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Case Number: S200200010

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	OASY-00	DOEE-00	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EAP-01	EB-00
	EUR-01	FAAE-00	H-01	IMMC-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	INSE-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	L-01	MCO-01	ADS-00	MMP-00	M-00
	NRCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OIC-02	OIS-01	OMB-01
	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00	SP-00
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 AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
 DEAHQS WASHDC
 AMEMBASSY LONDON

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 AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
 AMEMBASSY CARACAS
 AMEMBASSY QUITO

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JUSTICE FOR TVCS -- J LANCASTER
SOUTHCAM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/08/07

TAGS: PTER ASEC PREL PGOV PE

SUBJECT: PERU'S HOSTAGE CRISIS UPDATE - JANUARY 7-8

1. CLASSIFIED BY JAMES MACK, DCM, REASON: 1.5 (D).

2. [REDACTED] SUMMARY: IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT IN MRTA'S HOSTAGE STANDOFF, THE PRESS COVERING THE CRISIS HAS ITSELF BECOME THE LEAD STORY. THE ARREST OF TWO JOURNALISTS WHO MADE THE SECOND UNAUTHORIZED PRESS ENTRY INTO THE HOSTAGE SITE APPEARS TO BE A BELATED GOP EFFORT TO AVOID FURTHER, POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS SECURITY BREACHES. PRESIDENT FUJIMORI IS ENDEAVORING TO RESTORE SOME SENSE OF NORMALCY TO HIS ADMINISTRATION AND IS PERSONALLY LEADING THE GOP COUNTERCHARGE AGAINST WHAT THE GOP AND LOCAL MEDIA FEELS IS BIASED AND INACCURATE FOREIGN REPORTING. END SUMMARY.

TWO JOURNALISTS ENTER HOSTAGE SITE
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3. (U) A JAPANESE ASAHI TELEVISION JOURNALIST AND HIS PERUVIAN CAMERAMAN/INTERPRETER USED A NEARBY RESIDENCE TO ELUDE THE POLICE CORDON AND TO APPROACH THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE DURING THE AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 7. THE TUPAC AMARU REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (MRTA) HOSTAGE TAKERS ALLOWED BOTH TO ENTER THE HOSTAGE SITE AND STAY FOR TWO HOURS. ICRC WORKERS, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY EXCUSED THEMSELVES FROM THE AREA DURING THE DECEMBER 31 "PRESS OPPORTUNITY" FOR SECURITY REASONS, SUSPENDED THEIR DELIVERY OF FOOD AND IMMEDIATELY ABANDONED THE PREMISES, RETURNING ONLY AFTER THE UNAUTHORIZED PRESS ENTRY WAS COMPLETED.

4. (U) UPON EXITING, BOTH JOURNALISTS WERE DIRECTED BY THREE POLICEMEN TO THE POLICE'S MAKESHIFT AREA HEADQUARTERS LOCATED NEARBY. THE PERUVIAN POLICE SUBSEQUENTLY WHISKED BOTH JOURNALISTS AWAY IN AN UNMARKED CAR TO PERU'S ANTI-TERRORISM DIRECTORATE (DINCOTE), WHERE THEY REMAIN DETAINED. IT REMAINS UNCLEAR HOW LONG THE GOP WILL HOLD THE JOURNALISTS OR IF THEY WILL BE CHARGED IN CONNECTION WITH BREAKING THE POLICE CORDON, OR

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MORE SERIOUSLY, WITH ABETTING TERRORISM.

5. (U) BOTH THE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT AND JAPANESE GOVERNMENT QUICKLY CONDEMNED THE REPORTERS' UNSCHEDULED ENTRY, NOTING THAT SUCH ILLICIT CONTACTS WITH THE MRTA HOSTAGE TAKERS PUT THE HOSTAGES AT RISK AND UNDERMINE GOP EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE ONGOING CRISIS. OTHER JAPANESE REPORTERS, INCLUDING JOURNALISTS FROM TWO TOKYO DAILIES, ALSO EXPRESSED OUTRAGE REGARDING THEIR COLLEAGUE'S BOLDNESS. HOWEVER, BY MIDDAY JANUARY 8, PRESS ASSOCIATIONS, PARTICULARLY THE FOREIGN PRESS ASSOCIATION IN PERU, RALLIED TO THE DEFENSE OF THE JOURNALISTS AND DEMANDED THEIR RELEASE.

