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Barbara Khol

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U.N. To Monitor Anti-drug Program In Peru

by Barbara Khol
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On May 24, President Alberto Fujimori told a group of coca growers in Lima that the UN will monitor his government's anti-drug program aimed at persuading growers to substitute coca with other crops. The crop substitution effort is part of a $160 million accord with Washington. He said, "We have requested the presence of the United Nations in an effort to ensure that the agreement is fulfilled fairly and peacefully." According to Fujimori, UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar and director of the UN anti-drug program Giorgio Giacomelli have accepted the request, made by both Lima and Washington. The Agence France-Presse cited unidentified analysts who said the UN was called in because the coca growers feared excessive and repressive involvement by the army in the plan. Peruvian producers say substituting coca crops could cost as much as $1.25 billion. Marketing and processing infrastructure, and low-cost production and investment loans, they say, are also necessary to make crop substitution viable. According to Justo Silva, director of a coca growers cooperative in the Upper Huallaga Valley, "If we plant coca it is because we have no alternative due to the lack of markets for our products...We are not representatives of drug traffickers nor are we terrorists." The Upper Huallaga Valley is served by a single, narrow road leading to the Pacific coast. On May 23, US Ambassador to Peru Anthony Quainton said the bilateral anti-drug plan included funds for road construction and repairs to improve farmers' market access and for other economic development initiatives. (Basic data from AFP, 05/24/91)

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