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TEXT

SUBJ: RONDAS AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN PERU (U)

1. (C) SUMMARY:



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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 CAMPESINOS" 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 FANATICAL LEADER ABIMAEEL 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 CAMPESINOS 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 CAMPESINOS OF CAJAMARCA ARE DAIRY FARMERS WHO FOUGHT AGAINST A RISING TIDE OF CATTLE RUSTLING SPAWNED 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 (COUNTY) 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 GOVERN 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 MOVEMENT'S 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 INSURGENCIAS, THE MRTA AND SENDERO LUMINOSO, REMAINED COMFORTABLY

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DISTANT TO THE EAST IN THE HUALLAGA VALLEY OR SOUTH IN SENDERO'S BIRTHPLACE OF AYACUCHO.

B. (U) THE RONDAS OF THE NORTH WERE FORMED TO FIGHT CATTLE RUSTLING, NOT INSURGENTS. THE LINK BETWEEN THE RONDA MOVEMENT AND THE COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT BEGAN IN 1983 WHEN THE ARMY DIRECTLY CONFRONTED SENDERO IN ITS HOME OF AYACUCHO. THE ARMY'S ORIGINAL CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS WAS QUITE HARSH, OPERATING UNDER THE ASSUMPTION THAT MOST RURAL PEOPLE SUPPORTED SENDERO. FROM AYACUCHO IN THE SOUTH TO HUANCABILICA IN THE NORTH, THE ARMY'S 1983-84 CAMPAIGN HAS GENERALLY BEEN LABELLED AS A SCORCHED EARTH STRATEGY. THE NAVY WAS ALSO INVOLVED IN THE CAMPAIGN AND TOOK A SLIGHTLY MORE HUMANE TACK. IN A SIMPLISTIC EFFORT TO RESTRICT THE MOBILITY OF SENDERO, THE NAVY ADVISED COMMUNITIES TO TAKE AN AGGRESSIVE APPROACH TO OUTSIDERS COMING TO THE VILLAGE. THEY ADVISED CAMPESINOS THAT ANYONE NOT KNOWN PERSONALLY WAS PROBABLY A SENDERO SUPPORTER. TRAGICALLY, THE FIRST TEST OF THIS STRATEGY CAME NEAR AYACUCHO WHEN EIGHT JOURNALISTS ATTEMPTING TO INVESTIGATE A MURDER WERE KILLED AS THEY APPROACHED A VILLAGE'S PERIMETER.

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 MORAL (AKA "EL GAUCHO"). MORAL, 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. MORAL 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 IN INTERDICTING THE STRATEGIC POPULAR SUPPORT BASE AND

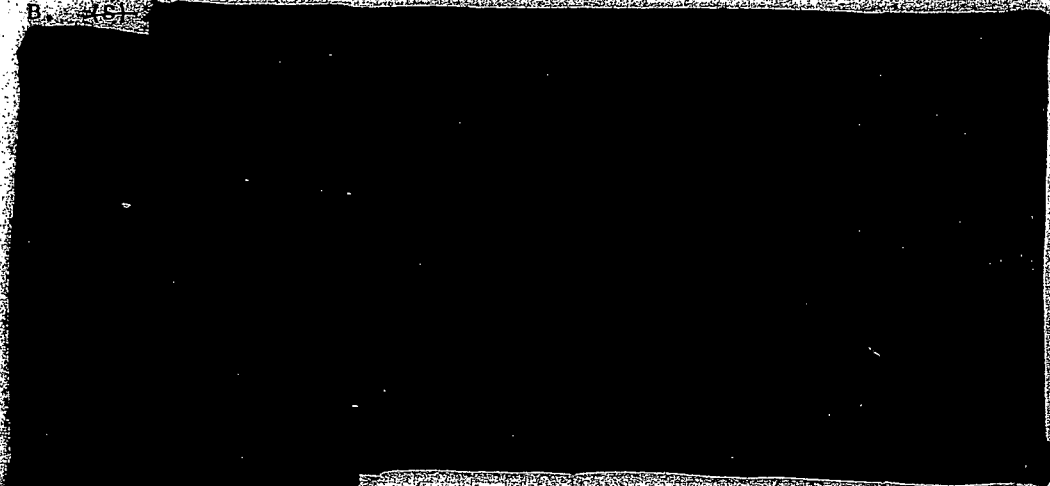
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CONVENTIONAL ORGANIZATION OF SENDERO, THEREBY PREVENTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANEUVER WARFARE THAT MARKS THE CLOSE OF A SUCCESSFUL INSURGENT CAMPAIGN.

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(U) THERE ARE REPORTS OF ACCUSATIONS THAT COMMANDERS ONLY APPROVE RONDAS LOCATED AROUND ARMY BASES FOR PROTECTION. LIMITED TRAINING IS GIVEN PRIMARILY ON THE WINCHESTER SHOTGUNS. THE ARMY HAS YET TO ARM RONDAS WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPONS BECAUSE IT WANTS RONDAS TO BE STRICTLY DEFENSIVE. CURRENT DOCTRINE CALLS FOR 15 SHOTGUNS GIVEN TO EVERY 45-MAN RONDA. WEAPONS ARE CENTRALLY STORED AND ONLY USED WHEN ON PATROL.

G. (U) RONDA WEAKNESSES:

A. (U) TO MAXIMIZE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS AS PART OF PERU'S COUNTERINSURGENT CAMPAIGN, RONDAS MUST NOT ONLY PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FORCES TO COMBAT SENDERO BUT ALSO ESTABLISH A WELL ADMINISTERED MOVEMENT AND IDEOLOGY TO COMPETE WITH THE POLITICAL STRENGTH OF SENDERO. WHILE THE RONDAS DO HAVE NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND MEET REGULARLY, THEY HAVE NO UNIFYING 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.

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C. (U) TO FORM AN EFFECTIVE ALLIANCE WITH THE RONDAS, THE GOVERNMENT MUST TREAT RONDEROS AS EQUAL PARTNERS IN THE STRUGGLE. THERE ARE REPORTS FROM HUANCA IN NORTHERN AYACUCHO OF RONDEROS USED TO BUILD WALLS AROUND MILITARY BASES WITHOUT COMPENSATION -- AS IF THEY WERE SIMPLE DRAFTEES UNDER MILITARY COMMAND. ANOTHER COMMANDER ORDERED HIS LOCAL RONDA TO GUARD TELEPHONE AND POWER LINES. WHEN SENDERO STRUCK THESE FACILITIES, THE INFURIATED LOCAL COMMANDER

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SUMMONED THE RONDA LEADERSHIP AND WHIPPED THEM.

D. (U) SOME PROMINENT PERUVIAN POLITICIANS AND HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS WORRY ABOUT CONTROL OVER RONDAS. IN MARCH 1990, 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. IRONICALLY, ONE OF THE MOST CREDIBLE OF THESE REPORTS CONCERNS THE DISAPPEARANCES OF THE MAYOR AND VICE MAYOR OF CHUSCHI WHERE SENDERO'S LEADER, ABIMAEI 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 AYACUCHO 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:

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B. (C) [REDACTED]

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8. (U) CONCERNS WITH THE NEW STRATEGY:

A. (S) [REDACTED]

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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. (c) CONCLUSIONS:



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10. (U) POC IS



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