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TAGS: PTER, ASEC, PGOV, PHUM, SNAR, CASC, PREF, KPRP, PE
SUBJECT: SENDERO LUMINOSO: NEW TACTICS BUT SAME OLD
THREATS TO USG INTERESTS

REFS: A) LIMA 8527 B) LIMA 7077

(U) CLASSIFIED BY HEATHER HODGES, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES,
EMBASSY LIMA. REASON: 1.5 (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY. SENDERO LUMINOSO (SHINING PATH - SL) IS
ASSASSINATING FEWER CIVILIANS THAN IT HAS IN THE PAST AS IT

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: DONALD A. JOHNSTON
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PLACES GREATER EMPHASIS ON REORGANIZING, RECRUITING AND BROADENING ITS POLITICAL APPEAL. WE DO NOT EXPECT THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION TO RECOUP MUCH FROM THE LOSSES IT HAS SUFFERED SINCE THE GOP'S 1992 CAPTURE OF FOUNDER ABIMAE GUZMAN, BUT SL'S SHREWDER POLITICAL STRATEGY MAY BOOST ITS STAYING POWER. SL STILL REPRESENTS A CHRONIC THREAT TO PERUVIANS AND EXPATRIATES ALIKE AND CONTINUES TO HINDER USG GOALS OF PROMOTING DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, COMBATING DRUG TRAFFICKING, FOSTERING BILATERAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT, AND PROTECTING AMERICANS IN PERU. END SUMMARY.

 SENDERO TAKES AIM AT FEWER CIVILIANS...

2. (U) SENDERO LUMINOSO (SHINING PATH - SL) HAS A WELL-DESERVED REPUTATION FOR BEING ONE OF THE MOST BRUTAL TERRORIST GROUPS IN THE WORLD. IN HIS 1988 "EL DIARIO" INTERVIEW, SL FOUNDER ABIMAE GUZMAN PRONOUNCED THAT

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 "REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE IS A UNIVERSAL LAW WITHOUT ANY EXCEPTIONS." SINCE 1980 ALMOST 30,000 PERUVIANS HAVE DIED AS A RESULT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE, MOST OF IT INFLICTED BY SL MEMBERS. SL FREQUENTLY MURDERED CIVILIANS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND PERPETRATED NUMEROUS INDISCRIMINATE BOMBINGS IN URBAN AREAS. SL VIOLENCE WAS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED UNTIL AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 1992 CAPTURE OF GUZMAN, BUT FIVE YEARS LATER, SENDERO CONTINUES TO CARRY OUT NUMEROUS TERRORIST ATTACKS.

3. (SBU) SENDERO LUMINOSO, HOWEVER, APPEARS TO BE CHANGING ITS TACTICS. VETERAN SENDERO WATCHERS NOTE THAT THE TERRORIST GROUP IS NOW TARGETING FEWER CIVILIANS DURING ITS ATTACKS. SL CADRES HAVE REPORTEDLY CONCEDED IN SOME OF THEIR MORE RECENT PUBLIC HARANGUES THAT THE PARTY MADE SERIOUS MISTAKES IN THE PAST BY EMPLOYING VIOLENCE THAT ALIENATED THEIR POTENTIAL BASES OF SUPPORT. SUCH AN ADMISSION WOULD HAVE BEEN UNTHINKABLE JUST A FEW YEARS AGO. SENDERO COLUMNS ARE PRIMARILY ENGAGING MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THE CIVILIAN SELF-DEFENSE COMMITTEES. SL COLUMNS CONTINUE TO EXTORT "WAR TAXES" OR STEAL SUPPLIES FROM CAMPESINOS, BUT THEY GENERALLY ESCHEW THE WIDESPREAD ASSASSINATIONS WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY CHARACTERIZED THE GROUP.

4. (U) THIS APPARENT SHIFT IN SL TACTICS IS BORNE OUT BY

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AN OVERALL REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF CIVILIANS KILLED IN TERRORIST ATTACKS. THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY AND PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT (DESCO), PERU'S LEADING THINK TANK ON TERRORISM, COUNTED 30 CIVILIAN DEATHS RELATED TO POLITICAL VIOLENCE DURING THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF 1997 COMPARED TO 88 DURING THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF 1996 (OR 139 FOR ALL OF [REDACTED])

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1996). THE DROP IS EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT GIVEN DESCO'S FINDING THAT THE NUMBER OF TERRORIST ATTACKS IN PERU IS RUNNING ONLY SLIGHTLY BEHIND LAST YEAR'S NUMBER OF INCIDENTS. DESCO COUNTED 381 TERRORIST ATTACKS IN THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF 1997 VERSUS 383 FOR THE SAME TIME FRAME IN 1996.

