

QUESTION AND ANSWER SERIES

PERU

**SHINING PATH ACTIONS IN 1998:
SUMMATION AND PARTIAL CHRONOLOGY**

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The chronology in this report covers the period from January - November 1998.

Actions by Shining Path in Peru in 1998

As indicated by data compiled from Peruvian news sources by the Lima-based *Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos* (APRODEH), the decline in activities by Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*) has continued in 1998.¹ However, despite this decline, Shining Path has manifested that it maintains the capacity to orchestrate activities in several departments throughout the country, including Lima.

In the first nine months of 1998, there were 223 actions by armed groups in Peru, compared with 460 in all of 1997, indicating a decline in 1998 of about 33 percent on an annualized basis. Of the 223 actions, 168 were known to be carried out or were claimed by Shining Path and 13 by remnants of the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), while in 42 actions the perpetrators were unknown.

In actions involving violent attacks, the great majority of which involved Shining Path, there were a total of 73 deaths and 34 wounded, about 80 percent of which casualties were incurred among civilians, police and soldiers. In 1997 the total of dead and wounded was 200, indicating a decline in 1998 of about 30 percent on an annualized basis.

In the coastal department of Lima, which includes the nation's capital, there were 122 guerrilla actions in 1997, resulting in 13 deaths and 22 wounded among civilians, police and soldiers, but no recorded losses among insurgents. In the first nine months of 1998, there were 68 guerrilla actions, indicating a decline of about 25 percent on an annualized basis. Most noteworthy was that none of the 68 actions in Lima department during 1998 resulted in either deaths or injuries on either side, compared with the 13 killed and 22 wounded in 1997. According to APRODEH, many of the actions in Lima department in 1998 have been of a propagandistic nature, e.g., painting of slogans on walls, distributing flyers and small hit-and-run attacks, which probably accounts in large part for the absence of death or injuries.²

In the first nine months of 1998, a majority of the deaths and injuries resulting from Shining Path attacks were reported in three departments: Ayacucho, in the Andes southeast of Lima, where 31 percent of deaths and injuries occurred; Huánuco, in the

¹ Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH). "Acciones de grupos alzados en armas," a series of tables charting armed actions by guerrilla groups in 1997 and 1998, undated.

² Interview with Rosario Narvaez, APRODEH staff, 28 October 1998.

southern portion of the Upper Huallaga Valley northeast of Lima, where 26 percent occurred; and San Martín, in the northern portion of the Upper Huallaga, where 19 percent occurred.

In recent years, Shining Path has been attempting to make a comeback, hoping to take advantage of a decline in popular support for the Fujimori government and the dire economic and social conditions which a majority of Peruvians continue to endure. According to David Scott Palmer, writing at the end of 1997:

Shining Path...retains a significant operational capacity in various parts of the country, including the Departments (states) of Lima, Huánuco, Ayacucho, and San Martín...They have returned to an earlier strategy of selective attacks against police and military targets, local officials, community and neighborhood leaders, and individuals whom they believe have betrayed them, as well as of new recruitment efforts in rural communities, urban neighborhoods, and universities. They have reconstituted an emergency central committee as well as some of their regional committees.³

Palmer was in Peru from May to September 1998, most of the time in Ayacucho Department. In a recent telephone interview, he reported that the general points made in his November 1997 affidavit still hold. He estimates that Shining Path currently has a military cadre of about 1,000 members nationwide. Approximately a third of them are operating in Ayacucho Department; the majority of the rest are in the Upper Huallaga Valley, with the remainder in cities. Some are organized in units of up to 70 guerrillas; others operate in smaller units; while the remainder operate individually as "floaters" between groups.⁴

In 1998 in the Upper Huallaga Valley and in Ayacucho Department, Palmer reported "a dramatic increase in visits" by Shining Path guerrillas to villages and small communities. The visits were generally peaceful propaganda efforts to try to regenerate popular grassroots support. According to Palmer, most of these episodes are not reported in the Peruvian media, which does, however, report the more high-profile, violent incidents. Palmer noted that the most high-profile violent attacks in 1998 were part of Shining Path's attempt to disrupt the local elections in October.⁵

