



Department of State

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TELEGRAM

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ACTION ARA-00

INFO OCT-00 COPY-01 ADS-00 AID-00 INR-10 SS-00 CIAE-00
H-01 NSCE-00 NSAE-00 SSO-00 SY-06 MA-08 L-03
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INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
DIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

OCT 3 1988

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 EXCISE DECLASSIFY in PART
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FOI, EO or PA exemptions _____
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 CLASSIFY as _____, OADR
 DOWNGRADE TS to () S or () C, OADR

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 0038

DIA FOR IR BRANCH

E.O. 12356: DECL: 1/3/90
TAGS: PTER, PE
SUBJ: SENDERO GREETES THE NEW YEAR: DARKNESS AT MIDNIGHT

REF: 83 LIMA 13302 ✓

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SENDERO LUMINOSO (SL) TERRORISTS WELCOMED 1984 WITH A COORDINATED, PRECISELY TIMED ELECTRICAL BLACKOUT THAT PLUNGED LIMA AND OTHER MAJOR CITIES INTO DARKNESS AS THE NEW YEAR ARRIVED. APPROXIMATELY 40 PERCENT OF PERU'S POPULATION (METROPOLITAN LIMA'S SIX MILLION, PLUS SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND MORE IN HUANCAYO, JAUJA, ICA, PISCO, AND ELSEWHERE IN CENTRAL SIERRA AND COAST SOUTH OF LIMA) SAW THEIR LIGHTS GO OUT AT MIDNIGHT WITH POWER NOT RESTORED...IN SOME CASES,

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UNTIL AFTERNOON JANUARY 2.

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3. IN A DISPLAY OF TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY, SL MANAGED TO DOWN A HALF DOZEN STRATEGICALLY PLACED TRANSMISSION TOWERS AT WIDELY SEPARATED POINTS IN THREE DEPARTMENTS (LIMA, HUANCAMELICA, AND JUNIN). TOWER DYNAMITINGS BEGAN IN EARLY MORNING HOURS DEC. 30. BUT SL'S PIECE DE RESISTANCE CAME AT PRECISE MOMENT OF 1984'S ARRIVAL, AS ADDITIONAL TOWER DYNAMITINGS DISRUPTED EMERGENCY SHUNTINGS IN ELECTRICAL GRID SYSTEM AND LEFT WHOLE OF CENTRAL PERU TEMPORARILY WITHOUT POWER. A SIMILAR ATTACK AGAINST NORTH PERUVIAN TOWER CARRYING CURRENT FROM CHINOTE TO TRUJILLO FAILED.

4. ALTHOUGH NONE OF ABOVE ATTACKS LEFT KNOWN CASUALTIES, POLITICAL AFTERMATH WAS CHARGED. LIMA'S THREE MAJOR, NORMALLY PRO-GOVERNMENT, DAILIES ("COMERCIO", "PRENSA," AND "EXPRESO") ALL LANDBASTED GOVERNMENT'S UNPREPAREDNESS, FOCUSSED ON OFFICIAL COMPLACENCY IN THE FACE OF MILITARY/POLICE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES' COLLECTIVE INABILITY TO DETER FORESEEABLE SL ACTIONS. PRENSA COLUMNIST MARTIN GARAY COMMENTED THAT, WHILE POLICE IN LIMA REMAINED SAFELY ARMED AND BARRICADED IN THEIR "CONISARIAS," THE REST OF THE CITY'S POPULATION WAS LEFT UNPROTECTED. ALL THREE DAILIES RIDICULED STATEMENTS BY GOP OFFICIALS IN PRECEDING DAYS TO EFFECT THAT SENDERO WAS ON THE RUN. (INTERIOR MINISTER PERCOVICH, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD CLAIMED THAT CAPTURE OF TOP SL LEADER DIAZ MARTINEZ -- REFTEL -- LEFT SL "DISARTICULATED.") EXPRESO COLUMNIST LUIS LOLI ROCA SAID SL SUCCEEDED IN DEMONSTRATING ONCE AGAIN THAT PERU'S "SUPREME GOVERNMENT" WAS NEITHER SUPREME NOR AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT. THE ONLY DISSENTING VOICE TO CRITICISM CAME FROM GOVERNMENT-OWNED LIMA DAILY "CRONICA," WHICH

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ACCUSED OPPOSITION PRESS AND EXPRESO OF SENSATIONALISM. CRONICA EDITORIALIZED THAT SENDERO'S ATTACK PRODUCED ONLY MOMENTARY DISCOMFORT FOR NEW YEAR CELEBRANTS, WHO "BROUGHT OUT THE CLASSICAL CANDLES OF OLDER TIMES AND, IN THEIR HOMES, EXPERIENCED A SPECIAL, MORE INTIMATE AMBIANCE."

5. COMMENT: SENDERO'S NEW YEAR APPEARANCE CONSTITUTES ITS MOST TELLING BLOW AGAINST BELAUNDE GOVERNMENT SINCE JUNE-JULY 1983, WHEN A SERIES OF ELECTRICAL BLACKOUTS AND ASSAULTS IN LIMA PRODUCED STATE OF ANXIETY IN

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CAPITAL. WE CANNOT TELL IF SENDERO'S CHANGED TACTICS
(INCLUDING A CONSPICUOUS ABSENCE OF BLOODSHED) STEM FROM
PERSONNEL LOSSES, A NEW STRATEGY, OR A POLITICALLY ASTUTE
TALENT FOR STRIKING A DEFT BLOW AGAINST A VULNERABLE
GOVERNMENT.
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