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JUSTICE FOR TVCS -- J LANCASTER
 SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
 MONTEVIDEO PASS TO LEGAT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/01

TAGS: PTER ASEC PREL PGOV PE

SUBJECT: PERU'S HOSTAGE CRISIS: NO VISIBLE SIGNS OF RESOLUTION

1. CLASSIFIED BY JAMES MACK, DCM, REASON: 1.5 (D).

2. (C) SUMMARY. THE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT AND MRTA TERRORISTS STILL APPEAR TO BE FAR APART ON A POTENTIAL RESOLUTION OF THE TEN DAY-OLD HOSTAGE CRISIS, MAKING THE ALREADY VOLATILE STANDOFF SUBJECT TO UNPREDICTABLE INFLUENCES. ICRC'S CHIEF DELEGATE TO PERU CONTINUES TO PLAY A ROLE AS A POSTMAN, BUT THERE ARE NO LIKELY CANDIDATES MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOP AND MRTA AT THIS TIME THAT COULD PLAY A MORE SUBSTANTIVE THIRD PARTY ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS. THE GOP COULD REDUCE TENSIONS WITH THE TERRORISTS BY ENGAGING IN A MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE WITH THE MRTA, RESTORING ICRC'S ACCESS TO MRTA PRISONERS, AND FACILITATING A GREATER FLOW

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 OF GOODS INTO THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE. END SUMMARY.

 STANDOFF CONTINUES

3. (C) TEN DAYS AFTER TUPAC AMARU REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (MRTA) TERRORISTS STORMED THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE AND TOOK SEVERAL HUNDRED VIP'S HOSTAGE, THE GOP AND MRTA STILL APPEAR FAR FROM REACHING A NEGOTIATED, PEACEFUL SOLUTION. MRTA NOW HOLDS A MORE MANAGEABLE 103 CAPTIVES AFTER RELEASING IN SUCCESSION WOMEN, SENIOR CITIZENS, WAITERS, SELECTED AMBASSADORS AND OTHER DIPLOMATS, AND THE GROUP OF 225 "NOT ASSOCIATED WITH THE POLITICS OF THE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT," INCLUDING ALL SEVEN AMERICAN CITIZENS. MRTA CONTINUES TO HOLD SENIOR GOP OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE FOREIGN MINISTER, THE AMBASSADORS OF JAPAN, THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, HONDURAS, AND BOLIVIA, AND A LARGE NUMBER OF JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN. PRESIDENT FUJIMORI'S YOUNGER BROTHER PEDRO AND BROTHER-IN-LAW PEDRO ARITOMI ARE ALSO AMONG THOSE BEING HELD. WE EXPECT MRTA WILL HOLD ON TIGHTLY TO THE REMAINING HOSTAGES AND WILL RELEASE ONLY PERSONS EXPERIENCING SERIOUS MEDICAL PROBLEMS.

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4. (C) THE MRTA VIEW: IN OUR JUDGMENT, MRTA IS EAGER TO NEGOTIATE BECAUSE IT HAS MANY INCENTIVES TO DO SO. UP FROM THE ASHES, MRTA HAS ALREADY GAINED INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION AND DEEPLY EMBARRASSED THE GOP. MRTA, HOWEVER, WILL ALSO WANT TO EXCHANGE ITS 103 HOSTAGES FOR AS MANY CONCRETE GAINS AS POSSIBLE THAT WILL ALLOW THE ORGANIZATION TO EITHER NEGOTIATE A GENERAL PEACE AGREEMENT WITH THE GOP OR HELP THE ORGANIZATION TO RECONSTITUTE ITS DEPLETED LEADERSHIP AND FORCES. THE MRTA CAPTORS WILL ALSO WANT TO PROTECT THEMSELVES; THE TERRORISTS INSIDE, INCLUDING MILITARY LEADER NESTOR CERPA CARTOLINI, PROBABLY REPRESENT THE

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ORGANIZATION'S MOST CAPABLE CADRES. THE URUGUAY COURT'S DECEMBER 24 DECISION TO RELEASE TWO MRTA DETAINEES WILL LIKELY EMBOLDEN MRTA TO STICK TO ITS UNREALISTIC DEMAND THAT THE GOP RELEASE THE OVER 400 MRTA PRISONERS IN PERU. ENCIRCLED BY SEVERAL HUNDRED POLICE, MRTA ALSO DOES NOT HAVE ANY REAL ALTERNATIVE TO NEGOTIATIONS EXCEPT A SUICIDAL CONFRONTATION.

