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ACTION SCT-03

EXCISE

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-17	AID-01	ARA-01	A-01	CA-02	CCO-00
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	E-01	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	HA-09	H-01	IMMC-01	INM-02
	INR-00	INSE-00	IO-19	JUSE-00	LAB-04	L-03	ADS-00
	M-01	NRCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	NSF-01	OES-09	OIC-02
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R 122133Z MAR 93
 FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6634
 INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO
 AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
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 INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

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 DEPARTMENT OF STATE IM/IPS/CR/IR Date: 9/11/97
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SECTION 01 OF 07 LIMA 02895

SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PGOV, PTER, PHUM, SNAR, SENV, PE
 SUBJECT: TARAPOTO: CENTRAL HUALLAGA RAMBLE

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REF: LIMA 621

TARAPOTO: JUNGLE TOWN WITH AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

1. (C) SUMMARY: POLOFF RECENTLY VISITED
 TARAPOTO, IN NORTHERN PERU'S GUERRILLA AND
 NARCO-PLAGUED COCA GROWING CENTRAL HUALLAGA
 VALLEY, IN SAN MARTIN DEPARTMENT (STATE). A
 STEAMY CITY OF SOME 80,000 RESIDENTS, TARAPOTO

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IS A LARGE "FARM TOWN" THAT BOOMED IN THE 80'S THANKS TO NARCO MONEY AND TO SERVICING THE COCA GROWERS. BUT TARAPOTENSES ARE NERVOUS ABOUT A DEPRESSED COCA MARKET AND REMAIN WARY OF A VOLATILE SECURITY SITUATION DESPITE RECENT IMPROVEMENTS. THE TUPAC AMARU REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (MRTA), WHICH HAS TRADITIONALLY STAKED OUT NORTHERN SAN MARTIN DEPARTMENT AS ITS STRONGHOLD, IS BY MOST ACCOUNTS DOWN, BUT THE JANUARY SACKING OF MOYOBAMBA, THE LARGEST CITY IN THE REGION, IS TAKEN AS A WARNING NOT TO COUNT MRTA OUT. IRONICALLY, MRTA'S DEMISE MIGHT EVEN ALLOW SENDERO LUMINOSO (SL), PERU'S LARGER AND MORE VIOLENT GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION, TO EXPAND TO THE NORTH. LOCAL OBSERVERS PRAISE HUALLAGA FRONT COMMANDER FOR RESTORING CONFIDENCE AND HOPE TO THE EMBATTLED AREA. HOWEVER, WITH PROFITABILITY OF LEGITIMATE CROPS LOW AND DECLINING RELATIVE TO COCA, TARAPOTO AND THE CENTRAL HUALLAGA ARE VULNERABLE TO

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VIOLENCE. ONE OF THE FEW WOMEN'S RIGHTS GROUPS IN PERU'S SELVA (JUNGLE REGION) DESCRIBED HOW DEPRESSED ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND A HIGHLY TRADITIONAL LATIN RURAL CULTURE CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS A SERIOUS SOCIAL CRISIS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PARTICULAR AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GENERAL. END SUMMARY.

MRTA: THE GUERRILLAS ARE NOT DONE YET

2. (U) THE TUPAC AMARU REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT'S GUERRILLAS, OR COMPAS, ARE BY ALL ACCOUNTS BEING POUNDED HARD BY THE MILITARY. JOURNALISTS, BUSINESSMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS IN TARAPOTO AGREED THAT THE ARMED FORCES ARE DOING THE BEST THEY HAVE SINCE THE WAR CAME TO THE HUALLAGA SOME 10 YEARS AGO. MOST CREDITED THE SUCCESS TO POLITICAL-MILITARY FRONT COMMANDER GEN. BELLIDO, WHOSE COMMAND WAS EXTENDED IN JANUARY (UNUSUALLY) FOR A SECOND YEAR IN APPARENT RECOGNITION OF HIS EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST SUBVERSIVES AND NARCOTRAFFICKING.