5. (U) SENDERO CONTINUES TO TARGET MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY FORCES, HOWEVER. DESCO REGISTERED 14 POLICE DEATHS RELATED TO TERRORIST ATTACKS DURING THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF 1997 COMPARED TO 15 POLICE DEATHS DURING ALL OF 1996. MOST RECENTLY, SL TERRORISTS GUNNED DOWN THE UPPER HUALLAGA COUNTERNARCOTICS POLICE CHIEF AND TWO OTHER NATIONAL POLICE OFFICERS AS THEY WERE DRIVING FROM AGUAYTIA TO THEIR BASE IN TINGO MARIA ON OCTOBER 18. THE ATTACK DOES NOT APPEAR PREMEDITATED, BUT RATHER THE POLICE CAR RAN INTO AN SL ROADBLOCK AT MIDDAY. SL CADRES WERE RANDOMLY COLLECTING "WAR TAXES" FROM MOTORISTS, BUT DID NOT HARM ANY CIVILIANS.

...WHILE THE PARTY REORGANIZES AND RECRUITS

6. (SBU) SENDERO LUMINOSO APPEARS TO BE PRIORITIZING POLITICAL REORGANIZATION OVER MILITARY ATTACKS, ACCORDING TO SL WATCHERS. WITH THE "CORRELATION OF FORCES" CLEARLY FAVORING THE GOP SINCE THE 1992 CAPTURE OF SL'S ALL-IMPORTANT FOUNDER AND NUMEROUS OTHER PARTY LEADERS, SL HAS BEEN ENDEAVORING TO RESTORE ITS BASES.. CONTINUED GOP

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ARRESTS OF MOSTLY MID- AND LOW-LEVEL SENDERO MILITANTS HAVE COMPLICATED SL'S ONGOING EFFORTS TO RECONSTITUTE ITS INTERNAL ORGANIZATION. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE SOME EARLY SIGNS THAT SL IS MAKING SOME HEADWAY, AT LEAST IN AREAS WHERE IT HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN STRONG. SENDERO CADRES DETONATED BOMBS FIVE MINUTES APART IN FRONT OF ELECTORAL OFFICES IN WIDELY SEPARATED LIMA SLUMS ON SEPTEMBER 24, FOR

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EXAMPLE. RECENT INCURSIONS IN AREAS AROUND TINGO MARIA IN THE UPPER HUALLAGA VALLEY ALSO APPEAR TO BE WELL-COORDINATED.

7. (U) SL HAS TRADITIONALLY REGARDED COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS AS "ENEMIES OF THE REVOLUTION" WHOSE CHARITABLE WORKS ALLOWED "CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION" TO PROSPER. SL CADRES KILLED A NUMBER OF LIMA SHANTYTOWN LEADERS, INCLUDING MARIA ELENA MOYANO OF VILLA EL SALVADOR IN 1992 AND PASCUALA ROSADO OF HUAYCAN IN 1996. SUCH MURDERS, HOWEVER, SET BACK SENDERO'S PROSPECTS CONSIDERABLY BECAUSE THEY ALIENATED THE VERY PEOPLE THE PARTY CLAIMED TO REPRESENT. MOYANO, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS BECOME A SYMBOL OF PERUVIANS' RESISTANCE AGAINST SENDERO; VILLA EL SALVADOR RECENTLY NAMED ITS NEW AMPHITHEATER AFTER HER.

8. (SBU) MORE RECENTLY, SL APPEARS TO BE REVISING ITS TREATMENT OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS BY INFILTRATING RATHER THAN ATTACKING THEM. VILLA EL SALVADOR MAYOR MIGUEL

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 AZCUETA, WHO WAS A VICTIM OF AN UNSUCCESSFUL SL ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT IN JUNE 1993, TOLD POLOFFS THAT SENDERO MILITANTS ARE TRYING TO RADICALIZE EXISTING CIVIC GROUPS BY CONVERTING SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES INTO MORE POLITICALLY CONFRONTATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. OTHER COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS NOTE THAT SENDERO MEMBERS ARE EXPLOITING SHANTYTOWN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FOR RECRUITING PURPOSES. INTERESTINGLY, A NUMBER OF SENDERISTAS RECENTLY ARRESTED WERE WORKING IN COMMUNITY KITCHENS, SCHOOLS, OR PARENTS' ORGANIZATIONS WHERE THEY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE LARGE NUMBERS OF MARGINALIZED PERUVIANS.

