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Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: EXDIS  
Document Number: 1993LIMA03389

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ACTION SS-00

INFO LOG-00 OASY-00 TEDE-00 ADS-00 /000W  
-----ABACDB 252159Z /38

R 252155Z MAR 93  
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7000  
INFO DIA WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: PTER, PINS, PINR, US, PE  
SUBJECT: WATCHING SENDERO FROM THE SIDELINES

- 1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
- 2. SUMMARY: FORMER DINCOTE CHIEF GEN. KETIN VIDAL, WHO LED THE CAPTURE OF ABIMAEEL GUZMAN, TOLD US 1993 WILL BE CRUCIAL IN SENDERO

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LUMINOSO'S EVOLUTION. VIDAL SAID RECENT SL ATTACKS INDICATE SL HAS AT THE VERY LEAST A TEMPORARY CENTRAL COMMITTEE. WHO IS IN CHARGE IS UNCLEAR; HE HELD OUT POSSIBILITY SL HAD HIGH LEVEL CADRE UNKNOWN TO THE GOP, AND THAT LEADERSHIP WAS DECENTRALIZED FOR ITS OWN PROTECTION. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT SHIFT OF SL ATTENTION FROM LIMA TO COUNTRYSIDE, ALTHOUGH HE HIGHLIGHTED RECENT SL ACTIVITY IN THE PIURA SIERRA. THERE WAS DEBATE IN SL OVER THE TARATA CARBOMBING, AS WELL AS INDICATIONS SL WOULD ADOPT A MORE "POLITICAL" APPROACH IN

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LIMA. DISRUPTION OF SL'S MILITARY APPARATUS IN LIMA MAY LEAD TO FEWER BUT WELL-PLANNED ATTACKS. VIDAL SAID SL RETAINED SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESSES THE GOP MIGHT EXPLOIT: THE ABSENCE OF A VISIONARY LEADER, A LESS INTIMIDATED POPULACE, AND SOME DEMORALIZATION WITHIN SL. THE GOP HAS IMPROVED SOME TACTICS SINCE 1990, BUT STILL LACKS A COHERENT STRATEGY. IT WILL BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE PRESIDENT TO MAKE GOOD HIS PROMISE TO DEFEAT THE MRTA BY JULY 1993, AND SL BY 1995. VIDAL IS OBVIOUSLY FRUSTRATED HE LACKS A DIRECT ROLE IN COUNTERTERRORISM; HE KEEPS HIS HAND IN, HOWEVER, IN THE HOPES THAT HE WILL GET BACK. END SUMMARY.

3. IN A MARCH 17 MEETING WITH POLCOUNS, POLICE INSPECTOR GENERAL AND EX-COUNTERTERRORISM (DINCOTE) CHIEF KETIN VIDAL SAID HE CONTINUED TO WATCH SENDERO, ALBEIT FROM BEHIND THE SCENES.

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 WHILE HIS POSITION AS POLICE INSPECTOR GENERAL HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH COUNTERTERRORISM, HE WAS INFORMED ABOUT DINCOTE ACTIVITIES, AND EVEN PARTICIPATED IN INTERROGATIONS OF CAPTURED SENDERISTAS. OBVIOUSLY FRUSTRATED HE HAD NO GREATER OFFICIAL COUNTERTERRORISM ROLE, HE OFFERED HIS READOUT ON WHERE SENDERO WAS SIX MONTHS AFTER THE GUZMAN CAPTURE, STRESSING THAT THIS WAS HIS PERSONAL INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS.

4. VIDAL SAID THAT STARTING IN DECEMBER 1992, SL'S ATTACKS SHOWED GREATER COHERENCE AND DIRECTION. HE MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY THE JANUARY CARBOMBINGS OF THE JAPANESE AND CHINESE EMBASSIES AND IBM, PLUS THE DECEMBER ASSASSINATION OF CGTP HEAD PEDRO HUILCA. IN HIS VIEW, THESE ATTACKS MEANT THAT SL HAD ESTABLISHED AT LEAST A TEMPORARY REPLACEMENT FOR THOSE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS, INCLUDING GUZMAN, WHO HAD BEEN CAPTURED IN SEPTEMBER 1992.

