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Annocr:

Next, an editorial reflecting the views of the U.S. Government.

Voice:

Latin Americans were in the forefront of the democratic revolution that has brought freedom to millions around the world. In the 1980s, there were numerous transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes in Latin America. That experience has illustrated both the benefits and difficulties inherent in the consolidation of democratic institutions and habits.

Peru is a case in point. The election of President Alberto Fujimori two years ago marked the third consecutive time that the presidency passed to an opposition party through democratic elections. At the time, Peru faced serious problems. The economy was stagnant, and deep-seated poverty was widespread. The country's institutions were being undermined by international drug cartels which had made Peru the world's largest producer of cocaine. Peru's judicial system had been corrupted by the drug traffickers. To make matters worse, the country was under constant assault by the most vicious terrorist group in the hemisphere, the Sendero Luminoso.

President Fujimori launched programs to meet these challenges. He moved to implement market oriented reforms in the economy, and cut back government regulation so that Peru's vigorous underground economy could be incorporated into the formal economy. He showed a willingness to work both internally and regionally on narcotics issues,

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and made efforts to counter the savagery of the Sendero Luminoso. International support for Peru grew and financial assistance from bilateral and multilateral sources was forthcoming.

All of these gains are now in jeopardy. On April fifth, President Fujimori inexplicably suspended Peru's democracy. As U.S. Secretary of State James Baker said at the Organization of American States meeting on Peru, "The actions taken by President Fujimori, whatever the justification given, are unjustified. They represent an assault on democracy ... and will only lead to repression and to radicalization."

To stress the U.S. commitment to the restoration of Peru's democracy, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter American Affairs Bernard Aronson recently traveled to Lima. He urged President Fujimori and a wide range of Peruvians to work with the O-A-S mission in seeking a democratic solution to the crisis. As Secretary of State Baker said, "You cannot destroy democracy in order to save it."

Anncr:

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