9. (SBU) RATHER THAN ACTING LIKE THE "VANGUARD OF THE REVOLUTION," A WEAKENED SENDERO LUMINOSO SEEMS CONTENT FOR THE MOMENT TO JUMP ONTO POPULAR BANDWAGONS. EARLIER THIS YEAR, SENDERO CADRES BOMBED OFFICES OF A CHILEAN ELECTRIC COMPANY AFTER LIMA SHANTYTOWN RESIDENTS PROTESTED THE COMPANY'S EFFORTS TO REPLACE UNDERGROUND WIRES WITH OVERHEAD ONES. SENDERO CADRES ALSO INFILTRATED LAND INVASION MOVEMENTS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF LIMA, POLITICIZING SQUATTERS AND PROPELLING CONFRONTATIONS WITH POLICE. WHEN SL TERRORISTS BOMBED A POLICE STATION ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF LIMA ON MAY 15, THEY LEFT LEAFLETS EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY WITH STREET VENDORS WHO WERE THEN RESISTING THE LIMA MUNICIPALITY'S EFFORTS TO RELOCATE THEM.

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 "MINDS THAT HATE"

10. (U) DESPITE THE AFOREMENTIONED SHIFTS IN SENDERO
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 TACTICS, THE PARTY REMAINS A BRUTAL TERRORIST ORGANIZATION.
 THE STATISTICAL DROP IN THE NUMBER OF SL ASSASSINATIONS OF
 CIVILIANS DOES NOT DIMINISH THE SENSELESSNESS OF THE
 VIOLENCE SL CONTINUES TO EMPLOY. IN MAY, FOR EXAMPLE, SL
 TERRORISTS SHOT AND KILLED THE 38-YEAR OLD SISTER OF A
 POLICE OFFICER IN A VILLAGE NEAR TINGO MARIA; WHEN HER FOUR-
 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER STARTED CRYING, THEY ALSO SHOT AND KILLED
 THE CHILD. IN ADDITION TO ATTACKING MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY
 FORCES, SENDERO STILL TARGETS CIVILIANS WHO PARTICIPATE IN
 SELF-DEFENSE COMMITTEES OR WHO HOLD GOVERNMENT OFFICE,
 FORMER SL MEMBERS WHO COOPERATED WITH THE GOP UNDER THE
 REPENTANCE LAW, PERCEIVED GOVERNMENT INFORMANTS, LEADERS OF
 INTERNALLY-DISPLACED PERSONS, AND ENGINEERS AND HEAVY
 MACHINERY OPERATORS WHO WORK ON INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN
 AREAS WHERE SL IS STILL STRONG. FREQUENTLY, SL COMMITS SUCH
 SELECTIVE ASSASSINATIONS BEFORE FORCIBLY ASSEMBLED CROWDS.

 "...BUT WHEN YOU GO CARRYING PICTURES OF CHAIRMAN MAO"

11. (U) SENDERO WATCHERS DO NOT BELIEVE THE TERRORIST
 ORGANIZATION CAN SUCCEED IN BROADENING ITS POLITICAL APPEAL,
 DESPITE THE APPARENT CHANGE IN SL TACTICS. UNIVERSITY
 STUDENTS, EVEN ON THE CAMPUSES WHICH WERE ONCE SL HAVENS,
 ARE GENERALLY FOCUSED ON FINDING WORK RATHER THAN ENGAGING
 IN RADICAL POLITICS. MOREOVER, EVEN THE MOST DISAFFECTED
 PERUVIANS HAVE LONG MEMORIES OF SL'S TERRIBLE HISTORY OF
 VIOLENCE AND ARE UNLIKELY TO BE EASILY SWAYED BY RECENT

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ADJUSTMENTS IN SL TACTICS. SL'S MAOIST INSURGENCY CURRENTLY THRIVES ONLY IN SHRINKING AREAS OF ISOLATED AND RUGGED TERRAIN. ONGOING SL ACTIVITY, AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS, IS STRONGEST IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF SAN MARTIN, AYACUCHO, HUANUCO, JUNIN, AND IN THE SLUMS OF LIMA. MOREOVER, SL IS NO LONGER IN A POSITION TO COERCE THE LEVELS OF SUPPORT IT OBTAINED IN THE PAST. WELL-ORGANIZED SELF-DEFENSE COMMITTEES IN AYACUCHO, FOR EXAMPLE, BOAST THAT THEY NO LONGER FEAR SENDERO.