BELLIDO HAS STATED PUBLICLY THAT MRTA WILL BE DEFEATED IN HIS FRONT BY 1994 (SEE REFTTEL FOR BELLIDO'S UPDATE ON THE MILITARY SITUATION.)

3. (U) THE SAN MARTIN MRTA HAS ALSO SUFFERED FROM INTERNAL STRUGGLES ON A NATIONAL LEVEL, REFLECTED LOCALLY BETWEEN THE HARDLINE POSITION OF (JAILED) MRTA NATIONAL HEAD VICTOR POLAY

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CAMPOS AND NESTOR SERPA CARTOLINI ON THE ONE HAND AND NATIVE SAN MARTIN LOCAL LEADER SISTERO GARCIA ON THE OTHER. IN 1991/92, MRTA ABANDONED THE ROBIN HOOD IMAGE IT ONCE FOSTERED IN SAN MARTIN AND BEGAN SACKING TOWNS, DESTROYED PAINFULLY ACQUIRED VILLAGE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ROBBED BANK HOLDINGS OF COMMON CITIZENS.

4. (U) NO LONGER CONTENT WITH "JUSTICING" CORRUPT POLICE AND AMBUSHING ARMY PATROLS, WHAT A LOCAL JOURNALIST TERMED MRTA'S "SENDERIZATION" - ADOPTING A LESS DISCRIMINATE TACTIC THAT TARGETED COMMON PEOPLE - MARKED THE END OF WIDE SPREAD POPULAR SUPPORT FOR MRTA. THE MRTA ARMED COLUMNS NOW LIMP ALONG WITHOUT THE FURTIVE AND ONCE COMMON CONNIVANCE OF THE LOCAL CAMPESINOS.

5. (C) CHILDHOOD FRIENDS OF SISTERO BLAMED THE STEADY RECRUITMENT OF COMMON CRIMINALS INTO THE

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INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PTER, PHUM, SNAR, SENV, PE

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MRTA FOR THE MOVEMENT'S EVENTUAL COLLAPSE. TO
COVER THE LOSS OF IDEOLOGICALLY COMMITTED AND
TRAINED CADRE THROUGH ATTRITION, MRTA COMMANDERS
TURNED TO YOUNG TOUGHS AND CRIMINALS WHO HAD A
NATURAL PREDISPOSITION TOWARDS EXTORTING "CUPOS"
(WAR TAXES) FROM EVEN MERCHANTS OF MODEST MEANS
IN THE VILLAGES OR FOR CONTROLLING AND MANAGING
THE LUCRATIVE PROTECTION RACKET OF THE DRUG
TRADE. AS THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT PERVADED MRTA
UNITS, THEY BECAME MORE MAFIA THAN GUERRILLAS -
THE PEOPLE TURNED ON THEM AND THEIR POLITICAL
GOALS BECAME AN EXCUSE FOR CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES.

6. (U) MANY TARAPOTENSES, SUCH AS THE MAYOR THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE AGRICUTURAL SECTOR GROWERS, TRIED HARD -- PERHAPS TOO HARD -- TO CONVINCING POLOFF THAT THE TUPAC AMARU REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (MRTA) IS NO LONGER A PROBLEM OR IS AT LEAST MORIBUND. BUT MOST INTERLOCUTORS OFFERED ONLY HALF HEARTED REASSURANCES THAT MRTA COULD NOT REPEAT THE SACKING OF MOYOBAMBA IN TARAPOTO. THE POLITICAL MILITARY COMMANDER WOULD NEVER LET THEM TAKE OVER HIS BASE'S HOST CITY, THEY SAID, BUT IT ALWAYS CAME OUT IN THE FORM OF A QUESTION. A LATENT MRTA THREAT TO AT LEAST CONDUCT SPORADIC ATTACKS CERTAINLY EXISTS, AND APPEARED MOST PROBABLE JUDGING BY THE PLENTIFUL MRTA WALL GRAFITTI IN WHAT LOCALS SAID WAS THE MRTA DOMINATED SOUTHERN EDGE OF TOWN WHERE POLOFF'S HOTEL WAS LOCATED.

