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Peru: Summary Of Recent Violence & Political Crisis Developments, July 27 - August 7

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July 27: According to the results of an opinion poll conducted by private polling firm Apoyo, President Alberto Fujimori’s approval rating has fallen to 60%, result of the recent wave of car bombings and other rebel violence in Lima. In the wake of the April 5 suspension of the constitution and dissolution of the national congress, Fujimori's approval rating reached 82%. According to the survey, 48% of respondents expressed disagreement with Fujimori’s anti-terrorist strategy, while 40% supported it; 35% supported the death penalty for individuals convicted of terrorism; 74% supported prosecuting suspected terrorists in military courts, while 17% thought they should be tried in civilian courts; 21% favored a negotiated peace agreement with the rebels; and 7% supported implementing urban self-defense militias ( rondas de autodefensa urbana). The Apoyo poll, with a 5% margin of error, was based on a sample group of 400 Lima area residents. Political party spokespersons told reporters that members of the dissolved congress held elections for leadership posts in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies. Alberto Borea, a member of the Christian Popular Party (Partido Popular Cristiano-PPC), was elected Senate president (speaker), while PPC-member Roberto Ramirez del Villar was re-elected as Chamber of Deputies president. July 28: About 30,000 troops continued to patrol the streets of the capital as rebels threatened to disrupt the country’s independence day celebrations with new violence. The Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) had threatened to enforce a nationwide armed strike (paro armado) July 28-29, following a massive offensive and similar strike in Lima the previous week. According to police sources, since initiation of the most recent rebel offensive in Lima July 16, at least 33 people have been killed, 300 wounded and about 1,000 buildings at least partially destroyed, mostly by car bombs. Maximo San Roman, the former vice president who was appointed constitutional president by the dissolved congress, reiterated his proposal for the creation of a transitional government. According to San Roman’s plan, elections would be held for a constituent assembly which would then appoint members of a provisional government to replace the Fujimori administration. The mandate of the constituent assembly would cover the period until new presidential and congressional elections could be held. Next, San Roman said municipal elections should take place in 1992 as originally scheduled, in order for the elected authorities to take office Jan. 1, 1993. In an independence day address to the nation, Fujimori defended the April 5 suspension of congress, the judicial system and constitutional guarantees as necessary and beneficial to the nation. Fujimori announced that municipal elections have been scheduled for Feb. 7, 1993. He said elections for a "constituent congress" will take place Nov. 22, and those elected will begin their terms on Jan. 2. Fujimori said the 80-member unicameral congress will be charged with drawing up reforms to the 1980 constitution, as well as carrying out traditional legislative functions until legislative elections are held. The constitutional reform package will be subject to referendum. Fujimori said the government is receiving assistance from the Organization of American States (OAS) in organizing the elections. He added that several countries and international organizations plan to send observers to oversee the elections. Next, Fujimori said the process of national dialogue, initiated in June, will be complete by Aug. 18. This, he said, will allow for announcement of regulations for the electoral process 90 days before the actual elections.
Parties and political independents can register candidates 45 days before the election dates. July 29: Members of the dissolved congress criticized Fujimori's speech as "unrealistic" and "a personal endorsement of his own dictatorship." They were also critical of Fujimori for failing to present a clear anti-terrorist strategy. July 31: Supreme Court justice Carlos Hermoza Moya told reporters that special tribunals presided over by anonymous judges (jueces sin rostro) will be operational by Aug. 2. Persons charged with offenses defined in the penal code as "terrorist" will stand trial in the new tribunals. Rebels are to be tried summarily, with legal proceedings lasting no more than 24 hours. 

