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President Announces Military Trials For Suspected Rebels

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On July 28, Peru's independence day, President Alan Garcia asserted that during the last year of his presidency, the fight against terrorism would be the government's top priority. He announced that suspected guerrillas are to be tried by military rather than civilian tribunals. In the past year, said Garcia, guerrillas have killed 766 civilians, 166 police, 98 soldiers and 87 elected officials. He added that property damage by the rebels included the destruction of 221 electricity pylons. Meanwhile, some 8,300 people were detained by police in Lima to "prevent violence" during a military parade commemorating independence. In the previous 10 days, 15 guerrillas were killed in firefights with the police on the streets of Lima. Earlier in the week, Sendero Luminoso rebels blew up 22 electricity pylons in the Andes mountains causing blackouts throughout the capital city. As of July 28, about half of Lima residences lacked power. General elections are scheduled for April 8. The new president will be inaugurated on July 28 next year. Garcia asserted that the guerrillas will attempt to spread chaos and provoke a military coup before the elections. He said, "A dictatorship would only increase violence, would legitimize insurgency and would stimulate the creation of new subversive groups." Beginning in May, the army began using Soviet-supplied MI-17 helicopters to pursue guerrilla units. According to the New York Times, the recent delivery of 3 of 15 additional Soviet helicopters may have triggered a bomb attack by Sendero Luminoso guerrillas this month that wounded 33 visiting Soviet sailors. In reference to Peru's $17 billion foreign debt, Garcia said that because of his government's "forceful anti-imperialist efforts," foreign bankers recently offered a 35% discount on debt principal. The president said the government would negotiate only when banks offer a 50% reduction. Since January, Peruvian consumer prices have increased 470%. In 1989, gross domestic product is expected to decline by 11%. (Basic data from New York Times, DPA, 07/29/89)