SUBJ: RONDAS AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN PERU (U)

1. (C) SUMMARY:
2. (U) INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORY OF COUNTERINSURGENCY (COIN).
CONFLICT SHOWS THAT LOCAL FORCES ACTING ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE AND
WITH POLITICAL SUPPORT CAN BECOME A MAJOR PART OF A SUCCESSFUL
COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGY. PERU'S "RONDAS CAMPESTINOS" ARE ONE OF
THE INSTITUTIONS PRESIDENT FUJIMORI NOW RELIES ON TO FIGHT THE
INTERNAL WAR WITH THE MAOIST SHINING PATH INSURGENCY. IN THE 10
YEARS SINCE SENDERO'S FANATIC LEADER ABINAEL GUZMAN DECLARED WAR
AGAINST THE PERUVIAN STATE, THE RONDAS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY
EFFECTIVE IN LIMITING THE MOBILITY OF SENDERO COLUMNS AND AREAS UNDER
ITS CONTROL. WHILE MOST RONDAS WERE STARTED ON THEIR OWN, THE
GOVERNMENT'S NEW POLICY IS A SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO USE THE RONDAS AND
CONVEY ITS MESSAGE TO THE MASS OF CAMPESTINOS THAT LIVE IN THE
BATTLEGROUND THAT IS PERU. THE CONTINUED EXPANSION AND GROWTH OF THE
RONDAS HAS BECOME ONE OF THE FEW RAYS OF HOPE IN PERU'S WORSENING
ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISIS. THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMINATION OF
THE RONDAS, THEIR ORIGINS, STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND EFFECTIVENESS IN
PERU'S BATTLE AGAINST SENDERO LUMINOSO.

3. (U) HISTORY:
A. (U) THERE ARE THREE SEPARATE RONDAS MOVEMENTS IN PERU: NORTHERN,
SOUTHERN AND URBAN. PERU'S FIRST RONDA FORMED IN 1976 IN THE TOWN OF
CUYUMALCA, CAJAMARCA DEPARTMENT, NORTH OF LIMA. MANY CAMPESTINOS OF
CAJAMARCA ARE DAIRY FARMERS WHO FIGHTED AGAINST A RISING TIDE OF
CATTLE RUSTLING SPANNED BY A SLUMP IN THE ECONOMY. OVER THE NEXT TEN
YEARS, THE RONDA MOVEMENT EXPANDED INTO PIURA, AMAZONAS AND LA
LIBERTAD DEPARTMENTS. AS THE MOVEMENT EXPANDED, THE RONDAS GREW IN
RESPONSIBILITY AND ORGANIZATION. RONDAS BEGAN TO SUPPORT COUNCILS,
LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES AND FORUMS FOR RESOLVING MANY COMMON DISPUTES
WITHIN EACH COMMUNITY. DOMESTIC, CRIMINAL AND WATER DISPUTES WERE
ALL RESOLVED BY THE NORTHERN RONDAS IN WHAT BECAME AN ALTERNATIVE
JUSTICE SYSTEM. RONDEROS ALSO BEGAN TO GATHER IN MEETINGS AT THE
PROVINCIAL (COUNTRY) AND DEPARTMENTAL (STATE) LEVELS. NATIONAL
POLITICAL PARTIES TRIED TO ASSIST AND DRAW STRENGTH FROM THE
MOVEMENT. PERU'S LEGAL MAOIST PARTY "RED HOMELAND," ITS MAIN LEFTIST
PARTY P.U.M., AND EVEN THE RULING CENTER LEFT APRA PARTY ALL TRIED TO
GAIN STRENGTH FROM THE RONDA MOVEMENT.
B. (U) AS RONDAS EXPANDED, THEY CHALLENGED THE ESTABLISHED POLICE
AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS THAT HAD FAILED TO PROVIDE THE BASIC SERVICES
THE RONDAS NOW PERFORMED. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S WERE INITIALLY
HOSTILE OR AT LEAST COOL TO THE GROWING AUTHORITY OF THE RONDAS.
FINALLY, THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT ALAN GARCIA PROMULGATED
LEGISLATION TO GIVE RONDAS AND ATTEMPTED, THROUGH APRA PARTY
CHANNELS, TO FORM ITS OWN CLIENT RONDAS, CALLED "PACIFIC RONDAS."
MOST ORIGINAL OR "INDEPENDENT" RONDAS WERE VERY LIGHTLY ARMED WITH
STICKS OR THE RONDA MOVEMENTS SYMBOL — A BULL WHIP. APRA'S NEW
PACIFIC RONDAS WERE MEANT TO BE UNARMED, SIMPLY HELPING POLICE CATCH
THIEVES AND RUSTLERS. ON THE GROUND, THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
"INDEPENDENT" AND "PACIFIC" RONDAS QUICKLY EVAPORATED AS THE RONDAS
FILLED THE VACUUM LEFT BY THE POLICE AND COURT SYSTEM.