5. WHILE OSCAR RAMIREZ DURAND ("FELICIANO") MIGHT BE THE NEW LEADER OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, VIDAL SAID THERE WERE OTHER POSSIBILITIES. THESE INCLUDED OSTAP MOROTE

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BARRIONUEVO, TERESA DURAN ARAUJO, ANGELICA SALAS LA CRUZ, OR MORE "POLITICAL" TYPES SUCH AS FRANCISCO TULICH MORALES AND EDMUNDO COX BEAUZEVILLE. IN ADDITION, VIDAL WARNED THAT THERE COULD BE OTHER HIGH LEVEL SL CADRE THAT WERE UNKNOWN TO US. THIS HAD BEEN THE CASE WITH

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CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS INCHAUSTEGUI AND CARDENAS, WHO HAD BEEN UNKNOWN UNTIL THEIR CAPTURE ALONG WITH GUZMAN.

6. NOR WOULD SL AUTOMATICALLY PLACE ITS HIGHEST-RANKING AND BEST-KNOWN PERSONNEL IN A CENTRAL COMMITTEE, KNOWING THAT THEY WOULD BE TARGETTED BY THE GOP. SL HAD LESSER-KNOWN BUT EXPERIENCED CADRE THAT COULD CARRY OUT THE

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FUNCTIONS OF COORDINATING THE DIFFERENT REGIONAL COMMITTEES. PERHAPS THERE WAS A COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP, PERHAPS EVEN A SERIES OF COMMITTEES, SO AS NOT TO RISK SIMULTANEOUS CAPTURE AGAIN OF ALL THE IMPORTANT SL MEMBERS.

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7. ALSO IMPORTANT WAS WHAT HAD NOT HAPPENED. THERE WAS, VIDAL SAID, NO EVIDENCE THAT SL WAS BREAKING UP INTO WARRING FACTIONS. (COMMENT: FACTIONS UNDOUBTEDLY EXIST, BUT VIDAL'S POINT IS THAT ANY INTERNAL TENSIONS ARE UNDER CONTROL FOR NOW.)

8. POLCOUNS ASKED IF SL MIGHT SHIFT ITS ATTENTION FROM LIMA TO THE COUNTRYSIDE. VIDAL SAID IT WAS NOT CLEAR THIS WAS HAPPENING, ALTHOUGH IT MIGHT. IN LIMA SL CONTINUED TO CARRY OUT ATTACKS, AND CLEARLY IT HAD NOT ABANDONED THE OUTLYING SLUMS (PUEBLOS JOVENES). IN PIURA, HOWEVER, SL WAS CONTINUING TO ORGANIZE IN THE HUANCABAMBA AND AYABACA HIGHLANDS. SL HAD KILLED SOME 16 POLICEMEN THERE IN A SINGLE AMBUSH IN FEBRUARY, AND VIDAL EXPECTED THE SITUATION TO DETERIORATE FURTHER. HE COMPLAINED THAT THE GOP WAS NOT REACTING TO THE SL THREAT IN PIURA.

9. VIDAL SAID THERE WERE SOME INDICATIONS THAT SL WAS SHIFTING TO A MORE "POLITICAL" AND LESS "MILITARY" STRATEGY. HE CLAIMED THAT THERE WAS CRITICISM WITHIN SL OF THE JULY 1992 TARATA CARBOMBING IN MIRAFLORES (WHICH CAUSED SOME 30 CIVILIAN DEATHS), DUE TO ITS NEGATIVE PROPAGANDA IMPACT IN PERU AND OVERSEAS. HE EXPLAINED THE RELATIVELY INEFFECTIVE SL ARMED STRIKES JUST BEFORE THE NOVEMBER 1992 AND THE JANUARY 1993

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ELECTIONS AS A REALISTIC SL RESPONSE TO REALITY. SL WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO DISRUPT THOSE ELECTIONS. IT MANIFESTED ITS OPPOSITION TO THE ELECTIONS THROUGH ASSASSINATIONS AND ARMED STRIKES, BUT DID NOT RISK FAILURE BY ATTEMPTING AN ALL-OUT DISRUPTION OF ELECTIONS.

10. CONTINUING TO LIMIT SL'S OPTIONS WERE ITS AVAILABLE RESOURCES. WHILE NATIONWIDE SL PROBABLY HAD "THOUSANDS" IN ITS RANKS (HE REFUSED TO BE MORE SPECIFIC), IN LIMA THE POLICE HAD BROKEN UP AT LEAST 12 SL MILITARY UNITS ("DESTACAMENTOS") IN THE LAST YEAR. PARTICULARLY HARD HIT IN LIMA WAS SOCORRO POPULAR (WHICH HAD BEGUN AS AN SL SUPPORT ORGANIZATION), WHICH LOST ITS LEADERSHIP PLUS 10 OF ITS ESTIMATED 50 DESTACAMENTOS. VIDAL SAID SL'S MOST LIKELY DIRECTION IN LIMA WAS TO INCREASE ITS LESS VISIBLE ORGANIZING EFFORTS IN THE PUEBLOS JOVENES, UNIVERSITIES, AND SCHOOLS, AND TO CARRY OUT PERIODIC ATTACKS -- FEWER BUT WELL-PLANNED -- TO DEMONSTRATE ITS STRENGTH.

