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Department of State TELEGRAM

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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6064
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

OCT 3 1998

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() DENY () Non-responsive info.
FOI, EO or PA exemptions _____
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() CLASSIFY as _____, OADR
() DOWNGRADE TS to () S or () C, OADR

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EO 12356: NA
TAGS: PIMR, SHUM, PINS, PE
SUBJ: (U) PERUVIAN VILLAGERS KILL EIGHT JOURNALISTS IN AYACUCHO

1. EIGHT PERUVIAN JOURNALISTS WERE KILLED IN AYACUCHO'S HUANTA PROVINCE BY A BAND OF UCHURACAY CAMPESINOS SOME-TIME BETWEEN JANUARY 23 AND 26. THE FARMERS REPORTEDLY MIS-TOOK THE EIGHT JOURNALISTS FOR SENDERO LUMINOSO TERRORISTS APPROACHING THEIR VILLAGE AND ATTACKED THEM WITH MACHETES AND STONES. THE REPORTERS WERE TRAVELLING ON FOOT TO HUAYCHAU TO CHECK ON STORIES THAT ITS CAMPESINOS KILLED SEVEN SENDERISTAS WHILE REPELLING A SENDERO LUMINOSO RAID JANUARY 22. THE FARMERS OF HUANTA PROVINCE ARE SOME OF THE POOREST IN AYACUCHO; MOST SPEAK ONLY QUECHUA.

2. ACCORDING TO A GOP MILITARY COMMUNIQUE, THE ARMY LEARNED OF THE JOURNALISTS' DISAPPEARANCE ON JANUARY 28 WHEN

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THE LIMA DAILY "LA REPUBLICA" TOLD THE AYACUCHO COMMAND

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THAT ITS REPORTER WAS OVERDUE. THE COMMUNIQUE SAID THE ARMY COMMAND ALERTED ITS UNITS IN HUANTA ON THE 28TH AND SENT IN HELICOPTER SEARCH MISSIONS ON THE 29TH. IN THE MEANTIME, THE UCHURACAY FARMERS TURNED OVER THE JOURNALISTS' TWO AYACUCHO GUIDES TO THE CLOSEST POLICE POST, ALONG WITH DOCUMENTS, EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING. ON JANUARY 30, ARMY, POLICE, AND CIVILIAN COURT OFFICIALS ARRIVED AT THE SCENE, WHERE THEY DISINTERRED EIGHT BODIES FROM FOUR SHALLOW GRAVES.

3. THE REPORTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS REPRESENTED THE LEFT-WING LIMA DAILIES "EL OBSERVADOR", "LA REPUBLICA", AND "EL DIARIO DE MARKA"; CENTRIST WEEKLY "OIGA"; AND AN AYACUCHO CITY NEWSPAPER. ACCORDING TO THE ARMY COMMUNIQUE THE HAD NOT ADVISED THE MILITARY OR POLICE FORCES OF THEIR PLAN TO VISIT NAUCHAU. A QUECHUA-SPEAKING JOURNALIST FROM WEEKLY "CARETAS" WHO VISITED NAUCHAU WITH AN ARMY HELICOPTER FLIGHT DURING THE SAME PERIOD REPORTED THAT THERE WERE STORIES REACHING THE VILLAGE OF AN SL ATTACK ON UCHURACAY.

4. ON JANUARY 30, WHEN THE BODIES WERE DISCOVERED, LEFTIST JOURNALIST CESAR HILDEBRANT VISITED THE SITE WITH MARIO CASTRO ARENAS, PRESIDENT OF THE JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION. ON HILDEBRANT'S SUNDAY EVENING PROGRAM, "VISION", HE QUOTED "MARKA'S" AYACUCHO COORDINATOR (AND QUECHUA SPEAKER) THEY VIRTUALLY ALL THE UCHURACAY VILLAGERS SAID THAT THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS BY THE GUARDIA CIVIL'S "SINCHI" COUNTER-INSURGENCY TROOPS TO ATTACK ANY STRANGER APPROACHING THEIR LAND, AS THEY WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE MEMBERS OF THE SL.

5. PRESS REACTION IS MASSIVE, WITH THE LEFTIST JOURNALS
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PICKING UP HILDEBRANT'S REPORT AND BLAMING THE GOP AND ITS POLICE FORCES, AND MORE CONSERVATIVE DAILIES CALLING IT A TRAGIC MISTAKE BY THE CAMPESINOS.

6. PRESIDENT BELAUNDE STATED JAN. 30 THAT IN ADDITION TO THE INVESTIGATION BEING CONDUCTED BY THE MILITARY, A SEPARATE COMMISSION, INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION, SHOULD BE FORMED.
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