³ Palmer, David Scott. Affidavit, 6 November 1997,

⁴ Palmer, David Scott. Telephone interview, 13 November 1998

⁵ Palmer, David Scott. Telephone interview, 13 November 1998

News reports of Shining Path activity and the data compiled by APRODEH also indicate that Palmer's assessment of the relative strength of the insurgency and its geographical presence appeared to hold true for much of 1998, despite the reduction in the number of guerrilla actions. The decline may have been the result of the capture in Lima in late April of Pedro Domingo Quinteros Ayllon, nom de guerre "Comrade Luis," second-in-command of the Shining Path emergency central committee. Quinteros was generally considered the second most important Shining Path leader after Oscar Ramírez Durand, nom de guerre "Feliciano," who succeeded the jailed Abimael Guzmán as head of Shining Path. Peruvian police sources said that Quinteros had traveled to Lima to meet with Shining Path cells in the capital.⁶

Despite the arrest of Quinteros, Shining Path appeared to maintain its operational capacity, particularly in the Upper Huallaga Valley northeast of Lima, as indicated by the following, non-comprehensive survey of some of the more significant Shining Path actions in 1998. Still, despite a number of significant guerrilla actions in the Upper Huallaga in the months before the municipal elections held nationwide on October 11, there were no reports of violence on the day that voting was conducted.⁷

- In early February 1998 a Shining Path column attacked the Amazon jungle town of Potsoteni located in the Upper Huallaga Valley 560 kilometers northeast of Lima. The group of approximately 30 guerrillas fought for more than an hour against members of the town's *ronda*, a civilian self-defense group made up of peasants armed by the government. The confrontation, according to Peruvian military sources, left four peasants and four guerrillas dead and five peasants gravely wounded. A few weeks earlier, in January, possibly the same Shining Path column attacked Tungayhuaco, another town in the Upper Huallaga Valley. In that assault, one peasant died and guerrillas seized small arms from residents before fleeing.⁸
- In mid-February one soldier was killed and eight others gravely wounded when an army patrol set off a number of mines presumably planted by Shining Path guerrillas near the Upper Huallaga city of Tingo María, the capital of Huánuco Department. According to military sources, the patrol was tracking a Shining Path column that

⁶ "Capturan a líder Senderista," *Reuters* (Lima: 21 April 1998), in *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 22 April 1998).

⁷ "Lima mayor reelected, exit polls show," *Associated Press* (Lima: 11 October 1998), in *Miami Herald* (Miami: 12 October 1998).

⁸ "Sangrienta ofensiva de Sendero deja 8 muertos," *Reuters* (Lima: 8 February 1998), in *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 9 February 1998).

apparently had carried out a series of attacks against towns in the valley since January, including those cited in the paragraph above. The military sources said the attacks indicated a “significant increase” in Shining Path activities in the Upper Huallaga since the beginning of 1998.⁹

- On March 10, a Shining Path column of about 30 guerrillas attacked and briefly occupied the town of Cahuas in Huánuco department in the Upper Huallaga Valley. Inhabitants were corralled into the town’s central plaza, where the guerrillas assassinated the local justice of the peace and two other individuals.¹⁰
- In mid-March, Peruvian army soldiers clashed with a group of about 30 Shining Path guerrillas near the Andean town of Vizcatán 325 kilometers southeast of Lima in the department of Ayacucho. The confrontation left ten insurgents and one soldier dead and six soldiers wounded, according to army sources. Vizcatán is a former Shining Path stronghold and the old refuge of Oscar Ramírez Durand, nom de guerre “Feliciano,” successor of Abimael Guzmán as head of the Shining Path. Peruvian armed forces expelled the Shining Path from Vizcatan in 1996, but army sources interpreted a recent increase in clashes between soldiers and guerrillas as evidence the Shining Path were looking to try to retake the town.¹¹
- At the end of July, about 50 Shining Path guerrillas attacked and occupied for four hours the jungle town of Angasyacu in the southern end of Upper Huallaga Valley. The guerrillas dynamited three high-tension electrical towers and threatened to kill residents if they voted in the municipal elections that were to be held throughout Peru on October 11.¹²
- In the second week of August a column of more than 50 Shining Path guerrillas attacked and occupied Saposoa, a city of 13,000 people 730 kilometers northeast of Lima at the northern end of the Upper Huallaga Valley. Saposoa is the capital of Huallaga province in the department of San Martín. The heavily armed guerrillas overran the local headquarters of the national police, disrupted a rally for Mayor