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7. (C) A REAL FEAR, EXPRESSED BY ALL THE INTERLOCUTORS, WAS THAT SENDERO LUMINOSO, A MUCH MORE FORMIDABLE AND BLOODIER GUERRILLA GROUP, WOULD MOVE NORTH TO FILL THE VACUUM LEFT BY A POSSIBLE MRTA DEFEAT OR COLLAPSE. SENDERO COLUMNS PERIODICALLY SWEEP NORTH OF WHAT JOURNALISTS AND THE ICRC TERMED "THE DIVIDE," RUNNING EAST-WEST THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF SAN MARTIN DEPARTMENT BETWEEN JUANJUI AND CAMPANILLA, BUT THESE SL COLUMNS WERE ONLY PATROLS. THE ICRC DELEGATE WARNED THAT THE MRTA'S STYLE OF WARFARE WAS "CHILD'S PLAY" WHEN COMPARED TO SENDERO'S MORE IDEOLOGICALLY BASED "TOTAL WAR" CONCEPT. THIS IN TURN, SAID THE DELEGATE PROBABLY EXPLAINED THE ARMY'S FAR BLOODIER TACTIC OF REPRISALS IN SOUTHERN SAN MARTIN.

MOYOBAMBA: THE SHOT HEARD ROUND THE VALLEY

8. (C) THE MRTA'S JANUARY 1993 SACKING OF MOYOBAMBA DOMINATED MOST CONVERSATIONS IN

TARAPOTO. THE MRTA HAD BEEN PRONOUNCED DEAD BEFORE, IN 1992 AFTER THE POLICE CAPTURES OF SENIOR NATIONAL LEADERS VICTOR POLAY AND PETER CARDENAS, AND HAD ANSWERED THIS BY SACKING JAEN, AN IMPORTANT REGIONAL TOWN IN NORTHERN CAJAMARCA DEPARTMENT. SIMILARLY, THE STREAM OF PRESS STORIES CARRYING BELLIDO'S AND OTHERS

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PROGNOSTICATIONS OF MRTA'S IMMINENT DEMISE HAD PROBABLY SPURRED MRTA TO SACK MOYOBAMBA. ONE VIOLENCE-WATCHER SUGGESTED THAT MRTA WAS IN ESSENCE CHALLENGING BELLIDO WITH THIS ATTACK. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT MRTA IS MILITARILY TOO WEAK TO HOLD ON TO A CITY, THE SCALE AND COMPLEXITY OF MRTA'S SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS CAUSED THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS CONSIDERABLE DISCOMFORT. THEY HAD, UNTIL THE ATTACK ON MOYOBAMBA, BEEN CONVINCED BY BELLIDO'S OPTIMISM AND EFFICIENCY THAT MRTA WAS ON ITS LAST LEGS. WHAT LITTLE COMFORT DID COME OUT OF MOYOBAMBA WAS THAT THE GUERRILLAS WERE NOT ABLE TO CRACK THE MAIN VAULT AT THE COMMERCE BANK, WHERE MOST OF THE MONEY WAS STORED.

9. (C) JOURNALISTS REPORTED THAT SOME 500 MRTA CADRE TOOK PART IN THE SACKING, CALLED TOGETHER FROM VIRTUALLY EVERY MRTA UNIT IN THE REGION AND REPRESENTING NEARLY ALL OF MRTA'S TOTAL FORCE IN

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THE JUNGLE AREA. THE FORCE REPORTEDLY ASSEMBLED
AT A MAIN MRTA BASE NEAR YUARACYACU AND DEPLOYED
MOSTLY BY BOAT DOWNRIVER TO MOYOBAMBA, SOME 30
KILOMETERS AWAY. A LOCAL MRTA COMMANDER
SURNAMED MENDOZA DEL AGUILA (AKA EL GRILLO) LED
THE ATTACK, ACCORDING TO PERSONS WHO CLAIMED TO
KNOW HIS FAMILY. THE ICRC REPORTS THAT OF THE
KNOWN CASUALTIES, THERE WERE TWO DEAD AND FIVE
WOUNDED POLICE, TWO DEAD AND TWO WOUNDED
SOLDIERS, THREE DEAD AND 13 WOUNDED CIVILIANS,

AND EIGHT DEAD GUERRILLAS. THE NUMBER OF
WOUNDED GUERRILLAS IS NOT KNOWN AND IT IS ALMOST
CERTAIN THAT THE MRTA CARRIED AWAY OTHER DEAD
COMRADES.