5. (C) THE GOP VIEW: IN OUR VIEW, PRESIDENT FUJIMORI IS LESS EAGER TO NEGOTIATE BECAUSE TALKS WITH THE MRTA COULD UNDERMINE HIS FIRM AND, TO DATE, LARGELY SUCCESSFUL STAND AGAINST TERRORISM. HE WILL NOT RELEASE MRTA PRISONERS, AND WE DO NOT BELIEVE HE WOULD CONTEMPLATE NEGOTIATING A BROADER PEACE PACKAGE WITH A GROUP THAT WAS ESSENTIALLY EXHAUSTED, AND UNLIKE INSURGENTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA, CONTROLS NO TERRITORY EXCEPT THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE HE IS PREPARED AT THIS POINT TO GIVE THE MRTA TERRORISTS FREE PASSAGE TO A THIRD COUNTRY EITHER. UNLIKE MRTA, WHICH HAS NO VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO NEGOTIATIONS, FUJIMORI PROBABLY STILL VALUES OPTIONS FOR A RESCUE MISSION. FOR FUJIMORI, A SCENARIO IN WHICH MRTA DRAWS FIRST BLOOD AND THE GOP RESPONDS WITH FORCE MAY BE A CLOSE SECOND TO A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.

6. (C) THE DANGER OF A PROTRACTED STANDOFF: WE ARE CONCERNED

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THAT AS THE HOSTAGE CRISIS CONTINUES WITHOUT SUBSTANTIVE, FLUID DIALOGUE, FRUSTRATIONS WILL BUILD AMONG ALL CONCERNED. CONTRARY TO PREVIOUS REPORTS FROM RELEASED HOSTAGES THAT THE CAPTORS' MORALE WAS GOOD, THE GUATEMALAN AMBASSADOR TOLD THE AMBASSADOR ON DECEMBER 27, THE DAY HE WAS FREED, THAT MORALE AMONG THE MRTA HOSTAGE TAKERS IS LOW. THE GOP'S FIRM POSITION AGAINST RELEASING HOSTAGES MAY BE DAMPENING THE TERRORISTS' MOOD. ADDITIONALLY, FUJIMORI, WHO HAS ESTABLISHED A SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL IMAGE AS A "MAN OF ACTION," MUST BE GROWING WEARY OF A PROTRACTED CRISIS THAT IS EMBARRASSING TO HIS GOVERNMENT, SAPPING THE ENERGIES OF HIS ADMINISTRATION, AND STEALING THE ATTENTION OF THE ENTIRE NATION. MOREOVER, AFTER TEN LONG DAYS OF BEING HELD

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AT GUNPOINT, WE BELIEVE THE 103 HOSTAGES, MOST LONG ACCUSTOMED TO BEING IN CHARGE, MUST RESENT TAKING ORDERS FROM 15-20 MOSTLY YOUNG, POORLY EDUCATED TERRORISTS.

WHO CAN HELP?

7. (C) ICRC'S CHIEF DELEGATE MICHEL MINNIG CONTINUES TO PLAY THE ROLE OF POSTMAN IN THE HOSTAGE CRISIS, PRIMARILY BY COMMUNICATING MESSAGES BETWEEN THE GOP AND MRTA TERRORISTS, BUT HE WILL NOT BECOME A NEGOTIATOR. HE DOES PUT MESSAGES INTO "CONTEXT" FOR BOTH SIDES, BUT HE HAS TOLD US THAT HE BELIEVES MAKING PROPOSALS WOULD COMPROMISE HIS NEUTRALITY. IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH MINNIG, HE REFRAINED FROM REVEALING ANY DETAILS OF THE MESSAGES HE IS PASSING, BUT READING BETWEEN THE LINES, HE IS FRUSTRATED BY THE LACK OF PROGRESS IN THE MEDIATED TALKS. AS THE CRISIS DRAGS ON, HOWEVER, AND ICRC CONTINUES TO ADVOCATE IMPROVEMENTS IN LIVING CONDITIONS INSIDE THE RESIDENCE, THE GOP IS LIKELY TO BECOME INCREASINGLY SUSPICIOUS OF ICRC'S NEUTRALITY.

