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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	UTED-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01
	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00
	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	STR-00
	TRSE-00	USIE-00	R-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-01	DRL-02
	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/010W			

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O 221607Z SEP 00
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6503
INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR WHA/AND, WHA/PRESS, WHA/PA, WHA/OAS, TGI,
I/CAR, R/MR

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AMEMBASSY ALSO FOR PAO/IO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, PE
SUBJECT: PRAGUE SPRING IN PERUVIAN MEDIA? SIGNS OF OPENING

THIS MESSAGE IS SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE TREAT
ACCORDINGLY.

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: PRESIDENT FUJIMORI'S SEPTEMBER 16
ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW ELECTIONS AND DE-ACTIVATION OF THE
NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (SIN) ALREADY APPEARS TO BE
HAVING A HEALTHY EFFECT ON THE PERUVIAN MEDIA. NEWSPAPERS
AND TV NETWORKS THAT TILTED -- OFTEN HEAVILY --TOWARD THE
GOP IN THEIR COVERAGE ARE SHOWING UNCHARACTERISTIC BALANCE

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J. OLSON
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IN THEIR REPORTING AND A NEWFOUND WILLINGNESS TO AIR OPPOSITION VIEWS AND CRITICISM--HOWEVER MILD--OF THE GOVERNMENT. WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO DRAW DEFINITIVE CONCLUSIONS, THE REMOVAL OF DE-FACTO INTELLIGENCE CHIEF VLADIMIRO MONTESINOS AND THE PROSPECT OF NEW ELECTIONS UNDER DIFFERENT RULES FROM THE LAST MAY HAVE PERSUADED NORMALLY PRO-GOP (AND ALLEGEDLY SIN-CONTROLLED) MEDIA TO PLAY IT RELATIVELY STRAIGHT. END SUMMARY.

FREE(ER)PRESS IN THE OFFING..?

2. (SBU) PRESIDENT FUJIMORI'S SURPRISE SEPT. 16 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW ELECTIONS AND THE DEACTIVATION OF THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (SIN) SEEMS TO HAVE JOLTED PRO-GOVERNMENT PERUVIAN MEDIA OUTLETS. CRITICAL REPORTING THAT PREVIOUSLY WOULD NOT HAVE SEEN THE LIGHT OF DAY IS NOW

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GETTING RELATIVELY OBJECTIVE TREATMENT BY TRADITIONALLY PRO-GOVERNMENT (OFTEN STRIDENTLY PRO-GOVERNMENT) OUTLETS. THE CHANGE IN TONE WAS IMMEDIATE: THE DAY AFTER PRESIDENT FUJIMORI DROPPED HIS BOMBSHELL, HERETOFORE STAUNCHLY PRO-GOVERNMENT MEDIA REPORTED STRAIGHTFORWARDLY ON OPPOSITION FIGURES AND CARRIED UNUSUALLY BALANCED EDITORIAL LINES.

-- PRO-GOVERNMENT DAILY EXPRESO SEPTEMBER 17 CARRIED AN EDITORIAL MILDLY CRITICIZING THE RADICAL STEPS THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED (NEW ELECTIONS AND DEACTIVATION OF THE SIN) BUT ALSO ASKING FOR GUARANTEES THAT THE IRREGULARITIES OF THE PAST ELECTION CAMPAIGN NOT BE REPEATED. SINCE THEN, EXPRESO HAS REGULARLY CARRIED A FULL PAGE OF FOREIGN PAPERS' EDITORIALS CRITICAL OF FUJIMORI BUT WITHOUT RESORTING TO THEIR USUAL TECHNIQUE OF USING THOSE EDITORIALS AS A BASIS FOR ATTACKING THE PERUVIAN OPPOSITION.

-- THAT SAME DAY, SEPT. 17, RABIDLY ANTI-OPPOSITION TABLOID REFERENDUM, RUMORED TO BE RUN BY THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, GAVE RELATIVELY BALANCED FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE TO THE PRESIDENT'S CALL FOR NEW NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND THE DEACTIVATION OF THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE.

-- MOST NOTABLY, RECENT ISSUES OF THE PRENSA CHICHA OR YELLOW TABLOID PRESS -- DAILIES EL TO, EL CHINO, EXTRA, EL MEN, AND EL MAANERO, MANY OF WHICH ARE ASSUMED TO BE FINANCED BY THE SIN -- HAVE STOPPED CRITICIZING TOLEDO AND OTHER OPPOSITION FIGURES.

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--POPULAR DAILY OJO, WHICH HAD RECENTLY CUT BACK SIGNIFICANTLY ON ITS POLITICAL COVERAGE, HAS AGAIN BEGUN UNCLASSIFIED

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REPORTING ON SENSITIVE TOPICS. MEDIA OBSERVERS HAD SUSPECTED THAT THE HIGH-CIRCULATION OJO WAS COMING UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE SIN TO ESCHEW POLITICAL REPORTING AND STICK TO A HARMLESS BREAD AND CIRCUSES FORMAT.