4. (U) THE RONDAS VS. SENDERO — THE BEGINNING:
A. (U) "THROUGHOUT THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE RONDAS, PERU'S TWO
INSURGENCIES, THE MRTA AND SENDERO LUMINOSO, REMAINED COMFORTABLY
DISTANT TO THE EAST IN THE HUALLAGA VALLEY OR SOUTH IN SENDERO’S BIRTHPLACE OF AYACUCHO.


C. (U) BETWEEN 1983-85 THE HARSH ARMY CAMPAIGN TAUGHT THE PEOPLE OF THE AREA THE LARGE PRICE TO BE PAID FOR THEIR INITIAL SYMPATHY TO SENDERO. SENDERO ALSO ALIENATED CAMPESINOS WITH ITS INCREASINGLY BRUTAL AND BLOODTHIRSTY APPROACH, FIRST TO COMMUNITY LEADERS BUT THEN EXTENDING TO ANYONE WHO THEY PERCEIVED DISAGREED WITH THE TEACHINGS OF “PRESIDENTE GONZALO.”

D. (U) THE ARMY INITIALLY SQUANDERED THIS DISAFFECTION FROM SENDERO DUE TO THE APPROACH OF THE FIRST AYACUCHO EMERGENCY ZONE (EZ) COMMANDER, CISNEROS MORALES (AKA “EL GAUCHO”). MORALES, WHO LATER SERVED AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE, ONCE SAID THAT IF THE COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN KILLED 100 INNOCENT PERSONS AND ONLY ONE SENDERO SUPPORTER, IT WOULD BE WORTH IT. MORALES WAS EVENTUALLY REPLACED BY A NEW BREED OF OFFICERS INSPIRED BY THE POPULAR OUTLOOK OF GENERAL VALASCO WHO RULED PERU FROM 1968-75. UNLIKE OTHER LATIN MILITARIES WITH STRONG TIES TO THE RIGHT, PERU’S MILITARY HAS ALWAYS HAD A STRONG POPULIST TENDENCY. THESE OFFICERS WANTED TO DEVELOP GUATEMALA-STYLE CIVIL PATROLS THAT WOULD IMPROVE COOPERATION AND COORDINATION WITH LOCAL PEOPLE AGAINST SENDERO.

