

**Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade**

**Terrorist Groups in Latin America: The Changing
Landscape**

The Peruvian Case

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In 1992, twelve years after the beginning of the armed conflict, the main leaders of the Shining Path (SP) and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (TARM) were captured by the police and their military forces were almost completely dismantled. Since then, the leaders of both groups have been in prison and military actions have almost disappeared. This victory was the result of excellent police intelligence in urban areas and an alliance between the armed forces and rural peasants in the countryside. Holdovers from the SP retreated to mountainous, inhospitable, and inaccessible areas located in the coca-growing regions of the VRAEM and the Upper Huallaga valleys, where they engaged in sporadic actions to obstruct efforts by the security forces to eradicate illicit crops and fight drug trafficking.

In February 2012, *Artemio*, the Shining Path leader in the Huallaga Valley, was detained by the police. Thus, one of the two armed holdovers of the SP was effectively dismantled. *Artemio's* downfall was the result of a prolonged and successful intelligence effort, which involved the counternarcotics (DIRANDRO) and counterterrorism (DIRCOTE) police. Previously, police actions had led to the arrest or killing of *Artemio's* most important supporters. Progress in security went hand in hand with the eradication of illicit coca, alternative development efforts, and a growing state presence. Although illicit crops remain, they are shrinking in number, and the Valley has turned into a peaceful region, a condition which has been described as the “San Martin Miracle”.

Unlike the Huallaga Valley, the strategy against the Shining Path in the VRAEM was led by the military and the role of the police was negligible until fairly recently. The strategy, implemented a decade ago, was basically defensive and consisted on the establishment of military bases for the purpose of containing SP's expansion. Between 2008 and 2009, the armed forces went on the offensive in order to take control of the SP's headquarters in the Vizcatán region. After initially retreating, the Shining Path counter-attacked by ambushing and killing dozens of soldiers and police agents, and even disrupting its air support, forcing the military to withdraw in defeat with not one SP soldier detained or killed.

Artemio's capture made evident that the unsuccessful military strategy had to be replaced by the successful police strategy. It was not easy for the military to acknowledge that the police had to play the lead role in the counterterrorist effort. The decision was finally made

by President Humala, who decided to integrate the intelligence activities of the counternarcotics police, the counterterrorist police and the Peruvian Navy, which together formed a special intelligence brigade, under police leadership. This brigade, with the support of all the branches of the armed forces, made it possible to strike on an ad hoc basis. It was this new strategy that led to the killing of *William* in September 2012 and *Alipio* and *Gabriel* in August 2013, the three most important SP military leaders and number five, two and four of SP's command structure, respectively.

SP has been dealt a very hard blow, but is still a long way from being defeated. Estimates on its strength in the VRAEM vary between 140 armed men and somewhere between 400 and 500. It is essential to take advantage of its current weakness by capturing or killing what is left of its leadership (*José, Raúl* and *Olga*), and dismantling its military apparatus. U.S. assistance, through DEA, has been instrumental in the progress thus far achieved and should be sustained to ensure the defeat of SP.

The achievements of the last two years demonstrate the effectiveness of the new strategy against SP, which could be helpful to confront terrorist groups elsewhere. This strategy consists of prioritizing police intelligence work, which should combine human intelligence with electronics (telephone and radio listeners). Good intelligence facilitates more precise police operations in the field, to hit, wound, and eventually kill the main leaders of the terrorist organization. Military involvement in these command operations can be very helpful. It is crucial to ensure the legality of intelligence and operational actions, so that these cases may be prosecuted by the judicial system. An effort of this nature requires only a small number of participants, but highly professional ones, that generally come from various units and institutions. Thus, it is essential that their actions be properly coordinated and conducted at the highest possible level.