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## Peruvian Intelligence Agency Faces New Accusations

by LADB Staff

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In the latest blows to Peru's tarnished institutions, a former intelligence agent who has sought political asylum in the US has accused the Peruvian intelligence services of torture, murder, and illegal wiretapping. Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori and the Peruvian Congress have ordered investigations into the charges.

Meanwhile, seven magistrates have resigned after pro-Fujimori legislators passed a law severely restricting their oversight powers. Luisa Margarita Zanatta, former agent for the Servicio de Inteligencia del Ejercito (SIE), spoke on Peruvian TV on March 16 from Miami, where she has been living for three months. Her accusations shed new light on a scandal that surfaced more than a year ago, when the body of another woman agent was found and a third was hospitalized after she was severely tortured. At about the same time, illegal wiretaps were discovered on the phones of opposition congressional delegates, political leaders, and members of the press (see NotiSur, 04/25/97).

The government denied responsibility for the wiretaps and for the agent's murder. However, the government rescinded the Peruvian nationality of Baruch Ivcher, the Israeli-born owner of the television station that first reported the telephone espionage (see NotiSur, 07/25/97). A special prosecutor and a congressional committee are now investigating the illegal wiretaps.

### *Agent says intelligence chief ordered wiretaps*

Zanatta said she worked for the SIE section that carried out the electronic surveillance ordered by Vladimiro Montesinos, the de facto head of the Servicio de Inteligencia Nacional (SIN). She said agents use sophisticated Israeli wiretapping equipment to monitor telephone conversations, and copies of the conversations are delivered daily to Montesinos. Zanatta accused the notorious Comando de Liberacion Nacional (Grupo Colina) of the death of agent Mariela Barreto, whose dismembered body was found by the side of a road in Lima last year. No charges have been filed in the case.

Zanatta said Barreto told her shortly before she was killed that she belonged to Grupo Colina and had participated in killing nine La Cantuta university students and a professor in 1993. Barreto said she told the Peruvian magazine Si where the bodies were buried. Grupo Colina is reportedly under the direction of Montesinos and armed forces head, Gen. Nicolas de Bari Hermoza Rios. The agent specifically accused retired Maj. Santiago Martin Rivas of murdering Barreto. Rivas and seven other military were convicted in 1994 of the La Cantuta murders, but were freed in 1995 under a controversial amnesty law (see NotiSur, 02/25/94 and 07/07/95).

Zanatta said Leonor La Rosa, another former agent, also was tortured for allegedly leaking information about Grupo Colina to the press. Four SIE officers have been sentenced to eight years in prison for the torture of La Rosa, who is in Mexico undergoing extensive medical and

psychological treatment. Although Zanatta said she did not participate in interrogations, she witnessed physical and psychological torture of people suspected of belonging to subversive organizations. The interrogations were conducted in a room called "the little Pentagon," in the SIE's Lima headquarters. Zanatta said she fled Peru Dec. 15, when she began to be pursued by her superiors. She has applied for political asylum in the US.

### *Defense Minister denies allegations*

Defense Minister Gen. Cesar Saucedo said Zanatta's denunciations were part of a campaign against the armed forces, and he said human rights violations were "not the practice of the army." "It is all part of an orchestrated campaign that has been going on for years, promoted by a soldier," said Saucedo, referring to former Gen. Rodolfo Robles (see NotiSur, 12/13/96).

Robles recently published the book "The Grupo Colina and Power: Crime and Impunity," in which he accuses the paramilitary group of carrying out assassinations of union leaders, politicians, and military opposed to Fujimori. On March 20, Fujimori ordered a "thorough" investigation of Zanatta's allegations. In addition, the congressional human rights commission is examining charges of abuses by the intelligence services.

Fujimori urged Zanatta to return to Peru to testify, giving his personal assurance that she would be safe. Despite Fujimori's assurances, Zanatta said she is convinced that, if she returns to Peru, she "will be eliminated." Congress cuts power of magistrates Meanwhile, in another incident that opponents say questions the Fujimori administration's commitment to democratic principles, seven judges resigned on March 17, following promulgation of a law passed March 11 that severely curtails their authority.

The judges consider the law unconstitutional and said it fosters impunity. The judges belonged to the independent Consejo Nacional de la Magistratura (CNM), responsible for disciplining judges. The law, passed by the Fujimori-controlled Congress, cuts the CNM's authority to investigate and dismiss judges and prosecutors at all levels and gives that authority to the Public Ministry. "They took away our independence and they distorted the spirit and the letter of the Constitution," said Carlos Parodi, former president of the CNM.

Attorney General Miguel Aljovin said he would ask Congress to repeal the polemical law. "Situations such as this create uncertainty in society, demonstrate judicial instability, and disturb the process of reform and moralization that has been taking place both in the judiciary and in the Public Ministry," said Aljovin. The political opposition and the College of Lawyers of Lima (CAL) have denounced the law to the Organization of American States (OAS) Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

On March 23, the World Bank suspended a US\$22.5 million loan for the justice sector, indicating international concern about the administration of justice in Peru. Former justice minister Carlos Blanca said the World Bank's suspension of the loan is directly tied to the resignations by CNM members and "the maneuvers carried out by the Peruvian government to ensure control over the Judicial Power." (Sources: Associated Press, 03/17/98; BBC News, 03/17/98, 03/19/98; CNN, Reuter,

The Miami Herald, 03/19/98; El Nuevo Herald, 03/17/98, 03/20/98; Inter Press Service, 03/20/98;  
Spanish news service EFE, 03/17-19/98, 03/24/98; Notimex, 03/18-20/98, 03/23/98, 03/25/98)

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