

Peru moves decisively on narco-terrorism

April 5, 1992: With the explicit support of Gen. Nicolás Hermoza Rios, head of the Joint Chiefs of the Armed Forces, President Alberto Fujimori shuts down the legislative and judicial branches, and issues several anti-terrorist and anti-drug decrees, previously vetoed by the Congress.

April 6, 1992: Decree 25475 is issued, establishing life sentences for the crime of terrorism, shortening the time frame for trials, and ordering them to be held in prisons, before anonymous judges. Issued at the same time was Decree 25659, which defines treason as the act of leading terrorist organizations, belonging to annihilation squads, participating in catastrophic assaults, and supplying or warehousing explosives. The crime of treason is tried in military courts, effectively placing the terrorist leadership under military jurisdiction.

April 10, 1992: Fujimori authorizes military participation in anti-drug operations, in the knowledge that the drug and terrorist zones are one and the same, and have to be fought simultaneously. Specifically, he orders the Air Force to take control of all the airports in the drug-producing and -processing region, in the jungle, and to intercept all drug flights and destroy landing strips used by the cartels.

April 1992: U.S. President George Bush, and almost all the other Ibero-American Presidents, denounce Fujimori as “anti-democratic.” Bush unilaterally suspends U.S.-Peru anti-drug cooperation, including the practice of providing Peru with intelligence gathered by AWACS, and other radar used by the Southern Command. At the beginning of that year, Bush had ordered the removal of the anti-drug radar built and operated by the United States in the Peruvian jungle, to provide intelligence to Peruvian authorities in combatting the drug trade.

May 1992: At the Bahamas meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS), the governments of the region denounce the “Fujimorazo” as an assault on democracy. The Peruvian government agrees to call elections for a Constituent Assembly, thus avoiding greater isolation.

May 16, 1992: The government promulgates the Repentance Law, mandating that reduced or suspended sentences be given to terrorists who cooperate with the authorities, identify their superiors, and reintegrate themselves into society.

July 1992: The narco-terrorist Shining Path begins the siege of Lima, and announces it has attained “strategic equilibrium” with the forces of the state. The Anglophile U.S. think-tank, the RAND Corp., had announced at the beginning of the year that Shining Path would lay siege to Lima, in

which case neighboring nations and the United States should intervene in Peru—precisely what the terrorists sought in order to declare Peru the “Vietnam” of the Andes.

Sept. 12, 1992: At “five minutes to midnight,” authorities capture in Lima Shining Path founder, Abimaél Guzmán Reinoso, along with a large number of the group’s leadership. Subsequently, the rest of the terrorist leadership is gradually captured. Shining Path’s main column, in the coca-producing Huallaga Valley, is significantly reduced as a result of both military actions and the government’s policy of creating armed peasant self-defense groups to fight terrorism.

Nov. 13, 1992: After discussing “democracy” with Bernard Aronson, George Bush’s Undersecretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Gen. Jaime Salinas Sedó surreptitiously enters Peru, and leads a failed coup attempt, whose goal is to assassinate both President Fujimori and General Hermoza.

Aug. 21, 1993: Law 26223 is promulgated, changing the Penal Code to mandate life sentences for the crime of drug trafficking, when it is linked to terrorism.

August 1993: Lee Brown, the anti-drug “czar” of the new Clinton administration, visits Peru to discuss resuming the anti-drug cooperation suspended by Bush. As a first step, intelligence provided by U.S. AWACS and other sources is resumed.

Jan. 13, 1994: The major Peruvian supplier to the Cali Cartel, Demetrio Chávez Peñaherrera, is captured in Colombia as a result of close coordination by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and Peruvian and Colombian authorities. Subsequently, other important kingpins—the López Rodríguezes, Abelardo Cachique Rivera, Wilder Alvarado Linares, Waldo Vargas Arias, etc.—are arrested in Peruvian, Ecuadoran, and Colombian territory.

April 1994: The Peruvian Army launches its “final offensive” against Shining Path’s remaining columns in the Upper Huallaga Valley; but it halts the offensive after the so-called National Human Rights Coordinator falsely “exposes” that the civilian population is being “bombed.” The International Red Cross also sabotages the operation, demanding entry into the zone and, once there, convinces arrested terrorists not to reveal their leaders’ whereabouts.

June 22, 1994: President Clinton asks the U.S. Congress to more flexibly interpret legislation that limits, and threatens to suspend, Peruvian use of intelligence provided by AWACS and other U.S. radar, in order to shoot down drug planes over Peruvian territory. Congress agrees. This permits resumption of interdiction of drug flights through the Peru-Colombia air bridge, which provided basic cocaine paste to Colombian laboratories. This breakup of the air bridge caused the price of coca leaf to plunge, and, combined with bold attacks on Shining Path’s and the MRTA’s (Revolutionary Tupac Amaru Movement) protection of drug production, resulted in a rapid reduction in the size of the area under coca cultivation.

Aug. 2, 1994: A law is promulgated streamlining the legal procedures, both for dealing with the crime of drug trafficking, and for offering rewards to those who confess their crimes and cooperate with authorities to dismantle the drug mafias.

November 1995: Authorities arrest members of an international contingent of MRTA guerrillas, including Panamanians, Chileans, Colombians, and one American, as they prepared to assault the Peruvian Congress and take several VIPs hostage to exchange them for imprisoned MRTA leaders. The arrest of American citizen Lori Berenson, and her later conviction and 30-year jail sentence, becomes the "case" which allegedly proves the Peruvian government's violation of human rights. From that point on, the international drug lobby mobilizes to stop all U.S.-Peru anti-drug cooperation.

October 1996: The government resumes coca leaf eradication programs, suspended since the end of the 1980s because of inadequate security to respond to terrorism. At the same time, the government announces coca crop substitution programs in several of the production zones.

December 1996: New legislation against money laundering is approved, as part of the program of cooperation with U.S. bank supervision agencies.

Dec. 17, 1996: An MRTA commando squad seizes the

Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, capturing high-level government officials, among whom are Fujimori's mother and brother, as well as police and military officers, congressmen, and a large number of foreign diplomats, including representatives of the DEA and CIA. This puts the government up against the wall, and Fujimori is subjected to immense international pressure, from both governments as well as non-governmental organizations, to make no attempt to free the hostages, but, rather, to negotiate and come to an agreement with the narco-terrorists.

Feb. 13, 1997: The government makes the unprecedented announcement that its goal is to eradicate illegal coca production within ten years. Also announced is a plan to dismantle, with U.S. assistance, the "riverine bridge" set up by the drug cartels between Peru and Colombia, which replaced the "air bridge," that Peru had earlier broken.

April 22, 1997: An elite commando unit of the Armed Forces recaptures the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, freeing all except one of the hostages, losing only two men, and completely annihilating the MRTA squad which had taken the residence.

May 1997: The Peruvian Congress names as national heroes Col. Juan Valer and Capt. Raúl Jiménez, the two Armed Forces commandos who had lost their lives in retaking the residence.

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