5. (U) THE GOVERNMENT REACHES OUT TO RONDAS;

A. (U) THE FIRST SIGN OF THIS NEW POLICY CAME IN THE MONTARO VALLEY IN 1986-87. LIKE THE CAMPESINOS OF CAJAMARCA, THE PEOPLE OF MONTARO DO NOT LIVE IN ABJECT POVERTY. MANY HAVE SOMETHING TO LOSE IN A REVOLUTION, INCLUDING CARS, STEREOS AND OTHER GOODS NOT NORMALLY EXPECTED AMONG ANDEAN FARMERS. WHILE THERE WAS INITIAL SUPPORT IN MONTARO FOR SENDERO (FILLING THE GOVERNMENTAL VACUUM THAT EXISTS MOST PLACES IN RURAL PERU), THE ARMY’S INITIAL FORAYS AND THE HARSHNESS OF SENDERO TACTICS ALIENATED MOST CAMPESINOS FROM SENDERO. THE ARMY’S CAMPAIGNS AGAINST SENDERO WENT BADLY, LEAVING ITS LEADERSHIP OPEN TO NEW IDEAS IN COUNTERINSURGENCY. SENDERO SUPPORT PEAKED IN 1989 AS THE CIVIL PATROL IDEA TOOK HOLD. RONDAS HELPED TO PUSH SENDERO OUT OF THE POPULOUS VALLEY FLOORS INTO THE HIGHLAND PUNA WHERE FEW PEOPLE AND RESOURCES WERE AVAILABLE TO SUSTAIN THE INSURGENCY. WITH VERY TENTATIVE SUPPORT, THE RONDA MOVEMENT GREW THROUGHOUT JUNIN, AYACUCHO AND APURIMAC DEPARTMENTS. ITS NET EFFECT WAS TO LIMIT SENDERO’S MOBILITY AND TO RESTRICT ITS ABILITY TO ATTACK ALL BUT REMOTE AND LIGHTLY DEFENDED VILLAGES. WE BELIEVE THE RONDAS COULD BE A KEY ELEMENT–AN INTERDICTION THE STRATEGIC POPULAR SUPPORT BASE AND
CONVENTIONAL ORGANIZATION OF SENDERO, THEREBY PREVENTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANEUVER WARFARE THAT MARKS THE CLOSE OF A SUCCESSFUL INSURGENT CAMPAIGN.

B. There are reports of accusations that commanders only ordered ronados located around army bases for protection. Limited training is given primarily on the Winchester shotguns. The army has yet to arm ronados with automatic weapons because it wants ronados to be strictly defensive. Current doctrine calls for 15 shotguns given to every 15-man ronda. Weapons are centrally stored and only used when on patrol.

C. (U) RONDA WEAKNESSES:
A. (U) TO MAXIMIZE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS AS PART OF PERU'S COUNTERINSURGENT CAMPAIGN, RONADOS MUST NOT ONLY PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FORCES TO COMBAT SENDERO BUT ALSO ESTABLISH A WELL-ADMINISTRED MOVEMENT AND IDEOLOGY TO COMPETE WITH THE POLITICAL STRENGTH OF SENDERO. WHILE THE RONADOS DO HAVE NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND BEAT REGULARLY, THEY HAVE NO UNITING IDEOLOGY OR DOMINANT PERSONALITY TO BRING A SHARPER FOCUS TO THE STRUGGLE. THE RONDA MOVEMENT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE A COUNTER TO THE SENDERO, BUT THAT IS NOT YET REALIZED.

C. (U) TO FORM AN EFFECTIVE ALLIANCE WITH THE RONADO, THE GOVERNMENT MUST TREAT RONADOS AS EQUAL PARTNERS IN THE STRUGGLE. THERE ARE REPORTS FROM MACHU IN NORTHERN YANACUCHO OF RONADOS USED TO BUILD WALLS AROUND MILITARY BASES WITHOUT COMPENSATION — AS IF THEY WERE SIMPLE DRAGGERS UNDER MILITARY COMMAND. ANOTHER COMMANDER ORDERED HIS LOCAL RONDA TO GUARD TELEPHONE AND POWER LINES WHEN SENDERO STOLE THESE FACILITIES. THE INFURIATED LOCAL COMMANDER
SUMMONED THE RONDA LEADERSHIP AND WHIPPED THEM.

