

Andean Report by Mark Sonnenblick

Will Peru continue its war on drugs?

The answer depends on whether the U.S. "Andean strategy" is expanded to take on the economic crisis in the region.

Peru closed its jungle border with Colombia on Aug. 26, as part of an effort to prevent the drug mafia from moving its operations headquarters to Peru, the source of half of the world's basic cocaine paste. Police Gen. Juan Zárate reported that Colombian narco-cos may well have flown into Peru. An unconfirmed report in the Peruvian press was that 50 traffickers had landed in the central Peru coca-producing zone near Ayacucho, the home base of the Shining Path terrorists.

Interior Minister Agustín Mantilla declared Aug. 28 that Shining Path was linked to the traffickers in the Huallaga and Aguaytia River valleys of northern Peru. He stressed that Peru's second terrorist movement, the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), also had fraternal ties to Colombia's narco-guerrillas, including the M-19.

Mantilla promised, "We will do everything possible to prevent the criminal drug traffickers from hiding in Peru. And, if we capture any Colombian narcotics trafficker, we would hand him over immediately, if requested by that country." Minister appealed to the United States for help. "We hope the United States reacts in time. We urgently need no less than \$600 million from the United States to develop an integrated plan capable of defeating the narcotics traffic in Peru, a plan which not only involves the repressive aspect."

President Alan García commented on Sept. 7 that President Bush's war on drugs was "late and should have been broader." not a problem of military repression;

that only deals with the symptom," García insisted.

The drug mafia was driven onto the defensive in Peru in 1985-86 by Operation Condor, which Mantilla and García conducted with absolutely no support from Washington. When Peru's anti-drug police hit teams could no longer pay for the fuel for helicopters borrowed from its armed forces, the jungle raids slackened.

Dope, Inc. has become an awesome economic and political, as well as military, power in Peru. The narco-terrorists may soon have killed enough mayors and taken over enough of the country to prevent normal elections from taking place.

Colombia's anti-drug offensive has already affected the Peruvian economy. The weekly *Oiga* reports that on a normal day, six small Colombian planes loaded with cocaine paste take off from airports in the Upper Huallaga River valley. *Oiga* reports that the repression in Colombia has caused these flights to be suspended. As a result, the jungle price for cocaine paste has dropped.

The average of \$5 million a day which came in on the flights has been severely reduced. The diminution in the flow of Colombian narco-dollars into Peru has caused a scarcity of dollars on the black market in Lima. As a result, as Economy Minister César Vásquez Bazán recognized, the Peruvian inti has been devalued from 3,500 to 4,200 to the dollar over the past two weeks. Vásquez confessed that the central bank was buying \$1 billion a year in dirty dollar bills off the streets of Lima. That is equal to one-third of

the nation's dollar income.

This addiction has brought the productive economy to the point where legitimate output is collapsing by over 20% this year (see *EIR*, Aug. 25, 1989, "Narco-dollars collapse Peru's economy").

only between starvation and working as peons for the narcos.

No U.S. "Andean strategy" for the war on drugs will work if it cannot reverse the economic holocaust in the region. Interior Minister Mantilla holds that his Operation Condor raids are having relative success against the jungle strongholds of the cocaine mafia, but that the cocaine industry in Peru cannot be defeated by repression alone and must also be attacked at its social and economic roots.

There still are patriots in Peru's government and military ready to fight to prevent their republic from being taken over by criminal mafias. But they are hamstrung by the propaganda offensive of "respectable" media at the service of the drug lobby. One insidious argument is that Peru should protect the cocaine producers to keep them from allying with communist terrorists operating in the drug zones. The daily *Expreso*, owned by financier Manuel Ulloa, for example, propagates the line that "indubitably, there has to be a priority; both problems cannot be fought at once. . . . There is opposition between the logic the U.S. government wants in the zone, prioritizing the narcotics-trafficking theme and the logic of the Peruvian armed forces, currently prioritizing fighting Shining Path."

The fifth column also plays back into Peru the filth printed abroad favoring drug legalization. A column by the *Chicago Tribune's* Mike Royko was run Aug. 29 in the Peruvian daily *El Nacional* under the headline, "The Solution Would Be To Legalize Drugs."