THE ICRC: WORKING WITH THE GENERAL

12. (C) UNFORTUNATELY, BELLIDO'S POSITIVE INFLUENCE APPARENTLY EXTENDS ONLY TO NORTHERN SAN MARTIN, THE AREA UNDER HIS "PERSONAL" COMMAND, [REDACTED] THE ICRC RECENTLY SPLIT ITS SAN MARTIN SUBDELEGATION IN TWO - ONE IN TARAPOTO AND A NEW ONE IN TOCACHE - TO BETTER COVER THE "INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT AND VIOLENT" SAN MARTIN AREA AND IN RECOGNITION OF THE DIFFERENT GUERRILLA DYNAMICS THAT EXIST WITH THE [REDACTED]

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MRTA IN NORTHERN SAN MARTIN AND SENDERO IN
SOUTHERN SAN MARTIN. [REDACTED]

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THE ICRC HAD STOPPED EVEN VISITING MILITARY AND POLICE DETENTION CENTERS AND POLICE STATIONS SINCE THE EARLY FEBRUARY PUBLICATION IN A WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE OF A WIRETAPED DETENTION CELL CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE ICRC AND CAPTURED SENDERO FOUNDER/LEADER ABIMEAL GUZMAN.

BRAVE STRUGGLE OF A WOMAN'S RIGHTS GROUP

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15. (U) FLOR DE BELEN ANGULO, COORDINATOR OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN (PRODEMU), PROVIDED POLOFF WITH A BRIEF SNAPSHOT OF THE PRIMITIVE WORLD OF MALE DOMINATED SAN MARTIN PROVINCE, THE "COUNTY" SURROUNDING TARAPOTO. THE NINE YEAR OLD ORGANIZATION, WITH AN IMPRESSIVE COMPLEX ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TARAPOTO, WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY NGO DEDICATED ENTIRELY TO WOMEN'S ISSUES AND PROBLEMS IN THE CENTRAL HUALLAGA UNTIL A SPIN-OFF GROUP WAS STARTED IN 1992 IN RIOJA. WITH PRIVATE FUNDING FROM HOLLAND AND LIMITED SUPPORT FROM THE UNITED NATIONS, ANGULO'S CLEAN AND MODERN (FOR TARAPOTO) FACILITIES BOAST A SHELTER FOR BATTERED WOMEN, A LEGAL HELP CLINIC AND A MEDICAL CONSULTATION SERVICE. AN OUTREACH SERVICE SENDS TRAINED WOMEN INTO NEARBY HAMLETS TO CONDUCT WOMEN'S RIGHTS WORKSHOPS AND PROVIDE PRELIMINARY MEDICAL AND FAMILY PLANNING COUNSELLING. PRODEMU CLAIMS THAT IN 1992 IT

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VISITED 39 COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN SAN MARTIN DEPARTMENT, COUNSELING 5,600 RURAL WOMEN.

16. (C) ANGULO STATED THAT THE PERUVIAN LEGAL CODE IS IN MANY RESPECTS SUPERIOR TO THAT FOUND IN OTHER COUNTRIES. BUT WITHOUT ANY EFFECTIVE LEGAL ENFORCEMENT OF THESE LAWS, WOMEN IN SAN MARTIN, AS IN THE REST OF PERU, ARE IN FACT SUBJECTED TO SEVERE DISCRIMINATION. PRODEMU ARGUED THAT IT CAN WORK TO CHANGE ENTRENCHED

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CHAUVINISTIC SOCIAL VALUES, DESPITE THE TACIT OFFICIAL ACCEPTANCE OF BLATANT DISCRIMINATION AND DE FACTO REFUSAL OF AUTHORITIES TO EVEN DISCOURAGE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN MADE THEIR STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL RIGHTS "ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE."

