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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-17	CIAE-00	C-01	OASY-00	DODE-00	HA-09
	H-01	INM-02	INRE-00	INR-01	L-03	ADS-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OMB-01	PA-02	PM-02	PRS-01	P-01	SNP-00
	SP-00	TRSE-00	T-01	/043W			

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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7526
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5462

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USIA

USIA FOR P/M, P/PFL, AR (BWHARTON), B/VL, B/TP

STATE FOR ARA/AND, ARA/P

E.O.12356:N/A

TAGS: PGOV, OPRC, PE

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT'S
SUPPORT OF PRESS FREEDOM HIGHLIGHTED IN EDITORIALS

1. SUMMARY. OVER THE WEEKEND, 3 DAILIES PUBLISHED
EDITORIALS HIGHLIGHTING THE USG STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR
PRESS FREEDOM IN PERU. THIS STATEMENT WAS ISSUED IN
RESPONSE TO PERU'S INTERNAL DEBATE ON MEDIA CENSORSHIP,
WHICH BEGAN WHEN PRESIDENT FUJIMORI SUGGESTED THAT NEWS
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REPORTS WOULD BE "ANALYZED" BY THE PERUVIAN INTELLIGENCE
SERVICE (SIN) TO DETERMINE IF THEY JEOPARDIZED NATIONAL
SECURITY.

2. WHILE FUJIMORI LATER SAID HE HAD BEEN MISQUOTED, THE
SUBJECT WAS KEPT ALIVE BY THE PERMANENT COMMISSION OF
THE CONSTITUENT CONGRESS (CCD) -- A BODY DOMINATED BY
PRO-GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES. THE CCD IS CONSIDERING
AN ARTICLE TO THE NEW CONSTITUTION MAKING MEDIA
STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF TERRORISM A CRIME. CCD MEMBERS
INDICATE THAT SUCH CASES COULD BE TRIED BY MILITARY

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J. OLSON
DATE/CASE ID: 1 AUG 2001 200003853

TRIBUNALS. ANOTHER CCD PROPOSAL CURRENTLY Q5HDA"QDISCUSSION WOULD PROHIBIT STATEMENTS WHICH OFFEND "THE HONOR AND REPUTATION" OF OTHER CITIZENS -- INCLUDING PUBLIC OFFICIALS. END SUMMARY.

-----QM55 /QK. CONSERVATIVE, INFLUENTIAL "EL COMERCIO" (READERSHIP ABOUT 630,000) IS THE PRESTIGIOUS PAPER OF RECORD FOR THE PERUVIAN ELITE. IT LEADS IN LIMA AND NATIONAL READERSHIP.

AN EDITORIAL TITLED "FEARS ON PRESS FREEDOM" APPEARED ON THE OPINION PAGE OF THE DAILY'S JANUARY 27 EDITION. EXCERPTS FOLLOW:

"EVEN THOUGH PRESIDENT FUJIMORI AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE HAVE REITERATED THEIR RESPECT FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND OF EXPRESSION, THERE IS JUSTIFIED APPREHENSION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF SUCH PRINCIPLES."

"THE CURRENT CONGRESS...IS INTRODUCING DANGEROUS CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS THAT COULD BECOME A GRAVE
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THREAT TO FREEDOM OF THE PRESS..."

"THE CONCERN IS EVEN GREATER IF WE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PRESSURE AND VEILED THREATS (COMING) FROM GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AGAINST THE PRESS...THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT HAS POINTED OUT THE RISKS TO PERU OF INTIMIDATING JOURNALISTS WHO PERFORM THEIR DAILY DUTIES IN A PROFESSIONAL WAY."

3. "EL COMERCIO'S" SUNDAY MAGAZINE "DOMINICAL" RAN A SIMILAR EDITORIAL TITLED "PRESS FREEDOM" ON JANUARY 31. THE EDITORIAL STATES:

"IT IS TRUE THAT PRESIDENT FUJIMORI, THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONSTITUENT CONGRESS AND THE INTERIOR MINISTER HAVE STATED THEIR RESPECT FOR PRESS FREEDOM. BUT THESE STATEMENTS ARE NOT ENOUGH IF THE PARLIAMENT'S MAJORITY, UNDER THE EXCUSE OF FIGHTING TERRORISM, APPEARS TO FAVOR AMBIGUOUS CONSTITUTIONAL RESTRICTIONS TO PRESS FREEDOM THAT COULD BE ARBITRARILY APPLIED."

4. "LA REPUBLICA" (READERSHIP ABOUT 200,000) IS THE LEFT-OF-CENTER TREND-SETTER. IT IS THIRD IN LIMA AND

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NATIONAL READERSHIP.

THE DAILY'S JANUARY 29 EDITION INCLUDED AN OPINION PAGE
EDITORIAL HEADLINED "INCREASING RISKS." EXCERPTS
FOLLOW:

"THE RECENTLY ISSUED DECLARATION BY THE U.S. STATE
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DEPARTMENT DEMANDING THAT PRESIDENT FUJIMORI GUARANTEE
FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND REFRAIN FROM RESTRICTING OR
INTIMIDATING THE MEDIA CLEARLY REVEALS THE NEGATIVE
IMPACT THAT RECENT EVENTS HAVE HAD ABROAD. LET US NOT
FORGET THAT MR. CLINTON'S ADMINISTRATION HAS STATED THAT
RESPECT FOR DEMOCRACY AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS ARE THE KEY
ELEMENTS THAT WILL GOVERN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
U.S. AND THE COUNTRIES OF THIS HEMISPHERE."

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5. CENTER-LEFT, SENSATIONALIST "EL NACIONAL"
(READERSHIP ABOUT 22,000) IS THE ONLY ONE OF FIVE PRO-
APRA (ALAN GARCIA GOVERNMENT) PAPERS LEFT. IT RANKS
ABOUT TENTH IN LIMA READERSHIP.

AN EDITORIAL, "THE RIGHT TO FREE EXPRESSION," APPEARED
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IN THE DAILY'S JANUARY 31 EDITION ON THE OPINION PAGE.
EXCERPTS FOLLOW:

"IN RECENT WEEKS, THERE HAS BEEN AN OFFENSIVE LAUNCHED
AGAINST THE MEDIA WHICH HAS REQUIRED GOVERNMENT
OFFICIALS TO REITERATE THEIR RESPECT FOR FREEDOM OF THE
PRESS...THIS HAS BEEN A MATTER OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES." COREY-ARCHER

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