⁹ “Minas de Sendero Luminoso,” *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 16 February 1998), citing unnamed wire service reports.

¹⁰ “Peru: Ataque a poblado,” *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 12 March 1998), citing unnamed wire service reports.

¹¹ “Tropas del gobierno eliminan a 10 terroristas en Peru,” *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 15 March 1998), citing unnamed wire service reports.

¹² “Peru: terrorismo contra elecciones,” *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 28 July 1998), citing unnamed wire service reports.

Celso Rodríguez Vargas who was running for reelection on October 11, and held the city for four hours before leaving. Rodríguez was executed by gunshot to the head following a *juicio popular*, or people's trial, staged by the guerrillas. Rodríguez was a candidate of the *Vamos Vecino* movement, a pro-Fujimori organization established as a vehicle for government candidates in the 1998 municipal elections. Two other civilians were killed and six wounded during the assault on the police station. According to military sources, the attack on Saposoa was the first significant Shining Path military action in San Martín department in four years. During that period, they said, the Shining Path's radius of activities in the Upper Huallaga had been limited more to the southern end of the valley 200-250 kilometers away.¹³

- Toward the end of September a group of more than 50 Shining Path guerrillas attacked Aucayacu, a municipality of 21,000 people on the Rio Huallaga in Huánuco department 370 kilometers northeast of Lima. The insurgents took over the central plaza, exchanged gunfire with police and set off bombs in two buildings. During the assault which lasted about an hour, the guerrillas painted the phrase *No Votar*, Don't Vote, on building walls and scattered fliers with the same message. As they fled into the jungle, they set off grenades behind them. There were no reported deaths or injuries among the insurgents, police or civilians.¹⁴
- On September 30 a group of about 20 Shining Path guerrillas attacked the municipality of Uchiza located in the jungles of the southern portion of the Upper Huallaga Valley. During the incursion, which lasted less than an hour, the guerrillas set off a bomb and scattered fliers calling for people not to vote in the municipal election and to join the *guerra popular*, people's war. Military sources said the attackers might have been part of the Shining Path column which attacked Aucayacu about a week earlier.¹⁵
- Following the October 11 municipal elections, anti-terrorist police announced that they had arrested eight alleged members of the Shining Path in the departments of Ayacucho and Ica (along the Pacific coast south of Lima), and in southern Lima.

¹³ "Sangrienta reaparición de Sendero," *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 10 August 1998), citing unnamed wire service reports.

¹⁴ "Sendero reaparece como columna guerrillera," *Associated Press* (Lima: 24 September 1998), in *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 25 September 1998).

¹⁵ Muñoz, Reynaldo. "Sendero amenaza de nuevo al Perú," *Agence France Presse* (Lima: 29 September 1998), in *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 30 September 1998).

Police sources in those areas said those apprehended had been planning to carry out attacks during the elections.¹⁶

- On November 2 a group of Shining Path guerrillas killed three farmers attending a religious festival in the town of Pueblo Nuevo in Huánuco department in the Upper Huallaga Valley. The farmers, two men and a woman, were dragged from the festival and shot. The guerrillas hung signs around their necks reading *soplón*, informer. Peruvian government officials speculated that the killings were in reprisal for the recent capture in Huánuco of Jenny Rodríguez Neyra, the third highest ranking Shining Path leader still at large.¹⁷

¹⁶ “The Americas,” *Miami Herald* (Miami: 15 October 1998), citing unnamed wire service reports.

¹⁷ Associated Press (Lima: 4 November 1998) - as reported on America Online, International News Service.