17. (C) ANGULO USED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TO ILLUSTRATE THE PROBLEMS FACED BY THE WOMEN IN SAN MARTIN. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SAN MARTIN IS THE NORM, NOT THE EXCEPTION. A RECENT PRODEMU SURVEY OF

WOMEN IN SAN MARTIN PROVINCE (THE COUNTY SURROUNDING TARAPOTO) FOUND THAT 94 PERCENT OF ADULT WOMEN REPORTED HAVING BEEN BATTERED. ACCORDING TO ANGULO, A HUSBAND CAN BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL FOR WIFE BEATING IF, IN THE MEDICAL OPINION OF A DOCTOR, SHE REQUIRES 15 DAYS OF BED REST. THIS IS UP FROM 10 DAYS THANKS TO A NEW LAW PASSED BY THE GOP AFTER THE APRIL 5 COUP. IN SAN MARTIN PROVINCE, ONLY FIVE CASES OF BATTERY WERE REPORTED TO THE POLICE IN 1992. TO EXPLAIN THE LOCAL MENTALITY IN THESE

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 CASES, ANGULO DESCRIBED ONE OF THE INCIDENTS. A SEVERELY BEATEN YOUNG WOMAN STAGGERED TO THE PRODEMU OFFICES AND REQUESTED THAT ANGULO ACCOMPANY HER TO THE POLICE STATION TO HELP HER FILE CHARGES AGAINST HER HUSBAND. THE BOOKING OFFICER SCOLDED THE YOUNG WOMAN FOR BRINGING A "MEDDLING" FEMINIST ALONG, ORDERED ANGULO OUT OF

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THE STATION AS SHE IS NOT A LAWYER, AND REFUSED TO FILE THE CHARGES. THE STATION COMMANDER, MOVED BY THE WOMAN'S OBVIOUS BEATING, ORDERED HER HUSBAND DETAINED FOR 24 HOURS. UPON RELEASE, THE HUSBAND IMMEDIATELY WENT TO HIS IN-LAWS TO COMPLAIN ABOUT HIS INCARCERATION. THE MORTIFIED YOUNG WOMAN'S PARENTS BEAT THE WOMAN THEMSELVES FOR DISGRACING HER FAMILY BY DISHONORING HER HUSBAND.

18. (C) A REGIONAL HOSPITAL TOLD PRODEMU THEIR RECORDS CARRIED AN AVERAGE OF 35 RAPE VICTIMS PER MONTH. THE SOCIAL STIGMA AND OSTRACIZATION IS SO STRONG THAT PRODEMU IS AWARE OF ONLY FOUR RAPES BEING REPORTED TO THE POLICE IN URBAN TARAPOTO IN ALL OF 1992. THREE OF THE CASES INVOLVED GIRLS AGED 9, 11 AND 16. PRODEMU ESTIMATED THAT IF A RAPE VICTIM DECIDES TO PRESS CHARGES, THE ARCHAIC JUSTICE SYSTEM FORCES HER TO RECOUNT THE ASSAULT TWELVE TIMES TO DIFFERENT JUDGES, PROSECUTORS AND ATTORNEYS. IN THE CASE OF THE 16 YEAR OLD, THE CHARGE OF RAPE WAS CHANGED TO SEDUCTION, CARRYING A MAXIMUM SENTENCE OF TWO YEARS. OVERCROWDED JAIL

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CONDITIONS MEAN ONLY CRIMINALS SENTENCED TO MORE THAN TWO YEARS SERVE TIME AND THE PERPETRATOR, THOUGH FOUND GUILTY, ESSENTIALLY WENT FREE. THE JUDGE ORDERED THE OFFENDER TO REPORT TO THE POLICE STATION EVERY EIGHT DAYS. IN THE CASE OF ONE OF THE OTHER MINORS, THE JUDGE ALLOWED A DEFENSE MOTION FOR A SECOND MEDICAL EXAMINATION OF THE GIRL, SIX WEEKS AFTER THE ASSAULT. AS NO EVIDENCE OF RAPE WAS FOUND, THE DEFENDANT WALKED.