D. (U) SOME PROMINENT PERUVIAN POLITICIANS AND HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS WORRY ABOUT CONTROL OVER RONDAS. IN MARCH 1996, PAPERS CARRIED REPORTS OF RONDEROS IN THE TOWNS OF COMAS AND COCHAS, JUNIN DEPARTMENT, WHO CAPTURED 13 SENDERISTAS; KILLED AND BEHEADED THEM, AND SENT THE HEADS TO AUTHORITIES. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTS OF DISAPPEARANCES OF PERSONS WHO REFUSED TO PATROL WITH A RONDA. IRRONICALLY, ONE OF THE MOST CREDIBLE OF THESE REPORTS CONCERNS THE DISAPPEARANCES OF THE MAYOR AND VICE MAYOR OF CHUSCHI WHERE SENDERO'S LEADER, ABIMIAEL GUZMAN, FIRST DECLARED WAR ON THE PERUVIAN STATE. RONDEROS HAVE ALSO SETTLED PRIVATE DISPUTES WITH THEIR GOVERNMENT-SUPPLIED WEAPONS AND MILITARY ALLIES. THE MOST PROMINENT CASE CONCERNS A LOCAL DISPUTE OVER WOOD CUTTING IN THE TOWN OF LA QUINUA OUTSIDE ANAYCUCCHO WHICH WAS SETTLED VIOLENTLY BY THE LOCAL RONDA. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTS OF RONDEROS PROTECTING THEIR COCA FIELDS AND LANDING STRIPS TO SUPPORT THEIR DRUG TRADE IN THE HUALLAGA AND APURIMAC VALLEYS.

7. (U) THE GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS TO ALLY WITH THE RONDAS:

A. (G)

(b)(1)
Sec 1.4
C, D

(b)(1)
Sec 1.4
C, D

(b)(1)
Sec 1.4
C, D

B. (U) CONCERNS WITH THE NEW STRATEGY:

A. (G)

(b)(1)
Sec 1.4
C, D

(b)(1)
Sec 1.4
C, D
VILLAGERS WERE KILLED OR DISAPPEARED, AND FOUR WITNESSES WERE SUBSEQUENTLY KILLED. GENERAL VALDIVIA DOES NOT KNOW THAT ONE LIVING WITNESS REMAINS WHO MAY TESTIFY AGAINST HIM. THE CASE AGAINST VALDIVIA HAS BEEN EXHAUSTED IN PERU. LAWYERS SUCCESSFULLY CONVINCED THE OAS'S INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO TAKE ON THE CASE AND ARGUE IT BEFORE THE INTER-AMERICAN COURT IN COSTA RICA THIS FALL.

B. (U) RONDEROS ALSO HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THE NEW COMMANDER OF LIMA'S SPECIAL FORCES, GENERAL PEREZ DOCUMENT. DOCUMENT FORMERLY COMMANDED FORCES IN JUNIN DEPARTMENT WHICH SET RECORDS FOR NUMBERS OF DISAPPEARANCES UNTIL THE VISIT OF U.S. SENATOR MARK HATFIELD (R-OR) TO PERU AND THE CONDITIONING OF U.S. AID ON HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS. DISAPPEARANCES IN JUNIN DROPPED FROM 10 PER MONTH TO ZERO FOLLOWING THE CONDITIONS ON THE AID. GENERAL DOCUMENT (OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "GENERAL TUTU" BY RONDEROS BECAUSE, LIKE TINKERBELL, HE MAKES PEOPLE DISAPPEAR) RELIES ON HIS EVANGELICAL FERVOR, ASTROLOGY, AND STAR CHARTS FOR GUIDANCE. SEVERAL REPORTERS HAVE EMERGED FROM DOCUMENT INTERVIEWS FEELING LIKE THEY JUST LEFT THE TWILIGHT ZONE OF DOCUMENT'S THEOLOGY.

9. (U) CONCLUSIONS:

10. (U) FOC IS

ADMIN
DECL: OADR
END OF MESSAGE