



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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17 February 2011

### PER103679.E

Peru: Status and criminal activities of the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso); government and police efforts to address Shining Path actions  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### Status of the Shining Path

The Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) is listed as being associated with terrorism by Public Safety Canada (Canada 22 Dec. 2010).

The EFE News Service reports that remnants of the Shining Path guerrilla group are present in the Upper Huallaga Valley under the command of Florindo Eleuterio Flores Hala, whose alias is "Comrade Artemio," and in the Apurímac and Ene River Valley (Valle de los Ríos Apurímac y Ene, VRAE) region where they are led by Victor Quispe Palomino, whose alias is "Comrade Jose" (EFE News Service 30 Dec. 2010).

In an interview with the Inter-Press Service (IPS), the author of *The Shining Path*, Gustavo Gorriti also states that the Shining Path has two different groups, one in the Upper Huallaga Valley and the other in the VRAE area, that are "largely hostile to each other" (IPS 4 Aug. 2008). Gorriti adds that the faction in the Upper Huallaga Valley region has suffered several setbacks, but the group in the VRAE region has been "visibly strengthened in recent years" (ibid.).

Somewhat similarly, an assistant professor of Latin American history at the University of Alberta --- who is also the author of *Before the Shining Path: Politics in Rural Ayacucho, 1895 - 1980* --- indicated in correspondence with the Research Directorate that the Shining Path has diminished in size and strength since 1992 and that it continues to function, although in "significantly modified form" (21 Jan. 2011). Moreover, she added that "there are at least two militarized political groups using the name Shining Path, and these groups likely have several hundred members" (Assistant Professor 21 Jan. 2011).

#### Shining Path activities

Various sources report that the Upper Huallaga Valley and the VRAE region, where the two Shining Path groups are located, are in Peru's coca growing areas (EFE News Service 30 Dec. 2010; IPS 4 Aug. 2008; Andean Air Mail 14 Oct. 2010). In addition, the Assistant Professor stated that the two militarized groups using the Shining Path name are "reported to be heavily involved with the drug

traffic trade" (21 Jan. 2011).

The international information provider IHS Global Insight Daily Analysis also reports that both Shining Path factions are

heavily allied to drug trafficking organisations, from where they draw the majority of their revenue, meaning that counter-insurgency operations in Peru are increasingly intertwined with counter-narcotics operations after the Colombian model. (30 Dec. 2010)

Furthermore, IHS Global Insight reports that neither faction of the Shining Path represents a threat to the state since both are focused heavily on "protecting their drug-trafficking assets" (IHS 30 Dec. 2010). The *Andean Air Mail and Peruvian Times* online magazine similarly states that the two Shining Path factions are "focusing almost entirely on narco-terrorism, controlling certain coca production areas and generating income from illegal drug trafficking" (14 Oct. 2010).

The IPS --- citing police interrogation records of the previous leader [2007] of the Upper Huallaga Valley Shining Path faction Atilio Cahuana --- reports that the guerrillas were seeking the support of the local *campesinos* (peasant farmers) who are opposed to government efforts to forcibly eradicate coca growing because their livelihood depends on the crop (IPS 24 Dec. 2008). The report indicates that Cahuana's role was largely to "indoctrinate new members of the organisation, and to penetrate coca-growers' villages to recruit them to its cause" (ibid.). The police records further describe the leader's other roles as follows:

"Whenever we arrived in a town or hamlet, we would discuss the local people's problems. Later, at the end of the meeting, they would bring up the subject of volunteers to join Sendero"... .

"I held constant meetings with the campesinos. Incorporating new recruits takes over a year. It is very complex and very difficult work, which is why we have the people's schools"... .

"I would settle border disputes between communities, arguments between families, problems the justice system was incapable of solving, debts, crop damage by a neighbour's animals, problems of common delinquency and rape"... .

"We would discuss the children's education, the issue of teachers and of parents' associations, and so on."... (ibid.)

