

Andean Report by Manuel Hidalgo

A Shining Path rescue effort

The U.S. State Department and International Red Cross are once again siding with Peru's narco-terrorists.

When the Peruvian Armed Forces launched its "final offensive" April 5 against the last bastions of the Shining Path in the Upper Huallaga Valley, the narco-terrorists' enormous international support apparatus once more surfaced, with the U.S. State Department backing a network of the media and of international and local "human rights" organizations.

The military operation against the final columns of Shining Path's People's Guerrilla Army (EGP) suffered a major reverse and was on the verge of being aborted, as so many others were during the first 12 years of the war, by the actions of this network under the orchestration of the Inter-American Dialogue, a bankers' front group based in Washington and with extensive influence inside the State Department.

Following the 1992 capture of Shining Path chieftain Abimael Guzmán, the Peruvian Army dedicated itself to cleaning out the remnants of the EGP centered in the Upper Huallaga Valley, which is also the world's largest producer of coca leaf used to make cocaine. The union of Shining Path with the traffickers, and their iron control over the population in that area, which is almost entirely involved in coca cultivation, has made any such mop-up operation difficult, given the risk of adversely affecting a population in which Shining Path is said to move "like a fish in water."

Shining Path's redoubts are virtually impossible to detect from the air, because of the dense vegetation. Only after months of patient intelligence

work, using information from terrorists who have surrendered under the government's "Law of Repentance," was the Peruvian Army able to pinpoint the terrorists' barracks and to identify the Shining Path "commissars" infiltrated into the population. Thus, Operation Aries was launched.

It was the local correspondent of Cable Network News (CNN) who on April 18 was the first to broadcast "exposés" of assassinations in the zone, allegedly carried out by the Army. The next day, the so-called National Human Rights Coordinator (CNDH) charged that the Army had carried out "bombardments" of defenseless towns, and that there were 50-100 victims.

The newspaper *La República*, linked to the pro-terrorist São Paulo Forum, handed its pages over to the CNDH and to the International Red Cross (ICRC), calling for immediate suspension of military operations and access by ICRC to the combat zone. By April 23, most of the country's media acknowledged that the reports of "bombardments" were false, and that the corpses found belonged to individuals who had died before the military operation, or to wounded Shining Path combatants finished off by their retreating comrades.

The Army, for its part, rejected the Red Cross's demand and charged it with acting in bad faith by entering war zones and demanding immediate access to captured terrorists. Gen. Alfredo Rodríguez Riveros, military chief of the Huallaga Front, denounced such interference, asking,

"Why don't they allow me the 15 days which I am given by law to interrogate them first?" The Red Cross's interference has reached such extremes, according to General Rodríguez, that after speaking with ICRC representatives, the terrorists not only refuse to cooperate under Peru's Law of Repentance, but deny everything they had admitted in their earlier statements.

Congressman Carlos Blanco noted that during Red Cross interviews with Shining Path terrorists, the Red Cross officials make various offers in exchange for the terrorists' silence. The congressman revealed that he knows of one case of a repentant terrorist who was offered ten exit visas abroad for himself and his entire family by ICRC, if he would say nothing to his captors!

When it became quite clear that neither the Fujimori government nor the Armed Forces would yield to these pressures, the U.S. State Department came to the rescue, issuing a statement on April 28 which repeated CNDH's "denunciations" and pressured for unrestricted access by ICRC into the combat zones, so that they can "do their work." The Peruvian Foreign Ministry publicly rejected the "inexact," "inappropriate," and "unfriendly" State Department communiqué.

Of course, this is hardly the first time that the State Department has come out on Shining Path's side. In 1991, it cut military aid to Peru, accusing the Peruvian military of human rights violations. More recently, it sent a Commission of Jurists headed by American University law professor Robert Goldman, to "study" Peru's legal system. The commission's conclusion was that Peru should annul its anti-terrorist legislation—the centerpiece of its highly successful strategy against Shining Path—and review its trials of terrorists. Peru's government has rejected the "recommendations."