIONS OF APRA LINKS TO THE COMMAND, GARCIA AND MANTILLA MAY WELL PRESS AHEAD WITH A PROBE TO PRECLUDE A WITCHHUNT BY OTHERS. THEY MAY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE APPEARANCE OF A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION -- AS WELL AS PROGRESS ON MAKING ARRESTS -- WILL HEAD OFF RECRIMINATIONS AFTER THE GARCIA ADMINISTRATION LEAVES OFFICE IN JULY 1990.
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