

Andean Report by Valerie Rush

MRTA terrorist chief captured

The Fujimori government is significantly escalating its anti-terrorism campaign, but the war is far from won.

Peruvian security forces delivered a major blow to one of that country's two major insurgencies on June 10, when Victor Polay, the head of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), was captured along with several other top MRTA leaders as they were preparing to hold a special congress in Lima. According to Peruvian Interior Minister Juan Briones Dávila, the MRTA commander may well be the first candidate for a life sentence, a measure just decreed as part of the government's new, get-tough anti-terrorism campaign.

Polay had been arrested once before, during the Alan García administration, but had escaped along with 50 other terrorists, by digging a tunnel out of a "maximum security prison."

The arrest of Victor Polay was made possible by a police raid several weeks earlier on an MRTA hideout in Lima, which netted the number-two man of the MRTA, Peter Cárdenas Schulte. Cárdenas was the head of the terrorists' military apparatus in Lima and of their national logistical operations. The MRTA's computerized archives were also seized, and yielded extensive information about the organization's finances and structure, its internal discussions, details on terrorist targets for the next 12 months, and, most importantly, the planned visit of Polay and other MRTA chieftains to Lima for the national MRTA meeting.

One day after the arrest of Polay, police succeeded in capturing the 16-year-old son of Shining Path's (Sendero Luminoso) imprisoned number-two man Osmán Morote Barrionuevo.

The teenager was captured, along with four other Senderistas, while in possession of weapons, dynamite, and a large amount of terrorist propaganda.

The arrests come in the midst of a series of new anti-insurgency decrees by the government of President Alberto Fujimori, designed to contain the bloody acts of terrorism that have virtually paralyzed this country, such as the recent car-bombing of a Lima television station which led to five deaths, more than a score wounded, and the station demolished, and which prompted the condemnation of Pope John Paul II. Among the latest measures decreed are a 10 p.m.-5 a.m. curfew on vehicular traffic through the streets of Lima, the cordoning off and military protection of areas surrounding television stations, strict control of the sale of certain chemicals used in the production of explosives, and an increased police presence on city streets.

On June 9, Commander-in-Chief of the Peruvian Armed Forces Gen. Nicolás de Bari Hermoza announced that the military would be organizing volunteer "citizens' brigades," along the model of Peru's armed peasant brigades, to try to uproot Shining Path from Lima's sprawling, desperately poor shantytowns. General Hermoza stressed that the urban brigades would only receive arms as necessary, and that they would be under the strict training and leadership of the Army.

In addition, Finance Minister Carlos Boloña has announced a 50% increase in the country's pitiful anti-

subversion budget, largely to beef up military intelligence.

All of these measures, while necessary, fall short of what is actually needed to stop the barbaric narco-terrorist onslaught against the Peruvian nation. Until the Fujimori government halts the bleeding of the nation's scarce resources by the international creditor banks and International Monetary Fund, the hideous conditions in the Army—where weapons are obsolete and soldiers sometimes go on patrol without bullets or boots—will continue, and the new urban brigades, like their peasant counterparts, will go largely unprotected.

Shining Path has nonetheless felt the heat from the government's new measures, and has been obliged to set up terrorist sanctuaries inside neighboring Chile for some of its more beleaguered forces. At the same time, however, Shining Path is exploiting the situation, turning its Chilean "sanctuary" into a money-making venture. Reports are already coming out of northern Chile that businessmen in the area are being forced to pay protection money to its terrorists, and those who don't pay are being kidnaped for ransom. At least one terrorist bomb has been exploded in the commercial zone of a northern Chilean town, prompting the commander of Chile's Army to warn on May 27 that the border must be reinforced.

Colombian police have also announced the discovery of a dynamite cache that was shipped to Colombian terrorists by their Peruvian counterparts, and former Peruvian Prime Minister Manuel Ulloa told a meeting of the Inter-Action Council in early June that Shining Path is expanding across the continent, financed by the drug trade. "Today, the great risk to democracy is from the drug trade linked to this kind of fundamentalist movement," said Ulloa.