8. (C) AYACUCHO ARCHBISHOP JUAN LUIS CIPRIANI SPENT SIX HOURS IN THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE ON CHRISTMAS, SPARKING SPECULATION THAT HE IS PLAYING A ROLE IN TALKS. HE DID SPEAK DIRECTLY WITH COMMANDANTE CERPA. YESTERDAY, CIPRIANI RETURNED TO THE RESIDENCE, BUT DID NOT GO INSIDE; INSTEAD, HE HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE TOLD THE MEDIA THAT HE IS NOT A MEDIATOR

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AND HE URGED THE MEDIA TO REPORT MORE RESPONSIBLY. CIPRIANI, FUJIMORI'S FAVORITE CHURCH AUTHORITY, PROBABLY CARRIED THE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW TO THE MRTA. IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHETHER HE WILL RETURN TO THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE OR

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WHETHER THE MRTA WOULD ACCEPT THE CONSERVATIVE PRELATE'S GOOD OFFICES.

9. (C) HUMAN RIGHTS OMBUDSMAN JORGE SANTISTEVAN DE NORIEGA AND FATHER HUBERT LANSSIERS, A MEMBER OF THE GOP'S AD HOC COMMISSION THAT RECOMMENDS PARDON FOR PERSONS UNJUSTLY IMPRISONED ON TERRORISM CHARGES, ARE UNIQUELY POISED TO PLAY A SUBSTANTIVE MEDIATING ROLE. THEY BOTH ENJOY SOME DEGREE OF TRUST OF BOTH THE GOP AND MRTA; THEY CARRY UNQUESTIONED CREDIBILITY WITH THE POLITICALLY AWARE SEGMENTS OF THE PERUVIAN PUBLIC. BOTH HAVE OFFERED THEIR ASSISTANCE TO THE GOP, BUT THE GOP HAS SO FAR NOT ACCEPTED THEIR OFFER. WE DO NOT EXPECT THE GOP TO CHANGE ITS MIND AT THIS POINT. WHILE PRESIDENT FUJIMORI HAS BEEN PLEASED WITH THE EFFORTS OF BOTH TO WORK ON PARDONS OF PERSONS UNJUSTLY IMPRISONED ON TERRORISM, HE IS NOT LIKELY TO TRUST THEM TO PLAY AN INSIDE ROLE ON A MATTER OF CONSIDERABLY MORE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE TO HIS GOVERNMENT. MOREOVER, FUJIMORI'S SMALL, HERMETIC CIRCLE OF INTELLIGENCE, DEFENSE, AND POLICE ADVISORS HAVE INSTITUTIONAL ROLES THAT HAVE PLACED THEM AT ODDS WITH BOTH POTENTIAL NEGOTIATORS.

10. (C) MRTA WOULD PROBABLY ACCEPT A NON-LATIN AMERICAN THIRD COUNTRY DIPLOMAT ASSOCIATED WITH THE PEACE PROCESSES IN CENTRAL

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AMERICA AS A SUBSTANTIVE MEDIATOR. MRTA WOULD BE ATTRACTED TO
THE INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY SUCH A MEDIATOR WOULD BRING. WE DO

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NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT MRTA WOULD ACCEPT ANY THIRD COUNTRY OAS OR LATIN AMERICAN DIPLOMAT. WE UNDERSTAND MRTA CAPTORS HAVE SPECIFICALLY DENOUNCED THE APRIL 1996 OAS' INTER-AMERICAN SPECIALIZED CONFERENCE ON TERRORISM HOSTED BY PERU AND THE 34 COUNTRIES THAT ATTENDED IT. DURING THE HOSTAGE CRISIS, PRESIDENT FUJIMORI HAS MET WITH ONLY TWO OFFICIALS -- THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF JAPAN AND MALAYSIA -- AND AVOIDED THE PHONE CALLS OF NUMEROUS FOREIGN LEADERS. WE THEREFORE STRONGLY DOUBT THE GOP WOULD ACCEPT ANY THIRD COUNTRY'S INTERVENTION FOR WHAT THE PERUVIAN PRESIDENT SEES AS A DOMESTIC SECURITY ISSUE.

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HOW CAN GOP DEFUSE THE CRISIS?

