

[REDACTED]

Central Intelligence Agency

CLASSIFICATION

DIPECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

7 September 1982

MEMORANDUM

Peru: Sendero Luminoso [REDACTED]

Summary

Sendero Luminoso (SL) is a small, Maoist terrorist group

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23 APR 1983

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Background

Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) is a radical, leftist terrorist and insurgent group that follows the organizational ideological model of Mao's peasant-based revolution in China. The SL's goals are to bring down the Belaunde government and to remove foreign--particularly US--influence from Peru. [REDACTED]

The SL was formed in the rural southern department of Ayacucho in the late 1960s by Ruben Abimael Guzman Reynoso, then a philosophy teacher at the San Cristobal de Huamanga National University in Ayacucho. Guzman was also a member of the Banda Roja, a pro-Chinese Communist Party made up primarily of attorneys, professors, and merchants. Guzman and his followers, mostly craftsmen, peasants, and students--charged that the group was increasingly favoring urban areas to the detriment of the countryside and was overly deemphasizing armed struggle. Since formally breaking with the Banda Roja to pursue a more violent path, Guzman has maintained that the SL is the only legitimate communist party in Peru. [REDACTED]

SL's Operations

Following President Belaunde's inauguration in 1980, the group embarked on a campaign of low-risk, high-profile terrorist attacks consisting primarily of dynamiting electrical towers, public buildings, and such symbols of authority as the Justice Ministry and police posts. Within the last year, however, SL operations have increased. While bombings continue, attacks against people, including the assassination of local officials and suspected police informants, are increasing. [REDACTED]

Members of the SL are organized into cells that operate independently. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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In March, the SL executed a highly successful attack on the Ayacucho prison and freed 247 inmates, including accused and convicted terrorists. More recently, numerous civil guard posts and small municipalities have been attacked. Last month, the SL dynamited several electrical towers near Lima, blacking out the city for several hours. At present, states of emergency exist in Lima, Callao, three provinces of Ayacucho department and one in Apurimac department.

The Threat to the Government

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The SL appears to enjoy little popular support, even in Ayacucho, although it may appeal to a few Indian groups by harking back to their Incan heritage.

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B3

The SL probably believes, however, that its current tactics even though they may not be winning much popular support--will provoke a violent response by the Army. They hope that this in turn will lead to military repression and a subsequent rise in popular sympathy for the SL and its violent tactics. The Peruvian public so far seems to be increasingly weary of disturbances caused by the terrorists, however, and is probably more likely to approve of direct military action against the SL than to support the terrorists.

In its operations to date, the SL has not posed a significant threat to the military. Destruction of electrical towers, and assaults on isolated police posts are difficult to prevent and require little technical expertise to execute. Most of the SL's recent urban operations could have been planned and carried out by small well-trained units.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

B3

[REDACTED]

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Outlook

While tensions between civilian and military authorities almost certainly would rise during an Army intervention against the SL, we believe that this would probably not lead to a coup. Military leaders are not eager to reassume political power because they are fully aware that they have no innovative solutions to Peru's current problems. Most want to concentrate on professional matters neglected during the 12 years the military governed the country.

