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Peru: Interior Ministry & Top Police Officials Accused Of Links To Rightist Paramilitary Group

by John Neagle
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Recently, a special Chamber of Deputies commission charged with investigating actions of the Rodrigo Franco Command, a rightist paramilitary group, completed a report in which Interior Minister Augustin Mantilla, military officers and top police officials are mentioned as suspects having links to the Command. On Aug. 21, commission member Deputy Gustavo Espinoza of the Peruvian Communist Party told reporters that the panel had questioned the work of the National Police and ministry intelligence officials for having accomplished virtually nothing in their investigation of the group. He added, "The officials have done questionable work in that they have no leads whatsoever, either because they direct the group, cover it up or are totally incompetent."

The Command made its first public appearance in July 1988, claiming responsibility for the fatal shooting in Lima of a lawyer who had defended a leader of the guerrilla group Sendero Luminoso.

Espinoza said that the commission has evidence that arms imported for the Interior Ministry were diverted by Mantilla to the Command: "The weapons were never officially picked up by the Interior Ministry." The report lists 65 violent incidents attributed to the Command which include the kidnapping of six politicians, 27 terrorist actions, and numerous killings that are under investigation. Links to members of the armed forces and the police are mentioned in 10 of the incidents.

Espinoza said the October 1987 explosion of a car bomb in front of the office of a newspaper considered Sendero Luminoso's principal mouthpiece, involved a vehicle owned by the Interior Ministry's logistics director, Augusto Callejas Carrasco. The deputy said that a young man killed in the explosion, described as an APRA militant employed in the Interior Ministry, had close ties with Mantilla, then deputy interior minister. According to Espinoza, the commission's discoveries led an APRA party deputy to deny the panel's request for a 30-day extension to continue its investigation. He added that several top police officials, including National Police chief, Fernando Reyes Roca, were found to have "very concrete" links to "many activities we were investigating." Espinoza said such activities led the US to suspend its counterinsurgency training assistance. He added, "The aid they wanted to give Peru was to combat terrorism and not to create new terrorist groups." (Basic data from AFP, UPI, Noticias Argentinas, 08/21/89)

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