11. SL NONETHELESS HAD THREE MAJOR WEAKNESSES THAT THE GOP COULD EXPLOIT. THE FIRST WAS THAT THERE WAS UNLIKELY TO BE A REAL REPLACEMENT FOR GUZMAN. ONLY GUZMAN -- "A GENIUS OF EVIL" -- HAD PROVEN HIS ABILITY TO TAKE MAOIST THEORY AND MAKE IT WORK IN PERU. AS EFFECTIVE AS OTHER SL LEADERS MIGHT BE, IT WAS NOT CLEAR THEY HAD THE STRATEGIC VISION AND GENIUS TO LEAD SL.

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12. THE SECOND WEAKNESS WAS THAT SL HAD LOST CONSIDERABLE ABILITY TO INTIMIDATE, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASSES. THE DANGER, OF COURSE, WAS THAT THE GOP MIGHT UNDERESTIMATE SL.

13. THE THIRD WEAKNESS WAS SOME SL MEMBERS HAD BEGUN TO LOSE FAITH IN THEIR MOVEMENT. VIDAL CLAIMED THAT SL PRISONERS WERE NOW MORE LIKELY TO LOSE HEART AND TO COOPERATE WITH THE GOP ("CAPITULAR") ONCE THEY WERE DETAINED.

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14. VIDAL SAID THE GOP COULD DEFEAT SL. THE YEAR 1993 WOULD BE DECISIVE, SINCE SL WAS AT ITS MOST VULNERABLE TO CONTINUED GOP COUNTERATTACK. THE REAL CHALLENGE FOR THE GOP, VIDAL SAID, WAS

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TO CONFRONT SL IN THE POLITICAL, IDEOLOGICAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ARENAS. IT WAS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR THE GOP TO REGAIN CONTROL OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WHICH SL HAD SO MANY TEACHERS. HE CONTENDED THAT THERE WAS, FOR

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VARIOUS REASONS, A SOCIAL BASE THAT PRODUCED POTENTIAL SL MEMBERS. THAT HAD TO BE AS MUCH A TARGET FOR THE GOP AS ARRESTING THE SL

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LEADERSHIP. WHETHER THE GOP WOULD REALIZE THIS WAS QUESTIONABLE. THERE WAS NO REAL COORDINATION OF COUNTERTERRORISM ACTIVITIES BY THE ARMED FORCES, POLICE, AND CIVILIAN AGENCIES NATIONWIDE. SINCE 1990 THE GOP HAD IMPROVED SOME TACTICS, SUCH AS RONDAS, URBAN SWEEPS, ETC., BUT THERE WAS NO OVERALL STRATEGY. IT WOULD BE NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE PRESIDENT TO MAKE GOOD ON HIS PROMISE TO ELIMINATE THE MRTA BY JULY 1993, AND SL BY 1995.

15. COMMENT: WHILE HIS EXPERIENCE LIES MOSTLY WITH SL'S URBAN OPERATIONS AND LEADERSHIP, VIDAL IS PROBABLY THE GOP'S BEST COUNTERTERRORISM EXPERT. IRONICALLY, HE HAD HAD NO COUNTERTERRORISM EXPERIENCE IN 1991 WHEN, AS A MONTESINOS ALLY, HE TOOK COMMAND OF DINCOTE. CLEARLY VIDAL HOPES TO HAVE A GREATER ROLE IN COUNTERTERRORISM WHENEVER HIS CURRENT ASSIGNMENT ENDS.

16. VIDAL'S ANALYSIS STRIKES US AS BALANCED AND WELL-REASONED. WHILE THERE REMAIN SIGNIFICANT SL VULNERABILITIES, SL MAY BE RECOVERING FROM THE SOME OF THE DAMAGE INFLICTED BY DINCOTE IN 1992. AS EMBASSY REVIEWS OF STATISTICS ON VIOLENCE SHOW, SL HAS KEPT UP THE PACE OF ATTACKS AND ASSASSINATIONS SINCE SEPTEMBER

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1992. WHILE SL'S LONGTERM LEADERSHIP PROBLEM MAY ULTIMATELY SINK IT, THE GOP IS NOT PRESSING ITS ADVANTAGES AS WELL AS IT COULD. BRAYSHAW##

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