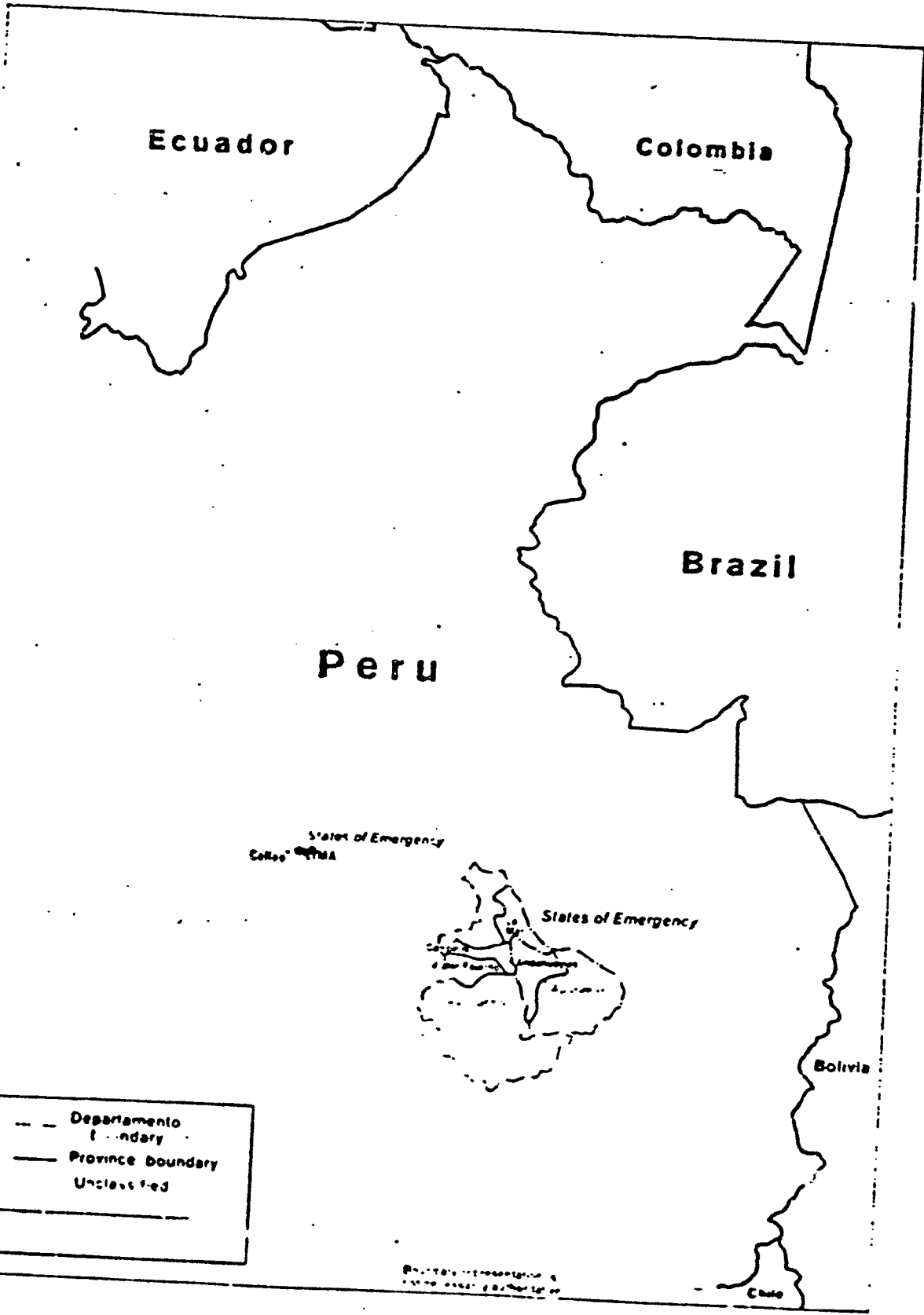
The survival of Peruvian democracy--and particularly the pro-US Belaunde government--remains important both for its demonstration effect and for the long-term prospects for stability in the region. We do not believe that SL alone currently represents a threat to Belaunde, but the military--a direct threat--will be carefully monitoring events. Military intervention would become more likely as a result of:

- increasing popular support for the SL;
- evidence of substantial foreign assistance to the SL;
- terrorist activity in the northern and jungle regions;
- larger, more sophisticated SL operations against important government targets, especially military units.

Even under these circumstances, the SL would almost certainly be shattered by a confrontation with the Army, especially if the military had the kind of unfettered authority

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it would like. The terrorists are still at a relatively rudimentary stage and the Army has performed effectively in past counterinsurgency campaigns.



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Chilo