

Andean Report by Valerie Rush

Peru outdoes U.S. in war on drugs

The García government's anti-drug fight shows up the efforts of the Reagan administration as not serious.

A stunning new anti-drug raid by Peruvian police forces testifies to the determination of the Alan García government to step up its war against narco-terrorism despite the attempts—domestic and international—to destabilize it in the wake of the mid-June *Sendero Luminoso* (the “Shining Path” terror band) prison uprisings.

In a multi-flanked operation begun July 1 and lasting three days, more than 100 of Peru's special anti-drug (Umopar) police penetrated by air and land that region of Peru's Upper Hualaga Valley known as “the cocaine triangle” (Uchiza, Sion, Paraiso, and Paupayacu). An army of mercenaries ensconced in three fortresses gave battle to the raiding police forces, using weapons that included powerful surface-to-air missiles and other modern weaponry.

One police official who took part in the operation noted, “What we found was truly incredible. Not a single police or military unit in the jungle is equipped with such sophisticated weaponry nor with these ultra-modern means of attack and defense.” One of three Air Force helicopters was nearly downed by the drug traffickers.

When the fighting ended, over 2.5 tons of cocaine paste ready for refinement into pure cocaine were seized, along with vast arsenals of weaponry. Two of the largest and most sophisticated refinement laboratories ever found were discovered, and 13 traffickers captured. The government declared the bust its largest to date.

Interior Minister Abel Salinas revealed in his press conference on the raids that in the first 10 months of the García government, more than 23 tons of pure cocaine (or its equivalent in basic coca paste, PBC) had been seized—almost as much as the 27.5 tons confiscated in all federally assisted anti-drug operations in the United States during 1985 (DEA estimates).

In addition, 144 clandestine airstrips and 28 drug laboratories have been destroyed in the Peruvian jungles, along with 452 tons of coca leaves ready for processing. Fourteen planes and 25 motorboats have been seized, and 62 traffickers captured. “We will not rest until we exterminate the gangs,” said Salinas. He asserted that with the raid the government has demonstrated its commitment to reestablishing “the rule of law” in the jungle.

Days after the police raids in Upper Huallaga, an explosion in a suburban house in Lima on July 6 revealed a terrorist factory belonging to the Tupac Amaru (MRTA) urban guerrilla. A car-bomb the narco-terrorists had been preparing went off, killing them and injuring inhabitants of neighboring houses. Besides the abundant weapons and MRTA literature discovered, Peru's investigative police (PIP) found quantities of ether and other chemicals used in processing coca paste, leading the Peruvian press to speculate anew about the mafia-terrorist link.

While the police were raiding the Huallaga Valley drug networks, Pres-

ident Alan García was bombarded with demands from both left and right that his cabinet resign in confession of its complicity in the executions of *Sendero* prisoners during the June prison rebellion. Luis Bedoya, head of the Social Christian Party and supporter of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, joined with the Peruvian Communist Party in indicting García for making “gross errors” in deploying the military against the *Sendero* uprising.

On the international front, “friend of Peru,” Socialist International chairman Willy Brandt was accused by former Venezuelan Foreign Minister José Alberto Zambrano of trying to force Alan García to negotiate with *Sendero Luminoso*. In charges made to the Caracas press and carried by the Lima daily *El Comercio* on July 3, Zambrano revealed that Brandt had tried to convince García to negotiate with the terrorists while chairing a Socialist International conference in Lima; the Venezuelan likened such an act to the West German government negotiating with the Baader-Meinhof terrorists. Zambrano added that Brandt's efforts had endangered the stability of Peru's democratic government. He did not mention that dialogue with the narco-terrorist *Sendero* would also have undermined García's war on drugs.

The voice of Brandt's faction in the Social Democratic Party, *Vorwärts* magazine, devoted its late June issue to a sympathetic appraisal of the *Sendero Luminoso* narco-terrorists which is also an attack on the García government. Journalist Michael Stuehrenberg, an ardent defender of *Sendero*'s Colombian cohorts, the M-19, writes: “The only thing to know [about *Sendero*] is why they belong to the Peruvian reality of today, and how they could resist the dirty war of the Army. The Senderistas are . . . victims of a terrorism, the shape of which is congruent with state power.”