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FUJIMORI COURTS FOREIGN PRESS

6. [REDACTED] IN CLASSIC FUJIMORI FASHION, THE PRESIDENT UNEXPECTEDLY TOOK TO THE WHEEL OF HIS FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE VEHICLE AND DROVE THREE TIME MAGAZINE REPORTERS TO A SERIES OF SHANTYTOWNS AND TO MIGUEL CASTRO CASTRO MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF LIMA. FUJIMORI USED THE VISIT TO THE SHANTYTOWNS TO UNDERSCORE HIS CONTINUED POPULAR SUPPORT AMONG PERU'S POOR AND TO CONTRAST THAT BACKING WITH THE LACK OF POPULAR SYMPATHY FOR MRTA. TALKING TO THE ENTOURAGE OF PRESS THAT FOLLOWED HIM, FUJIMORI ALSO STATED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT HE WILL NOT GIVE IN "TERRORIST BLACKMAIL."

7. [REDACTED] IN AN ALMOST CERTAIN REACTION TO INTERNATIONAL MEDIA CRITICISM OF PERUVIAN PRISON CONDITIONS, FUJIMORI LED THE AMERICAN JOURNALISTS ON A HALF-HOUR VISIT TO THE MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON WHICH HOUSES, INTER ALIA, SOME 90 IMPRISONED MRTA MILITANTS. DURING THE VISIT, THE PERUVIAN PRESIDENT CHATTED FREELY WITH THE PRISONERS, ACCEPTED AND PUT ON A STRAW HAT GIVEN TO HIM BY ONE OF THE PRISONERS, AND GAVE THE JOURNALISTS A FIRST-HAND BRIEFING ON PERU'S PRISON SYSTEM. FUJIMORI ALSO OPENED HIS DOORS TO A CNN INTERVIEW ON JANUARY 8 AND IS REPORTEDLY SLATED TO ACCOMPANY U.S. TELEVISION NETWORK REPORTERS ON A JANUARY 9 TOUR

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OF SHANTYTOWNS.

 PRESS WARS

8. (U) IN THE ABSENCE OF AN IMMINENT RESOLUTION OF THE HOSTAGE STANDOFF, THE PRESS IS INCREASINGLY FEEDING ON ITSELF. MOST NOTABLY, THE DIVISIONS BETWEEN THE LOCAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS, TWENTY-THREE DAYS INTO THE CRISIS, ARE GROWING. LOCAL MEDIA, LONG FAMILIAR WITH MRTA'S TERRORIST ANTECEDENTS, HAVE GENERALLY DISCREDITED MRTA'S POLITICAL APPEALS AS ILLEGITIMATE AND DISINGENUOUS. RESPONDING TO MRTA'S REQUEST (VIA A POSTER IN THE SECOND STORY WINDOW) FOR EQUAL TIME TO RESPOND TO A LEADING TELEVISION NEWS PROGRAM'S CRITICAL REVIEW OF MRTA'S PAST, POPULAR LIMA NEWSCASTER GUIDO LOMBARDI TOLD THE

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 MEDIA HE WOULD GIVE MRTA A PLATFORM ONLY AFTER IT RELEASED THE HOSTAGES. LOMBARDI ADDED THAT MRTA DID NOT GIVE "EQUAL TIME" TO THE PEOPLE IT ASSASSINATED AND KIDNAPPED.

9. (U) LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS HAVE BEEN VERY CRITICAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS'S, AND PARTICULARLY THE NEW YORK TIMES', COVERAGE OF THE ONGOING HOSTAGE CRISIS. LOCAL JOURNALISTS ARGUE THAT THE ARMY OF FOREIGN REPORTERS THAT DESCENDED ON PERU IN THE WAKE OF THE HOSTAGE CRISIS TEND TO:

--- ROMANTICIZE THE MRTA HOSTAGE TAKERS, CALLING THEM "GUERRILLAS" AND "REBELS" INSTEAD OF "TERRORISTS";

--- MISINTERPRET THE MILITARY ACTIONS OF A FEW MRTA CADRES AS SOME KIND OF REFLECTION OF A MORE GENERAL DISSATISFACTION WITH THE FUJIMORI GOVERNMENT;

--- ACCEPT GULLIBLY THE MRTA'S PURPORTED DESIRE TO REINSERT ITSELF INTO PERU'S POLITICAL MAINSTREAM;

--- FOCUS MORE ON THE DEFICIENCIES IN PERU'S PRISON SYSTEM THAN MRTA'S PAST TERRORIST ACTIVITIES;

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--- IGNORE THE ALMOST UNIVERSAL PERUVIAN PUBLIC REJECTION OF ALL TERRORISTS AND THEIR TACTICS.