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 STILL A LONG-TERM THREAT TO USG INTERESTS IN PERU

12. (C) ALTHOUGH ONLY A SHADOW OF ITS MENACING SELF PRIOR TO THE 1992 CAPTURE OF ITS FOUNDER, SENDERO LUMINOSO STILL POSES A CHRONIC THREAT TO USG INTERESTS IN PERU:

--- THE GOP CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN EMERGENCY ZONES IN 16 PERCENT OF PERU WHERE SL REMAINS MOST ACTIVE. TWENTY-THREE PERCENT OF PERUVIANS CURRENTLY LIVE IN SUCH AREAS WHERE THE MILITARY MAINTAINS LAW AND ORDER AND WHERE CIVIL LIBERTIES ARE CIRCUMSCRIBED. THE GOP ALLOWED THE CONTROVERSIAL SYSTEM OF FACELESS JUDGES TO LAPSE IN THE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY COURTS ON OCTOBER 15, BUT PERU'S COUNTERTERRORISM LAWS STILL GIVE THE MILITARY JURISDICTION OVER CIVILIANS ACCUSED OF

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 TREASON OR AGGRAVATED TERRORISM.

--- SL CADRES CONTINUE TO WORK IN CONCERT WITH DRUG TRAFFICKERS, PARTICULARLY IN THE UPPER HUALLAGA VALLEY. SL CADRES PROVIDE PROTECTION IN EXCHANGE FOR CASH, WEAPONS, AND OTHER RESOURCES PROVIDED BY DRUG RINGS. EMBASSY LIMA RECEIVED A THREAT IN SEPTEMBER, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT SL CADRES PAID BY DRUG TRAFFICKERS PLANNED TO AMBUSH NAS-FUNDED CORAH ERADICATION OPERATIONS IN WESTERN UCAYALI DEPARTMENT (REF A).

--- SL ACTIVITY COMPLICATES US-FUNDED ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. USAID FOLLOWS A RIGOROUS TRAVEL CLEARANCE PROCESS WITH THE EMBASSY AND PERUVIAN MILITARY AND POLICE DETACHMENTS IN PROGRAM AREAS. USAID ALSO CHARTERS PLANES TO REACH ITS ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN THE APURIMAC VALLEY, AVOIDING THE TAMBO-SAN FRANCISCO ROAD WHERE SL MILITANTS FREQUENTLY EXTORT "WAR TAXES." IN AUGUST, SENDERISTAS STOPPED AND BURNED A FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE VEHICLE BELONGING TO A PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT AGENCY (PEAH) SUPPORTING ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WHILE IT WAS PLYING THE ROAD BETWEEN AGUAYTIA AND TINGO MARIA (THE DRIVER WAS NOT HARMED).

--- SL IS STILL A THREAT TO FOREIGN, INCLUDING U.S., INVESTMENT. THE SUBSIDIARY OF THE FRENCH FIRM ELF HAS NOT RESUMED ITS PETROLEUM EXPLORATION WORK AT ITS JUNIN SITE AFTER SL COLUMNS EXCHANGED SOME 30 KIDNAPPED WORKERS FOR A

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RANSOM PAYMENT OF ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES IN MID-AUGUST. BECHTEL IS PLANNING TO CONSTRUCT A PIPELINE FROM THE MOBIL/SHELL CAMISEA GAS CONCESSION IN THE MADRE DE DIOS DEPARTMENT TO [REDACTED]

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THE PERUVIAN COAST OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. THE PIPELINE WILL LIKELY PASS THROUGH NORTHERN AYACUCHO, THE CRADLE OF SENDERO LUMINOSO, AND SL COLUMNS COULD VERY WELL TRY TO OBSTRUCT THE USD TWO BILLION PROJECT. SEVERAL U.S. COMPANIES, HOWEVER, HAVE MANAGED TO CONTINUE OPERATIONS DESPITE SL'S PRESENCE, INCLUDING MAPLE GAS IN THE AGUAYTIA AREA.