SEA CHANGE ON TV, TOO -- FOR THE MOMENT

3. (SBU) THIS ABRUPT CHANGE OF TONE AND CONTENT IS ALSO EVIDENT IN THE PRO-GOVERNMENT PERUVIAN TELEVISION WORLD WHERE NEWS WHICH MADE THE GOP LOOK BAD RARELY MADE IT TO AIR AND OPPOSITION FIGURES WERE ROUTINELY SAVAGED -- OR SIMPLY IGNORED. MOST OBVIOUSLY, ALL TV CHANNELS CARRIED THE VIDEO SHOWING FORMER FUJIMORI INTELLIGENCE ADVISER VLADIMIR MONTESINOS EVIDENTLY BRIBING A MEMBER OF CONGRESS -- ANTI-GOVERNMENT COVERAGE UNTHINKABLE UNTIL SUNDAY. OTHER EXAMPLES:

-- GOVERNMENT STATION CHANNEL 7'S NEWS COVERAGE THE DAY AFTER PRESIDENT FUJIMORI'S ANNOUNCEMENT SHOWED GOVERNMENT-PARTY CONGRESSMAN ALBERTO KOURI (THE STAR OF THE MONTESINOS BRIBERY VIDEO) BEING INSULTED AT A PRESS CONFERENCE -- THE TYPE OF SCENE THAT WOULD NOT HAVE AIRED PREVIOUSLY.

-- CHANNEL 5 PANAMERICANA NEWS IS USING A NEW TAG-LINE IN THEIR SLOGAN AS OF SEPTEMBER 18: 'PANAMERICANA TELEVISION .. INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM, A KIND OF JOURNALISM FOR WHICH

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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
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CHANNEL 5 WAS NOT RENOWNED.

-- CCN CHANNEL 10, A STATION ALIGNED WITH DAILY PRO-
GOVERNMENT EXPRESO, HAS SUDDENLY STOPPED ITS TRADITIONALLY
HARSH CRITICISM OF THE OPPOSITION, WHICH THEY HAD BEEN
RUNNING AS RECENTLY AS LATE LAST WEEK ON THEIR POLITICAL
TALK SHOWS.

-- THE LIST GOES ON: TV CHANNEL 5'S NEWS ANCHOR TEAM OF
MONICA DELTA, EDUARDO GUZMAN AND JOSE MARIO, USUALLY VERY
CLEARLY PRO-GOP, REPORTED FACTUALLY ON THE SITUATION DURING
A SPECIAL NEWS PROGRAM SEPTEMBER 17, EVEN TAKING THE UNUSUAL
STEP OF ASKING GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES TOUGH QUESTIONS.
THEIR USUAL TREATMENT IS TO IGNORE THE OPPOSITION WHILE
HANDLING GOP FIGURES WITH KID-GLOVES.

-- PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY IS THE SEPTEMBER 20 ANNOUNCEMENT
BY STRIDENTLY ANTI-OPPOSITION NEWSWEEKLY GENTE THAT IT WAS
DROPPING ITS LIBEL SUIT AGAINST JOURNALISTS FROM INDEPENDENT
DAILY EL COMERCIO, CABLE NEWS NETWORK CANAL N, AND
JOURNALIST AND TOLEDO ADVISOR GUSTAVO GORRITI. THE SUIT
STEMMED FROM ALLEGATIONS MADE ON CANAL N THAT GENTE WAS A
MOUTHPIECE FOR THE SIN, ALLEGATIONS MADE AFTER GENTE

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PUBLISHED A LIST OF OPPOSITION JOURNALISTS THE GOP WAS GOING
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TO DISAPPEAR, A PIECE GENTE CLAIMED WAS A JOKE.

4. (SBU) COMMENT: UNTIL LAST WEEKEND, THE PERUVIAN MEDIA SCENE WAS RELATIVELY PREDICTABLE, WITH PRO AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT TERRITORIES CLEARLY STAKED OUT AND FEW MEDIA OCCUPYING THE MIDDLE GROUND. THE EVIDENCE OVER THE PAST FOUR DAYS INDICATES THAT PRO-GOP PRINT AND TELEVISION OUTLETS ARE CHANGING IN AN UNCERTAIN ENVIRONMENT, HOPING PERHAPS TO REGAIN SOME OF THE CREDIBILITY LOST OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS OF IGNORING OR TRASHING OPPOSITION VIEWS AND THEIR EXPONENTS.

5. (SBU) COMMENT, CONT'D: HOWEVER, THE APPROACHING ELECTION CAMPAIGN MAY WORK AGAINST THIS PROCESS. ELECTION CAMPAIGN SEASONS HAVE NOT USUALLY CREATED THE MOST PROPITIOUS CLIMATE FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS (OR RESPONSIBLE REPORTING) IN PERU. THE CURRENT POLITICAL LANDSCAPE, WHILE RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF JUST TWO WEEKS AGO, HAS NOT FUNDAMENTALLY ALTERED THE DISTORTED STRUCTURE OF THE MEDIA, WHERE THE CONSTELLATION OF CRONYISM, DEBT, RELIANCE ON GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING AND JUDICIAL BLACKMAIL KEPT MUCH OF THE MEDIA BEHOLDEN TO THE GOVERNMENT. WHETHER THIS NEW CLIMATE WILL LAST IS UNCLEAR, BUT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS SHOW THAT AT LEAST SOME REFORM OF THE MEDIA IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT INSTITUTIONAL OR LEGISLATIVE CHANGES.
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