The Assistant Professor at the University of Alberta, referring to a November 2010 report in the Peruvian magazine, *Caretas* says that "Shining Path militants have an estimated 30 child soldiers in military training camps in the VRAE" (21 Jan. 2011).

The EFE News Service and IHS Global Insight both report that in December 2010, Shining Path guerrillas killed three police officers in an ambush in the southeastern region of Cuzco, Peru (EFE News Service 30 Dec. 2010; IHS 31 Dec. 2010). IHS Global Insight also indicates that two non-commissioned officers were killed in the same ambush (ibid.).

The Assistant Professor stated that "various Peruvian periodicals" report that more than 60 police and military officers have been killed since 2008 and that most sources blame Shining Path guerrillas for their deaths (21 Jan. 2011).

### **Efforts to address Shining Path actions**

IHS Global Insight reports that Mario Antonio Sifuentes Sandoval (alias "Comrade Sergio"), a leading insurgent with the Shining Path, was captured by Peruvian security forces in December 2010 in the Upper Huallaga Valley (IHS 30 Dec. 2010). Comrade Sergio was reportedly deputy to Flores Hala, who was mentioned earlier (ibid.).

When asked to comment on government and police efforts to address the Shining Path's actions, the Assistant Professor stated that Peru's military and police forces are both involved in the government's effort to fight the Shining Path militants and the drug trade (21 Jan. 2011). The Assistant Professor elaborated on these efforts by saying that

[t]he effectiveness of these forces, however, is compromised by limited state resources and by the Peruvian state's historical neglect of its highland and jungle regions. (Assistant Professor 21 Jan. 2011)

The Assistant Professor also referenced an *Andean Air Mail* article that cites Ollanta Humala, the head of Peru's Nationalist Party, criticizing the government's neglect of the Upper Huallaga Valley and VRAE (ibid.). The article cites Humala as saying that if there is greater state presence in the Upper Huallaga Valley and VRAE regions there will be less support for violent organizations (*Andean Air Mail* 29 June 2010).

This is corroborated by an IPS news article, which quotes the leader of the Upper Huallaga Valley Atilio Cahuana, as saying "we were in the areas where the state is absent. The political authorities of the Interior Ministry, such as governors and deputy governors, cannot do this; they do not go into those areas" (24 Dec. 2008).

According to a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article --- which cites several Wikileaks cables, including one by then-US Ambassador to Peru dated 12 March 2009 --- there are allegations of links between army officers and drug traffickers (19 Dec. 2010). The same cable also states that army commanders posted in the VRAE region "receive lucrative payoffs," work with Shining Path militants and do not "fight hard" to disrupt the drug trafficking networks (Pittsburg Post-Gazette 19 Dec. 2010).

The Assistant Professor similarly stated that the effectiveness of police and military forces to address Shining Path's activities "may also be limited by corruption" and that "[s]everal national and international observers have alleged that members of Peru's military have cooperated with drug traffickers" (21 Jan. 2011).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

## References

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*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. 19 December 2010. Tim Johnson. "Peru Failing to Halt Rebel Group Insurgence." (Factiva)

## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** An associate professor of history at Connecticut College, a professor of Latin American history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and an assistant professor of Latin American history at Virginia Commonwealth University were unable to provide information for this Response. Attempts to contact an associate professor of history at Eastern Illinois University, an associate professor of history at the University of Oregon, a professor of political science at George Mason University, a professor of anthropology at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, a professor of Latin American history at Stanford University, a writer at the North American Congress on Latin America, and a professor of history at Lehman College were unsuccessful.

**Internet sites, including:** Andina News Agency, *Caretas* [Lima], *El Comercio*

[Lima], *Diario Ojo* [Lima], European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, International Relations and Security Network (ISN), *La Republica* [Lima], Reuters, United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), UN Refworld, UN ReliefWeb.

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