

REVIEWED BY [Signature] OCT 31
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(U) PERU'S SENDERO LUMINOSO: WAS
CORNER OF THE DEAD

Introduction and Summary

(U) Peru returned to democracy in 1980. Later that same year, dead dogs hanging from lampposts in Lima announced the surfacing of an obscure subversive group, Sendero Luminoso (Path). Lima residents did not fathom the significance of the dead dogs and soon forgot them. A year later, hanging dogs appeared again, this time in a remote Andean department of Ayacucho, 150 miles southeast of Lima. The Quechua-speaking people of Ayacucho, whose name in the local tongue means "Corner of the Dead," understood the symbolism of impending death.

(C) Armed struggle, slow in starting, in the intervening years has claimed an estimated 4,000 lives and has evolved into a series of urban attacks and cruel rural massacres. The military administration, fearing the possible consequences of military control of the region, initially gave responsibility for the campaign to the police. When the police proved inadequate, the government sent the armed forces to the region. The attacks had spread to Lima and the government sent the armed forces to the region in December 1982. In July 1984, the military took charge of the antiterrorist campaign.

The military recently replaced the commander of the Ayacucho emergency zone when he said publicly that the solution to the problem hinged on the social and economic development of Peru's poor regions rather than on a purely military approach.

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(C) The civilian government finds itself in a difficult position. Sendero Luminoso is ruthless and not open to compromise. It regards the entire Peruvian political system--democratic and economic--as bankrupt, and during 1983 and 1984 stepped up violent military action. The military urges all-out war against the guerrillas, free of the restraints imposed by constitutional order. Liberals favor alleviating the causes of subversion through extensive economic development which Peru cannot afford in its current financial difficulties. Unwilling to unleash the military and devote vast economic resources to the problem, Belaunde and other politicians will confront an increasingly bleak situation. A combination of economic deterioration and subversive activity threatens the continuance of democratic government. Tensions between the military and the civilian government, compounded by terrorist violence increase the risk of a military takeover, jeopardizing the presidential elections scheduled for 1985.

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The Shining Path to Revolution

(U) In 1928, Mariategui wrote that "Marxism-Leninism opens the shining path to revolution." In 1970, Guzman devoted following of leftist students at the University of Ayacucho broke with the Peruvian Communist Party and formed the Communist Party for the Shining Path of Mariategui, or Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path).

(U) The mountainous Ayacucho region, inhabited by a million Quechua-speaking peasants--70 percent of whom are Spanish at all--is almost completely divorced from the rest of the region that forms modern Peru. Traditionally neglected and without industry or steady public works programs and with poor soil. Average life expectancy is about 45 years. Water, electricity, and medical services are almost nonexistent outside the few main towns. Much of the region is not accurately mapped.

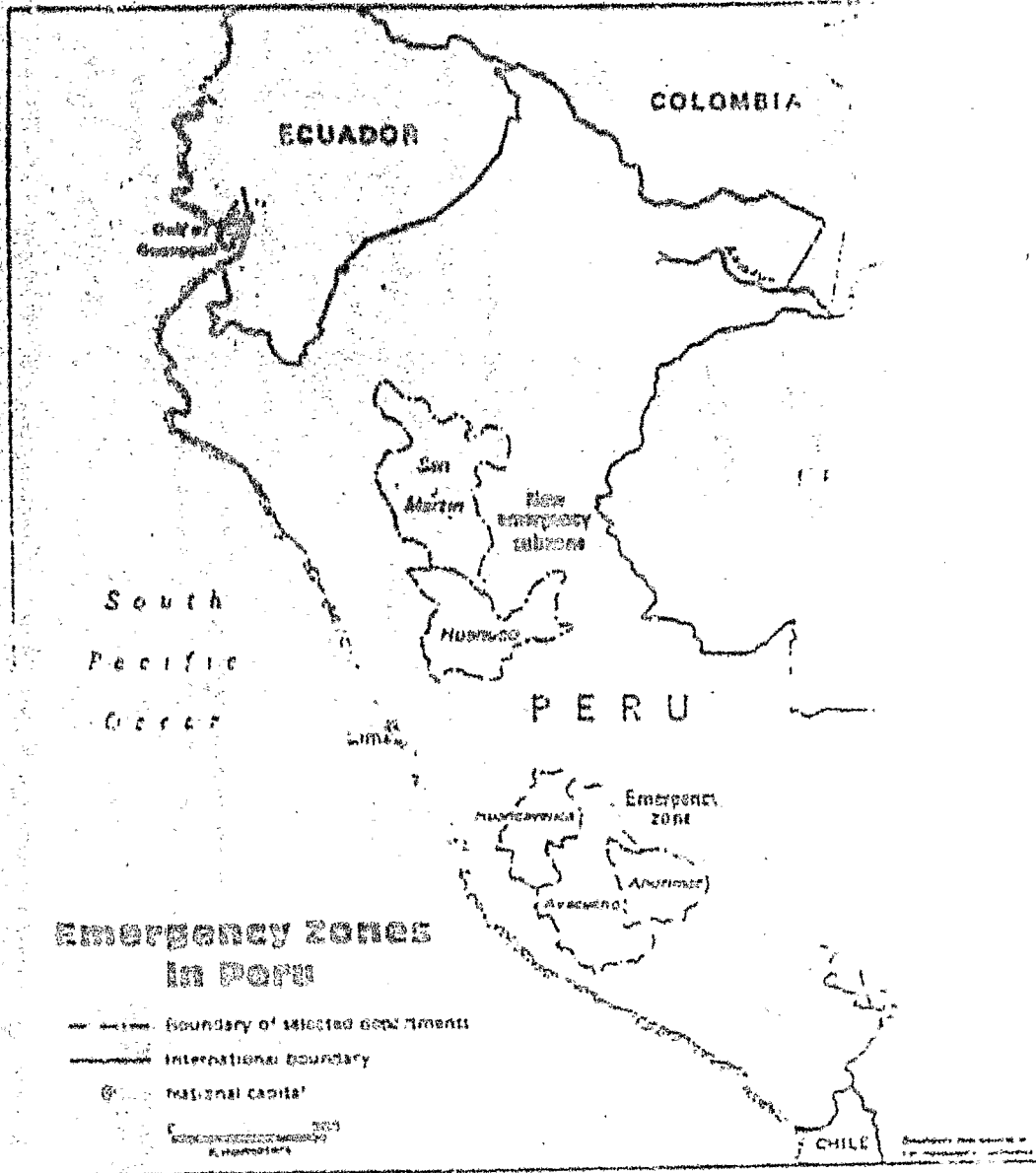
(U) During the 1970s, Sendero Luminoso activists traveled across Ayacucho, learning its language and customs and spreading their brand of agrarian communism. They worked in various positions as school teachers, agricultural advisers, and organizers. Sometime during this period, Sendero's philosophy shifted to a more radical, militant one. Sendero Luminoso made no distinction between democratic regimes, denouncing the entire Peruvian political structure as bankrupt. Most Peruvian leftists could only speak of armed struggle, but Guzman and his followers believed what they said.

