

Peru deals blow to continental terrorism

by Andrea Olivieri

Peru's anti-terrorism police, the Dincote, struck a spectacular blow on Oct. 15 against the continent-wide network of narco-terrorists known as the Americas Battalion, when it raided a Lima hide-out of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), where a kidnapped Peruvian-Japanese businessman had been sequestered for over a month in a hole-in-the-wall "people's jail." The Dincote discovered a vast arsenal, sophisticated communications equipment, computers, plans for upcoming terrorist actions, and more.

They also arrested eight MRTA terrorists, along with one of Chile's most wanted criminals, Jaime Castillo Petruzzi. Police sources report that Castillo, with his European, Chilean, and Nicaraguan connections, was a crucial link between the Peruvian gang and the Americas Battalion, which functions as the terrorist underbelly of the Cuban-spawned São Paulo Forum of leftist political parties, which has been courted of late by the U.S. State Department and by Inter-American Dialogue advisers. Castillo's arrest thus has not only struck a mortal blow to the MRTA, but has seriously damaged the continental network of terrorism as well. According to President Alberto Fujimori, Castillo "was truly a serious threat to the security not only of Peru and Chile, but of all of Latin America."

This is precisely the message that Fujimori presented during his Oct. 1 speech to the United Nations General Assembly, when he emphasized that "with the achievement of peace in our country and the definitive eradication of terrorism, we are simultaneously helping to keep it from spreading to the Southern Cone of our continent." The MRTA raid and arrests, combined with the release to the public of several letters from imprisoned Shining Path chieftain Abimael Guzmán to Fujimori acknowledging the defeat of his bloody gang and suing for peace, have shown the rest of the Americas that it is still possible to defend one's national sovereignty with dignity.

Arming a division of terrorists

The cache of weapons seized in the MRTA raid included rockets, bazookas, anti-tank missiles, grenades, advanced automatic weaponry, and a huge quantity of ammunition. President Fujimori said the MRTA's arsenal could have

equipped an entire army division. The plans discovered with the weapons indicated that assaults on military installations and selective assassinations of prominent politicians, bankers, and congressmen had all been scheduled to take place in the period leading up to the Oct. 31 referendum on the new Peruvian Constitution, with the intent of sabotaging the vote.

The referendum, which is widely expected to yield a landslide "yes" vote, will fully legitimize Fujimori's April 5, 1992 decision to shut down the pro-terrorist Peruvian Congress and assume special executive powers, an action which outraged the "Project Democracy" crowd in Washington and elsewhere, but which finally put Peru on the necessary war footing to defeat a decade-long terrorist onslaught. It is because a victorious "yes" vote in the referendum will finally silence the internationally orchestrated offensive against Fujimori's model war against terrorism, that the Americas Battalion is so desperate to prevent the election.

Just as the MRTA faces virtual extinction, its terrorist brethren in the Shining Path may well be facing their long-overdue demise as well. In the month of October, President Fujimori has received two letters and a video recording from the imprisoned head of Shining Path, Abimael Guzmán, also known as "President Gonzalo" or "The Fourth Sword of Marxism." In those letters, confirmed as authentic by the video, the terrorist acknowledges that his movement—which has claimed countless thousands of Peruvian lives over the past decade—has been essentially beheaded.

"Under the current circumstances," wrote Guzmán in his second letter, "the party and its leaders are presented with a great and historic decision. Just as in the past we decided to begin the people's war, today with equal firmness and resolution, we must fight for a peace agreement." In response, President Fujimori has been emphatic that he will not engage in peace negotiations with Guzmán, who is serving a life sentence in prison. As he explained in his U.N. address, "A 'peace agreement' presupposes negotiations between two belligerent parties considered equals, not only in equivalence of forces but also in ethical and moral content. There are no grounds for negotiations with this terrorist and his genocidal group."

Ever since Fujimori's government passed a Law of Repentance earlier this year, 600 Shining Path terrorists have surrendered. Since the public release of Guzmán's letters to the President, another 200 have turned themselves in. This, together with 600 casualties and 2,400 arrests this year, is said by experts to represent 50% or more of the terrorist group's active cadre.

The Oct. 15 assault on the MRTA hideout and Guzmán's letters of surrender do not guarantee the end of all terrorism in Peru. Like the mythical Hydra, its many tentacles will continue to regenerate, nourished by international financial and political support, as long as the ideology of "indigenism" which spawned it remains intact and conditions of economic prostration continue to prevail in Peru.