A POPULAR MAYOR DOES WHAT HE MUST

19. (C) TARAPOTO MAYOR DANIEL CORAL IS A POPULAR MAN WITH UNBOUNDED OPTIMISM. REELECTED IN JANUARY MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WITH 17,000 VOTES FOR HIS ACCION POPULAR SLATE VERSUS 5,000 FOR HIS NEAREST RIVAL, HE CLAIMS THAT 92 PERCENT OF MUNICIPAL

COSTS ARE RAISED LOCALLY. USED TO RECEIVING
 "ALMOST NOTHING FROM THE GOVERNMENT" IN LIMA,
 CORAL PROUDLY TOLD POLOFF HE HAD PAVED FIVE
 KILOMETERS OF ROADS AND LAID EIGHT KILOMETERS OF
 DRAINAGE IN 1992 BY HOLDING 20 TO 30 BARBEQUES,
 AND SAID AT LEAST ONE COOKOUT IS SCHEDULED EVERY
 WEEKEND OF THE YEAR. CORAL DISMISSED SUBVERSIVE
 ACTIVITY OUT OF HAND AND PROMISED THAT WITH
 U.S. AID HE COULD PUT ALL OF TARAPOTO'S YOUTH
 INTO PUBLIC WORKS SO THAT THEY WOULD BE TOO
 TIRED TO GET INTO NARCOTIC OR POLITICAL MISCHIEF
 AT THE END OF THE DAY. WITH 30,000 PEOPLE

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 LIVING IN 32 SHANTY TOWNS AROUND TARAPOTO, HE
 ADMITTED THAT LACK OF RESOURCES [MADE YOUTHS
 TURN TO COCA GROWING, NARCOTRAFFICKING,
 SUBVERSION OR ALL THE ABOVE IN ORDER TO MAKE A
 LIVING.

KING AGRICULTURE IS DYING

20. (C) CORAL'S COMPLAINTS ABOUT CENTRAL
 GOVERNMENT NEGLECT WAS LARGELY ECHOED BY SAN
 MARTIN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT PRESIDENT GONZALO
 VILLAVICENCIO. KNOWN AS "EL CHARO" (THE
 MEXICAN) FOR HIS HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE,

VILLAVICENCIO ESTIMATED THAT 70% OF SAN MARTIN'S
 470,000 POPULATION WERE RURAL AND ENGAGED
 PRIMARILY IN AGRICULTURE.

UNCLASIFIED
 [REDACTED]
 UNCLASIFIED

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ACTION SCT-03

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-17	AGRE-00	AID-01	ARA-01	A-01	CA-02
	CCO-00	CEQ-01	CG-00	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00	C-01
	DEAE-00	OASY-00	DINT-05	DODE-00	DOEE-00	DS-00	EB-01
	OIGO-01	E-01	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	HA-09	H-01	IMMC-01
	INM-02	INR-00	INSE-00	IO-19	JUSE-00	LAB-04	L-03
	ADS-00	M-01	NRCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	NSF-01	OES-09
	OIC-02	OIS-01	OMB-01	PA-01	PM-02	PRS-01	P-01
	RPCS-01	SIL-00	SNP-00	SP-00	SR-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	STR-17	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	USSS-00	ASDS-01	EPAE-00
	RPE-01	/114W					

-----A6999A 130149Z /38

R 122133Z MAR 93
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6639
INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PTER, PHUM, SNAR, SENV, PE

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21. (U) THIS MAKES AGRICULTURE THE KEY SECTOR
IN SAN MARTIN'S ECONOMY AND SOCIETY -- WHICH WAS
UNFORTUNATE BECAUSE AGRICULTURE IN SAN MARTIN IS
IN SERIOUS TROUBLE. VILLAVICENCIO INVITED
POLOFF TO A MEETING (GRIPE SESSION) WITH LEADERS
OF THE RICE, CORN, AND CATTLE GROWERS

