

Andean Report by Valerie Rush

'Americas Battalion' targets Peru

Moscow's irregular warfare troops go on the offensive against Alan García's government.

The Nov. 6 takeover of two Peruvian towns by a heavily armed, uniformed commando unit of the narco-terrorist Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) was broadcast live to the entire Peruvian nation, courtesy of Channel Five television which just "happened" to be on hand for the big event.

The MRTA is a Cuba-linked and urban-centered member of the "Americas Battalion," the continental narco-terrorist army backed by Moscow. Channel Five is closely linked to former Peruvian Prime Minister Manuel Ulloa, whose economic policies paved the way for the surrender of the national economy to the drug trade. It was no accident that the chief opponent of President García's move to nationalize the drug banks would be giving free "publicity" to the drug trafficker's terrorist army.

Peruvians watched their televisions in horror while the terrorists raised their flag over the main square of Juanjui, an important provincial capital in the coca-growing state of San Martín. Sporting bazookas and other sophisticated weaponry, the khaki-clad terrorists captured the police station and kidnapped a score of police, burned police archives on the drug trade, and killed at least one while wounding another half-dozen.

Channel Five's "intrepid" reporter then interviewed the head of the commando unit, one "Commander Rolando," who was later described by the media as a former Colombian drug trafficker who fled that country when

his collaboration with the narco-terrorist M-19 guerrillas surfaced. "Rolando" revealed to his interviewer that MRTA actions were carried out with the "close collaboration of military officers," and financed by "taxes which we collect from the major multinationals," among others.

President Alan García denounced the takeover as the work of "terrorist and drug-trafficking remnants." Senate President Ramiro Priale decried this "conspiracy against Peruvian democracy by part of the insurgent movements and other sectors, including from abroad," and claimed that the armed incursion against Juanjui and nearby San José de Sisa was carried out for "publicity effect," as the journalists had been advised well in advance of what was to occur.

Interior Minister Barsallo described the event as a "stageshow," designed to feed the ongoing destabilization campaign against the García government. Right on cue, Sen. Enrique Bernales from the leftist Izquierda Unida (IU) party demanded the resignation of Minister Barsallo and the government's abandonment of its anti-terrorist hard line.

Said Bernales, "If I were President Alan García, I would attempt dialogue with the MRTA. If the resignation of Minister Barsallo resolves the problem, he should immediately resign since civil war must be avoided."

Other IU congressmen have organized a "parliamentary delegation" to visit San Martín, to enter into dialogue with the "popular forces" and to

"guarantee the security of the population, which is being repressed" by the armed forces. Elements from within the ruling APRA party itself also denounced the government's anti-subversion policy, demanding the immediate reorganization of the intelligence services for their failure to "anticipate" the MRTA actions.

President García's denunciation of the publicity given to the MRTA action does not mean he is unaware of the threat the narco-terrorists pose. One week before the Juanjui takeover—the fourth such action in one month—the MRTA issued a communiqué announcing that it had launched a new phase of insurgency, a "systematic armed battle" for "national liberation." During the course of the Juanjui occupation, the terrorists acknowledged that they were acting in coordination with the Colombian M-19 narco-terrorists.

In taped messages sent to the Peruvian media immediately after the occupations, the MRTA promised to unleash a "bloodbath in the jungle" if their guerrilla forces were "repressed" by the police or military.

President García has been adamant that warfare can be met only with warfare. During a visit to the grave of a colleague murdered by terrorists, he said, "I can make no concessions to assassins . . . the legal use of weapons is the only means of eradicating subversion. . . . There is no other path open to us; history demands that we be hard, because the future of our children in a peaceful society demands this."

García has responded to the Juanjui takeover by declaring an immediate state of emergency, sending the military to occupy the entire state of San Martín. The army is enabled to carry out arrests without a court order, conduct house-to-house searches, and limit free transit of the population.