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bered among the ills of the world all forms of communism.

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Marxist parties ("parliamentary organs"), capitalism, Soviet "imperialism." Sendero has attacked the US and Embassy and the office of the Soviet airline Aeroflot.

(U) Sendero Luminoso issues no communiques, manifestos, or other public documents. Its leaders are well-hidden and grant interviews or otherwise exploit media outlets to express their aims. Organized in tight cells, Sendero has proved resistant to penetration by the security forces. From what can be pieced together from numerous sources, including a 1971 pamphlet written by Guevara, Sendero fashions its revolution after the Mao and Pol Pot. It sees Peru as "a semi-feudal and semi-capitalist society... abused by a minority for centuries." The intent is to launch an offensive "that may take 20 years" in which the guerrillas will surround and cut off the cities and finally take them. An armed struggle was launched as Peru returned to democracy in 1980 to emphasize the view that all regimes are equally guilty and to take advantage of the inherent difficulties that face any government trying both to preserve democracy and to combat terrorism.

(C) Between 1980 and 1982, the insurgency was limited to sporadic raids on government outposts in the Andes and kidnappings. It seemed to pose little threat to the Government. What the government failed to notice, or at least not to publicly admit, was that Sendero Luminoso had won control of the countryside by holding regular indoctrination meetings, its members distributed food, executed enemies of the state, criminals, local officials, teachers, wealthy merchants, and those who had ingratiated themselves to peasants who had been authorities for decades. The pattern changed abruptly in 1982, when a Sendero force of perhaps 150 attacked Hualgayuta, Ayacucho City, with automatic weapons and captured it out and freeing all 247 inmates of the maximum security prison. The government declared the region to be an "emergency zone."

(C) Violence perpetrated by Sendero Luminoso in the Ayacucho raid has become more widespread and intense. Sendero has expanded its scope of operations beyond Ayacucho. The government has declared a new emergency zone in the Huancayo Valley (see map). Sendero has also launched repeated attacks in Lima, recruiting from among the urban poor. Its urban activities gain more media exposure and middle-class attention and have significantly increased Peruvian political tension. Within the emergency zones--areas accustomed to violence and brutality--Sendero tactics now include periodic massacres of peasants unsympathetic to the cause. Sendero cadres reportedly have not spared women, young children, or elderly people. Fueling local fears and rivalries, the killings have sparked retaliatory slaughters by peasants of suspected Sendero sympathizers, village groups, and unsuspecting outsiders.

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(C) Sendero Luminoso obtains most of its guns and
and finances itself principally through protection money,
road "tolls" in the emergency zones, and occasional bank
Although it operates in many of the same areas as narcotic
traffickers, there is no evidence of a narco-terrorist link
group appears to leave the other alone. Although this self-
sufficient policy limits the sophistication of Sendero's op-
tions, members have been successful in fabricating crude but
effective weapons. Hand-rolled slings to hurl dynamite, firing
lines for rockets, etc. Lack of military prowess is at
partially compensated for by zeal.

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In December 1982, the government sent 3,000-4,000 troops--
half from the army, marines, and air force and the rest police--
into the Ayacucho emergency zone. Army Gen. Clemente Noel was
appointed political-military commander of the zone. Although
there were initial reports of successes, the campaign was poorly
planned and executed and soon bogged down. In late 1983, Noel was
replaced by a Quechua-speaking son of peasants, Gen. Adrian Huaman
Centeno. In July 1984, Belaunde yielded to pressures and gave the
armed forces a broad, somewhat vaguely worded mandate to take
control of the antiterrorist campaign nationwide. Huaman's
inexperience with attempts to win the hearts and minds of the

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population through civic actions and closer relations
troops and the locals. Most military commanders, however,
resist in a hearts-and-minds approach. After Hummer said
August television interview that the solution to the insur-
gency is social and economic development, rather than a pure
military approach, he was dismissed by the high command.

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