--- SENDERO LUMINOSO HAS NOT DIRECTLY TARGETED AMERICANS IN RECENT YEARS, BUT REMAINS IDEOLOGICALLY OPPOSED TO ALL FOREIGN INFLUENCES IN PERU. SL TERRORISTS DETONATED CAR BOMBS IN FRONT OF THE OLD U.S. EMBASSY IN LIMA IN JULY 1993 AND AT THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE IN FEBRUARY 1992, AMONG A NUMBER OF OTHER ATTACKS AGAINST U.S. INTERESTS IN PERU. OFFICIAL AMERICANS REMAIN POTENTIAL TARGETS OF SL ATTACKS AND THEIR TRAVEL IS RESTRICTED IN AREAS WHERE SENDERO REMAINS ACTIVE. INFORMATION ON RESTRICTED TRAVEL AREAS IS ALSO PROVIDED TO VISITING AND RESIDENT AMERICANS THROUGH THE CONSULAR INFORMATION SHEET.

GUZMAN/"FELICIANO" POSTSCRIPT

13. (C) SL FOUNDER ABIMAEL GUZMAN REMAINS IN AN UNDERGROUND CELL AT THE NAVAL BASE IN CALLAO, WHERE HE IS SERVING A LIFE SENTENCE. MRTA FOUNDER VICTOR POLAY, A FEW OTHER SL AND MRTA LEADERS AND ONE DRUG TRAFFICKER ARE ALSO

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SERVING LIFE SENTENCES AT THE EIGHT-CELL, MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON. THE PERSONALITY CULT GUZMAN SPUN AROUND HIMSELF PROVED TO BE SL'S ACHILLES' HEEL ONCE THE GOP FINALLY CAPTURED GUZMAN IN SEPTEMBER 1992. ACCORDING TO THE LAST ICRC REPRESENTATIVE WHO VISITED GUZMAN (PRIOR TO THE MRTA HOSTAGE CRISIS), GUZMAN SAID HE WAS RESIGNED TO THE FACT THAT HIS REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT HAD FAILED AND HE TRULY BELIEVED IN THE 1993 PEACE ACCORD HE SIGNED WITH THE GOP. THE ICRC DELEGATE OPINED THAT GUZMAN'S EGO HAD MUCH TO DO WITH HIS RESIGNATION AS THE FORMER SL LEADER FIRMLY BELIEVED THE PARTY COULD NOT SUCCEED WITHOUT HIS DIRECTION.

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14. (C) CURRENT SL LEADER OSCAR RAMIREZ DURAND (A.K.A. "FELICIANO") OSTENSIBLY PROVOKED A SPLIT IN SL RANKS BY LEADING SL CADRES DETERMINED TO FIGHT ON OVER SL MEMBERS WHO ACCEPTED GUZMAN'S 1993 VIDEOTAPED APPEAL FOR A TRUCE. SOME SL WATCHERS BELIEVE THE SCHISM WAS REAL AND WEAKENED SL CONSIDERABLY. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] TOLD POL COUNSELOR THAT HE BELIEVED THE SL TERRORISTS HE VISITS IN MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISONS ARE UNFAIRLY TARRIED BY THE ONGOING ACTIONS OF THE FOLLOWERS OF "FELICIANO." ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] WHO RECENTLY VISITED SL MEMBERS IN YANAMAYO PRISON, FORMER SL NUMBER TWO OSMAN MOROTE ASKED THAT ABIMAEEL GUZMAN BE ALLOWED TO VIDEOTAPE ANOTHER APPEAL FOR SL TERRORISTS TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS.

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15. (C) OTHER SL WATCHERS BELIEVE GUZMAN'S PRISON APPEALS FOR PEACE WERE ACTUALLY INTENDED TO HELP PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE PARTY WHILE HE AND OTHER LEADERS WERE IN JAIL AND THAT REPORTS OF A SL SPLIT ARE MERE PRESS PLAY. SL MILITANTS OUTSIDE OF JAIL, THEY ARGUE, REMAIN COMMITTED TO A LONG-TERM MAOIST POLITICAL STRATEGY BY ALL AVAILABLE MEANS WHILE SL MEMBERS IN JAIL EMBRACE THE PEACE ACCORD IN THE EXPECTATION OF RECEIVING BETTER PRISON TREATMENT. WE ARE INCLINED TO SUPPORT THE LATTER VIEW.

16. THIS CABLE IS SUBMITTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE POST REPORTING PLAN.

HODGES

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