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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TEXT
 TAGS: PTER, PHUM, ASEC, PE
 COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJECT: LETTER BOMB KILLS JOURNALIST

REF: A) LIMA 3400

1. (C) SUMMARY: A LETTER-BOMB APPARENTLY INTENDED FOR THE DIRECTOR OF A PRO-MRTA PAPER KILLED A YOUNG JOURNALIST ON OCTOBER 10. THIS IS THE FOURTH REPORTED USE OF A LETTER-BOMB IN PERU. A PARAMILITARY GROUP IS MOST LIKELY RESPONSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

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2. (U) A LETTER-BOMB SENT BY UNKNOWN TERRORISTS ADDRESSED TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE MRTA-LINKED WEEKLY "CAMBIO" KILLED MELISSA ALFARO MENDEZ AT ABOUT NOON ON OCTOBER 10. THE BOMB DAMAGED "CAMBIO'S" NEWSROOM BUT NO OTHER PERSONS WERE INJURED -- MOST PEOPLE WERE ON LUNCH BREAK AT THE TIME. ALFARO (23) WAS A GENERAL EDITOR AND COVERED PARLIAMENTARY ISSUES FOR "CAMBIO." SHE WAS THE DAUGHTER OF UCAYALI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVE VICTOR ALFARO.

3. (C) "CAMBIO" DIRECTOR CARLOS ARROYO REYES, THE INTENDED VICTIM, PUBLICLY BLAMED UNSPECIFIED "RIGHT-WING PARAMILITARY GROUPS" FOR THE BOMBING. HE DISMISSED THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE WORK OF "SUBVERSIVE" GROUPS, PRESUMABLY, A REFERENCE TO SENDERO LUMINOSO (SL).

4. (C) THE 20 BY 30 CENTIMETER MANILA ENVELOPE WAS HAND-DELIVERED ABOUT TWO HOURS BEFORE IT EXPLODED AND PURPORTEDLY CONTAINED PRESS CLIPPINGS FROM FRANCE. THE TYPE OF EXPLOSIVE USED IS STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION, BUT "GELIGNITE" (USED BY THE MILITARY FOR DEMOLITIONS) WAS PRELIMINARILY SUSPECTED. NOTE: LETTER-BOMBS HAVE NOT BEEN PREVIOUSLY ASSOCIATED WITH EITHER MRTA OR SL, AND REQUIRE A DEGREE OF SOPHISTICATED IN THEIR MANUFACTURE MORE READILY IDENTIFIED WITH TRAINED EXPERTS SUCH AS THOSE FOUND IN THE MILITARY AND POLICE. END NOTE.

5. (U) TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, LETTER-BOMBS HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN USED IN THE FOLLOWING INCIDENTS:

-- MARCH 15, 1991. PROMINENT HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER AUGUSTO ZUNIGA PAZ SEVERELY INJURED (REF A).

-- JUNE 21, 1991. VICTOR HUGO LUIS LEON KILLED AT HIS OFFICE, LOCATED DIRECTLY OPPOSITE THE CAMBIO OFFICE. SPECULATION IS THAT THE BOMB WAS SENT TO THE WRONG OFFICE.

-- JUNE 28, 1991. EDMUNDO CALDERON CASAS, A POLICE GUARD AT THE CLOSED OFFICES OF THE SL MOUTHPIECE "EL DIARIO" LOST AN ARM AFTER ACCEPTING A LETTER.

ONE NEWSPAPER REPORTED THAT A LETTER-BOMB SENT TO CARLOS ZANATTI BERNICH, OWNER OF THE LE PARIS CINEMA, WAS DEFUSED BY THE POLICE ON MAY 26. HE APPARENTLY HAD REFUSED TO PAY MRTA "WAR BONDS" (CUPOS).

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6. (C) IN ADDITION TO ARROYO'S ACCUSATIONS AGAINST "RIGHT-WING PARAMILITARY GROUPS," OTHER CHARGES HAVE SURFACED. POLICE SOURCES SAID THAT SL CANNOT BE RULED OUT, GIVEN THE INTENSE RIVALRY BETWEEN SL AND MRTA. "EL COMERCIO" NOTED THAT "CAMBIO" HAD BEEN AGGRESSIVELY PURSUING CORRUPTION CHARGES AGAINST FORMER PRESIDENT ALAN GARCIA AND A CONGRESSIONAL DEPUTY PROMINENT IN THE GARCIA INVESTIGATION TOLD

EMBOFF HE WAS SURE THAT APRA'S PARAMILITARY GROUP, COMMANDO RODRIGO FRANCO, HAD SENT THE LETTER-BOMB.

7. (C) COMMENT: THERE ARE ANY NUMBER OF POSSIBLE PERPETRATORS -- THE PRO-APRA RODRIGO FRANCO COMMAND (CRF), RENEGADE POLICE OR MILITARY ELEMENTS, LEFTIST ORGANIZATIONS OR SUBVERSIVE GROUPS SEEKING TO DISCREDIT THE GOP, ETC. -- AND VERY FEW HARD FACTS TO HELP IDENTIFY THEM. THE AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT SOLVED ANY OF THE PREVIOUS LETTER-BOMBINGS, AND EVEN THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE MUCH-PUBLICIZED ZUNIGA BOMBING REMAINS IN ABEYANCE. END COMMENT.
QUAINTON##

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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