4-30-2004

President Toledo Dissolves Intelligence Service

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Peruvian president Alejandro Toledo announced that he would be eliminating the Consejo Nacional de Inteligencia (CNI), or National Intelligence Council, after the resignation of the seventh director of the agency to hold the post during Toledo's tenure.

The CNI was originally set up to replace the Servicio Nacional de Inteligencia (SIN), which lost credibility when proof of massive corruption within the SIN, run by former spymaster Vladimiro Montesinos, became public (see NotiSur, 2000-10-06). Peruvian officials said too many agents with ties to Montesinos remained in the scandal-plagued agency to allow it continue running.

Repeated resignations lead to dissolution

In late March, Vice-Admiral Ricardo Arbocco became the seventh man to head the agency since Toledo's inauguration in June 2001, but had to step down two days into his term after it emerged that he was being investigated for corruption. Arbocco's immediate predecessor at the CNI, Daniel Mora, resigned after it was discovered that some of his subordinates were plotting against Interior Minister Fernando Rospigliosi.

Rospigliosi is responsible for internal security and a plot to have him removed from office led to Mora's resignation, but a national secretary from Toledo's Peru Posible (PP) party later said the plot was not against Rospigliosi but rather against Mora, the CNI director. Hugo Garavito, PP Secretary for Ideology, said the intent of the plot was "to destabilize the presidency of the CNI." Rospigliosi expressed concerns about documents that had disappeared from the CNI's offices shortly after it was shut down.

After the double round of resignations, Prime Minister Carlos Ferrero said too many agents had ties to the exiled former president Alberto Fujimori and his security advisor Montesinos. Montesinos has been jailed for abuse of power and is awaiting trial on dozens of other charges, including money laundering and drug and arms trafficking. Fujimori, living in Japan, is wanted by Peru for allegedly organizing death squads.

Analysts said Toledo's appointment of Arbocco would reinforce the public's lack of confidence in the president's government. Currently, Toledo has single-digit approval ratings (see NotiSur, 2004-02-13).

Temporary administrator appointed

The Peruvian government appointed Admiral Julio Aybel Raygada as temporary administrator for the CNI on March 26. The official newspaper "El Peruano" printed a decree which said Raygada
"will be in charge of a temporary administration that will assume the assigned duties of the CNI until it concludes the process of reorganization with in 90 days."

During the process of designing and structuring the organization that will replace the CNI, the armed forces and National Police will conduct intelligence operations, according the resolution published in "El Peruano." Those two groups will keep tabs on drug traffickers and remnants of rebel groups that protect them in isolated swaths of the Peruvian jungle, said Prime Minister Ferrero. The reorganization meant "the suspension of the execution of intelligence operations, except those necessary to prevent any danger or threat against national security," read the decree.

**Opposition alleges threat to national security**

A special commission will examine how best to restructure the service, but opposition leaders criticized Toledo's decision to shut down the agency, in spite of its scandals. The leader of the Partido Popular Cristiano, Antero Florez, told journalists that Peru still had border problems and terrorist remnants to deal with.

The head of the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA), Jorge de Castillo, said the deactivation of the agency "demonstrates absolute incompetence" and accused Toledo of "carrying the country into the abyss." Castillo said there were deficiencies in national intelligence-gathering capacities and said Peru remained "unprotected" from narcotics trafficking, border problems and "subversive" elements.

In Montesinos' time, the SIN was staffed with 2,800 agents, but currently the CNI operates with a total of only 450 agents. The president of the Congress' Defense Committee, Luis Iberico, said the Peruvian police lacked the infrastructure and human resources to investigate cases of telephone espionage which have been maintained since Fujimori's regime.

"Right now the Peruvian police don't have the infrastructure or human resources to conduct important investigations," said Iberico, a legislator from the Frente Independiente Moralizador (FIM).

The vice president of the Defense Committee, Rosa Florian Cedron, said the reorganization left the country in a state of vulnerability and argued that it is difficult for an agency to be reorganized while at the same time it tries to continue intelligence work.

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