[On July 25, Fujimori announced that all suspected rebels accused of murder would henceforth be prosecuted as traitors. The measure allows for trial of these persons by anonymous judges in military courts. It also allows judges to sentence those convicted on such charges with the death penalty.] According to judge Georgino Quintanilla, former president Alan Garcia, currently in exile in Colombia, has been ordered to appear in court in connection with illegal weapons possession charges. Quintanilla said that if Garcia does not appear voluntarily, "he will be brought before the court by security forces." Garcia's lawyer, Jorge del Castillo, said the order was groundless because Garcia could not be prosecuted without first suspending his immunity as a former president. In Geneva, the UN Human Rights Commission unanimously adopted a resolution criticizing Peru for "concentrating power in the hands of the executive" and for the "large number of complaints of extrajudicial execution and disappearances attributed to the security forces." A spokesperson from the commission said, "Lack of domestic order and legality in Peru, both before and after April 5, have blocked implementation of the international pact on civil and political rights." The pact was ratified by 112 countries, including Peru. Oscar de la Puente, who serves as both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, formally announced the second phase of dialogue with opposition parties for Aug. 4. The Popular Action (Accion Popular-AP) and Popular American Revolutionary Alliance (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana-APRA) parties immediately announced they would not participate in the talks. The other parties delayed announcing a decision regarding participation in the dialogue. Party leaders said that in his July 28 speech, Fujimori undermined the dialogue by imposing a series of conditions on the redemocratization process which were to have been the subject of negotiation between the government and opposition. In particular, the parties reject Fujimori's announcement that municipal elections will not be held until Feb. 7, 1993. Many opposition parties insist that municipal elections be held as originally scheduled in November. Aug. 4: Shortly before the dialogue was scheduled to begin, leaders of the principal opposition parties AP, APRA, PPC, the Freedom Movement (Movimiento Libertad-ML) party, the Unified Mariateguista Party (Partido Unificado Mariateguista-PUM), the Socialist Left (Izquierda Socialista-IS) and the Revolutionary Leftist Union (Unidad de Izquierda Revolucionaria-UIR) issued a joint statement announcing their decision to not participate. They said that, given Fujimori's unilateral establishment of the structure and election rules for the "constituent congress," there was no longer a basis for discussion. The seven said they would consider reversing their decision if Fujimori issued a statement calling his July 28 announcements "proposals." Only the four smallest parties, including Fujimori's Cambio 90 Movement, met with de la Puente at the dialogue session. Those present signed a document urging dissident political organizations to join the talks, rescheduled for Aug. 7-18. De la Puente said that a government plan to restore constitutional rule would be ready for discussion by Aug. 6. In an apparent attempt to appease the parties, he added that the president's July 28 speech did not represent a "unilateral decision, nor an attempt to impose parameters" for the constituent assembly, but rather a set of "proposals." Aug. 7: At a press conference in Washington, DC, Economy Minister Carlos Bolona issued a plea for the resumption of US aid to Peru. Bolona said the halt in foreign assistance has jeopardized economic targets set for the
country by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and has hampered anti-drug trafficking and anti-terrorism efforts. Political party leaders again declined the government's invitation to participate in the national dialogue and blamed the failure of the talks on "government intransigence." In a joint statement, the party leaders called on the government, all political parties, the media and the Church to participate in a parallel "genuine and legitimate" dialogue, planned for Aug. 11. They said topics for discussion at these negotiations would include ground rules for the electoral process, characteristics and mandate of the constituent assembly, and a date for holding municipal elections. Signatories of the statement included the APRA, the AP, the Freedom Movement, the PPC, the United Left (Izquierda Unida) coalition, the PUM, the National Worker and Campesino Front (Frente Nacional de Trabajadores y Campesinos-FNTC), and dissident members of Fujimori's Cambio 90 party. (Sources: Reuter, 07/28/92; Associated Press, 07/28/92; Chinese news service Xinhua, 07/31/92; Inter Press Service, 07/27/92, 07/28/92, 08/04/92; Notimex, 07/29/92, 07/30/92, 08/04/92; Spanish news service EFE, 07/28/92, 07/31/92, 08/03/92, 08/04/92, 08/07/92, 08/08/92; Agence France-Presse, 07/27-29/92, 07/31/92, 08/03-08/92)

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