10. (U) FOREIGN JOURNALISTS STRESS THAT IT WOULD BE MUCH EASIER TO REPRESENT THE GOP'S VIEWS ON THE SITUATION IF GOP OFFICIALS MADE THEMSELVES AVAILABLE. WITH GOP DECISION-MAKING AND DAMAGE CONTROL TIGHTLY CONTROLLED BY THE PERUVIAN PRESIDENT, GOP OFFICIALS DO NOT WANT TO GET OUT IN FRONT OF FUJIMORI. AS A

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RESULT, THE DEARTH OF GOP STATEMENTS HAS CEDED GROUND TO MRTA COMANDANTE NESTOR CERPA, AS WELL AS MANY OF FUJIMORI'S MAINSTREAM POLITICAL CRITICS WHO WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK ON THE RECORD WITH THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS. MOREOVER, THE LOCAL MEDIA, WHICH WAS QUICK TO REVEAL IDENTITIES OF HOSTAGES AND CONTINUES TO REPORT RUMORS AS FACT, HAS AT TIMES FUELED THE VOLATILITY OF THE HOSTAGE SITUATION. AMONG THE MISLEADING ARTICLES RECEIVING LOCAL PRESS PLAY WAS A STORY ALLEGING THAT THE GOP INTENDED TO STORM THE HOSTAGE SITE USING FOREIGN, HIGH-TECH INTELLIGENCE GATHERING EQUIPMENT.

BACK TO NORMAL?

11. (U) THE GOP HAS LAUNCHED A CONCERTED EFFORT OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS TO ADOPT A FACE OF NORMALCY. PRESIDENT FUJIMORI HAS CONFIRMED TO HIS ECUADORIAN COUNTERPART THAT THE LATTER'S VISIT TO LIMA ON JANUARY 13-15 SHOULD STILL TAKE PLACE. THE CONGRESS, WHICH DECIDED BEFORE THE HOSTAGE CRISIS TO EXTEND ITS SESSION BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL DECEMBER 15 RECESS DATE, REMAINS IN SESSION AND IS CONSIDERING NON-HOSTAGE RELATED BUSINESS. THE CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION IS STILL SUPPORTING THE PRESIDENT DURING THE HOSTAGE CRISIS, BUT IS BEGINNING TO MAKE MORE NUANCED STATEMENTS, WHICH AS THE IMPASSE CONTINUES, COULD LEAD TO MORE

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CRITICAL STATEMENTS.

12. (U) END-OF-THE-YEAR PERSONNEL CHANGES IN THE JUDICIARY, MILITARY AND POLICE ARE, FOR THE MOST PART, GOING FORWARD. THE PERUVIAN POLICE, IN PARTICULAR, HAVE ALREADY NAMED REPLACEMENTS FOR THE POLICE OFFICIALS BEING HELD HOSTAGE, NOTING THAT THE POLICE HOSTAGES' PLACEMENTS WILL BE REEXAMINED WHEN THE CRISIS IS OVER. POLICE GENERAL MARCELO NAKAMURA SAKAMOTO HAS ALREADY ASSUMED CONTROL OF PERU'S ANTI-TERRORISM DIRECTORATE (DINCOTE) WHILE GENERAL MAXIMO RIVERA DIAZ REMAINS A HOSTAGE. PRESS RUMORS ARE ALSO CIRCULATING THAT THE GOP WILL REPLACE CAPTIVE FOREIGN MINISTER FRANCISCO TUDELA AND AGRICULTURE MINISTER RUDOLFO MUNANTE. THE PERUVIAN CONSTITUTION PROHIBITS CABINET MEMBERS FROM HOLDING ABSENT MINISTERS' PORTFOLIOS FOR MORE THAN 30 CONSECUTIVE DAYS.

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ARCHBISHOP MEDIATOR DEPARTS LIMA

13. [REDACTED] FATHER GUILLERMO OVIEDO, CONFIDANT OF ARCHBISHOP JUAN LUIS CIPRIANI, TOLD POL COUNSELOR ON JANUARY 8 THAT CIPRIANI DEPARTED FOR HIS AYACUCHO DIOCESE FOR 48-72 HOURS. OVIEDO OFFERED THAT THE GOP TRANSPORTED THE KEY MEDIATOR BACK TO AYACUCHO ON AN AIR FORCE PLANE. ACCORDING TO OVIEDO, CIPRIANI, WHO HAS NOT BEEN IN AYACUCHO SINCE CHRISTMAS, MUST STILL ATTEND TO HIS CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES AS BEST AS POSSIBLE. WITH CIPRIANI TEMPORARILY REMOVED FROM THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, THE ICRC IS FOR THE MOMENT THE MRTA'S ONLY MESSENGER TO THE OUTSIDE.

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