ASSOCIATIONS (AMONG OTHERS). ABLE TO GROW NEARLY ANY FRUIT, VEGETABLE OR GRAIN CROP, PLUS BLESSED WITH PLENTIFUL CATTLE LAND, THE CENTRAL HUALLAGA HAS ONE VERY POOR LAND LINK OVER THE ANDES TO THE MARKETS ON THE COASTS AND NONE THROUGH THE JUNGLE TO POTENTIAL MARKETS IN BRAZIL. CURRENTLY, LAND TRAVEL TO LIMA IS VIA CHICLAYO, A DISTANCE OF 1,500 KILOMETERS AND FIVE DAYS AWAY, DEPENDING ON ROAD CONDITIONS AND THE WEATHER. LARGE RICE CROPS IN THE PAST FEW YEARS ROTTED IN THE HOT SELVA SUN BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT COMPETE WITH ASIAN RICE PRICES - IT WAS CHEAPER TO SHIP RICE HALF WAY ROUND THE WORLD THAN FLY AN HOUR OVER THE ANDES TO LIMA. GASANSA, THE CATTLE RANCHERS ASSOCIATION, SAID THAT LACK OF PROFITABLE MARKETS HAD MEANT THE CATTLE HERDS WERE DOWN TO 4,000 HEAD IN 1992 FROM 120,000 HEAD IN 1985. THE 1991 COLLAPSE OF STATE LENDING BANKS THAT HAD PROVIDED CHEAP CREDIT TO FARMERS WAS AN ADDITIONAL BLOW TO THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. ALL THE ASSOCIATIONS EXCEPT ONE DEMANDED THAT LIMA CONTINUE PROTECTING THEIR MARKETS WITH PROTECTIVE TARRIFS. MAISELVA, THE CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION CLAIMED TARRIFS WERE NEEDED TO KEEP PRICES ABOVE

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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USD 250 FOR SELVA-GROWN CORN TO COMPETE. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO COMPETE THEIR 3-4 TON PER HECTARE PRODUCTIVITY AT USD 250 AGAINST THE 12 TON PER HECTARE PRODUCTIVITY AT USD 100 COSTS OF AMERICAN FARMERS. IF THE GOP "BOWED DOWN" TO IMF REQUIREMENTS AND RESCINDED THE TARRIFS, NONE OF THE LEGITIMATE GROWERS AND RANCHERS WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE ENDS MEET.

22. (U) THE UPSHOT OF ALL THIS BAD NEWS WAS THAT AT PRESENT THE ONLY VIABLE CROP WAS COCA (AND AQUACULTURE, PER THE SHRIMP FARMERS WHO APOLOGETICALLY MUMBLED THAT THEY WERE DOING QUITE NICELY.) ANECDOTES WERE THROWN AROUND OF FARMERS FORCED TO PLANT COCA TO MAKE MONEY TO FEED HIS FAMILY. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE SCOPE OF COCA, NO TWO ESTIMATES COINCIDED. THE GROWERS DID, HOWEVER, AGREE THAT COCA WAS NOT NEARLY AS

PROFITABLE AS IT ONCE HAD BEEN. MANY COCA GROWERS NEAR TARAPOTO HAVE SWITCHED TO MORE PROFITABLE PARTIAL PROCESSING OF COCA RATHER THAN SELLING DRIED COCA LEAF BECAUSE THIS WAS BARELY PROFITABLE. CALLING CURRENT U.S. AID FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT "A DROP IN THE BUCKET" THAT BELIED ANY SERIOUS EFFORT IN THIS REGARD, THE SELVA MAESTRA AGRARIAN FEDERATION (FASMA) - A MILITANT LEFTIST UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION - WAS ADAMANT. MOST, BUT BY NO MEANS ALL, FARMERS DESPARATELY WANTED TO GROW NON-COCA CROPS BUT COULD NOT DUE TO ECONOMIC REALITIES. GIVE US REAL AID, THEY STATED - CHEAP LONG TERM CREDIT,

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VIABLE COST EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND A MARKET INFORMATION NETWORK - AND COCA WILL INSTANTLY BECOME MORE MANAGEABLE FOR U.S. LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS.

