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ACTION ARA-16

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LIMA 7909

E.O. DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, SNAR, PER
SUBJECT: (C) PERUVIAN NATIONAL DAYS PASS WITHOUT DISTURBANCE

1. (C) SUMMARY: PERU CELEBRATED ITS NATIONAL HOLIDAYS JULY 28 AND 29. WHILE CUSTOMARY FESTIVENESS WAS SUBDUED THIS YEAR, AT LEAST IN LIMA, DUE TO PERVASIVE CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE TERRORIST ACTIONS, NONE OF MAJOR TRADITIONAL EVENTS WERE CANCELLED. PRESIDENT BELAUNDE DELIVERED A TWO-HOUR EXTEMPORANEOUS ADDRESS TO CONGRESS JULY 28 SUMMARIZING A LARGER WRITTEN REPORT DELIVERED TO NEW SENATE PRESIDENT MONTEAGUDO. BULK OF SPEECH CONCENTRATED ON BELAUNDE'S PET DEVELOPMENT THEMES, BUT HE GAVE GREATEST RHETORICAL EMPASIS TO DEALING WITH PROBLEM OF TERRORISM. HOWEVER, BEYOND ANNOUNCEMENT THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD PRESS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO
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PERMIT DEATH PENALTY TO BE APPLIED TO TERRORISTS.

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BELAUNDE GAVE NO INDICATION THAT GOVERNMENT HAD NEW IDEAS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH MENACE POSED BY SENDERO LUMINOSO. (DURING WEEKEND, GOVERNMENT ALSO EXTENDED THE STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR SIXTY DAYS. SEE SEPTEL.) PARADE FOLLOWING DAY TOOK PLACE AMIDST ALMOST UNPRECEDENTED SECURITY MEASURES. THAT IT TOOK PLACE AT ALL, AND THAT SENDERO WAS PRESUMABLY UNABLE TO DISRUPT IT, PROVIDED COUNTRY WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST. IN THESE TERMS BELAUNDE CAN CONSIDER HIS HANDLING OF NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS AS SUCCESSFUL. CRITICS, HOWEVER, ARE HARPING ON LACK OF DEPTH AND SUBSTANCE IN PRESIDENT'S TREATMENT OF BOTH TERRORIST AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.
END SUMMARY.

2. (LOU) THE PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH GOT EXCELLENT REVIEWS AS POLITICAL THEATER. DELIVERING SPEECH BEFORE JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS, BELAUNDE DEPARTED FROM HIS PREVIOUS PRACTICE OF READING MESSAGE AND SPOKE FOR OVER TWO HOURS EXEMPORANEOUSLY IN A DISPLAY OF MEMORY AND PRACTICED ORATORY. (HE DELIVERED TO PRESIDENT OF SENATE A WRITTEN REPORT TO COVER CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS. ALTHOUGH SOME CARPERS CLAIM CONSTITUTION MANDATES FULL SPEECH BE READ.) HIGH POINTS OF PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS WERE IN PERORATION. BELAUNDE ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD ASK CONGRESS TO AMEND CONSTITUTION TO INSTITUTE DEATH PENALTY FOR TERRORIST ACTS. AT THE SAME TIME, HE LAID HEAVY EMPHASIS ON SUPPOSED FOREIGN INSPIRATION FOR TERRORISM CLOTHED IN "EXOTIC IDEOLOGICAL DISGUISES". BELAUNDE ALSO SIGNALED A STRONG CONECTION BETWEEN DRUG TRAFFICKING AND TERRORISM. "ONE DOESNT SPEAK OF AN OUTRIGHT WAR ON THE FRONTIERS OF THE COUNTRY," HE SAID. "BUT OF A TREACHEROUS ATTACK, THE PRODUCT OF COWARDLY
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INFILTRATION, CRIMINALLY MANAGED FROM GOD-KNOWS-WHERE, FINANCED BY THE CRIMINALLY-ACCUMULATED RESOURCES OF DRUG-TRAFFICKERS."

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have been withheld in their entirety.

Exemption(s) invoked: Non-relevant information

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10. (C) COMMENT: THE BIGGEST NEWS ABOUT THIS YEAR'S NATIONAL DAY FESTIVITIES MAY WELL BE THAT THERE WAS NO BIG NEWS. SENDERO SUCCEEDED NEITHER IN DISRUPTING OFFICIAL EVENTS NOR IN DISTRACTING ATTENTION FROM THEM BY PERPETRATING ATROCITIES ELSEWHERE. BELAUNDE WAS THUS VINDICATED IN HIS DECISION NOT TO CANCEL PARADE OUT OF FEAR OF POSSIBLE TERRORIST ACTIONS AND PAY POLITICAL PRICE IN TERMS OF GOVERNMENT'S IMAGE. ON CONTRARY, BY VIRTUE OF HIS STERLING PERFORMANCE ON PODIUM JULY 28 AND COURAGE HE DISPLAYED ARRIVING AT JULY 29 PARADE IN OPEN CAR, HE SUCCEEDED IN PROJECTING SENSE OF PURPOSE AND APPEARANCE OF LEADERSHIP ON TERRORISM ISSUE. PERUVIANS NEEDED THAT.

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