11. (C) WE BELIEVE THE GOP CAN HELP DEFUSE THE CRISIS BY BEGINNING A SUBSTANTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE MRTA CAPTORS, IF THE GOP HAS NOT ALREADY DO SO. THE GOP HAS RIGHTLY REFUSED TO RELEASE MRTA PRISONERS, BUT MAKING COUNTEROFFERS THAT DO NOT COMPROMISE PRINCIPLE COULD HELP REDUCE MRTA'S UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE URUGUAY COURT'S DECISION TO RELEASE TWO MRTA DETAINEES WILL LIKELY EMBOLDEN THE MRTA TO CONTINUE EXTORTING SIMILAR CONCESSIONS FROM THE GOP. EVEN IF POLES APART, THE GOP CAN GIVE THE MRTA TERRORISTS A SENSE OF "ACCOMPLISHMENT" BY ENGAGING IN A MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION WITH THE MRTA. THE GOP'S BEST NEGOTIATING LINE MAY BE TO TRY TO CONVINCE THE MRTA THAT THEY HAVE ALREADY ACHIEVED ENOUGH, AND THAT VIOLENCE WOULD ERASE THE POLITICAL MESSAGE MRTA HAS TRIED TO SEND.

12. (C) THE GOP COULD ALSO REDUCE TENSIONS BY ALLOWING THE ICRC ITS REGULAR ACCESS TO PRISONS AND MRTA PRISONERS. THE ICRC TOLD US AND THE PRESS ON DECEMBER 27 THAT THE GOP IS DENYING ITS WORKERS ACCESS TO PRISONS (BUT NOT POLICE DETENTION CENTERS). WHILE THE GOP IS WISELY BOOSTING SECURITY AT PRISONS AROUND THE COUNTRY, DENYING THE ICRC ACCESS TO PRISONS IS LIKELY TO GENERATE SUSPICIONS AND ALARM AMONG THE MRTA CAPTORS. THE GOP UNDERSTANDABLY DID NOT CONCEDE PROVIDING THE HOSTAGE TAKERS TELEPHONE ACCESS TO IMPRISONED MRTA LEADERS, BUT ALLOWING ICRC ACCESS PER ESTABLISHED ROUTINES COULD REASSURE THE MRTA THAT THE GOP IS NOT TAKING RETRIBUTION AGAINST MRTA PRISONERS.

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13. (C) THE GOP APPROVES ALL ITEMS THAT THE ICRC DELIVERS TO THE HOSTAGES AND MRTA TERRORISTS. THE GOP CAN MANIPULATE THE FLOW OF THESE ITEMS TO APPLY PRESSURE OR TO REDUCE TENSIONS WITH THE MRTA. THE GOP HAS ALREADY ALLOWED A SIGNIFICANT RANGE OF ITEMS TO BE SENT IN, INCLUDING THREE MEALS DAILY, POTABLE WATER, CHEMICAL TOILETS, MEDICINE, FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE, AND BATTERY-OPERATED LANTERNS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE GOP WILL RESTORE ELECTRICITY OR CELLULAR TELEPHONE SERVICE TO THE RESIDENCE FOR SECURITY REASONS. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOP CAN CONTINUE TO MAKE LIFE A LITTLE MORE COMFORTABLE FOR HOSTAGES AND TERRORISTS ALIKE BY ALLOWING THE ICRC TO DELIVER MORE CLOTHES AND HOUSEHOLD ITEMS.

COMMENT

14. (C) EARLY IN THIS CRISIS THE GOP AND MRTA BOTH MADE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS THAT THEY WANTED TO RESOLVE THE HOSTAGE CRISIS PEACEFULLY. WE STILL BELIEVE THAT THE GOP AND THE TERRORISTS WHO INITIATED THIS CRISIS FAVOR A NON-VIOLENT RESOLUTION OVER A VIOLENT ONE. NEVERTHELESS, NEITHER SIDE SEEMS TO BE WELL-POSITIONED TO ENTER INTO SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS. MRTA'S EARLY

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JUSTICE FOR TVCS -- J LANCASTER
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DEMANDS REFLECT AN EXAGGERATED SENSE OF SELF-IMPORTANCE. IN ADDITION, THE GOP WILL HAVE A HARD TIME SUPPRESSING ITS TRUE FEELINGS IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH AN ORGANIZATION THAT HAS EMPLOYED TERRORISM TO UPSET PUBLIC ORDER IN PERU FOR OVER A DECADE. FUJIMORI IS NOT SHARING HIS STRATEGY, BUT OUR BEST ESTIMATE AT THIS POINT IS THAT CONSIDERABLY MORE TIME WILL HAVE TO PASS AND UNPREDICTABLE INFLUENCES WILL HAVE TO BE PLAYED OUT BEFORE THE GOP AND MRTA MOVE CLOSER TO A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION.

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