THE ENVIRONMENT IS BEING MUGGED

23. (U) VILLAVICENCIO, FASM
A, THE JOURNALISTS,
THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND OTHERS AGREED ON ONE OTHER POINT - THE SAN MARTIN JUNGLE IS BEING MUGGED, AND THE CULPRITS ARE THE COCA GROWERS. ONE OF THE FEEDER RIVERS SUPPLYING TARAPOTO WITH WATER RAN COMPLETELY DRY FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER LAST YEAR. GEN. BELLIDO REPORTEDLY WAS CONVINCED OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE WATER SITUATION THAT HE IS SAID TO BE PLANNING TO USE THE MILITARY TO CLEAR COCA GROWERS FROM THE HEAD WATERSHED AREAS OF THE LOCAL RIVERS. THE REMOTE HIGH JUNGLE WATERSHED AREAS ARE INCREASINGLY STRIPPED BURNED AND PLANTED WITH COCA BY NEW

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 GROWERS LOOKING FOR SAFE PLANTATION AREAS OR
 FORCED INTO THESE AREAS BY THE SATURATION OF
 OTHER SUITABLE COCA GROWING LAND. OVER A
 MILLION ACRES OF JUNGLE HAVE BEEN DEVASTATED,

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ACCORDING TO VILLAVICENCIO. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GROWING SEASON, SLASH AND BURN FARM SMOKE REPORTEDLY BECOMES SO HEAVY THAT AIR TRAFFIC AND COMMERCIAL AIR SERVICE IN THE SELVA REGION ARE AFFECTED ON MOST DAYS OR CLOSED DOWN ALL TOGETHER ON OCCASION.

24. (C) USAID WAS SCORED BY A [REDACTED] BIOLOGIST LIVING IN TARAPOTO FOR UNSOUND ECOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT. HE CLAIMED THAT THE PONAZA VALLEY, WHERE USAID CURRENTLY HAS AN ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROJECT IS PERU'S ONLY "DRY SELVA MICRO-ENVIRONMENT" AND IS THE HOME OF A TURTLE SPECIES FOUND NO WHERE ELSE IN PERU. THE SCIENTIST WAS TROUBLED THAT INSUFFICIENT SAFEGUARDS WERE IN PLACE TO PROTECT THE PONASA VALLEY'S ECOLOGY. HE IS CURRENTLY STUDYING A UNIQUE FROG THAT HAD ONLY BEEN FOUND IN THE MOUNTAIN AREAS NEAR TARAPOTO. COMMENT: USAID HAS SPOKEN WITH THE BIOLOGIST AND IS AWARE OF HIS CONCERNS. USAID IS NOT WORKING IN AREAS OF THE PONAZA WHERE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIVE AND MAINTAINS STRICT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION MEASURES. USAID WILL CONDUCT AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT LATER THIS YEAR AS PART OF PRE-IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES FOR THE SELVA ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION PROJECT. END COMMENT.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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25. (C) COMMENT: TARAPOTO IS BETTER OFF THAN MOST JUNGLE TOWNS DESPITE ITS SHARE OF ECONOMIC AND SECURITY PROBLEMS. HOST TO THE REGIONAL POLITICAL-MILITARY COMMAND, IT IS RELATIVELY BETTER PROTECTED FROM TERRORISTS AND THE EXCESSES OF THE NARCO TRADE. IN MRTA RATHER SENDERO'S OPERATIONAL AREA, IT HAS ALSO BEEN SPARED THE SAVAGERY OF SENDERO'S MORE VIOLENT NATURE. BUT THE REGIONAL ECONOMY IS DEPENDENT ON THE COCA TRADE AND VIABLE ALTERNATIVES, MUCH DESIRED EVEN BY THE COCA GROWERS, ARE NOT YET A REALITY. THE MUCH PRAISED REGIONAL MILITARY COMMANDER GEN. BELLIDO TOLD US BLUNTLY THAT, IN HIS VIEW, POLITICAL VIOLENCE WILL CONTINUE TO PLAGUE SAN MARTIN AS LONG AS THERE IS A

NARCOTICS TRADE. WE AGREE.

BRAYSHAW



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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a
*** Current Classification *** [REDACTED]