

Andean Report by Valerie Rush

Bush's 'big stick' policy

Peru will get a few pennies of military aid, at the price of legalizing cocaine and giving the U.S. a military foothold.

The paltry \$34 million worth of U.S. military aid to Peru that has been the subject of so much debate in Washington lately comes with many strings attached, not the least of them being the emasculation of the Peruvian Armed Forces, one of the few remaining institutions that stands between what's left of that nation and the narco-terrorists known as "Sendero Luminoso," or Shining Path.

Suddenly discovering that "insurgency and [drug] trafficking are inextricably bound together," as Assistant Secretary of State for Narcotics Affairs Melvin Levitsky recently put it, President Bush and his State Department are insisting that Green Beret "trainers" go along with the aid package, to teach Peruvian troops to fight Shining Path. This scenario is already well under way next door in Bolivia, where a U.S. military beachhead has been established. Should Peruvians, getting an unmistakable whiff of Vietnam, think of resisting this arrangement, there is always the threat of suspending the aid.

Indeed, such Capitol Hill "human rights" crusaders as Democratic Senators Patrick Leahy (Vt.) and Ted Kennedy (Mass.) have already managed to block the funds' disbursement, on charges that the Peruvian military is pursuing a dirty war. Ironically, they are armed with data from pro-terrorist organizations like Amnesty International, which has systematically ignored documentation of Shining Path's Pol Pot-style mass beheadings, disembowelings, massacres of women, children, the elderly, technicians,

scientists, and teachers.

A "sympathetic" U.S. Ambassador Anthony Quainton met with Fujimori and promised a fight to free up the funds, in exchange for his effort to clean up Peru's defense forces. Desperate to comply, Fujimori ordered psychological testing for Peru's entire national police force, allegedly to weed out unstable and sadistic elements. He also pledged tighter controls over human rights abuses, and a portion of the \$34 million has been earmarked for "human rights" training of soldiers. However, he made no pledge to raise the wages of draftees, who earn an average \$7 a month and are sent into the field with one week's training and no bullets. *Newsweek* of Aug. 19 quotes security analyst Enrique Obando: "I don't think Shining Path is on the verge of victory, I would say that the state is on the verge of defeat. The Armed Forces could tumble down at any moment."

The *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, always ready to lend a hand to a colonial cause, devoted nearly identical editorials Aug. 11 and 12 to the need for U.S. "military cooperation" with Peru in fighting narco-terrorism. Both insisted that there was no threat of U.S. involvement in a long and spreading war, à la Vietnam or El Salvador. They only differed on how "reformable" the Peruvian military is, with the *Post* hoping that its human rights record would improve "if the U.S. is actively and attentively engaged," and the *Times* denouncing the Army's "internal culture" as incorrigible.

Both editorials lauded the new "joint strategy" worked out between the Bush and Fujimori governments, a reference to combining U.S. military involvement with "useful new approaches" like crop substitution. However, it is universally admitted that—as in Bolivia—no effort to implement crop substitution has been undertaken. Indeed, the Fujimori government's recent repeal of Peru's 22-year-old agrarian reform guarantees the failure of such an approach. The new decree opens the floodgates to mass purchases of Peruvian land by foreign capital—a favorite laundering mechanism of drug traffickers—while denying credit to the very small producers who make up 80% of Peruvian agriculture. Thousands of coca growers, left with no options, will remain the slave laborers of the cocaine cartels.

The Fujimori government has, in fact, begun to prepare for the next phase: drug legalization. According to the Aug. 1 London *Financial Times*, a task force has been established within the Peruvian Foreign Ministry to study the prospects for legalization of coca, the raw material from which cocaine is made. Disguising its legalization drive as an effort to market denarcotized "coca tea," the government's coca marketing agency ENACO is seeking approval for its plan from the U.N., which currently includes the coca leaf as a banned psychotropic substance under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. The *Times* quotes from Interandes, a Swiss-Peruvian consulting firm specializing in Andean "development," which argues that "legal coca is the best substitute for illegal coca." By making neither land nor credit available to growers for legal crops, the Fujimori government and its international financial sponsors apparently think so, too.